

CARING FOR CREATION: INVESTIGATING FAITH-BASED
ENVIRONMENTALISM IN FOUR CONGREGATIONS

by

GRETCHEN HUGHES LIEBERMAN

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This thesis has been approved and accepted by:

Dr. Marion Goldman, Chair of the Examining Committee

11/30/04
Date

Committee in Charge: Dr. Marion Goldman, Sociology, Chair
 Dr. Ken Hudson, Sociology
 Dr. Irene Diamond, Political Science

Accepted by:

Dean of the Graduate School

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There is growing evidence of an environmental movement within the religious sector. However, this phenomenon, referred to as faith-based environmentalism (FBE), is only present in some congregations. Previous research has investigated whether or not certain religious characteristics are associated with support for environmental issues. Building off this earlier quantitative work, this study seeks to determine what individual and collective qualities contribute to the presence of FBE. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected using surveys and individual interviews from four congregations in Eugene-Springfield, Oregon. It was found that the social gospel tradition in mainline Protestantism and the corresponding *tikkun olam* emphasis of liberal Judaism are key theological variables correlated with FBE. Additionally, strong leadership from the clergy (in conjunction with the laity's tolerance for leadership) was found to be equally essential. This thesis concludes that despite religion's potential, these variables are critical for a faith-based response to environmental issues.

CURRICULUM VITAE

NAME OF AUTHOR: Gretchen Hughes Lieberman

PLACE OF BIRTH: Portland, Oregon

DATE OF BIRTH: April 16, 1973

GRADUATE AND UNDERGRADUATE SCHOOLS ATTENDED:

University of Oregon
Western Washington University

DEGREES AWARDED:

Master of Science in Environmental Studies, 2004 University of Oregon
Bachelor of Arts in Education, Environmental Studies, 1996 Western Washington
University

AREAS OF SPECIAL INTEREST:

Faith-Based Environmentalism
Environment and Development

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

Coordinator, First-Year Programs, University of Oregon, Eugene, 2003--2004

Graduate Teaching Assistant, Environmental Studies Program, University of
Oregon, Eugene, 2000-2003

Peace Corps Volunteer, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Environment and
Social Development, Republic of Kiribati, 1996-1999

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In memory of my grandmother, Virginia Scherer, who introduced me to God, and to my son, Noah, who represents the future and the need to care for our world.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Of You Who Have So Much

REFRAIN:

*The land mourns and all who
dwell in it are languishing
The beasts of the field are anguishing
and so the birds of the air
And will these gifts of our Make
get their Sabbath rest,
These for our cherishing their last request?
The fish of the sea our perishing.¹*

Global warming and all Creation is mourning
Ours is the hottest time in 12,000 years!
Car emissions, exhaustion of our ambitions
Shrinking snowpacks drawing fish and farmer fears.
While the Sockeye sweats on River's journey
Soccer child says, "Mom let's take the bus!
Then our family could maybe sell that SUV."
It's really up to us.

Sea's upwellings feed tiny zooplankton's dwellings
Warming surface waters quell this current treat
Coal-fired spewing will hasten food-chain-undoing,
Sea birds need the fish that on the plankton eat.
As shearwaters starve and murre-nests empty
Rabbi stands in synagogue, says, "Look,
We must steward church and household energy!
It's all here in the Book."

Industrial nations, one fifth of world populations
Make three quarters of all greenhouse gas and more
Too big houses, squarefootages in the thousands,
Suburbs built away from the market, service, store.
Our desire for wealth begets El Nino,
Storms, droughts, floods get first the poor, the tired.
Kenyans and Samoans urge in Summit:
"Of you who have so much more is required!"

Pastor Tom Williams² lyrics may not win awards for either poetry or scientific accuracy, but 60 people sang them with solemnity and intentionality at the "Cool Congregations" event at the United Methodist church on a dark November afternoon. The seminar was part of the National Religious Partnership's Interfaith Global Climate Change Campaign. Besides singing folksy environmental songs with a religious spin, the representatives of various congregations from around the region listened to several presenters talk about the science of climate change, strategies for improving energy efficiency in churches, and success stories from other congregations. I attended the conference out of a desire to learn more about the growing trend of religiously-inspired environmental efforts, and I sang along with the faithful.

¹ inspired by Hosea 4:3

² pseudonym

My interest in environmental issues collided with my own spiritual journey somewhere in college. When a friend gave me a book called Earth Prayers From Around the World for a birthday (Roberts and Amidon, 1991), I knew there were others who had made this connection as well. Scientists agree that the planet is struggling under the weight of humans. Between anthropogenic climate change, a thinned and holey ozone layer, the greatest species extinction since the end of the dinosaurs, and the everyday realities of depleted resources and toxic water, air, and soil, the state of our global environment is in serious need of attention. Thomas Rolston, a philosopher, scientist, and Presbyterian minister, has been influential in bridging science and religion. He argues that, "Our planetary crisis is one of spiritual information, not so much sustainable development... but using the Earth with justice and charity... Science cannot take us there; religion perhaps can" (Stammer, 2003). Rolston is far from alone. Little did I realize when I received that book, just how many likeminded people there were and how organized they were. Philosopher Max Oelschlaeger agrees with Rolston. He describes the lack of progress as "the paradox of environmentalism. More than two decades of almost continuous action, most of it well-intentioned, indicate a failure to stem the drift of Western culture toward ecological breakdown" (1994, 21). Given that "great cultural crises are always moral crisis," Oelshlaeger believes that, "religion is the most likely way that Americans can move themselves to care for creation" (1994, 75).

Between then and the start of this research, I grew to understand just how substantial this faith-based movement had become, and how many Americans were learning to care for the environment from a religious perspective. I had heard about the Catholic Bishops who issued an official pastoral letter on the sanctity and health of the Columbia River Basin. I knew that there was a group of evangelical Christians who had been instrumental in saving the Endangered Species Act from being gutted. I began reading books and articles on eco-theology, of which there are more than one would imagine. By the time of the Cool Congregations event, I was eager to meet people who were actually putting these ideas into practice rather than just exploring theological theories. The enthusiasm of these real people was heartening.

Having read enough from theologians, philosophers, environmentalists and historians about the potential for religion to inspire an environmental ethic, I believe the question of possibility has been answered quite affirmatively. Even scientists agree. In 1991, a group of prominent scientists wrote 'An Open Letter to the American Religious Community,' calling religious leaders to make the environment a faith priority (Lampman, 2000). Given the condition of the environment, and given the faith that Rolston, Oelschlaeger, and others put in religion to help people make a monumental paradigm and behavioral shift, it seems pertinent to question whether or not people of faith are capable of heeding this call. Moreover, are they? Are they listening to the theologians, philosophers, and scientists and responding faithfully to environmental problems? Clearly, some are, like the Catholic Bishops from the Columbia River Basin, the Evangelical Environmentalists, and the folks who were gathered that afternoon in the Methodist fellowship hall. But it is far less clear that all people of faith are equally recognizing religion's voice in this area. I began to wonder, what causes some faith communities to embrace this religious concern for the environment, while others ignore it?

This study was designed to investigate variables correlated with faith-based environmentalism (FBE) in congregations. Why did representatives from some congregations in the local Eugene-Springfield area attend the Cool Congregations event, but others did not? Surely, there had to be more than just coincidence behind the self-selection. Given that there are many congregations in town and only a handful chose to attend, it must not be just the result of Eugene's reputation for environmentalism. Furthermore some congregations from Springfield participated, which is not known for the same green aura. Is it simply that some congregations are predisposed to be pro- or anti-environment? Or does FBE only happen in active, vibrant, revivalist congregations that offer many inroads to attract newcomers? Is FBE simply a result of para-denominational support, attracting only the denominations that are affiliated with the National Religious Partnership for the Environment (NRPE)? Yet with the NRPE covering the Mainliners, Evangelicals, Catholics, and Jews, it seems nearly everyone has

the opportunity. Perhaps it is due to the impact of individual clergy at the congregational level? Despite the fact that NRPE offers such a broad umbrella, maybe there are certain religious characteristics that promote or prevent FBE. This shapes the question for this research: What institutional support and theological foundations are necessary for religious communities to be inspired to take on FBE?

To answer this question, I visited with and collected data from four congregations in the Eugene-Springfield area between fall 2002 and spring 2003. Two of the congregations had participated in the Cool Congregations event in 2001 (the United Methodist church, which had hosted the event, and the Reconstructionist synagogue, whose rabbi helped open the seminar with prayer.) The other two had not participated, a booming Nondenominational church and a small Southern Baptist congregation, and I wanted to better understand why they might not have. Through surveys, participant observation, and in-depth interviews with the four congregations I tested my theory that the active FBE at the first two congregations is due to clerical leadership and certain theological foundations. Specifically, I hypothesize that the leadership at the United Methodist and Reconstructionist congregations and the social gospel focus of the Protestants or the *tikkun olam* (or “repair the world”) emphasis of Judaism are directly related to the presences of FBE. The following chapters will test this theory and present evidence to support it.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

There are four separate areas of literature that provide a necessary background for understanding faith-based environmentalism (FBE). The following literature review begins by describing the historical and current connections between religion and the environment, from the infamous White thesis, to the response of ecotheologians, philosophers and religiously-inspired environmental individuals and institutions. It continues by summarizing the sociological studies about the effects of religiosity on various environmental variables. Next, the work of Emerson and Smith is examined to understand more about the effects of religious market place and the potential for (and the challenges of) clerical leadership. Lastly, the theological traditions of social gospelism and *tikkun olam* are explored as possible explanations of FBE.

Past and Present Connections Between Religion and the Environment

Responding to White's Critique

Any contribution to the conversation about environment and religion must inevitably start by paying homage to what has come to be called simply, the White Thesis. In 1967, Lynn White, Jr., published an uncharacteristic piece in the journal Science, entitled, "The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis." White, a historian, argued that "What people do about their ecology depends on what they think about themselves in relation to things around them. Human ecology is deeply conditioned by beliefs about our nature and destiny-that is, by religion." Furthermore, White claimed that, "Christianity is the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen," due to beliefs about human and Godly transcendence of nature, "dualism of man and nature," and God's will that humans should "exploit nature." White believed that while the impact of this anthropocentric world-view was perhaps limited throughout antiquity, it paved the

road for the marriage of science and technology that began with Isaac Newton and Francis Bacon. This holy union of science and technology gave “mankind powers which to judge by many of the ecologic effects, are out of control.” Therefore, “Christianity bears a huge burden of guilt” for “the present increasing disruption of the global environment” (White, 1967: 1203-07).

There are two primary weaknesses in White’s thesis. His first mistake is blatant; he even presents it to the reader. White’s article illustrates how Christianity developed very differently in the West than the East and says that only in the West did science and technology combine with Christian theology to produce such powerful effects. Yet White ignores the obvious conclusion which pesters the thoughtful reader: perhaps then it is not the raw material of Christianity itself, but the unique blend of Christianity that developed when mixed with western culture, since Christianity in the East did not lead to this same outcome. The second problem with White’s argument is not unique to White at all. Although he specifically places blame on the Christian theology and worldview, *White’s apparently limited understanding of Judaism allows him to tie the two together by labeling our modern Western worldview as Judeo-Christian.* He makes the common mistake of assuming that because Christianity shares certain texts and traditions with Judaism, that the interpretations of these shared roots are the same. While his argument is largely an accusation of Christianity, he pulls Judaism (a distinct and separate religion, not just an early rendition of Christianity) into the fire by using the common notion of a Judeo-Christian tradition.

Weaknesses aside, White’s thesis has had an enormous impact over the past 35 years. It initiated a conversation about the culpability of religion for our environmentally-devastating Western worldview and even called for a reexamination of the tradition, suggesting that St. Francis of Assisi should be the patron saint of ecologists. In the three and a half decades since White boldly asserted that the Judeo-Christian tradition is responsible for the deplorable state of the environment, countless academics, theologians and interested lay folk have responded. While some authors accept the blame

and others refute White's argument, they all generally focus on proposing alternative interpretations and understandings of Christianity and Judaism, alternatives that would not only prevent harm, but would allow religion to be a valuable tool in caring for the environment. Some authors even see religion as the best possible means for addressing our environmental problems. The remainder of this section will focus on these ideas, as well as concrete examples of the FBE that has resulted from them.

Locating Support for the Environment in the Traditions

The notion that religion has an important role to play in dealing with environmental issues has become mainstream in the past decade. Newspapers periodically run stories on faith-based environmental endeavors and the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) has published a book on the topic, Earth and Faith: A Book of Reflection for Action (Bassett 2000), as well as many other materials. The UNEP publications show how the traditions of Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Taoism, Buddhism, and others can help the world respond to concerns about water, air quality, diversity, health, resource depletion, safe industries, and overall societal well-being. Because each of these traditions is in and of itself complex, this research looks only at two, Christianity and Judaism. Even within these, there are diverse approaches to Faith-Based Environmentalism. For example, J. Baird Callicott sees at least two distinctly different Christian interpretations, stewardship and citizenship (1994) and Laurel Kearn's work identifies three types of Christian eco-theologies, stewardship, creation spirituality, and eco-justice (1996). The collection of articles featured in Judaism and Ecology (2002), which came out of the conferences on religion and ecology at Harvard from 1996-1998, shows a diversity of opinion about the relationship between Judaism and environmental concern. However, since the goal of this study is to understand what allows for the development of FBE within a given community, it is not necessary to spend considerable time detailing the nuances of various eco-theologies or viewpoints

here. I will however, briefly outline some of the key themes present in most Christian and Jewish FBE below.

One of the earliest publications in the movements was Ian Bradley's unabashedly enthusiastic book, God is Green: Ecology for Christians (1990). Bradley combs through the Bible and illuminates the vast amount of textual support he sees for a Christian eco-theology. Like many Christian theologians, Bradley believes that a *misinterpretation* of Christianity has led to environmental abuse. These key misinterpretations include the notions that nature exists solely for human's benefit, that God is transcendent and uninterested in the material world, and that the natural world is profane and in darkness (due to the dualistic split between spirit and nature) (Bradley, 1990: 3).

Bradley shows that these misinterpretations are *easily eliminated* when considering the following five arguments. First, there is ample evidence of God's love of the world and other animals' inherent worth and right to exist. (Look to the Psalms and Genesis in particular.) Second, there are strong directives toward stewardship. Bradley, like many others, argues that the term 'dominion' needs to be contextually understood like the kind of dominion God asked of the Israelite kings, which was "not seen as absolutist and despotic" but instead "charged with exercising mercy and justice towards his creatures." The story of Noah is also evidence of the value of stewardship in God's eyes. Third, Jeremiah and the other prophets speak out vehemently against misusing the land and link it to the people's relationship to God. Lastly, Bradley maintains that the separation between humans and nature that people associated with Christianity was not present in Hebrew thought, but was introduced later by the Greeks. Shed of this dualistic layer, the Bible, and Bradley believes Christianity in particular, is uniquely qualified to *generate an environmental ethic*, because Christ became incarnate. This cosmic Christ, who overcomes the split between spirit and nature, will lift up the whole world (Bradley, 1990).

More recently, Michael Bullmore's article, "The Four Most Important Biblical Passages for a Christian Environmentalism," identifies the concepts central to most

Christian FBE. In an effort to provide clergy with a basic canon of environmental messages found in scripture, he cites the creation stories of Genesis 1 and 2, the story of the flood in Genesis 9, the Psalms (particularly 104), and Romans 8:18-23. Together, these texts make the following four points. First, God created the world and found it good. Second, God continues to be actively involved by sustaining the world and is also interested in the well-being of the non-human world. Third, humans do have a unique role of responsibility (i.e. stewardship). Finally (and distinctly Christian), Christ came to rescue humans and non-humans alike (Bullmore, 1998). The similarity between Bradley and Bullmore's arguments and the presence of these same tenets in many other books and articles show how central these themes are in general Christian eco-theology.

In his reflection on his experience as a participant-observer in the Jewish environmental movement, Mark Jacobs, director of the Coalition on Environment and Jewish Life (COEJL), offers what he identifies as the most common environmental motivations for Jews (2002). These include the desires to fulfill Jewish and universal obligation, effect broad cultural and political change, strengthen the Jewish community, and find personal fulfillment. Jacobs explains that participants who see a Jewish environmentalism as part of their Jewish obligation operate under five principles. First and second, God commands us to protect creation and to pursue justice. Third and fourth, Judaism teaches that we are responsible for improving the world and that respect for the Divine requires us to protect the environment. Lastly, faithfulness to God requires caring for God's creation (Jacobs, 2002: 465).

In an exhaustively thorough analysis of writings on Judaism and the environment, Manfred Gerstenfeld concluded:

Judaism has developed over several millennia. Its classical literature, starting from the Bible and followed by Mishnah, Talmud and later rabbinical literature, expresses continuity in general and in environmental matters. In reading these texts through the eyes of the environmental discipline, it becomes clear that there was substantial environmental awareness – as we would now define it – in ancient Judaism (1998: 223).

Gerstenfeld (1998) identifies a web of Jewish support for environmental concern, built on *halakha* (Jewish law), biblical narrative, *midrash* (explanative stories), liturgy and *minhag* (custom), and the Jewish philosophical tradition. Examples follow:

Halakhot relating to nature, animals, and the preservation of natural resources are discussed in countless articles in such collections as Judaism and Ecology, Judaism and Environmental Ethics, and Ecology and the Jewish Spirit. After perusing such publications, Gerstenfeld recognizes the frequency of certain key arguments. Many authors discuss the significance of the commandments concerning *bal tashhit* (forbidding wanton destruction), *za'ar ba'alei hayyim* (forbidding unnecessary pain to animals), ritual slaughter, *Shabbat* and sabbatical and jubilee years, pollution, allocation of space and resources, and dietary laws. For example, Rabbi Barry Freundel, like countless others, begins his article, "Judaism's Environmental Laws" by referring to Deuteronomy 20: 19-20, which forbids destroying a city's fruit trees when making war against it (1998; 214-224). This provides support for *bal tashhit*. Freundel argues that such an imposition on natural resources during an extreme situation illustrates that there are always limits, presumably even more during normal times. David Vogel looks at the same text in his article, "How Green is Judaism?" and offers competing classic interpretations from two medieval Jewish scholars, Ibn Ezra and Rashi. Ezra explains the passage by saying that we are not to do that which would negatively impact us in the long-term. Vogel identifies this as an anthropocentric sustainable-development model. Rashi on the other hand, is more eco-centric, saying that the trees are "innocent bystanders" and "don't just exist to serve human needs." To support the notion of *halachic* proclamations against harm to other species, *za'ar ba'alei hayyim*, many authors cite Deuteronomy 25:4 (the prohibition of muzzling an ox while it is threshing), Deuteronomy 22:10 (the prohibition of yoking two different types of animals together), Deuteronomy 22:6-7 (the prohibition of taking a mother bird in addition to fledglings or eggs from the nest), and the *shehitah* (ritual slaughter) laws (Gerstenfeld, Vogel, Bleich).

Jewish scholars cite many different biblical narratives as support for a Jewish *environmental ethic*. Among the most commonly discussed are the stories of Eden and creation, Noah and the flood, Jonah, the nature-filled psalms of praise, and the strong warnings of the prophets. Ecological awareness and concern can also be found in the liturgical tradition. Prayer services are filled with references to nature and God as Creator. The *Amidah*, a central prayer in Jewish practice, “refers to God as the cause of the wind’s blowing and the rain’s falling in winter, and in summer, as the cause of the dew” (Gerstenfeld, 1998; 20). Such a tone is not unique to the *Amidah*. Studying the *Kol Haneshamah* prayer book for Reconstructionist Shabbat services shows references to nature and environmental concern infused throughout the whole text. Accompanying the second biblical selection that proceeds the *Shema* prayer, is the following mini-lesson: “This warning against idolatry has ecological significance. If we continue to pollute the environment – and thus display contempt for the integrity of God’s creation – pure rain will cease to fall, and the ground will cease to give forth its produce” (p. 68). Many other poems, prayers, and words of commentary in the book share the same theme.

Perhaps the key difference between the foundations for Christian environmentalism and Jewish environmentalism, is that Christianity looks only to the Christian Bible for support, while Judaism seeks it in the many different resources of the Jewish faith including laws, narratives, rabbinic interpretations, liturgy, and its philosophic tradition. In the latter, one has no farther to look than to the oft-cited medieval Jewish philosopher, Maimonides whom Gerstenfeld quotes as saying, “It should not be believed that all the beings exist for the sake of the existence of humanity. On the contrary, all the other beings too have been intended for their own sakes, and not for the sake of something else.” Regardless of the differences between the two religions however, both have solid foundations for establishing faith-based environmentalism.

At this point, so many people have laid the ground-work and shown how both Christianity and Judaism have the basis for supporting environmental concern, that the argument has been firmly established. Max Oelschlaeger estimates that between 1984

and 1994, more than 1700 references speak to the connection between religion and the environment. Indeed, Oelschlaeger's book, *Caring for Creation* (1994) argues that religion has (no less than) the "greatest" potential for addressing the ecocrisis. Oelschlaeger refers to the works of sociobiologist, Richard Dawkins, cultural anthropologist, Clifford Gertz, and others to establish the concept of religion as a "legitimizing narrative" which helps shape our actions. Religion provides a second language, biblical and communitarian, "that might enable a democratic citizenry to overcome its tendency to think of the common good only in terms of the first language of utilitarian individualism" (Oelschlaeger, p. 83). Furthermore, the vast majority of Americans speak this second language. According to Oelschlaeger, "more than 90 percent of Americans believe in God" of which nearly two-thirds identify as actively involved in congregations (p. 77).

Oelschlaeger refers to the work of Gary Willis who documents "the potency of Judeo-Christianity as a political force in the United States... from the Civil War through civil rights to abortion" (1994: 204). Oelschlaeger is remarkably optimistic in his assessment of the potential of the Judeo-Christian tradition to respond to the environmental crisis in the same fashion:

I think of religion, or more specifically the church - both the public church and congregations of people or fellowships of believers gathered in places of worship - as being more important in the effort to conserve life on earth than all the politicians and experts put together. The church may be, in fact, our last, best chance....*There are no solutions for the systemic causes of ecocrisis, at least in democratic societies, apart from religious narrative* (Oelschlaeger 1994: 5, italics in original).

Oelschlaeger recognizes that the focus on salvation and other issues like abortion do present major obstacles for conservative Christians, but he still believes that despite their significant differences, religious radicals, liberals, moderates and even conservatives, all share a belief in creation that lays the necessary groundwork for a religiously-inspired environmental ethic. Therefore, because religion acts as a socially motivating force for so many Americans, Oelschlaeger sees it as "the readiest opportunity

for most Americans to engage in a discourse concerning the public good” (1994: 76), particularly because the average citizen does not relate to corporations, government, and universities. While these three institutions may be out of touch with the average American, churches (which Oelschlaeger uses to mean faith communities of any religion) are not. Therefore:

For most Americans the local church is far and away the most likely forum for discussion of moral issues that overlap with politics. The local church is ideally suited to discourse where ecological crisis runs up against the gospel of greed.... The church is a community of memory, tracing its roots back to a covenant relation with God and the celebration of that relationship on the Sabbath. The worship retells...the story of the relation between the religious community and God, and the liturgy, ideally, provides a legitimating narrative for the whole of life. Americans have reasons to care for creation. Insofar as these traditions remain viable, they are not confined to a day of worship but shape the believer’s character and behavior, spilling out of the church into everyday life (1994: 202-203).

Although Oelschlaeger readily acknowledges that most faith communities have a long way to go in actually effecting significant change, he points out that the church has been involved in ecologically-concerned projects since as far back as the 1930s, with events like Rural Life and Soil Stewardship Sundays. Most of this religious environmental work however has occurred in the last two decades.

Examples of Activism

It has taken mainstream environmentalism awhile to catch on to the existence of FBE, but the presence of cover stories like “Can Religion Save the Environment” in E: The Environmental Magazine (2002), and “For God So Loved the World” in Outside (2001) show that word is spreading about these eco-spiritual crusades. What is drawing people’s attention? Perhaps it is personalities like Peter Illyn, the former four-square preacher, who Bruce Barcott (2001) describes as “the world’s foremost Bible-thumping, chapter-and-versifying, Jesus-praising tree-hugger (battling)... to save God’s glorious domain.” Likewise, groups like the Evangelical Environmental Network played a significant role in saving the Endangered Species Act when Congress tried to gut it in the

mid-nineties and the Catholic Bishops of the Pacific Northwest have called for the protection of the Columbia River Basin (Barcott). Many of these groups have come together under the umbrella of the National Religious Partnership for the Environment (NRPE), which is comprised of the aforementioned Evangelical Environmental Network (EEN), the National Council of Churches (NCC) (representing mostly mainline denominations), U.S. Catholic Conference (USCC), and the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life (COEJL). The NRPE's goal is to "weave the mission of care for God's creation across all areas of organized religion" (Motavalli 2002: 26). The Interfaith Global Climate Change Campaign, which aimed to educate and activate congregations about global warming as a religious issue, and the What Would Jesus Drive? campaign which sought to challenge current and potential SUV buyers in congregations and at auto dealerships are examples of the large-scale national efforts of FBE. At the local level, many congregations are improving energy efficiency, like the Gethsemane Lutheran church of Carmichael, CA which put solar panels on their house of worship with the help of California Interfaith Power and Light. Other congregations are monitoring streams or fighting pollution. The Jesus People Against Pollution group in Missouri is pushing for the clean-up of Superfund sites. Many faith communities are tackling hard topics like overconsumption with their congregants. Much of this local work is supported by para-denominational organizations like the NRPE and its affiliates (Motavalli 2002: 27-29).

Despite their willingness to come together under the auspices of the NRPE, the USCC, NCCC, EEN, and COEJL do have distinct differences. An article by Raymond Grizzle and Christopher Barrett (1998), "The One Body of Christian Environmentalism," outlines the six different Christian perspectives on the environment (see table 2.1): 1) "Subjectionism," the furthest away from mainstream environmentalism, is strongly anthropocentric and primarily concerned with economic welfare of people. Grizzle and Barrett associated it with the fundamentalists. 2) "Social Justice" evolved from long standing traditions of social activism in the mainline protestant and Roman Catholic

Table 2.1: Six Types of Christian Environmentalism as Identified by Grizzle and Barrett (1988)

<p>1. Subjectionism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • anthropocentric, focused on economic welfare • fundamentalists 	<p>4. Environmental Justice (“EJ”)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • combination of social justice and environmental concern, focused on people of color and the poor • mainline Protestantism
<p>2. Social Justice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • social activist tradition, also anthropocentric • mainline protestant and Roman Catholic churches 	<p>5. Ecofeminism</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • critique of patriarchy as threat to women and the environment • liberal Protestants and Catholics
<p>3. Creation Care/Stewardship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • similar with mainstream environmentalism • variants found in all traditions 	<p>6. Eco-Justice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • social justice expanded to include concerns about the more-than-human world • mainline Protestants and Catholics

churches, but is also largely anthropocentric. 3) Most similar with mainstream environmentalism is the “Creation Care” or “Stewardship” model, elements of which can be found in every Christian tradition. 4) A combination of social justice and creation care perspectives forms “Environmental Justice,” or “EJ” which has largely been a focus of mainline Protestantism. EJ is mainly concerned with the impact of environmental problems on people of color and the poor. 5) Though certainly not specific to Christianity, “Ecofeminism” has found several prominent voices in the church, primarily liberal Protestants and Catholics. 6) Lastly, “Eco-Justice” calls for “ecological health and wholeness together with social and economic justice.” This branch of Christian environmentalism “represents the expansion of long-standing concerns by mainline Protestants and Roman Catholics for social justice to include justice for all God’s creatures” (Grizzle and Barrett, 1998). These different perspectives are evident in the goals and activities of the three Christian branches of the NRPE. An analysis of reports from the NCC, EEN, and USCC in 2000 show how their accomplishments do fall in slightly different categories; the NCC, USCC, and EEN appear to be generally guided by eco-justice, environmental justice, and creation care models respectively (Somplatsky-

Jarman, et al, 2000). However, Mark Shibley and Jonathan Wiggins argue that although the NRPE might be organized around eco-justice principles, the four partner organizations are much less so. The liberal mainline churches in the NCC are the closest, but the USCC and COEJL are more stewardship focused and the EEN does not identify with eco-justice at all.

Does it matter what ethical framework is used? Shibley and Wiggins (1997) believe that it does. Furthermore, they challenge the effectiveness of a top-down para-organizational model like the NRPE, citing their own study which showed that despite the fact that 53,000 congregations nationwide received materials from the NRPE, few even remembered getting anything. They conclude that:

Unless particular environmental problems are of pressing concern to local congregations, they may have no interest in engaging environmental issues generally. Even socially active congregations are typically involved in a variety of important causes in the community and environmental issues simply may not rank as a priority among other issues. ... even if local congregations are receptive to new environmental resource materials, the ethics available to most congregations will emphasize stewardship, not eco-justice. In effect, this will reinforce the environmental status quo in the United States; stewardship fits with the traditional conservation and preservation agenda of the environmental movement... Thus churches may yet emerge as an important moral authority on conservation and preservation issues, but with the exception of some NCC-affiliated liberal protestant groups and other maverick congregations, there is no evidence to suggest the emergence of a widespread and prophetic interfaith voice that casts environmental issues in the broader light of social justice for all human beings. Most churches and synagogues may end up following, or resisting, rather than leading the emergent environmental justice movement in the United States (Shibley and Wiggins, 1997: 345-6).

Sociological Research Regarding Religious Characteristics and Environmental Measures

The past twenty years have produced a small collection of sociological studies analyzing the effects of various religious characteristics on environmental measures.

Table 2.2 Previous studies of the effects of religious factors on environmental variables

STUDY	DATA	IVs	DV
Van Liere & Dunlap 1980	A survey of previous studies	Age, social class, urban vs. rural, political liberalism vs. conservativeness, gender	General environmental concern
Hand & Van Liere 1984	WA state survey	Judeo-Christians, denominational affiliation, attendance	Mastery-over-nature orientation, environmental concern
Shaiko 1987	Survey of environmentalists		
Eckberg & Blocker 1989	Oklahoma telephone survey	Judeo-Christians, conservative Protestants, beliefs about the Bible, believing religion is important	General environmental concern (pollution, natural resources, waste, etc.), use vs. protect attitude
Greeley 1993	1988 GSS	Biblical literalism, being Christian, belief in God, image of God	Willingness to spend money on environment (only one variable)
Kanagy & Willits 1993	Large Pennsylvania sample	Judeo-Christians, attendance	Environmental attitudes and beliefs from the New Environmental Paradigm
Guth & Kellstedt 1993	Religious activists	Denomination, attendance, ritual and private practice, beliefs, fundamentalism, revivalism, individualism-communalism, spiritual life, born-again	How important are environmental problems?
Woodrum & Hoban 1994	N. Carolina sample	Five indicators of religiosity: salience, worship frequency (attendance), literalism, creationism, use of nature/dominion.	General environmental attitudes, information, and concern about nuclear power
Guth et al 1995	Religious leaders and activists, laity and survey respondents	Religious beliefs (conservative eschatology), traditions (Catholic, mainline Protestants, evangelicals, etc.), and commitments	Priority for environmental protection
Kanagy & Nelsen 1995	National sample	3 measures of religiosity (attendance, born again, personal religion)	Attitudes about the environment with regards to: federal spending for environmental protection, relaxing environmental controls for economic growth, and self-identification as an environmentalist.
Eckberg & Blocker 1996	1993 GSS	3 indexes of religiosity including: religious sectarianism, common religiosity, level of religiosity	10 indexes of environmentalism including: dominion beliefs, action/policy orientations, behavior, green lifestyle, beliefs about the impacts of humans
Wolkomir et al 1997	1992 national telephone survey on biotechnology	Religious salience, biblical literalism, and political conservatism, denominational identification	Dominion belief, environmental concern, and environmental behavior
Boyd 1999	1993 GSS	Belief in God, biblical literalism, fundamentalist traditions, graceful image of God, frequency of church attendance, and frequency of prayer	General support for the environment, based on three measures: willingness to spend money, attitudes, and behaviors.

This work appears to be the intersection of the broader discussion about religion and the environment (surveyed in the previous section) and sociological research about environmentalism in general, like Kent D. Van Liere and Riley E. Dunlap's article (1980) on the effects of age, social class, rural (vs. urban) residence, political identification, and gender on the level of people's environmental concern. This intersection, which considers the impact of religious variables on environmental measures, is comprised primarily of 12 studies. Table 2.2 gives an overview of the data sources and variables in these studies.

A survey of this quantitative research shows that solid conclusions about the relationship between religiosity and environmentalism are not easily arrived at. (See table 2.3 for a visual display of this lack of consensus.) Though the studies have yielded competing theories, there are certainly some overriding themes, which will be summarized below.

One of the earliest studies was Carl Hand and Kent Van Liere's survey about the religious affiliations and commitment and environmental attitudes of Washington state residents (1984). Their research supported the White thesis by showing a subtle correlation between Judeo-Christianity and a mastery-over-nature attitude, but it also showed that there are other variables to consider. While they did find that more frequent church attendance was generally correlated with lower support for environmental concerns, they also discovered that it was exactly the opposite for some liberal Protestants. They concluded that denomination is a strong factor, and they argued that the anti-environmental attitudes uncovered by their survey were due to a higher percentage of respondents involved in more conservative denominations (Hand and Van Liere, 1984).

The next major study, done by Douglas Eckberg and T. Jean Blocker (1989), concluded that when evaluating the interaction between religion and environmentalism the heavyweight variable is biblical literalism. Using the University of Michigan's popular General Social Survey (GSS), they showed that respondents who believed that

Table 2.3 Themes and consensus from previous studies about religion and the environment

RELIGIOUS IV	EFFECT ON ENVIRONMENTAL VARIABLE (DV)	STUDIES
Judeo-Christian	Negative effect	Eckberg & Blocker 1989 Hand & Van Liere 1984
	Possibly negative, but perhaps not when other factors are controlled	Kanagy & Willits 1993
	No effect	Boyd 1999
Denominations	Positive or negative, depending	Hand & Van Liere 1984
Belief in God	Negative effect	Greeley 1993
	No effect	Boyd 1999
Biblical literalism	Negative effect	Greeley 1993 Eckberg & Blocker 1989
	No effect	Woodrum & Hoban 1994 Boyd 1999
Fundamentalism	Negatively associated with support for environment	Boyd 1999 Eckberg & Blocker 1996 Guth & Kellstedt 1993
Conservative eschatology	Negatively associated with support for environment	Guth et al. 1995 Eckberg & Blocker 1989
Harsh image of God (vs. Graceful God)	Negatively associated with support for environment	Greeley 1993
	No effect	Eckberg & Blocker 1996 Boyd 1999
Frequency of Attendance/participation	No effect	Boyd 1999 Guth et al. 1995
	Positively associated with support for environmental policy	Eckberg & Blocker 1996
	Negatively associated, but probably because more frequent attendance corresponds with being more conservative	Guth & Kellstedt 1993
	Negatively associated with attitudes Positively associated with behaviors	Kanagy & Willits 1993
Frequency of prayer	Positively associated with support for environment	Boyd 1999 Eckberg & Blocker 1996
Common religiosity	No effect	Woodrum & Hoban 1994 Eckberg & Blocker 1996
	Slight negative effect, possibly misrepresented because replicating fundamentalism	Guth et al. 1995
	Negatively associated with attitudes Positively associated with behaviors	Wolkomir et al. 1997

the Bible is the “literal” word of God were less supportive of environmentalism than those who believed it was “inspired” by God, or simply a “valuable collection of stories.” Eckberg and Blocker (1989) saw this as support for Hand and Van Liere’s earlier assessment, as biblical literalism is often considered a characteristic of fundamentalism.

Responding to the growing body of research suggesting that biblical literalism (and therefore fundamentalism) negatively predicts support for environmentalism, Andrew Greeley (1993) used the 1988 GSS to propose a new theory. He tried to show that fundamentalism's lack of support for environmentalism was a result of its image of God rather than biblical literalism. He argued that after all, there are some liberal fundamentalists, like former Vice President, Al Gore for example. His research showed that support for the environment correlated with a more gracious image of God (as opposed to scary or harsh). Greeley argued that non-Christians, Catholics, and liberal protestants are more supportive of environmentalism while fundamentalists are less so, because of how they perceive God, not because of their degree of biblical literalism (1993). Greeley's work is often cited in reviews of research as a significant contribution to the conversation, though his theory does not seem to attract many followers.

Conrad L. Kanagy and Fern K. Willits' study was the first to distinguish between environmental attitudes and behaviors (1993). Their research also began to consider the many demographic variables that might be obstructing a clear analysis of the environmental attitudes and behaviors of religious people. Kanagy and Willits' research (1993) showed that the negative correlation between basic religious affiliation and environmental attitudes drops to insignificant when factoring in attendance and demographic variables. In their study, church attendance however, rather than general religious affiliation, does have a somewhat negative influence on their measure of environmental attitudes. The fact that church attendance was negatively correlated with environmental attitudes appears to lend more support to the White thesis. However, attitudes do not appear to be synonymous with behavior, and Kanagy and Willits' work (1993) showed that while attendance was negatively correlated with environmental attitude, it was actually positively associated with environmental behavior. Kanagy and Willits (1993) theorized that because environmental attitudes were measured using the New Environmental Paradigm, there may be alternative religious paradigms that effectively promote environmental behavior, for example, stewardship (Shaiko, 1987).

Therefore, perceived negative correlations between religiosity and environmental attitudes might be due to poorly designed research methods (Kanagy and Willits 1993).

Kanagy returned to this topic again in 1995, this time with the help of Hart M. Nelsen. They used a national sample and different survey questions to come to similar conclusions, most importantly that previous survey research on this topic may be asking the wrong questions, making religious people appear less environmentally inclined, when in practice they are indistinguishable from the mean.

Two of the most commonly cited studies were the collaborative efforts of James L. Guth, Lyman A. Kellstedt, John C. Green, and Corwin E. Smidt. Guth and Kellstedt published a study in 1993 that looked at the environmental attitudes of an enormous sample (nearly 5,000) of religious activists, lay and clergy, involved in different kinds of projects (none environmental) from all sides of the political spectrum (including Bread for the World, Evangelicals for Social Action, and Focus on the Family). They surveyed the activists to evaluate which types of Christianity were greener than others. Like many of the previous studies, Guth and Kellstedt (1993) concluded that theological fundamentalism versus liberalism is the strongest religious independent variable for predicting environmentalism. Evangelicals were the least environmental, protestants were somewhat greener, and Catholics the greenest. They theorized that fundamentalism correlates negatively with environmentalism because of dispensationalism, end-times ideology, and pessimism about the possibility of reform. They cited the infamous example of the former US Secretary of the Interior, James Watt, a fundamentalist Christian, who resisted attempts to strongly protect national resources in the long-term by telling Congress, "I do not know how many future generations we can count on before the Lord returns" (as quoted by Guth and Kellstedt, 1993) Interestingly however, they found that while fundamentalism was a strong independent variable, religious context is also important:

...specific denomination settings, the character of the local church, the direction of the pastoral leadership, and media preferences do influence respondents' attitudes on the environment, independent of their own

beliefs. For example, fundamentalists located in mainline denominations of liberal local churches, or whose pastor speaks frequently on 'liberal' issues have stronger environmental sympathies than those with identical doctrinal beliefs who are located in more 'fundamentalist' settings (Guth & Kellstedt, 1993).

Their finding is particularly pertinent to the research at hand as this study looks at the effects of clerical leadership on religious people's environmental beliefs and behavior.

Guth and Kellstedt joined with Green and Smidt to publish an even larger study in 1995, surveying clergy, political party contributors, and the mass public. The researchers found that "conservative eschatology, religious tradition, and religious commitment all have strong bivariate associations" with attitudes about environmental issues. However, conservative eschatology again proved to be the strongest predictor, while tradition and commitment measures may only be proxies for biblical literalism. One interesting finding in their study was an apparent split in the level of environmental concern between mainline clergy and mainline laity, with the clergy being greener than the laity (Guth et al, 1995). (Among evangelicals and Catholics, clergy and laity appeared more unified.) This finding is also foundational to my research, which seeks to further understand the potential clergy have to influence and motivate their congregants about environmental concerns.

Eric Woodrum and Thomas Hoban's research (1994) reconsidered the apparent environmental split between conservative and liberal Christianity. Their study shows that mastery-over-nature attitudes "may be more prevalent among conservative denominations because of the social characteristics of their congregations quite apart from theological issues." Indeed, though over 60% of the respondents in their North Carolina study believed in a biblically-authorized dominion over nature, this belief had no significant correlation with biblical literalism or environmental concern. Woodrum and Hoban's findings (1994) reinforce the importance of controlling for other demographic variables and for considering the possibility that alternative avenues (i.e. stewardship) to environmental concern might be more accessible to some religious

traditions. This echoes the work of Shaiko (1987) as well as Kanagy and Willits (1993). With these considerations, Woodrum and Hoban (1994) conclude that “conventionally religious individuals, like religious institutions, have not yet distinguished themselves conspicuously on environmental issues either positively or negatively.”

In 1996, Eckberg and Blocker returned to the scene, this time with the aid of the comprehensive 1993 GSS results on both environmental and religious variables. They argued that previous studies, including their own, were methodologically limited, because they had not been able to measure the right variables and relied upon too much generalizing. Now however, the 1993 GSS, with over 40 measures of environmental attitudes and actions and plenty of religious data as well, provided unprecedented opportunities. Their research both confirmed and challenged previous studies. Eckberg and Blocker (1996) found, like other studies, that “the more traditional or orthodox the belief, the less actively green one is likely to be.” However, in some parts of their analysis, individual variables like biblical literalism or belief in God, failed to have a direct effect on the environmental indexes, echoing the work of Woodrum and Hoban (1994), and that “common religiosity” as it has been defined in so many studies is “utterly unimportant in environmental issues.” To their surprise, their study also replicated the conclusions of Kanagy and Willits (1993) and showed that religious participation actually has a positive (though weak) effect on personal environmental behavior. Also, it appears that the “frequency of prayer positively predicts” environmental behaviors, like buying organic food and driving less (Eckberg and Blocker, 1996).

Woodrum and Hoban joined with Michelle Wolkomir and Michael Futreal to publish another article in 1997, this time specifically addressing the question of denominational subcultures with regards to religious responses to environmentalism. They confirmed “some denominational differences in dominion belief among Judeo-Christian denominations, . . . reinforc(ing) the assertion that different religious groups have varied scriptural interpretations,” but they argued that such differences in dominion

beliefs may not have much effect. Indeed, different denominational groups do not have significantly different levels of environmental concern or behavior, with the exception of Black Protestantism (Wolkomir *et al*, 1997). Their study reported findings similar to Kanagy and Willits (1993) showing that though religious salience was negatively correlated with environmental attitudes, it was positively correlated with environmental behavior. They concluded, like Kanagy and Willits (1993) and Woodrum and Hoban (1994) already had, that the difference in environmental attitudes and behaviors between denominations are more likely the result of other factors, demographic or perhaps other specific characteristics of the religious groups (Wolkomir *et al* 1997).

Most recently published is the study by Heather Hartwig Boyd (1999), which looked at the same 1993 GSS data that Eckberg and Blocker analyzed. Like several others before her, she concluded that, fundamentalist Christians are less supportive of environmentalism than non-fundamentalists, but that belief in God and/or church attendance does not predict less support for environmentalism. Likewise, biblical literalism does not predict less support for environmentalism than non-literalists (Boyd, 1999). Challenging Greeley (1993), she showed that respondents with a less-graceful image of God were not necessarily less supportive of environmentalism than those with a graceful image of God. Furthermore, to her surprise, Boyd's research supported Eckberg and Blocker's finding (1996) that frequent prayer is actually positively associated with more support for environmentalism. She summarized her results by saying that

weak and somewhat contradictory results indicate that Christian religious beliefs are not strongly linked to either support for the environment or lack of support for the environment... the results... do, however, call into question the idea embodied in the Lynn White thesis that Christian beliefs and behaviors are strong social influences that motivate the American public to degrade the natural environment (Boyd, 1999).

While a survey of these studies can appear confusing and contradictory, there are some overlapping themes that many of the authors seem to agree on. The following ideas coming from this body of research lay the foundation for my work:

- Judeo-Christianity is not necessarily any more anti-environmental than the general population, once other variables are taken into account (Boyd, 1999; Kanagy and Willits, 1993).
- There are denominational differences found between conservative and liberal religious denominations (Hand and Van Liere, 1984; Greeley, 1993; Boyd, 1999; Eckberg and Blocker, 1996; Guth and Kellstedt, 1993; and Guth *et al*, 1995).
- It is not clear what causes those differences, but it is probably not the result of level of belief in God, frequency of attendance, saliency of religion, or even biblical literalism (Eckberg and Blocker, 1996; Boyd, 1999; Woodrum and Hoban, 1994; and Guth *et al*, 1995). There appears to be some other factors causing that difference, which could be either demographic or theological (pre-millennialism and dispensationalism being possible) (Kanagy and Willits, 1993; Guth and Kellstedt, 1993; Woodrum and Hoban, 1994; and Wolkomir *et al*, 1997).
- Measuring environmental attitudes (more so than behaviors) is difficult, because religious populations may have different avenues for developing legitimate environmental concern than commonly identified environmental ethics. (Shaiko, 1987; Kanagy and Willits, 1993; Woodrum and Hoban, 1994; Kanagy and Nelsen, 1995; and Wolkomir *et al*, 1997).
- Context, including the local church atmosphere and leadership, appears to be important (Guth and Kellstedt, 1993).

The Effects of Clerical Leadership and other Lessons from Emerson and Smith

Michael O. Emerson and Christian Smith's book Divided By Faith (2000) describes the complex incongruity between evangelical Christianity's authentic desire for racial reconciliation and its inherent perpetuation of the black-white divide in the United States. Even though their study has nothing to do with the environment or FBE, there are many parallels, and Emerson and Smith's work provides an important foundation for this research.

First of all, their book addresses the role of religion and social change. They acknowledge that “religion’s initial and primary thrust is conservative.... by providing significance and purpose to life as it is, religion provides legitimization for the world as it is” (p. 17). However, they continue, “this view of religion is incomplete. Within the very forces able to render religion a legitimator of the world are revolutionary impulses able to change the world... Emboldened by the sacred, religion can be a powerful source for change” (p. 18). Citing historical racial examples such as abolition and the Civil Rights movement, Emerson and Smith argue that:

Religion can provide the moral force for people to determine that something about their world so excessively violates their moral standards that they must act to correct it. It also can provide the moral force necessary for sustained, focused, collective action to achieve the desired goal (p.18.)

Though Emerson and Smith were not referring to FBE, the preceding paragraph speaks to it perfectly. Religion does inherently have great potential as a source for social change. The authors cite a front-page story in the Wall Street Journal calling “evangelicals ‘the most energetic element of society addressing racial divisions.’” Likewise, similar articles have expressed enthusiasm for the role of religion in inspiring care for the environment.

Secondly however, like Shibley and Wiggins’ critique (1997) of the NRPE, Emerson and Smith question how much “the activities of commissions and nonbinding pronouncements of denominations ... tell us ... about the views of ordinary Christians. It is likely that the masses, when they thought about the issue, supported the status quo” (p. 44). And much like the majority of the 53,000 congregations that forgot about the materials sent by the NRPE (Shibley and Wiggins, 1997), Emerson and Smith’s work shows that there is a significant inconsistency between the official pronouncements of racial reconciliation from the church’s leadership and the racial attitudes of the “rank-and-file” membership.

There are three important lessons from Emerson and Smith's book that apply to this study: the impact of a theological tool-kit, clerical leadership, and a free market of religious ideas.

Emerson and Smith analyze the problem of evangelicals and the racial divide with the rational choice model developed by Rodney Stark and Roger Finke. The authors describe how freedom of religion and the expansion of the marketplace into all segments of life have created a "mega-mall of religious consumerism" in the United States. With the development of a religious marketplace, churches have become more "dependent on winning voluntary support" (2000, 139). Thus, while the marketplace model allows for greater religious diversity between groups, it also produces greater homogeneity within congregations. This is because as rational choice actors, "most people seek the greatest gain for the least cost" and "internally homogenous congregations more often provide what draws people to religious groups for a lower cost than do internally diverse congregations" (p. 145).

This combination of religious pluralism and homogeneous congregations has a tendency to weaken the collective prophetic voice (Emerson and Smith, 2000). Sociologist W.E.B. DuBois, recognized this problem in the 1930s. Speaking of the church's ability to confront the racial divide, he said. "It is mainly a social organization, pathetically timid and human; it is going to stand on the side of wealth and power; it is going to espouse any cause which is sufficiently popular, with eagerness" (as quoted by Emerson and Smith, 2000: 162). While DuBois was referring to the problem of racial inequality, the same argument could be made about many social problems. Though history proved him somewhat wrong when it came to the Civil Rights movement and contemporary news articles about FBE do likewise, Emerson and Smith acknowledge that he was largely correct. They explain:

A key function in most religions is to proclaim what ought to be, what is universally true, what is right and just. We may call this the prophetic voice. But the organization of American religion fragments this prophetic voice, even within the same religion, into thousands of different voices.

What are the effects of this? Ultimately, exactly what DuBois concluded (p. 163).

And while Emerson and Smith's work looks at the impact of these issues on the evangelical response to racial inequality, the theories of a religious marketplace, internal homogeneity and a splintered prophetic voice applies equally well to the potential effectiveness of FBE.

The weakening of the prophetic voice and the pull towards intra-congregational homogeneity that occurs in a free-choice religious marketplace lessens the potential of clerical leadership. Emerson and Smith describe this phenomenon:

...religious leaders must act within a limited range shaped by the social locations of their congregation. The congregation often looks to religion not as an external force that places radical demands on their lives, but rather as a way to fulfill their needs. ... (People in power) rarely come to church to have their social and economic positions altered. If we accept the oftentimes reasonable proposition that most people seek the greatest benefit for the least cost, they will seek meaning and belonging with the least change possible. Thus, if they can go to either the Church of Meaning and Belonging, or the Church of Sacrifice for Meaning and Belonging, most people choose the former. It provides benefit for less cost.... As a result, many religious leaders, even if they desire change are constrained. Unless their message is in the self-interest of the group, they must necessarily soften and deemphasize their prophetic voice in favor of meeting within-group needs (p. 164).

Emerson and Smith cite a study of clergy who had the opportunity to participate in civil rights marches in Chicago in 1965. The study showed overwhelmingly that whether or not the clergy participated in the marches and risked arrest was largely "independent of their own personal views" but determined instead by "their congregations' expectations" (p. 165). Jeffrey Hadden, author of the study, concluded that:

clergy have come to see the church as an institution for challenging (people) to new hopes and new visions of a better world. Laity on the other hand, are in large part committed to the view that the church should be a source of comfort for them in a troubled world. They are essentially consumers rather than producers of the church's love and concern for the

world, and the large majority deeply resent (the clergy's) efforts to remake the church (as quoted in Emerson and Smith, 2000: 166).

Emerson and Smith acknowledge that the hierarchical nature of some denominations like Catholicism and Methodism might give clergy more power. I would argue as well, that insomuch as a certain position aligns with congregants' own desires, they will not reject leadership that pushes them to sacrifice. The rational choice model does not negate the possibility of sacrifice if congregants believe the reward is sufficient. Emerson and Smith leave this loophole open in the following statement:

... within groups, religious leaders possess power and authority, to be sure, but only to the extent that they embody a group's concerns and hopes. They can to some extent shape the direction of the group, yet if they stray too far from the felt needs of the group, from comforting and uplifting the group members, their authority and power are weakened and may be rejected (p. 167).

This explains why some clergy are able to soapbox about the "evils of SUVs," while others might agree, but would not dare push their congregants on the topic. If a pastor is matched with a congregation that shares his perspective, there is far less risk in preaching a green gospel.

The last lesson from Emerson and Smith that is pertinent to this study is the notion of a theological tool kit. The authors build on the work of Ann Swindler who "argues that culture creates ways for individuals and groups to organize experiences and evaluate reality. It does so by providing a repertoire or 'tool kit' of ideas, habits, skills, and styles." Furthermore, "religion plays a key role in defining (Americans') cultural tool kit and which tools are functionally most important to them" (p.75,6). Emerson and Smith explain that these most-accessible tools limit how we understand and respond to society and problems. In the case of evangelicals and race relations, their tools of "accountable freewill individualism," "relationalism," and "antistructuralism" limit their ability to recognize the institutional basis of racial inequality (p. 76-80). This theory of a

religio-cultural tool kit may help explain the presence (or lack) of FBE in various congregations.

Indeed, one tool in the evangelical tool kit (the “miracle motif”), which Emerson and Smith identified as problematic for eliminating the racial divide, may also be relevant to the success or failure of FBE. The “miracle motif is the theologically rooted idea that as more individuals become Christians, social and personal problems will be solved automatically” (2000, 117). Emerson and Smith believe that it:

is a major hindrance to the fulfillment of Christian responsibility.... It directs the church to become so focused on evangelizing that new converts are taught that *Christian maturity consists of preparing for and actually evangelizing*, to the exclusion of taking on social responsibility (p. 131).

Even Oelschlaeger, in his treatise on the promise of FBE, acknowledges that “some conservative Christians... believe that nothing, including ecological education, will make a difference unless we let Jesus into our lives” (1994: 8). However, that is the only reference he makes to the challenge that the miracle motif poses for FBE.

Social Gospel and *Tikkun Olam*: Theological Tools Fostering Faith-Based Environmentalism

Emerson and Smith’s use of Swindler’s tool kit theory helps explain why certain types of religious beliefs promote or inhibit subsequent beliefs or values. Just as beliefs in *freewill individualism* and the miracle motif provide a framework for a spirituality that is not focused on repairing racial relations, it is possible to identify other core religious beliefs that promote, or alternatively, inhibit FBE. The Protestant tradition of social gospelism and a similar Jewish emphasis on *tikkun olam* appear to be two important theological tools that foster FBE. The following section will define and historically situate these religious tools and show how they connect to FBE.

According to Susan Curtis (1991), an important shift in Protestant thinking occurred in the late nineteenth century. Curtis describe this ideological sea-change with a

quotation from Walter Rauschenbusch, whom many identify as one of the prominent fathers of the Social Gospel:

Within our memory the fear of hell and the desire for bliss in heaven have strangely weakened, even with men who have no doubt of the reality of heaven and hell. On the other hand, the insistence on present holiness and Christian living has strengthened. Good men give less thought to their personal salvation than our fathers, but their sympathy for the sorrows of others is more poignant (as quoted by Curtis, 1991:102).

This new focus was a departure from the individualism of the Victorian era and a direct response to the negative side effects of “industrialization, massive immigration, and chaotic urban development” (Curtis, 1991: 3). Some protestant clergy began pushing Christians to see salvation in collective terms, as “conscious participation” and “the realization of the natural power of the soul” rather than an escape from original sin through individual faith (p. 218). The purpose of church shifted from a once-a-week ceremonial activity to a daily resource for community support providing assistance with food, clothing, childcare, medical needs and labor issues (p. 3). In addition to Rauschenbusch, Curtis’ book details the efforts of other prominent social gospelers like Washington Gladden, Mary Elizabeth McDowell, Bishop Francis John McConnell, and Edward Scribner Ames. These leaders were focused on a variety of different social issues, but the connecting thread was that “social gospelers considered their religious beliefs relevant to the world around them” (p. 276). As Bishop McConnell once said (decades before the phrase “What Would Jesus Do?” ever became popular), if He were alive today, “Christ would soon find his way to the offices’ of reformers ‘striving to give men better houses, more fresh air, more healthful shop and factory ventilation” (as quoted by Curtis, 1991: 172). Curtis declares that “Social gospelers seemed obsessed with abolishing disease and cleaning the environment.” In particular, McDowell dedicated her life to cleaning up garbage dumps and ensuring clean air and water for the poor (p. 140).

Interestingly, while the conservation and preservation traditions of Pinchot and Muir are commonly recognized as the origins of the modern environmental movement

(Dunlap and Mertig, 1992), feminist analysis credits the work of early women reformers such as McDowell, Jane Addams, and others as being “the founding mothers of environmentalism” (Wolf, 1994). And as the environmental movement has continued to expand into greater areas of concern, the social gospel movement has matched it. In his article, “Global Eco-Justice: The Church’s Mission in Urban Society,” Larry Rasmussen (2000) argues that Rauschenbusch’s “social question” is as pertinent today as it was a century ago. Rauschenbusch and other social gospelers challenged the corruption, filth, and inhumanity that accompanied industrialization and modernization. These problems continue to exist today, but “the social question has gone both global and urban” (2000, 519). Rasmussen continues:

The social question is essentially the social justice question. The ecological question is essentially the question of sustainability. They must now be addressed together as the global eco-justice question. ...global eco-justice – addressing the social and ecological questions together for the sake of comprehensive sustainability – is the proper frame for the church’s urban mission (p. 519/20).

While Rasmussen refers specifically to the social gospel, others allude to it. In Gabriel Daly’s article, “Foundations in Systematics for Ecological Thinking,” he links creation theology (and therefore FBE) with the World Council of Churches, ecumenism, solidarity with the poor, and justice. There are countless other theological articles that do the same. It is clear that some Christians are continuing to use the social gospel as a tool for developing FBE.

Although social gospelism was not confined to any particular denomination (Rauschenbusch was a Baptist after all), ranks of Protestantism can be defined by those who align with it and those who do not (Meyer, 1988: 37). It was powerful enough to create a schism among Protestants, with mainliners becoming social gospelers and fundamentalists defining themselves in opposition. For example, some evangelicals crusaded against the Federal Council of Churches (later the National Council of Churches, which is part of the NRPE), because of its strong association with social gospel

ideology (Meyer, 1988: 404; Carter, 1954: 53). These conservative evangelicals identified themselves as fundamentalists and responded to social gospelism with a theology based on pre-millennialism:

The social gospel turned American Protestantism's emphasis away from faith alone and toward human action – away from the individual sins of the heart and toward the social sins of the world.... But to a core of conservative evangelicals, it seemed to denigrate individual salvation and make human institutions as a substitute for the Kingdom of God.... Pre-millennialism's lessons were diametrically opposed to the social gospel's. If human institutions were doomed, social change was useless. What mattered instead was saving as many souls as possible (Beinart, 1999: 24).

Furthermore, the pre-millennialist focus on end-times that characterizes fundamentalism largely prevents the development of environmental theology and ethics (Cowdin, 1994).

It is clear that social gospelism is a theological tool that encourages FBE among Protestants, while the alternative, fundamentalism/pre-millennialism inhibits it. A similar theological tool in Judaism is the concept of *tikkun olam*. Though it has undergone significant transformations since then, the original emergence of *tikkun olam* ideology is commonly traced to Isaac Luria, the sixteenth century kabbalist (Fine, 1989). There are many versions of Luria's teaching, but most scholars agree on the following elements. First, God contracts inward and creates empty space. Then, God poured God's essence into vessels of light in this created space. Some of the vessels were unable to contain such light, and they shattered. While most of the divine light returned to its source, some sparks of light remained trapped within the broken shards of the vessels. *Tikkun* is the process of restoration and repair (Fine, 1989).

Interpretations of this story vary widely. Some argue that the notion of *tikkun* only refers to the spiritual repair of the Jewish community through proper observance of laws and rituals. Lawrence Fine (1989) argues that the original Lurianic myth is blatantly otherworldly and not a model for social activism in the way that he believes Lawrence Kushner, Michael Learner and others use *tikkun olam*, because Kabbala views the material world as evil and dualistically separated from the spiritual realm. Others

however, like Arthur Waskow (1985, 1995, 2002) and Arthur Green, use *tikkun olam* to refer as Green says, to “the betterment of the world, including the relief of human suffering, the achievement of peace and mutual respect among peoples, and the protection of the planet itself from destruction” (as quoted by Arnold Wolf, 2001). This contemporary application of *tikkun olam* can be traced back to the “social action legacy of the 1960s, which harnessed the activism of that period to the ethical imperatives of the Jewish tradition” (Lee, 1990). Though some scholars like Fine (1989) argue that the contemporary notion of *tikkun olam* is inaccurately attributed to Luria, most (even Fine) would argue that this modern concept is also inherently Jewish. Unlike the schism between social gospellers and fundamentalists, most Jewish scholars believe that in “Judaism, such a bifurcation of spiritual and sociopolitical concerns is hardly possible” (Green as quoted by Wolf, 2001). As such, whether it can be attributed to Luria or not, the contemporary ideology of *tikkun olam* is the Jewish recognition “of the seamless oneness of the realm of the spiritual and the realm of moral action on the interpersonal and social levels” (Bronstein, 2000). Like the social gospel, *tikkun olam* is not limited to environmental endeavors, but refers to many different social justice issues. Likewise, while not all Jewish environmental writing necessarily uses the term *tikkun olam*, it nevertheless provides the legitimization for linking Judaism with more than just spiritual concerns. One has to look no further than the *Aleynu* prayer which closes worship services in the synagogue. One common Reconstructionist version is as follows:

It is up to us to hallow Creation, to respond to Life with the fullness of our lives. It is up to us to meet the World, to embrace the Whole even as we wrestle with its parts. It is up to us to repair the World and to bind our lives to Truth. Therefore we bend the knee and shake off the stiffness that keeps us from the subtle graces of Life and the supple gestures of Love. With reverence and thanksgiving we accept our destiny and set for ourselves the task of redemption (written by Rami M Shapiro, as found in the Kol Haneshamah prayer book, 1994).

A poem by Judy Chicago that accompanies the *Aleynu* in the same prayer book speaks in even clearer language:

And then all that had divided us will merge
 And then compassion will be wedded to power
 And then softness will come to a world that is harsh and unkind
 And then both men and women will be gentle
 And then both women and men will be strong
 And then no person will be subject to another's will
 And then all will be rich and free and varied
 And then the greed of some will give way to the needs of many
 And then all will share equally in the Earth's abundance
 And then all will care for the sick and the weak and the old
 And then all will nourish the young
 And then all will cherish life's creatures
 And then all will live in harmony with each other and the Earth
 And then everywhere will be called Eden once again (1994).

Honoring the *tikkun olam* mandate is nothing new for American Jews. A national survey on Jews and social justice found that "75 percent of Jews agree with the statement that 'social justice commitment is at the heart of Judaism,' and 47 percent of Jews consider commitment to social equality 'most important' to their 'Jewish identity'" (Jacobs, 2002). Arthur Goren's book, The Politics and Public Culture of American Jews, makes the argument that "since Judaism as interpreted by the American rabbi taught its followers to seek social justice, being Jewish in America meant fighting for open housing and fair employment practices, for social welfare and pro-union legislation..." (1999: 193). Goren's litany of Jewish social concerns parallels the Protestant social gospel perfectly. Indeed, he links the work of the American Jewish Congress and rabbinical councils to the Federal Council of Churches, which establishes a congruency between *tikkun olam* and social gospel, even if Goren does not use those precise terms. Jerome Chanes (1996) does however. His article on "Public Policy and *Tikkun Olam*," identifies Jewish involvement with the National Religious Partnership on the Environment as an example of *tikkun olam*. Additionally, in Hava Tirosh-Samuelsan's "Introduction" to Judaism and Ecology (2002), she clearly places Jewish environmental concern within the tradition of *tikkun olam* when she writes, "If Jews stand in covenantal relationship, and are called to mend the world, Jews cannot ignore ecological matters in the name of more pressing

social issues. To protect God's world from further abuse by humans is a Jewish moral obligation" (2002: lviii).

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

The existing body of literature relating to religion and environmental concerns, as reviewed in the previous chapter, indicates that there is no significant anti-environmental effect of basic religiosity. To the contrary, evidence of faith-based environmental work abounds, both at local and national/international levels. However, such enthusiasm for environmental issues has far from taken over every pulpit, and while some congregations may be very actively organized around environmental concerns, others do not appear to consider it as part of their mission at all. The goal of this research is to better understand what variables foster faith-based environmentalism (FBE) at the congregational level. More specifically, what theological tools, organizational preconditions, and clerical efforts correlate with shifts in congregational environmental consciousness? The following chapter describes the methods used for this research, by locating the study, identifying the choice of congregations, and describing the quantitative and qualitative techniques used to evaluate the hypotheses.

Locating the Research: Eugene-Springfield, Oregon

To explore this question, I have worked with four congregations in the Eugene-Springfield area to better understand clergy and congregants' understanding of religiosity, perception of environmental issues, and what connections (if any) people are making between their religious faith and environmental concerns. Working in the Eugene-Springfield area presents some unique qualities for case-study research. The two adjoining towns are separated physically by I-5 and ideologically by their evolutionary trajectories. Both towns were historically timber communities, and despite the major decline of the Northwest timber industry in the past couple of decades, both Eugene and Springfield's characters are still shaped by those roots. However, in the last several decades, Eugene, Oregon has developed a reputation for its liberal, hippie,

environmentalist atmosphere that is known around the entire country. While in reality, Eugene is actually far more ideologically diverse than this, the ever-present stereotype of the “green-bubble” of Eugene is based in some truth. On the other side of I-5, Springfield has stayed truer to its timber-town roots. Locating the research in the Eugene-Springfield area provides the study with good ideological diversity which can help illuminate differences between the congregations and congregants. Secondly, the reality of the “green” stereotype of Eugene qualifies this study as an extreme case. Even if some of the results from the study are not replicable in other towns, studying an extreme case provides an opportunity to clearly identify key factors, which would not be as easy to uncover in a more diffuse study. For example, with Oregon being the most “unchurched” state in the country, people that participate in a religious organization here must be doing so for more reasons than just satisfying cultural expectations.

Choosing the congregations

The four participating institutions, representing a diverse cross-section of faith communities, included a Reconstructionist Jewish synagogue, a United Methodist church, a Nondenominational Christian fellowship, and a Southern Baptist congregation. As illustrated in table 3.1, the four communities create an effective research matrix for evaluating theological liberalism and conservatism as well as the effects of a revival versus stable congregation on the presence (or lack) of religious environmental efforts. Revival in this sense refers to a congregation that is growing rapidly.

Table 3.1 Cross-Section of Participating Congregations

	Revivalist	Non-revivalist
Theologically liberal	Reconstructionist Synagogue	United Methodist Church
Theologically conservative	Nondenominational Church	Southern Baptist Church

To ensure that the study looked at some congregations where a FBE focus existed, I choose two communities that had participated in the Cool Congregations event that I attended in November 2001. Both the United Methodist church, and the

Reconstructionist synagogue had been involved in the event and were willing to participate when they were approached. The United Methodist church, both the local congregation that I worked with, and the denomination as a whole, is seen as theologically liberal, and a mainline protestant congregation. Robert Wuthnow and John Evans say that the United Methodist church accounts for one-third of all mainline membership. Among other factors, they distinguish mainliners from other Protestants by their lack of Biblical literalism, their encouragement of reason and personal experiences in interpreting the Bible and church teachings, and their tolerance for the “idea that truth can be found in other religions” (Wuthnow and Evans, 2002: 9). Likewise, Reconstructionist Judaism is considered liberal Judaism (Goren, 1999). The main difference (for the purposes of this study) between the Reconstructionist synagogue and the United Methodist church, aside from the obvious difference that one is Jewish and the other Christian, is that one of the congregations is revivalist and the other is not. Reconstructionist Judaism, dating back to Mordecai Kaplan’s work in the 1930s is growing rapidly (JRF, 2004). More specifically, the particular synagogue that I worked with has been undergoing a significant demographic transition. The synagogue is one of the fastest growing congregations in town. Though exact numbers were not available, the staff estimated that the community had more than doubled in the last decade, to a total of nearly 400 households currently. On the other hand, the United Methodists have continued to lose membership nationally since the 1960s (Wuthnow and Evans, 2002: 8), and like other mainline protestant denominations, is shrinking as a proportion of the overall protestant constituency. This particular United Methodist church is holding steady at about 500 households. Comparing the Reconstructionist synagogue and the United Methodist church helps disprove one potential null-hypothesis that FBE is an outcome of revivalist or non-revivalist congregations. The other two congregations used in this study are both theologically conservative, though one is revivalist and the other is not. Southern Baptists as a denomination are theologically conservative (Ammerman, 2002), and this particular congregation was representative of the denomination. The church is not a revivalist congregation however. They maintain a Sunday morning

attendance of about 175 people each week. So the Baptist church made for a good comparison with the theologically liberal Methodist congregation. Lastly, the Nondenominational fellowship is both theologically conservative and revivalist. The rapidly-growing congregation is only 5 years old and has blossomed from a small Bible Study with just a handful of people to a vibrant 500+ person community, complete with its own church building now. Further descriptions of the four congregations will be in the analysis chapters.

Quantitative Research

This study builds off the small body of literature regarding quantitatively-focused attitudinal studies on religious and environmental beliefs. Looking at the topic quantitatively allows me to place my findings within the existing conversation, by comparing my findings with previous studies and adding to the discourse. The following section will explain how the quantitative work was designed, conducted, and analyzed.

The quantitative work of this study was largely centered on a survey that was conducted with the four participating congregations. The survey was designed to be short and answerable by worshipers directly after a service. Only two pages, just 21 questions, the survey attempted to identify levels of religiosity, beliefs about the role of religion in society, beliefs about the environment, levels of environmental behavior and some basic demographical markers (age, gender, level of education). (See Appendix A for the actual survey.) Surveying the congregations provided a big-picture, macro-view of the underlying sentiments and aims of the congregation and provided a validity check against the qualitative interview work.

Given that many of the articles on this topic have used data from the General Social Survey (GSS) for their research, I also looked to the GSS for help in developing the survey used for this research. Of the 18 topic-specific questions, 12 come directly from the GSS. Tables 3.2 and 3.3 show which questions came from the GSS and which were created specifically for this research project. Using questions from the GSS also

ensured greater reliability in the study. Earl Babbie's text, The Practice of Social Research, says that using "measures that have proven their reliability in previous research" is an effective way to ensure reliability.

Table 3.2 Questions from the General Social Survey (GSS) used in this study

Mnemonic*	Questions from the General Social Survey
RELPERSN (relpersn)	1. To what extent do you consider yourself a religious person? Are you . . . <i>very religious/moderately religious/slightly religious/not religious at all</i>
ATTEND (atfnd)	2.) How often do you attend religious services? ... <i>never / less than once a year / about once or twice a year / several times a year / about once a month / 2-3 times a month / nearly every week / more than once a week</i>
CHURHACT (activ)	3.) Do you take part in any of the activities or organizations of your church/synagogue other than attending service? ... <i>No / yes (if yes, what?)</i>
DECBIBL (bibldec)	4.) How important is the Bible/Torah in helping you to make decisions about your life... <i>very important / important / somewhat important / not very important / not important at all</i>
DECCHURH (churdec)	5.) How important are the teachings of your church/synagogue in helping you to make decisions about your life... <i>very important / important / somewhat important / not very important / not important at all</i>
RELLIFE (bellife)	6.) How much do you agree or disagree with the following: I try hard to carry my religious beliefs over into all my other dealings in life.... <i>strongly agree / agree / neither agree or disagree / disagree / strongly disagree</i>
CLERGVTE (relvote)	8.) How much do you agree or disagree with the following: Religious leaders should not try to influence how people vote in elections.... <i>strongly agree / agree / neither agree or disagree / disagree / strongly disagree</i>
CLERGGOV (relgov)	10.) How much do you agree or disagree with the following: Religious leaders should not try to influence government decisions.... <i>strongly agree / agree / neither agree or disagree / disagree / strongly disagree</i>
CHURHPOW (relpowr)	11.) Do you think that religious organizations in this country have too much power or too little power? ... <i>far too much power / too much power / about the right amount of power / too little power / far too little power</i>
RECYCLE (recycl)	13.) How often do you make a special effort to sort glass or cans or plastic or papers and so on for recycling? ... <i>always / often / sometimes / never</i>
CHEMFREE (organc)	14.) How often do you make a special effort to buy food grown without pesticides or chemicals? ... <i>always / often / sometimes / never</i>
DRIVLESS (drivless)	15.) How often do you cut back on driving a car for environmental reasons? ... <i>always / often / sometimes / never</i>

* GSS Mnemonics are in all capitalized, mnemonics used in this study are in lowercase.

However, six of the questions on the survey did not have tested reliability.

Question 9 (relcons) was written to mirror the CLERGVTE question from the GSS (question 8). Question 12 was intended to replace the Likert-scale IHLPGRN question

Table 3.3 Other Questions Used in this Study

Mnemonic	New Questions
scgstkol	7.) Circle the phrase that you feel best completes this statement: A religious person should concentrate on... <i>bringing people closer to God and God's plan / improving the society we live in now.</i>
relcons	9.) How much do you agree or disagree with the following: Religious leaders should not try to influence people's day-to-day consumer and lifestyle choices (like the kind of food we buy, the cars we drive, etc.) <i>strongly agree / agree / neither agree or disagree / disagree / strongly disagree</i>
thnkenvr	12.) How often do you think about environmental issues (like pollution, global climate change, endangered species, waste, resource use, etc.)? ... <i>all the time / often / sometimes / not very often / never</i>
creation	16.) Circle the statement that most closely matches your perspective. ... <i>God created the world for us to use as we see fit. / God commanded us to care for and protect the world.</i>
envrelig	17.) Circle the statement that most closely matches your perspective. ... <i>Environmental issues are religious matters. / Environmental issues are not religious matters.</i>
orgs	18.) Are you familiar with any of the following organizations? Circle Y (yes) or N (no). ... <i>Christian Environmental Council (CEC), The Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life (COEJL), Evangelical Environmental Network (EEN), Interfaith Council for Environmental Stewardship (ICES), Interfaith Network for Earth Concern (INEC), Interfaith Climate Change Campaign/Network, The North American Coalition for Christianity and Ecology (NACCE), The North American Coalition on Religion and Ecology (NACRE), National Religious Partnership for the Environment (NRPE), Northwest Jewish Environmental Project (NJEP), Oregon Interfaith Power and Light, Religious Campaign for Forest Conservation</i>
Mnemonic	Demographic Questions
gendr	19.) What is your gender? ... <i>male / female</i>
age	20.) How old are you? ... <i>10-19 / 20-29 / 30-39 / 40-49 / 50-59 / 60-69 / 70-79 / 80+</i>
educ	21.) What is the highest level of education you've completed? ... <i>some high school / high school / some college / bachelor's degree / graduate degree</i>

from the GSS which reads as follows: "How much do you agree or disagree with the following: I do what is right for the environment, even when it costs more money or takes up more time." I argue that the IHLPGRN question is a less valid measure of people's level of environmental concern because the question sets people up to answer positively with the phrase "I do what is right...." Regardless of people's feelings about the environment or their level of commitment, people do not want to have to answer that they "don't do what is right." There is not a suitable question from the GSS which tries to assess how focused on environmental issues people are, so this survey used the question, "How often do you think about environmental issues (like pollution, global

climate change, endangered species, waste, resource use, etc.)?” Likewise, there are no questions from the GSS that deal with social gospel or *tikkun olam* theology, beliefs about one’s responsibility toward creation, or whether or not environmental issues are religious matters. Lastly, measuring people’s familiarity with the interdenominational organizations like the National Religious Partnership for the Environment, was a task specific to this research, so clearly there was no question that had been previously designed for that.

To ensure the best possible validity in my study, the data from the surveys was triangulated with the information acquired from the in-depth interviews and previous research on the topic. Davidson and Layder suggest that triangulation has “become accepted means of ensuring validity” (1994: 53).

The in-depth interviews showed that the survey questions were for the most part valid, with the glaring exception of question number one, RELPRSN, which asks, “to what extent do you consider yourself a religious person? Are you... very religious, moderately religious, slightly religious, or not religious at all?” My suspicions about this question were formed early on, while looking over the returned surveys. Respondents of all four congregations struggled with this question, but in particular, participants at Nondenominational and Southern Baptist churches, disliked it intensely, and had no qualms about telling me so, both in person as they handed back the surveys and in writing on the surveys. Overwhelmingly, people in those two congregations viewed being religious as following certain religious rules, rituals, dogma, and practices. They viewed their faith as something distinctly different from being religious, which almost had a negative connotation among them. Rather than being religious, which to them implied mindless obedience to meaningless rituals consistent with a Catholic or Muslim faith (their belief, not mine), they saw themselves as not religious, but as “followers of Christ.” Sonya, a young woman from the Nondenominational church explains:

Religion refers to things that you do, like practices. I guess religion refers to me to practices like for Muslims, you need to pray five times a day towards Mecca, with your hands this far apart, with your fingers this far apart, with your nose this far from the ground, all that kind of stuff, when

for Christianity, it's not anything about how we look or what we do, it's just about having a relationship with God.

It was not uncommon in the surveys to find people who marked slightly or not religious at all, who also indicated that they came to church weekly or even more often, were involved in various Christian activities, valued the Bible in making decisions, and tried hard to carry their religious beliefs over into other dealings in life. Many of these respondents scratched out the word religious and substituted spiritual instead. Based on the large number of responses like this, I determined that RELPRSN was an inadequate measure of a person's religiosity and did not use it in further analysis.

Distributing the surveys required the special restrictions and desires of each congregation needed to be taken into consideration. The first congregation surveyed was the United Methodist Church. The Associate Pastor, Tom, and a member of the Creation Care committee proposed the opportunity to participate in the study to the board, and it was accepted. I attended both Sunday morning services on a prescheduled day, was introduced during the announcements in which one of the lay leaders from the congregation explained what I was doing and encouraged people to assist by filling out a survey after the service. At the conclusion of each of the services, I stood with the surveys at the back of the sanctuary and tried to persuade as many people as possible to take one and fill it out. Ninety-seven surveys were returned that Sunday, out of approximately 350 in attendance (not counting youth). It appeared, based on how they handed back the surveys and the answers to the gender question as well, that many couples filled out the surveys together. To increase the sample size, I attended two more Sunday morning services about a month later. The second visit was a busy day at the church. They were hosting their yearly "All Out Sunday," which is an opportunity for the various committees and organizations within their church to promote their projects and try to recruit more volunteers. In addition to observing the event, with so many people milling around between services, it was a good opportunity for me to increase my sample size by having more people fill out surveys. Twenty more surveys were added to the sample that Sunday. The second visit produced a much smaller number of surveys

than the first visit because nearly everyone that I tried to hand a survey to had already filled one out the previous month. There are approximately 500 households that are members of the church, so 117 surveys provides reasonable confidence in the ability of the responses to reliably describe the congregation. The fact that so many people that filled one out the first visit were also there the second time, also showed that the survey had reasonably captured the core congregation.

The second congregation surveyed was the Nondenominational Church. Pastor Dave felt that it would be more appropriate to conduct the surveys during a Wednesday evening Bible Study, which he said usually have 60-100 people in attendance. The meeting was more like a worship service than a Bible Study, with people seated in rows facing the pulpit, singing, prayer, and a short talk by a lay leader on the Bible selection of the evening. I participated with the congregants and then Pastor Dave introduced me during announcements near the end of the meeting. He and a few other helpers distributed all of the surveys to people in their seats and he requested them to take five minutes to fill them out before leaving. The request from the mouth of a charismatic pastor holds a lot of weight, and 44 out of 47 people in attendance returned their surveys. Although there was a significantly smaller number of congregants participating that evening than expected, their surveys showed they were all very regular attendees and that they were highly involved in the church. Therefore the responses from the Nondenominational church also paint an accurate picture of the character of their congregation.

The Southern Baptist church was the third congregation to survey. As with the United Methodist church, I attended a Sunday morning worship service on a prearranged day approved by the pastor and the church board. Like the Nondenominational church, the minister himself introduced me, had me tell about the project, and then requested the ushers to distribute the surveys to everyone in the pews. Many people were slyly working on their surveys during the worship service. Others did it after the service, but the help from the pastor and the ushers produced a response rate of 78 out of approximately 125 (not including youth) in attendance that morning. Although the

congregation does not have official membership numbers, a Sunday morning attendance of 125 is normal.

The Reconstructionist Synagogue proved to be the most challenging to survey. Although the rabbis and the congregants were enthusiastic, what was a relatively simple task with the three Protestant congregations had an added level of complication with the Jewish congregation. Like the churches, the best time to reach the most people at the synagogue is during a worship service. There are two main weekly worship services at the synagogue, one Friday night, and the other Saturday morning, both on *Shabbat*, as the Jewish Sabbath starts at sunset on Friday night and lasts until sunset on Saturday. Jewish law sanctifies *Shabbat* by prohibiting many normal activities during that time. Work is prohibited, including writing and even carrying things. Given this, it was not possible to distribute surveys or to ask people to fill them out during this sacred time. It also did not seem consistent with the methodology to mail surveys to the membership list. The core participants in synagogue life are a smaller percentage of the actual membership than in the other congregations. Responses from the membership in general (as opposed to the frequently participating members) would not have been consistent with the results of the survey from the other three congregations. Therefore, rather than mailing surveys, I worked with the synagogue staff and lay leaders to distribute the surveys at a series of other events over the course of a couple of weeks. Surveys were given to attendees of several adult Hebrew and Jewish education classes, committee meetings, Yiddish club, and a community *seder* on the second night of Passover, and 82 surveys were returned. The community *seder* posed some of the same challenges that a membership mailing would have, in that many people attending the *seder* are otherwise infrequent attendees at the synagogue.

Using SPSS I worked with the data to search for themes in understanding the personalities of each of the congregations and what factors contribute to the faith-based environmental concern that is present in both the Reconstructionist synagogue and the United Methodist church. This was done by looking at crosstabs, frequencies and distributions, and linear and logistical regression outputs. (The Likert-scale questions

were collapsed into dichotomous variables for use in logistic regressions.) These findings will be described in detail in the following chapter.

Qualitative Research

The qualitative component of my research included observation and participation experiences and in-depth, semi-structured interviews. I had multiple opportunities to observe and participate at each of the congregations while attending the worship services or other events where I distributed surveys. Being in the various buildings also gave me time to explore each of the settings, learning quite a bit about the goals and philosophies of the different institutions by looking at the different posters on the walls, announcements for activities, and literature available in the libraries. To supplement these observations, I also learned about the theological and institutional priorities of the different communities by examining outside literature about the denominations, both given to me by clergy and discovered on my own.

In addition to observing the social setting of all four communities, I also participated in committee meetings with two of the congregations. Both the United Methodist church and the Reconstructionist synagogue have active faith-based environmental committees. I attended three gatherings of the United Methodist's *Creation Care Action Group*, and approximately a dozen meetings and events of the Reconstructionist synagogue's *K'vod Hateva* (Honoring Nature) committee over the course of a year. Working with the two groups gave me a greater understanding of their aims and understanding.

The bulk of the qualitative data however was acquired through in-depth interviews with clergy and laity from each of the congregations. I completed 18 semi-structured interviews, lasting on average approximately 90 minutes. The questions that I used as a guide for the interviews are in Appendix B. In addition to questions specific to the interview, each of the interviewees was given the survey again, but asked to treat the

questions as open-ended, rather than circling one-word answers. This exercise helped me make sense of the survey data from each congregation.

Wanting to get a broad representation of each congregation, I chose potential interviewees by looking at the surveys where people had volunteered to include their name as someone willing to participate in an interview. From the pool of willing interviewees, I attempted to pick three lay people who represented as diverse as possible a spectrum of opinion from each group. Using the questions from the survey, I grouped people from each congregation into a few different categories (not necessarily accurately representative of the real make-up of the congregations) and interviewed one person from each of the categories. Choosing diverse interviewees from within each congregation made the work of analysis more challenging, but also more accurate. Rather than picking three people that I predicted would all represent the stereotype I had about the institution, I wanted the interviews to provide a complex representation of each community as a place with competing ideas and desires.

For example, from the two congregations that featured faith-based environmental committees, it was important to talk to people who were involved in these efforts, as well as those who were not. Likewise, some interviewees had answered that “environmental issues **are** religious matters” while others had said they “**are not** religious matters” (question 17). From the United Methodist church, I interviewed Associate Pastor Tom, Rose, Candice, and Norman. (All interviewees in the study are identified by pseudonyms.) Both the Head Rabbi and the Assistant Rabbi at the Reconstructionist synagogue were very closely identified with the environmental activity at the temple, and so both Head Rabbi Yehuda and Assistant Rabbi Chaim Vered were interviewed (they chose their own pseudonyms), in addition to lay members, Ralph, Miriam, and Jaime.

From the two congregations where there was no evidence of faith-based environmental concern present, the willing interviewees were divided into two camps, based on question 17 (environmental issues are or are not religious matters). Other questions considered include how often people thought about the environment (question 12) and what people believed about God’s creation (question 16). Interviews at the

Southern Baptist church included Pastor Jim, and three members of the laity, Carmelle, Amanda, and Dan. Pastor Dave, Anne, Sonya, Ruth, and Paul were interviewed from the Nondenominational church. This last church had four lay interviews because the interview with Anne had to be thrown out on account of not being a valid representation of the community. (Although Anne does attend the Nondenominational church, she is planning on converting to Judaism, no longer considers herself a Christian, and was only continuing to attend for her last few months in town so that she could challenge the ideas of the pastor and her friends at the church, which she is philosophically and theologically at odds with.)

The 18 interviews were transcribed, read, and reread. More than 200 pages of material was compiled. Using the original interview questions, I started grouping answers by themes. These themes of faith versus works, personal relationships, care for creation, role of the Bible or Torah in respondents lives, and the goals and definitions of religiosity helped distill the interviewees into four new categories. Organizing the interviewees into categories highlights the role of institutional leadership and a social gospel/*tikkun olam* orientation in responding to environmental issues. More detailed description of the interviews will be in chapter five.

CHAPTER FOUR

QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

The quantitative work of this study has three objectives: to provide further description of the four congregations that I studied, to show how they are consistent with the previous research presented in the literature review, and to help determine the variables that correlate with FBE. The following analysis corroborates the work discussed in the literature review in two important ways. First of all, religion is not inherently anti-environmental. Secondly, there are distinct differences between religious groups in their level of environmental concern and commitment. The first two parts of this chapter describe the congregations that were studied and demonstrate how the data from this study confirm these findings and others presented in the literature review. The remainder seeks to answer the question specific to this study; what variables encourage the presence of FBE? Why is faith-based environmental activity present in some congregations, yet not in others? Quantitative analysis reveals key themes that help to answer this question in addition to directing the qualitative analysis discussed in the next chapter.

Altogether, 321 individuals were surveyed in this study, 117 from the United Methodist church, 78 from the Southern Baptist congregation, 44 from the Nondenominational fellowship, and 82 from the Reconstructionist synagogue. As discussed in the previous chapter, the number of surveys from each community represents a decent sample of their congregations.

Congregational Demographics

The four congregations surveyed in this study are quite unique from each other for the most part, and the following demographical information gathered from the survey helps to demonstrate that. The exception is the slight gender imbalance of respondents which was replicated in each of the congregations. There was approximately a 40-60

split between male and female respondents in each of the communities (see table 4.1). The same gender distribution in each of the congregations rules out the possibility that gender is a key variable predicting the FBE.

Table 4.1 - Gender distribution of respondents in four congregations (by percent)

	United Methodist	Southern Baptist	Non-Denominational	Reconstructionist Synagogue	total population
male	40	41	41	44	41
female	60	59	59	56	59
total %	100	100	100	100	100
N=	110	69	41	69	300

With the exception of the Nondenominational church, the congregations were mostly middle-aged with most respondents being in their 40s and 50s (see table 4.2). The Nondenominational church was a particularly young congregation. Most of the attendees were in their 20s. Many of them were college students. The few slightly older folks in attendance appeared to be in a leadership role.

Table 4.2 Age distribution of respondents in four congregations (by percent)

	United Methodist	Southern Baptist	Non-Denominational	Reconstructionist Synagogue	total population
10-19	2	3	7	1	3
20-29	3	1	66	4	11
30-39	7	13	15	14	11
40-49	22	19	2	30	21
50-59	28	17	10	35	25
60-69	14	23	-	5	12
70-79	16	12	-	7	11
80+	8	12	-	5	7
total %	100	100	100	101	101
N=	110	69	41	81	301

There was a marked difference in educational background between the theologically liberal and theologically conservative congregations. Half of the respondents from the United Methodist church and the Reconstructionist synagogue had graduate degrees. Over 80 percent of them had a minimum of a four-year degree. In contrast, 83 percent of the Southern Baptists and 66 percent of the Non-Denomination congregants had less than a bachelor's degree (see table 4.3).

Table 4.3 Educational background of congregations (by percent)

	United Methodist	Southern Baptist	Non-Denominational	Reconstructionist Synagogue	total population
some high school	1	10	-	-	3
high school	5	28	12	-	10
some college	14	45	54	16	27
bachelors	30	4	27	33	24
graduate degree	51	13	7	51	36
total %	101	100	100	100	100
N=	111	71	41	81	304

Given the short nature of the survey and the fact that I was collecting them by hand, I chose not to inquire about people's socio-economic status. However, I gathered from casual observation during the worship services that like the educational disparity between the congregations, the United Methodist church and the Reconstructionist synagogue were middle class and the Southern Baptist church was working class. It was less clear with the Nondenominational fellowship, partly because of their young age.

Congregational Personalities and Beliefs

The survey data can be used to describe the religiosity of the four congregations in terms of level of activity, role of the Bible and congregational leadership, and beliefs about religious identity. It can also be used to describe their level of environmental commitment. Painting a broad picture of each of the communities lays the groundwork for further analysis of which factors do or do not contribute to FBE.

Table 4.4 Attendance of respondents in four congregations (by percent)

	United Methodist	Southern Baptist	Non- Denominational	Reconstructionist Synagogue	total population
More than once a week	15	50	89	10	32
Nearly every week	63	38	5	18	38
2-3 times a month	17	11	5	12	13
About once a month	2	-	-	18	5
Less than once a month	4	1	2	42	13
total %	101	100	101	100	101
N=	117	76	44	83	320

Common sense would suggest that most of the people surveyed would be people that attend religious services frequently, and that was definitely the case for the three churches. Table 4.4 shows that between 95 and 99 percent of the Christian respondents report coming to religious services at least multiple times a month. The Jewish respondents are an exception, with only 40 percent. This reflects the different methodology used with that congregation, since it was not feasible to distribute the survey during the weekly *Shabbat* service. Similarly, most respondents in all four congregations were active members, meaning that they "took part in ... activities or organizations of (their congregation) other than attending service." More than 90 percent of the Methodists and approximately 70 percent of the respondents from the other three communities considered themselves active as such.

Looking at crosstabs of the proportion of congregants who rely on the Bible/Torah or the teachings of their institution to help them make decisions shows major differences between the congregations (tables 4.5 and 4.6). As one might expect, the Southern Baptist and Nondenominational churches ascribe greater importance to the Bible. A chi-square test shows that the difference between congregations is significant. (To satisfy the goodness of fit rule, the five point Likert-scale was collapsed into four categories.) Likewise, the two conservative churches also place greater value on their church's teachings in their daily life. A chi-square test shows this difference is also significant. However, just because the Reconstructionist synagogue and the United

Methodist church place less value on the church's teachings, does not mean that they find them wholly unimportant. Indeed, nearly all (96 percent) of the Methodists believe that their church's teachings are somewhat to very important, as do 73 percent of the Reconstructionists.

Table 4.5 Importance of Bible/Torah* to respondents (by percent)

	United Methodist	Southern Baptist	Non-Denominational	Reconstructionist Synagogue	total population
very important	18	71	84	10	38
important	40	27	9	19	27
somewhat	28	-	2	32	19
not very/not at all	15	1	5	40	17
total %	101	99	100	101	101
N=	114	77	44	81	316

* Based on the question, "How important is the Bible/Torah in helping you to make decisions about your life?"

Pearson Chi-Square test shows a .000 p value with 9df and Chi of 165.5

Table 4.6 Importance of Church/Synagogue's Teachings* to respondents (by percent)

	United Methodist	Southern Baptist	Non-Denominational	Reconstructionist Synagogue	total population
very important	32	66	57	7	37
important	55	28	23	27	36
somewhat	9	4	16	39	17
not very/not at all	4	3	5	27	10
total %	100	101	101	100	100
N=	117	76	44	82	319

* Based on the question, "How important are the teachings of your church/synagogue in helping you to make decisions about your life?"

Pearson Chi-Square test shows a .000 p value with 9df and Chi of 127.924

Though many respondents report that the teachings of their institutions are important to them, it appears that it depends on what kind of teachings those are. When asked how they feel about clergy influencing congregants on political issues or consumer decisions, most people were less enthusiastic (see tables 4.7 and 4.8). Less than half of any of the congregations felt that it was okay for the religious leaders to influence how people vote. The test of chi-square shows that there was no significant

Table 4.7 Beliefs about appropriateness of clerical influence on political decisions* (by percent)

	United Methodist	Southern Baptist	Non-Denominational	Reconstructionist Synagogue	total population
strongly disagree	14	18	9	9	13
disagree	30	23	23	24	26
neither agree or disagree	23	20	32	29	25
agree	24	23	25	26	25
strongly agree	9	16	11	13	12
total %	100	100	100	101	101
N=	117	77	44	80	318

* Based on the collapsed Likert-scale question (Agree or disagree): "Religious leaders should not try to influence how people vote in elections."

Pearson Chi-Square test shows a .74 p value with 12df and Chi of 8.59

Table 4.8 Beliefs about appropriateness of clerical influence on consumer decisions* (by percent)

	United Methodist	Southern Baptist	Non-Denominational	Reconstructionist Synagogue	total population
strongly disagree	17	11	9	13	14
disagree	43	13	14	27	28
neither agree or disagree	21	33	41	33	30
agree	16	25	23	18	20
strongly agree	3	17	14	9	9
total %	100	99	101	100	101
N=	116	75	44	82	317

* Based on the collapsed Likert-scale question (Agree or disagree): "Religious leaders should not try to influence people's day-to-day consumer and lifestyle choices (like the food we buy, the cars we drive, etc.)"

Pearson Chi-Square test shows a .00 p value with 12df and Chi of 40.656

difference between the congregations. Even fewer people in the Nondenominational and the Southern Baptist churches felt it acceptable for clergy to take a stand on consumer issues. The Reconstructionist synagogue was slightly higher (40 percent), but still less than half. Only the United Methodist church found majority support for such leadership (60 percent). A chi-square test shows that there are significant differences between the congregations with respect to how they respond to clerical leadership about consumer choices. Further conversation with individuals indicated that these questions seemed almost irrelevant or even strange to the congregants at the two conservative churches, as if they could not imagine an example of such (despite the fact that the leaders of both churches acknowledge taking personal stands on political or lifestyle issues they feel are religious, like abortion or sex outside of the confines of church-approved marriage). Congregants of the United Methodist church are quite accustomed to both of their clergy making bold statements about both political and consumer issues (which will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter). Their higher level of support may be due to this (or vice versa). Congregants of the Reconstructionist Synagogue also hear comments like these from their clergy, and have had mixed experiences with it. Phil Zuckerman's book, *Strife in the Sanctuary*, chronicles a previous schism experienced by that particular congregation, which was due in part to a split in opinion about whether a former rabbi should be as politically vocal as he was.

Table 4.9 shows a measure of religiosity by asking people to rate how much they try to carry their religious beliefs over into daily life. Again, even though crosstabs and a chi-square test shows a significant difference between the congregations, with the Southern Baptists and the Nondenominationalists reporting the most agreement, the majority of respondents in all of the congregations agree that they try to do so. Over 90 percent of all the respondents from the three churches agree. The difference between the Jewish congregation and the churches on these three questions may reflect deeper differences between Judaism and Christianity than can be explored in this study.

Table 4.9 How hard people report trying to carry religious beliefs into daily life*

	United Methodist	Southern Baptist	Non-Denominational	Reconstructionist Synagogue	total population
strongly agree	48	69	57	29	49
agree	44	27	34	36	37
neutral-strongly disagree	8	4	9	35	14
total %	100	100	100	100	100
N=	116	77	44	83	320

* Based on the collapsed Likert-scale question (Agree or disagree): "I try hard to carry my religious beliefs over into all my other dealings in life."

Pearson Chi-Square test shows a .000 p value with 6df and Chi of 52.5

One of the most important variables to consider in this study however is the difference between the theologically conservative and liberal congregations with regards to their beliefs about the worldliness of religion. I expected, based on previous research, that the two congregations where FBE has been present, would have a social gospel/*tikkun olam* focus. Crosstabs and a chi-square test shows that to be the case. When asked what "a religious person should concentrate on, bringing people closer to God and God's plan, or improving the society we live in now," almost no one from the Southern Baptist and Nondenominational churches chose the latter, the social gospel/*tikkun olam* answer. On the other hand, 72 percent of the Methodists and an overwhelming 92 percent of the Jews felt that it was their primary religious duty to

Table 4.10 Social gospel/*tikkun olam* orientation of congregations (by percent)

	United Methodist	Southern Baptist	Non-Denominational	Reconstructionist Synagogue	total population
NO	28	97	97	8	50
YES	72	3	2	92	50
total %	100	100	99	100	100
N=	100	71	41	73	285

Pearson Chi-Square test shows a .00 p value with 3df and Chi of 170.654

improve society. With a total sample of 285 respondents for that question, the split between the outwardly-focused (social gospel/*tikkun olam*) and inwardly-focused individuals, was precisely fifty-fifty (see table 4.10). Further analysis of the impact of social gospel/*tikkun olam* ideology will follow later in this chapter.

Environmental Attributes of Congregations

Though Lynn White and many critics since him place responsibility for the West's abuse of the environment on the opening chapter of Genesis, an analysis of the survey data supports Max Oelschlaeger and the others who believe that the Judeo-Christian tradition is fertile ground for an environmental ethic. Of the 321 people who were asked to circle the statement that most closely matches their perspective: God created the world for us to use as we see fit, or God commanded us to care for and protect the world, only 2 percent said that the world is to be used as we see fit. Eleven percent skipped the question or circled both, indicating that they had some difficulty with the question. The vast majority in every congregation (86 percent of all respondents) agreed that we are commanded to care for and protect the world however (see table 4.11).

Table 4.11 Presence of creation care ethic in congregations (by percent)

	United Methodist	Southern Baptist	Non-Denominational	Reconstructionist Synagogue	total population
NO	0	3	14	0	3
YES	92	85	77	84	86
<i>Didn't answer/both</i>	8	13	9	16	11
total %	100	101	100	100	100
N=	117	78	44	83	322

Inadequate cell size to compute Chi-Square.

What causes people to believe in a stewardship model? The data does not identify a cause of the stewardship ethic. Logistic regression shows no significance for

demographic factors like gender, age, or education. There is not even a correlation with any other religious characteristics like frequent attendance, value of the Bible or institutional leadership, or an individual's commitment to carrying beliefs into everyday life. Furthermore, there's no valid connection between the social gospel or people's beliefs about the role of religious leaders in their daily decision-making. Regardless of what it stems from, the stewardship ethic is a vital component of FBE. Additional analysis will help explain why FBE is only present in two of the congregations when there appears to be such a strong basis for a creation care ethic in all of them.

The majority of respondents also believed that environmental issues are religious matters, although there is a significant difference between congregations. The two congregations that feature FBE show higher levels of agreement with that statement than the two theologically conservative churches, but even 54 percent of the Southern Baptists responded affirmatively (see table 4.12). The Nondenominational Protestants however did not generally see environmental concerns as religious, 16 percent were ambiguous and another 50 percent responded negatively. Unlike the creation variable, there are some significant demographic variables that help predict whether or not someone will agree that environmental issues are religious matters (see table 4.13). The data from this study shows that being female and over 30 makes one more likely to agree. The age finding appears to be falsely reporting significance due to the strong correlation between age and

Table 4.12 Belief that environmental issues “are” religious matters (by percent)

	United Methodist	Southern Baptist	Non-Denominational	Reconstructionist Synagogue	total population
NO	15	23	50	28	25
YES	74	54	34	59	60
Didn't answer/both	10	23	16	13	15
total %	99	100	100	100	100
N=	117	78	44	83	322

Pearson Chi-Square test shows a .000p value with 6 df and a Chi of 30.416

Table 4.13 Demographic correlates with the belief that "environmental issues are religious matters." (Logistic Regression)

	Exp(B)
Female	2.241 *
Adult (30-49)	4.782 ***
Midlife (50-69)	5.442 ***
Older (70+)	3.183 *
Bachelors degree	1.299
Graduate degree	1.394
constant	0.354

* p < .05 ; ** p < .01; ***p < .001

N = 269

congregations, with most of the younger than 30 respondents belonging to the Nondenominational church.

A regression of certain religious characteristics shows that people who agree that they "try hard to carry their religious beliefs into their everyday life" (BELLIFE2) are more likely to believe that environmental issues are religious matters. This is not surprising. If people bring their religious conviction into their daily life, then everything becomes religious, even issues like the environment. There is also a correlation between people who are more closely aligned with social gospel or *tikkun olam* theology and those who agree that environmental issues are religious matters. This supports the hypothesis that a social gospel/*tikkun olam* orientation is linked to a greater likelihood of FBE. As discussed in the literature review, the social gospel and *tikkun olam* traditions were built around defining social issues as religious matters and this extends to environmental concerns. Likewise the two questions from the survey that asked people how comfortable they were with religious leadership also show that there is a correlation between people who believe that environmental issues are religious matters and those who believe it is okay for their clergy to influence them on political (relvote2) and consumer decisions (relcons2). However, logistic regression only shows the latter as significant (see table 4.14).

Table 4.14 Religious attributes correlating with the belief that "environmental issues are religious matters." (Logistic Regression)

	Exp (B)
frequent attendance (ATTND2)	0.99
importance of Bible (BIBLDEC2)	1.185
importance of institution (CHURDEC2)	1.194
tries hard to carry beliefs into life (BELLIFE2)	8.617 ***
Social gospel/tikkun olam (SOCGOSP2)	3.584 **
tolerance for clerical leadership in politics (RELVOTE2)	1.822
tolerance for clerical leadership in consumer issues (RELCONS2)	3.359 **
constant	0.084

* p < .05 ; ** p < .01; *** p < .001
N = 269

So given that the majority of respondents believe that environmental issues are religious matters (60%), and that most of them (85%) also claim to "try hard to carry their religious beliefs into their everyday life," what is their level of environmental concern or effort? The survey asked people "how often do you think about environmental issues (like pollution, global climate change, endangered species, waste, resource use, etc.). The Methodists and the Jews report thinking about the environment significantly more than the people from the other two congregations (see table 4.15).

Table 4.15 How often people think about environmental issues (by percent)

	United Methodist	Southern Baptist	Non-Denominational	Reconstructionist Synagogue	total population
all the time	24	12	14	35	23
often	62	52	32	51	53
sometimes/not often/never	14	36	55	15	25
total %	100	100	101	101	101
N=	117	73	44	83	317

Pearson Chi-Square test shows a .00 p value with 6df and Chi of 45.186

Logistic regression shows that being female, over 50 and having at least a bachelor's degree help predict an individual's level of environmental concern in the sample studied. As discussed before however, both age and education are strong covariates with congregations in this particular study, with the less environmentally-concerned Non-Denomination congregation being mostly in their 20s and the two environmentally active congregations having a preponderance of advanced degrees among their membership (see table 4.16).

Table 4.16 Demographic correlates with respondents who display a high level of concern[†] about the environment (Logistic Regression)

	Exp (B)
Female	1.856 *
Adult (30-49)	1.592
Midlife (50-69)	2.694 *
Older (70+)	2.614
Bachelors degree	2.085 *
Graduate degree	2.928 **
constant	0.748

* p < .05 ; ** p < .01; *** p < .001

N = 296

[†] people who think about environmental issues often or all the time

Table 4.17 Religious attributes correlating with high level of concern[†] about the environment (Logistic Regression)

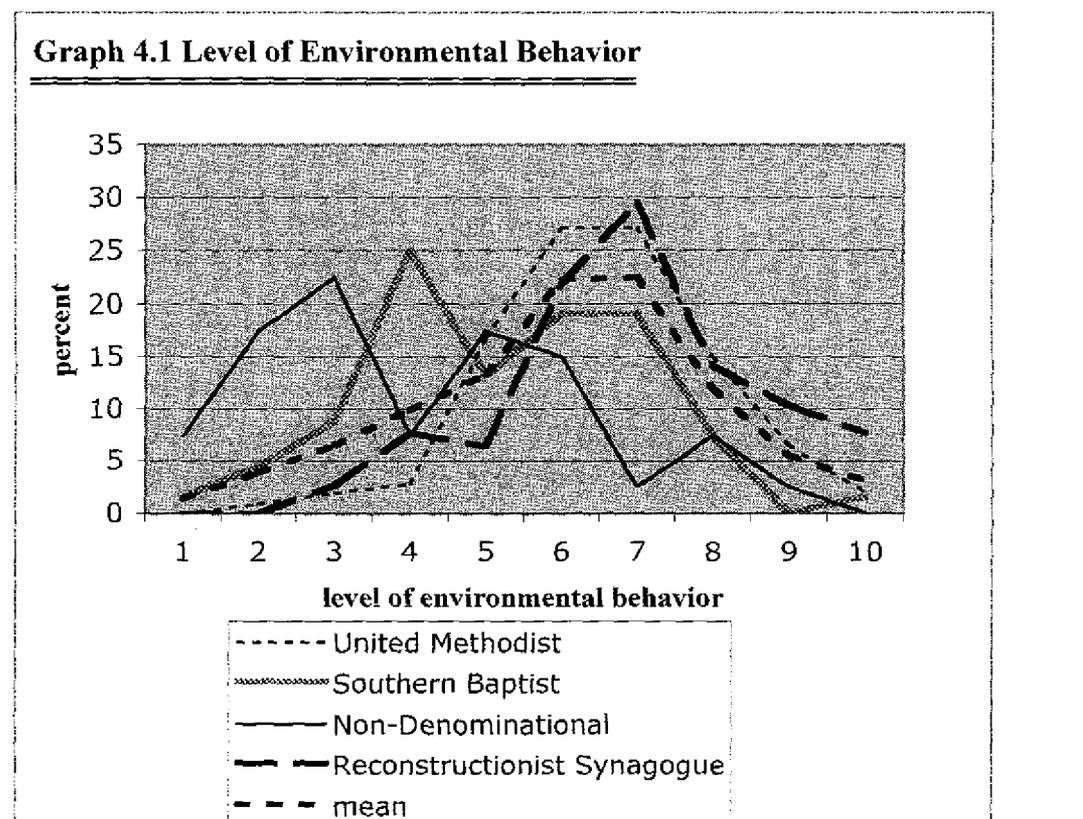
	Exp (B)
frequent attendance (ATTND2)	0.432
importance of Bible (BIBLDEC2)	0.414
importance of institution (CHURDEC2)	1.13
tries hard to carry beliefs into life (BELLIFE2)	2.38
Social gospel/ <i>tikkun olam</i> (SOCGOSP2)	2.443 *
tolerance for clerical leadership in politics (RELVOTE2)	0.932
tolerance for clerical leadership in consumer issues RELCONS2	2.112 *
Constant	2.651

* p < .05 ; ** p < .01; *** p < .001

N = 270

[†] people who think about environmental issues often or all the time

Looking at religious characteristics, two in particular stand out as having a subtle correlation with an individual's level of environmental concern. Belief in the social gospel/tikkun olam predicts more frequent thoughts about the environment than those who believe that the primary duty of a person of faith is to bring people closer to God. Likewise, people who are comfortable with clergy speaking their mind about consumer issues also report thinking more about the environment (see table 4.17).



An individual could theoretically think about environmental issues quite frequently, without being sympathetic to them or even having particularly anti-green sentiments. The question was intentionally phrased neutrally, "how often do you think about environmental issues?" Therefore, it is important to also consider respondents' environmental behavior, which gives a truer indication of how much they act out of their

concern for the environment. Questions to gauge their environmental commitment included how often they recycle, buy organic food, and avoid driving for environmental reasons. These were combined and scaled from 1-10. With 293 cases, this scale has a reliability of .63 using the Chronbach's alpha analysis. It is reasonably reliable. The mean score on the 10-point scale was a 6. The Reconstructionist Jews and the Methodists scored the highest with an average of 6.9 and 6.5 respectively. The Southern Baptists averaged 5.3 and the Nondenominationalists scored 4.2. See graph 4.1 for a comparison of their score frequencies. Linear regression shows that belonging to the Southern Baptists or Nondenominationalist congregations predicts lower scores on the environmental behavior scale (see table 4.18).

Table 4.18 Effect of congregation on environmental behavior scale (OLS regression)

	B
United Methodist	-0.374
Southern Baptist	-1.647 ***
Non-Denominational	-2.722 ***
constant	8.897

* p < .05 ; ** p < .01 ; *** p < .001
N = 292

Similar to the effect of demographic variables on the level of environmental concern, being older than 30 (again, due to the Nondenominational confound) and having an advanced degree also suggests a slightly higher score (approximately 1 point) on the 10-point scale of environmental behavior (see table 4.19).

Like the logistic regression for environmental concern, certain religious characteristics predict scores on the environmental behavior scale. Both the social gospel/*tikkun olam* belief and the “**relcons2**” (tolerance for clerical leadership about consumer issues) variable show a correlation with higher levels of environmental activity. Appropriately enough, an individual's commitment to carrying his/her beliefs into everyday life also predicts a slightly higher environmental score. In this study, frequent

Table 4.19 Demographic correlates with scores on environmental behavior scale (OLS regression)

	B
Female	0.372
Adult (30-49)	1.118 **
Midlife (50-69)	1.141 **
Older (70+)	1.098 **
Bachelors degree	0.488
Graduate degree	0.864 ***
constant	6.39

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

N = 286

attendance has a slightly negative relationship with environmental behavior (see table 4.20). Previous research discussed in the literature reviews shows that there is no consensus of the impact of attendance. Some studies have shown a positive correlation with environmental DVs, others have shown a negative correlation, while yet others have shown no relationship.

Table 4.20 Religious attributes correlates with scores on environmental behavior scale (OLS regression)

	B
frequent attendance (ATTND2)	-0.834 *
importance of Bible (BIBLDEC2)	-0.356
importance of institution (CHURDEC2)	-7.23E-02
tries hard to carry beliefs into life (BELLIFE2)	0.888 *
Social gospel/ <i>tikkun olam</i> (SOCGOSP2)	1.098 ***
tolerance for clerical leadership in politics (RELVOTE2)	-7.48E-03
tolerance for clerical leadership in consumer issues (RELCONS2)	0.833 **
Constant	7.284

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

N = 250

Characteristics of Faith-Based Environmentalism

In order to determine which variables correlate with the presence of religious environmental activity in congregations, the foundational elements of FBE must initially be defined. This study identifies FBE as a care for creation, belief that environmental issues are religious matters, and a high level of environmental concern and behavior. (The “high level” of environmental concern and behavior is assessed by creating a scale from the questions concerning recycling, driving, purchasing organic food, and thinking about environmental issues. - The latter was originally a 5 point question, but was collapsed to a 4 point Likert-scale to give it equal weight with the other variables. When combined and scaled, these four variables with 292 respondents have a reliability of .76 using the Chronbach’s alpha measure. The people that scored in the top 25 percent of that scale, were identified as being highly environmentally responsible.) All these factors, high environmental responsibility, care for creation, and the belief that environmental issues are religious matters are necessary components of FBE, and though there is a lot of covariance between them, they are not exactly the same.

For example, people who believe they are “commanded to care for and protect the world” are 19.3 times more likely than people who believe “the world is for us to use as we see fit” to agree that “environmental issues are religious matters” (sig .006). However, with so many people (more than 80 percent) agreeing that we are commanded to care for and protect the world, they cannot all be the “most” environmentally responsible and concerned. Both logistic regression and chi-square show that the care for creation belief does not significantly predict a high environmental responsibility score.

However, linear regression and a chi-square test do show that people who believe that environmental issues are religious matters are 4.2 times more likely to be highly environmentally conscious (tables 4.21 and 4.22). Yet with more than 60 percent of the population sampled agreeing with that statement, it does not single-handedly define FBE.

Table 4.21 Effective of belief that environmental issues are religious matters on level of environmental responsibility (OLS regression)

	B
envrelig	4.229 ***
constant	0.113

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

N = 268

4.22 Distribution of people who believe that "environmental issues are religious matters" and people who are highly environmental responsible (by percent of total)

		Highly Environmentally Responsible?		
		NO	YES (top 25%)	
Believes that environmental issues are religious matters? *	NO	27	3	29.5
	YES	48	23	70.5
total %		74	26	100
N=		199	69	268

Pearson Chi-Square test shows a .000 p value and 1df and Chi of 14.3, i.e. there is a significant correlation between believing that environmental issues are religious matters and being highly environmentally responsible.

** both or none were coded as system missing*

Although faith-based environmentalism (FBE) could be defined in a variety of ways, for the purposes of using the data at hand to test this study's hypotheses, I define it using the three variables just discussed (creation, envrelig, and envresp2). Care for creation provides a starting block for FBE; believing that environmental issues are religious matters is the next step. Among people of faith, the belief that environmental issues are matters of faith encourages a greater sense of responsibility in those areas. And finally, following through on those beliefs by demonstrating a high level of

environmental concern and care makes some individuals stand out from the rest of the people surveyed. When these three variables are combined, a new variable can be created, FBE. Of the 254 respondents who have data for each of the three questions, just 58 (18% of total population, and 23% of the 254 who answered all of the combined questions) can be identified as having all the characteristics used here to identify faith-based environmentalism (see table 4.23).

Table 4.23 Frequency of Faith-Based Environmental Attributes in Congregations (by percent)

		United Methodist	Southern Baptist	Non-Denominational	Reconstructionist Synagogue	total population
# of foundational attributes of FBE	0	-	2	17	-	3
	1	12	27	37	28	23
	2	63	59	40	34	52
	3	25	13	6	38	23
total %		100	101	100	100	101
N=		99	56	35	64	254

Thus far, the data in this chapter have been used to describe the characteristics of the four congregations, and show how certain demographic and religious conditions correlate with environmental variables. In order to answer the original question, "what variables contribute to FBE," it is necessary to look at some of these same variables again with respect to the combined measure of FBE.

Logistic regression with the demographic and religious characteristics presented previously (age, gender, education, frequent attendance, importance of Bible/Torah and religious institution, and commitment to carrying religious beliefs into daily life) looks unsurprisingly similar to the earlier models (see table 4.24). The only predicting variables are being in one's 30s and 40s (due to the confound discussed earlier) and self-identifying as trying hard to carry one's religious beliefs into daily life. As discussed before these are both logical given the age division between the four congregations and

4.24 Logistic regression showing impact of demographic and religious characteristics on likelihood of FBE

	Exp (B)
Female	1.263
Adult (30-49)	3.87 *
Midlife (50-69)	2.504
Older (70+)	2.018
Bachelors degree	1.248
Graduate degree	1.242
frequent attendance (ATTND2)	0.466
importance of Bible (BIBLDEC2)	0.583
importance of institution (CHURDEC2)	0.674
tries hard to carry beliefs into life (BELLIFE2)	14.01 **
constant	0.027

* p < .05 ; ** p < .01 ; *** p < .001

N = 242

the likelihood that people who claim to try hard to carry their beliefs into daily life are going to be more conscientious in general.

In order to test the impact of clerical leadership, I created a new variable that combines the two questions about the appropriateness of clergy influencing people on political and consumer issues. People that believed both were okay were identified by the variable **clerlead**. Of the 313 people with answers to both questions, only 27% expressed comfort with clerical leadership in both of these areas.

The social gospel/*tikkun olam* variable, together with the new one, **clerlead**, make it possible to test my original hypothesis that clerical leadership and the presence of social gospel/*tikkun olam* theology are important variables contributing to FBE. Indeed, logistic regression shows that both of these are strong correlates with FBE. People with a social gospel/*tikkun olam* orientation are 2.8 times as likely as otherwise to have the foundational qualities of FBE. Likewise, those comfortable with political or consumer leadership from their pastor or rabbi are 3.3 times more likely (see table 4.25).

4.25 Logistic Regression showing impact of social gospel/*tikkun olam* orientation and comfort with clerical leadership on likelihood of FBE

	Exp (B)
Social gospel/ <i>tikkun olam</i> (SOCGOSP2)	2.794 **
Tolerance for clerical leadership (CLERLEAD)	3.342 ***
Constant	0.11

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

N = 226

Not only is the social gospel/*tikkun olam* perspective individually important, but it also appears to matter whether or not one belongs to a congregation of that ilk. Because the survey data showed that the United Methodist and Reconstructionist Synagogue both had strong social gospel/*tikkun olam* orientations, those two communities were coded as “worldly.” Regardless of an individual’s answer to the social gospel/*tikkun olam* question, participation in a worldly congregation predicts a greater likelihood (nearly 4 times) of personal FBE attributes. On the other hand, being a member of a revivalist (or growing) congregation does not have any impact on one’s likelihood of demonstrating FBE (see table 4.26).

4.26 Logistic Regression showing impact of social gospel/ *tikkun olam* and growing congregations on presence of FBE

	Exp (B)
social gospel/ <i>tikkun olam</i> focused congregation (worldly)	3.926 ***
growing	1.381
constant	0.096

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; *** $p < .001$

N = 254

Though the existing research on this topic is full of contradictions, the literature review shows that there are certain themes. The quantitative work described in this chapter can be used to confirm some of those earlier studies, in particular the finding that there are denominational differences in level of environmental support (Hand and Van

Liere 1984, Greeley 1993, Guth and Kellstedt 1993, Guth et al 1995, Eckberg and Blocker 1996, and Boyd 1999). This study shows that there were significant differences between the congregations with regards to the level of environmental concern and behavior and the belief that environmental issues are religious matters. Furthermore, like Guth and Kellstedt (1993) found, context (local church atmosphere and leadership) is an important variable to consider. The logistic regression shown in table 4.16 is evidence that regardless of people's individual characteristics, they are more likely to display the foundational attributes of FBE if they are in one of the two "worldly" congregations which have a focus on such issues.

The following chapter will explore these findings further by analyzing the qualitative data to better understand the connections between both clerical/institutional leadership and the social gospel/*tikkun olam* orientation and the presence of faith-based environmental activism in congregations.

CHAPTER FIVE

QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

The previous chapter used survey data to help describe the four congregations and began drawing initial conclusions about faith-based environmentalism and its covariants. It showed that tolerance for clerical leadership and the *social gospel/tikkun olam* orientation were good predictors of FBE. Survey data though does not allow individuals to tell their own stories, which bring to light a more nuanced understanding of who relates to FBE and why. Attending worship services in all the congregations, participating in meetings with the United Methodist and Reconstructionist environmental committees, and doing 18 in-depth interviews helped flesh out what type of people are more inclined towards FBE, and why it is occurring in two of the congregations and not in the other two. The qualitative analysis that follows corroborates with the data from the survey to answer these questions.

Characteristics of the Congregations

Not only does the United Methodist Church have a distinct enough building to be known as a local landmark, but the pastors are also well known in the community. Head Pastor Lynn and her husband, Associate Pastor Tom are frequent speakers at community events. They are not shy about sharing with conviction their views about environmental, peace, or worker justice issues.

Even if I had been unfamiliar with Lynn and Tom's public activism, the church's social nature was evident when I visited on several occasions. The posters on the walls, church bulletins and pamphlets, and books and subscriptions in the church library paint a clear picture of a congregation interested in putting their faith into action. The church's mission, which appears everywhere, is to "Receive, by welcoming all people into a community of love and acceptance; Transform, by helping all people experience God's love in Jesus Christ; and Send, by empowering all people to be Christian servants in the

world.” The acceptance of diversity was evident as I sat behind a lesbian couple with a mixed-racial adopted family during the service. The connection between faith and action was clear everywhere I looked. A pamphlet in the foyer reinforced the United Methodist belief “in reaching out to disaster victims... improving the lives – and the possibilities- of children everywhere, (and) working for peace and justice around the world.” Other flyers were requesting congregants to bring in canned food, help build a Habitat for Humanity house, buy wreaths to support the Oregon farm worker justice movement, sign up to participate in Community Supported Agriculture (CSA), or attend a local production of the “anti-war play, *Lysistrata*.” Magazines in the library like Christian Social Action, Soujourners: Faith, Politics, & Culture, Fellowship: A Magazine of Peacemaking, and Yes, featured articles about issues such as the death penalty, prisons, peace and justice issues, sustainable living, banning guns, the need for family planning and a religious pro-choice stance, care for older adults, HIV/AIDS, and every other progressive social issue imaginable. And just in case congregants and visitors fail to notice the flyers or read the magazines, the worship services are often a celebration of “faith in action.” One Sunday Pastor Lynn’s sermon, “Responding to God’s Word,” highlighted bicycle fundraising for low-income housing, mine-removal in Bosnia, and AIDS ministry. Pastor Lynn asked congregants to consider, “What is your passion? What excites you?” She explained, “this is God’s call to you.... The kind of work God tends to call us to is what the world tends to need most.” Her closing benediction was “May God answer our call and guide us in faithful action. Here we are, send us.”

Pastor Tom grew up in the area as the sixth generation on a donation land claim family farm. Though his life’s work has taken him off the farm, his religious calling has led him to work with agriculture and farm workers. At church, Pastor Tom teaches classes on Voluntary Simplicity, leads Earth Day worship services, and shares the environmentally and religiously focused songs that he writes, such as “God of the sparrow, God of the Whale” and “What on Earth are We Doing?” (A collection of Pastor Tom’s songs and lessons can be found in his book Walk Lightly on the Earth: Apprenticing a Conscience for North America.) He works with the church’s Creation

Care Committee, which has put together a carpooling program, promotes Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) participation, and initiated a “1-2-3 Save Energy” Campaign asking congregants to commit to using CFLs, reducing gas consumption, and lowering thermostats. He has designed an elaborate six-week course for his congregation called “Give Up Carbon for Lent” which walks participants through the science of global warming, the theological foundation for concern, and action points where they can make a difference in their own daily lives.

The United Methodist church has a stable population of about 500 households. Worshippers tended to be mostly middle-class families and seniors. Surveys showed that most congregants were highly educated, with graduate degrees being the norm.

Rapidly approaching the same size is the Reconstructionist synagogue in town. For years, it was the only Jewish community in town, but now, even with other options, including conservative, orthodox, and secular *chavurot* (Jewish groups), the *shul* is still growing, and in the process of trying to build a new synagogue. Though one is Jewish and the other Christian, the two congregations have more in common than just size, socio-economic, and educational characteristics. The synagogue has also been known for decades as a local center for Jewish activism. Starting with a former rabbi and continuing with the current rabbi, the synagogue has been involved with issues like the peace, environmental, women’s rights, disability rights, and labor movements. The community sustains *Tzedakah V’Chesed* (Social Services), *Tikkun Olam* (social action), *K’vod Ha’Teva* (honoring nature), and Peace and Justice committees besides all the other committees typical of a religious community. In the rabbi’s monthly column in a recent edition of the synagogue’s newsletter, he wrote about “Justice at the Checkout Counter” and shared some of his ideas about establishing a system of “Ethical *Kashrut*” (Kosher) that would take into consideration the environmental, human and animal rights issues involved in the production of goods. Like Pastor’s Lynn and Tom, Rabbi Yehuda’s public persona extends beyond boundaries of his synagogue. He has spoken about social and environmental issues on the radio, he has written letters for the Oregon Voter’s Pamphlet, and is well known in the community. Rabbi Yehuda grew up in a very Jewish

community on the East Coast and attended an Orthodox synagogue as a child. The sixties brought him west where he explored his love of music, playing for the symphony and then later serving the local congregation as a cantor. Eventually his role expanded into the position of head rabbi. During my research, Rabbi Chaim was serving as a rabbinical assistant at the synagogue, completing his practice before ordination. Rabbi Chaim has been formally educated with a PhD in Judaic Studies. He has been instrumental in establishing Jewish environmental organizations like the Coalition on Environment and Jewish Life (COEJL) and the Northwest Jewish Environmental Project (NJEP).

Worship services at the Reconstructionist synagogue are on Friday nights and Saturday mornings. Both services use the *Kol Haneshamah: Shabbat Vehagim* prayer book used by many Reconstructionist synagogues. Friday night (*Erev Shabbat*) services are intimate gatherings (regardless of how many people) where participants *daven* (pray) together through songs (some ancient, some new, mostly in Hebrew, though some wordless, some accompanied with doumbek, mandocellos, guitars, and a tambourine, others unadorned and soulful). As discussed in the literature review, many of the traditional prayers use language that closely links God and Creation and reminds worshippers of their environmental and social responsibilities. And even if they fail to recognize it through the prayers, the short talks during each week's service (by the rabbi, members of the community, or outside guests) often highlight social issues, sometimes linked to the weekly Torah portion, sometimes not.

While I was conducting my research with the community, the *K'vod Ha'Teva* committee was busy with a community environmental education project. They were getting ready to put on a series of events associated with the documentary film Blue Vinyl, produced and directed by a Jewish filmmaker. The film is a "toxic comedy" that follows one woman's quest to learn more about the dangers of vinyl production and use in our society. The *K'vod Ha'Teva* committee arranged for two showings of the film, one for synagogue board members and others who would be instrumental in the decision making process for the new building, and another for the larger Eugene-Springfield

community. The latter was held at a high school and drew a couple hundred people who came to see the film and hear a panel discussion of representatives from different types of environmental work. In addition to the two showings, there were several other activities related to Blue Vinyl planned for the community. In addition to this major endeavor, the committee has also been active in improving synagogue purchasing and practices, holding environmental fairs during *Tu B'Shevat* (New Year for the Trees), working with synagogue youth, and supporting the rabbi in his work towards a new Ethical *Kashrut* program.

Even though the Nondenominational and Southern Baptist churches stand in sharp contrast to the two congregations featuring FBE, they do have certain similarities. Like the Reconstructionist synagogue, the Nondenominational church is growing by leaps and bounds and has a lively spirit about it. Pastor Dave started the church in his 20s as a Bible study with just five other people in 2000, and by 2003 that Bible study had evolved to a whole church with about 500 people involved attending worship on Sundays. His enthusiasm seems to make up for his lack of formal religious training. And though their circles might not overlap too much, Pastor Dave is also well-known in the community like Rabbi Yehuda and Pastors Tom and Lynn. Pastor Dave however is not known for making political speeches or talking on the radio about genetically-modified foods, nor would he want to be. He is known for being a star quarterback for the Oregon Ducks, back in the mid-nineties. One interviewee, Sonya, theorized that Dave's fame may be what brings some people to the church for the first time, but it is not what makes them stay. The contemporary worship style, relaxed attitude, and focus on the intersection between real-life and scripture are quite popular, especially with the college-age students who make up the bulk of the worshippers. Wednesday night Bible studies, which is how Pastor Dave started the whole thing, now draw as many as 100 in any given week. The week I attended was an unusually quiet evening with only 45. Worshippers sang songs of praise accompanied by a band, and listened to a talk from a lay leader on the story of the Prodigal Son. The lay leader drew attention to his own frequent failings and reminded listeners that there's nothing inherently good in any of us. "Don't get caught in the

world's currents. The world is only temporal; flesh is empty." Comparing sin to cotton candy, the speaker said "sin might look good and be tempting, but it's worthless, with no nourishment." But don't despair, he continued, "Jesus paid for your sins, so give 'em to him. Don't hold on to them. Give 'em to Jesus. Give up your burden...." The church's mantra is that a personal relationship with Jesus is the best protection against sin.

Interviewees talked about committing their lives to Jesus like we do to a friend or spouse. Jesus can be our best friend, which means we need to talk to him on a daily basis, listen to him and what he wants for our lives.

Worshippers at Pastor Dave's Nondenominational church are invited to be fully participatory in their faith in a lot of different ways. There are several worship, prayer, and study services throughout the week. People are called to work with the high school youth (which don't seem all that much younger than the general audience). There are invitations and opportunities to join street ministry teams and overseas mission trips. The church was largely unadorned. Despite having been at the present location for over a year, there were few decorations and not much literature scattered about. Some interviewees mentioned that sometimes during election seasons the Christian Coalition (an ultra-conservative group) would leave their voter's guides in the foyer, but during my visits, the only visuals were a few simple posters with words of praise like "God is Awesome!" There was nothing about the surroundings or the worship service which was even remotely related to Faith-Based Environmentalism, unless one could count the announcement from Pastor Dave that it was time for the annual church cleaning frenzy, and unclaimed and old things were "all going to be thrown out, so don't go diggin' in the dumpster this time."

The fourth congregation, the Southern Baptist, is the smallest, and like the United Methodist church, it is not growing, but instead fighting the national trend of denominational membership drain as Nondenominational churches gain new numbers (Wright, 2003). The Southern Baptists have approximately 175 attendees on an average Sunday. It is a smaller, downtown church with a mostly middle-age and elderly population. The congregation is mostly working-class without much advanced education.

There is a strong community feeling, and interviewees talk about the good support system that the church provides. My visits found people to be warm and welcoming, though not necessarily jubilant and effervescent. This might be due to the age of the congregation. On the whole however, the Southern Baptist church did not have the same level of energy as the younger, Nondenominational church. A deacon's announcement about trying to get a choir started, indicated that it had been difficult to involve people in additional commitments. The calendar of events included several different kinds of Bible studies, prayer meetings, and fellowship meals.

Pastor Jim, 62, is from a large Oklahoma family, and is looking forward to retiring back there. Every since he responded to God's call to be a pastor he has spent the last 30 years in small Southern Baptist churches in Oregon. Pastor Jim's personable and inviting nature made it almost (but not quite) easy enough to ask him why he had a life-size cardboard cut-out of John Wayne, pistols barred, in his office.

Like the Nondenominational church, the worship service started with a prayer for God to protect our country (this was right before the start of the war on Iraq in 2003). Pastor Jim also called all the men in the congregation forward and had them pray for President Bush, the military, and for themselves in their role as heads of households. "It's not hard for women to submit to husbands when husbands submit to the Lord," intoned Pastor Jim. This set the mood for the service, which like the Nondenominational service was focused on personal sin. Pastor Jim spoke of the need for a balanced view of God. In addition to the loving God whom we usually emphasize, we need to keep in mind that "God is outraged at sin. God hates sin, because that's what took away his son." We have no choice but to be sinners, said Pastor Jim, even after we're saved, but once we know about Jesus, we can choose between a "fleshly edenic nature or a saved nature." And it's better to be a saved sinner than a lost sinner. The only path to salvation is a daily cleansing by God; we need to have a "perpetual spiritual revival," inviting Jesus into our lives and following his guidance for us. Pastor Jim's sermon was effective. A couple people found their way up to the altar during the following invitational.

Literature and posters around the church emphasized salvation and domestic and international mission work (“church planting”). The library was filled with resources for Bible study, traditional Christian families, Christian living (the challenges of staying away from pornography, sexual sin, lying, cheating, gambling, and alcohol), and the anti-abortion movement.

The four congregations had distinct personalities, and each appeared to be good representations of their denomination (or lack of denomination). The energy and activity level were rewarded by rapidly growing populations in the Reconstructionist synagogue and the Nondenominational church, though not in the United Methodist church. The mandate for a faith in action and a commitment to our world was evident at the United Methodist church and the Reconstructionist synagogue, whereas the Nondenominational and Southern Baptist church promoted a more personal faith journey, one that is focused on conquering sin by having a relationship with Jesus. The data from the in-depth interviews confirms this personal versus worldly distinction and replicates the split between congregations that practice and promote FBE, and those that do not.

Table 5.1: Individual and Congregational Support for FBE

		FBE present in congregation?	
		Yes (United Methodist or Reconstructionist Synagogue)	No (Nondenominational or Southern Baptist)
Individual displays FBE attributes?	Yes	Type I: Pastor Tom, Rose, Candice, Rabbi Yehuda, Rabbi Chaim, Miriam, Ralph, and Jaime	Type III: Amanda, Dan and Ruth
	No	Type IV: Norman	Type II: Pastor Dave, Sonya, Paul, Pastor Jim, Carmelle

Further analysis of the qualitative data shows that the interviewees can be roughly divided into four categories using two axes (see table 5.1), faith-based environmental activism present (or not) in congregations, and individuals who display the foundational

FBE attributes discussed in the previous chapter. (They believe that God commands us to care for creation, they view environmental issues as religious matters, and they demonstrate environmentally-conscious behavior.)

Four Types of Interviewees

Organizing the 17 applicable interviewees by congregations and attributes helps draw out the key themes that appear to be correlated with the support (or lack of support) for institutionalized FBE. The following section will describe these four types of responses.

The first type of individual is involved in one of the FBE congregations (the United Methodist church or the Reconstructionist Synagogue) and displays FBE attributes. Three out of the four interviewees from the United Methodist church (Pastor Tom, Rose, and Candice) and all the interviewees from the Reconstructionist Synagogue (Rabbis Yehuda and Chaim, Miriam, Ralph, and Jaime) fit into this category. Candice is a thirty-something PhD student in business management. She is recently married and expecting and has more commitments on her day-planner than most people could cope with. Rose is in her forties and has a large family of adopted girls with her partner, both of whom are retired from the military. In addition to being very active in church and tending to a large family, she teaches computer science at a local college. Like Rabbi Yehuda, Miriam, who is in her forties, grew up in an east coast family, but came west for education years ago and never went back. She was very active in the spiritual awakening and political work of the 80s in San Francisco, but came here seeking a slower lifestyle. Ralph is an elementary school teacher in his early 50s, who recently officially converted to Judaism after participating and being a stable member of the local Jewish community for nearly two decades while raising his two kids with his Jewish wife. Also a Jew-by-Choice, Jaime is a part-time graduate student and stay-at-home mother of two. She has been Jewish for over 10 years.

Type I interviewees have at least four characteristics in common, an action-based faith, theological liberalism, respect for clerical and organizational leadership, and a

strong belief in the intrinsic value of nature. The first is the belief that the God calls us to have a “faith in action.” As Rose said, “faith is pretty meaningless without any actions...like the song goes, they will know you are Christians by your love.” Pastor Tom explained:

Our founder said, ‘the world is our parish,’ there’s no part of life that’s not our legitimate concern as human beings. I’m always trying to connect what the church is saying with what is going on in the world, to find ways again to make our relationship with God right – how we are treating the earth, and workers, etc..... It’s about refocusing the stories of Jesus and understanding that they have to do with equanimity between people and a redistribution of wealth. Where those aren’t primary concerns of the Jesus story, it’s not a good interpretation.

Pastor Tom recognizes that his beliefs come straight out of the social gospel tradition of the Methodist church. Although a different religion altogether, and therefore a different theological foundation, Rabbi Yehuda and all four of the other interviewees expressed similar sentiments. Rabbi Yehuda explained, “my sense of Judaism is that it gets lived out in the details of life, and the details of life really measure what our contribution is to what we believe is the purpose of life.” While most people interviewed had definitive views about the question asking them to choose between bringing people closer to God and God’s plan or improving the society as we live in now, Rabbi Yehuda, turned the dichotomy completely upside down from the other answers. “They’re one in the same,” he said. (Many of the interviewees from the two theologically-conservative churches agreed, but said that if we bring people closer to God by knowing Jesus, it will improve society because they will be better people.) This was very different from Rabbi Yehuda, who said:

Improving society through the performance of mitzvot is what brings people closer to God and God’s plan. Judaism is about action. It’s about mitzvot, and so you can’t separate those two. There’s no way I could authentically say I’m bringing anybody closer to God and God’s plan unless we’re doing what I think our job description is here, which is to help God’s plan unfold by doing mitzvot.

Another member of the synagogue, Jaime, put it this way, “What does it mean to be a good Jew?” It means always striving to be a better person and putting your better self out in the world more, always being mindful of world dynamics and your community and your family and your actions.” Jaime’s fellow congregant, Ralph, has similar words, “As a good Jew, you dedicate yourself to social justice, to helping people that need help, to making sure that people that are downtrodden and low income or undereducated or disabled, or old, or too young, or just anybody that is struggling, gets help.” Clearly, the social gospel tradition evident in the responses of the Methodists is well matched by the focus on *tikkun olam* that characterizes all of the Jewish respondents.

The second characteristic shared by Type I interviewees is their theological liberalism (as many of the Southern Baptists or Nondenominationalists might define it). This is evident in responses like Candice’s and Rose’s. Rose admitted to reading an alternative to the Bible, which was more useful to her. Candice explained that the Bible works as an inspiration to her, but she doesn’t hold to it literally. Indeed, she said “I don’t really think it’s a big deal whether people are Christian or Jewish or Buddhist or whatever, if they’re living a Godly life. I don’t think it prevents you from going to heaven or whatever that little ultimate end state is that everyone likes to focus on.” This is in stark contrast to what many of the respondents from the other two churches would have said. Miriam, from the synagogue, talked about how the Torah contained a lot of “awful” stuff, and not all of it was for her, but that she finds it validating when something from the Torah confirms what she knows from her inner truth. “I’m just the kind of person who likes to find what works for me and be ethical in that and not conform to rules that don’t mean anything to me or that I don’t feel have a value. Not surprisingly, the lay interviewees from both congregations were more dismissive of their religious texts than their clergy, but compared to Pastors Dave and Jim, the two rabbis and Pastor Tom were definitely more willing to be unorthodox in their interpretations of their religious traditions. Rabbi Yehuda described the Torah as “essential” and a primary resource to turn to, but he also said that it is the “basic framework” and that it can be “pretty internalized” after a lifetime. Rabbi Yehuda’s willingness to explore a new kind

of kosher framework, Ethical *Kashrut*, as he calls it, shows his creativity in responding to his tradition. Pastor Tom acknowledged that “the Bible has become more and more important” to him, but that his work “redefining Jesus and the Jesus story” leaves him with a very different understanding of “salvation” and “the kingdom of God” than many other Christians. This willingness to engage in lateral-thinking about their faith-traditions is an important quality for the incorporation of environmental concerns into their religious belief systems.

The third commonality between the Type I interviewees is their belief in the responsibility of the clergy and the larger religious organization to provide leadership that challenges us. Candice explained that “it’s part of the role of religious leaders to help with moral guidance and help people to live a more religious life. They risk offending some people, but that’s part of the job.” Candice’s fellow congregant Rose has a similar response:

If you’re a leader, you have the responsibility to say what needs to be said, even when things will be disagreed with.... The consumer-driven society that we live in is so marketing and advertising oriented. I feel like that’s the primary drive in our society, so religious leaders should take a stand and counteract that.

Candice and Rose’s pastor, Tom, willingly takes on this role, though he acknowledges the challenge, since he might not stay employed if he gets too pushy with his congregants. He describes his approach:

What I try to do is to keep working from a Biblical approach, helping people in the church to clarify their values and our call as Christians. Hold those up and say, ‘okay, so whether it’s about what you do or how you vote, do your ethics match up with what you’re doing?’ I think that’s the responsibility of the church. That’s my responsibility, help lay a foundation for them, and just be really tenacious about it.

However, which values Tom wishes to clarify are quite different from his fellow pastors from the Southern Baptist and non-Denomination church. Tom’s response to the What Would Jesus Drive campaign illustrates this difference:

I say (to my congregants), look at these fundamental faith stories, what are they saying to you? Here, see that I drive an electric car. This is a faith choice for me. I'm not going to tell you what to do. I'm going to ask you what you're doing. I will not tell them that they are evil people, because when the rich man came to Jesus and asked him what he had to do for eternal life, Jesus asked him if he followed the commandments. And he said 'I've always done that.' He was a good guy. He was one of society's best. Jesus didn't tell him he was evil. First thing the story says, he looked on him and he loved him and then he said, 'you've got to sell your stuff.' And so, I have to love my neighbors and then say to them, 'you've got too much stuff!'

Pastors Jim and Dave would be more likely to emphasize the "follow Me" advice that Jesus gave in the Parable of the Rich Man (Matthew, 19: 16-30).

Pastor Tom and both rabbis agreed that clergy and religious institutions have a role in shaping people's choices. Both of them strongly disagreed with the statement, "religious leaders should not try to influence people's day-to-day consumer and lifestyle choices (like the kind of food we buy, the cars we drive, etc.)." "I think the biggest task of congregations is to become places where responsible ways of life are formed," said Pastor Tom. Rabbi Yehuda likened it to the traditional kosher practices of a synagogue:

I think it's the role of religious leaders to educate about underlying values, that religion is about helping people understand our role in creation, our place in creation. If we understand that we are here as caretakers of creation, not as exploiters of creation, then if we understand that framework and get information about how to carry out our job description, then we'll connect the dots.... The central institutions of a faith community serve as models. In traditional kashrut, synagogues typically would have a higher standard of kashrut than the individual members of the community, because you want to make it high enough of a standard that everyone should feel included in the community and so that it's a collective model.

All three of the Type I clergy expressed the extra weight that is placed on them by taking a stand on issues. Pastor Tom talked about the importance of owning a completely electric car (a Gizmo) so that his actions spoke louder than his words. Rabbi Chaim related his experience feeling pressure from the congregation when purchasing a new car, to get one that lived up to the congregation's expectations of him. Rabbi Yehuda

acknowledged how conspicuous everything in his grocery cart becomes since his congregants know his values about organic and non genetically-modified foods. But he sees that “inner tension” as “indicative of a healthy social covenant. We are points of reference for each other. I’d feel awful,” he said, “if I had something that was pure garbage, and bumped into somebody that I respect as a committed person around these mitzvot.”

Lastly, all of the Type I respondents believed that the more-than-human world has intrinsic value. Candice’s comments when asked about the contested verses in Genesis that White and others use to link Judeo-Christianity with environmental neglect, reflect her view of nature. Her humorous comments are also indicative of the liberal (or more flexible) theology that characterizes many of the Methodist and Jewish congregants:

In terms of using the creation story as a metaphor, there was a lot here before us, and I don’t think we are the one great crowning thing that overrules everything. I think God’s responsible in whatever way, whether it’s in creating the Big Bang or whether it’s guiding evolution or whatever the Spirit does. We’re not all there is to that. For example, God created mushrooms, because God wanted mushrooms, or you know, God allowed mushrooms to develop or God started the spark that would lead to mushrooms, because mushrooms are important in and of themselves, they’re not important only as a way to make my salad taste better!

While Type I folks believe that nature does have intrinsic value, they do not have the purely bio-centric perspective of deep ecology. Rabbi Yehuda explained that

a person should always have in his pockets, two messages. One, ‘this is all created for my sake.’ And the other, ‘I am but dust and ashes.’ We don’t have to float above the ground that we walk so lightly on the earth that we don’t derive from it the blessings and the benefits that it has for us, but I trust that we can do that in a way that also preserves and cultivates creation, that honors the artist. If I desecrate a beautiful piece of artwork, I can’t very well say that I’m honoring the Artist.

Type I interviewees were not the only ones to share this perspective, but it seemed particularly sincere in their cases, rather than just a reluctant concession. The most striking counter example is Pastor Dave of the Nondenominational church. His comments initially sound just like Rabbi Yehuda, but the tone is very different:

I do think there is the concept in there that God created the earth and so there's the philosophy that, anything God's given you, you should take and use it wisely, and responsibly, and for the glory of God. So, obviously, polluting a river with toxic waste is not responsible, it becomes immoral and wrong, because what God has given you, you have destroyed, but...I don't think any part of Genesis is the interpretation or the commandment about an environmental issue.... Somewhere in between, we need to find the middle ground, because everything has a consequence, and when I view the consequences of the environmental movement, I view them as wrong.

Throughout his interview, Pastor Dave made it clear that he felt that "the environmental movement has lost sobriety." So while on the surface his comments about respecting the earth because God created it, sound similar to Rabbi Yehuda's and other Type I respondents, it was evident that this was not a guiding principle in his life.

Pastor Dave, his congregants Sonya and Paul and Pastor Jim and Carmelle are examples of Type II, people who participate in a congregation without FBE and who show no personal predilection for FBE. Sonya and Paul are in their 20s, and have both dropped out of college (perhaps temporarily) to "do full-time ministry" on a leap of faith. They are living on contributions from friends and family as they pursue God's plans for their lives in a moment-by-moment way, heeding the call to help homeless youth, preaching the gospel, and spending lots of time in Christian fellowship. Carmelle, from the Southern Baptist church on the other hand is a matter-of-fact teacher's assistant, married with three girls. She followed her husband out here from the south, "because the woman has to follow her husband and submit and all that stuff." Her father was a pastor and she teaches children's Bible school at their church.

Type II interviewees have two main themes: relationship and scripture. When these five interviewees talked about their faith, their main emphasis was on their personal relationship with Jesus. Many of the people from the Nondenominational and from the Southern Baptist churches opposed the use of the word "religious" on the surveys. They crossed the word out and replaced it with "spiritual" or "follower of Jesus" or "committed

to Christ.” The interviews helped flesh out the strong distinction they feel. When asked what it means to be a good Christian, Paul responded:

Since the beginning of time... God's had one desire, to have a personal relationship with man and woman. He just wants to know us personally. Sin got in the way. Just simply choosing something besides God, and therefore we couldn't dwell with God and then He comes and dies for our sins so that now it's not up to us being good or bad, it's up to us accepting Jesus. ...a good Christian is someone who just walks with god, spends time with Him, hears His heart, studies the scriptures and lets God minister to him.

Sonya's words show just how personal that relationship is:

Being a Christian means that you acknowledge that Jesus was the true son of God and that He was crucified and raised from the dead by the power of the Holy Spirit and that He's still alive today...And not only acknowledging that, but having it in your heart and having a relationship with him, just like I have a relationship with my parents, I talk to them, we do things together. It's like that with the Holy Spirit too. You need to talk to the Holy Spirit, tell Him your worries and your fears. So I guess being a good Christian would just be up-keeping that relationship...Say, hey, look Buddy, You are God of the universe and you died for me and so I'm going to in turn, serve you with my life and try and tell the world now what you've done for me.

While the other respondents did not actually call God, “Buddy,” or liken God to their parents, Sonya's response typifies the personal nature of their spiritual relationships.

This focus on their personal relationship with God shapes their faith in two important ways. First, in the age-old debate between faith and works, works loses. Questioning the people in Type II about faith and works elicited some very value-based judgments. For example, consider the Catholic-bashing displayed by Sonya when asked what she thought about the debate between faith and works:

We were just doing a Bible Study on that last night. It's kind of confusing, because a lot of people think that Catholicism is a sect of Christianity, when they pretty much are two different religions, and so I know that Catholics believe that you do need works, that you need religion, you know, like stand up, sit down, do your communion, do your rosary prayers, and all that stuff to be saved, but in Christianity, it is

purely by grace that we've been saved. But I think that through your faith, that good works should just happen.

When pressed to define what those good works would be, Sonya gave examples of listening to God, letting go of personal desires, and letting other people know about the good that God has brought into her life. The other interviewees in Type II also defined works in terms of evangelism, in stark contrast to the Type I, where people were focused on social issues like poverty, justice, and the environment.

The other question that was designed to help make clear distinctions between respondents was from the survey. Respondents were asked to choose whether a religious person should concentrate on "bringing people closer to God and God's plan, or improving the society that we live in now." Interviewees had an opportunity to elaborate on this topic, and it was stunning how their answers seemed almost verbatim. Pastor Dave said, "bringing people closer to God and God's plan," and without a pause added, "but of course then society would be better, just by definition." From a different congregation, but with the same idea, Carmelle said, "our main purpose is to try to bring people closer to God and His plan, but I think sometimes when you do that, you do actually improve the society." When respondents were pressed to explain why that would improve society, many explained that by being close to God, people would stop lying, cheating, doing drugs, etc., the absence of which would make a better world. Paul's response to this question highlights the evangelical nature of his faith-over-works belief:

Bringing people closer to God and God's plan... I just think that's the only thing that matters. For instance, if I go to Guatemala, and just build all these houses and feed all the people, that's great, but 70 years from now, all of them are going to be dead. But if I go there and I tell them about God, and that's all I do, then they die and they have eternal life. But if I go down there, and I help them at the time or I tell them about God and *just out of love*, help them, that's even better. So I think that the greatest thing is to bring people to God so that they can have eternal life, but I think that right after that, as a sign of love, improving society is great.

The distinction is that Paul believes, like the others in Type II, that good works will just fall into place if you have a relationship with God. He was careful to emphasize “out of love” meaning that he does not see the works as a required part of his faith.

The second outcome of this personal relationship emphasis, is the professed absence of collective rules. If God desires personal relationships with us, than what He asks of each of us is different. Even though Paul expressed several environmentally-sensitive opinions throughout the conversation and tries to bike rather than using his car when possible (partially for environmental reasons), he still disagreed with the What Would Jesus Drive campaign’s suggestion that it is morally irresponsible to drive “gas-guzzling SUVs.” He explained his opposition as follows:

I’m an avid follower of Jesus, and He went to the Sadducees and Pharisees, and they’d put on so many rules. They were all about these rules and all these works that the people were just bogged down trying to obey everything, and no one could possibly do it all, and I think that he came to say ‘hey, it’s not about any of these things...It’s really about knowing God, loving God and loving your neighbor, that’s what it’s about. So, if I, or someone else, thought it was not loving to drive a gas-guzzling car, ... if that was in their conscience, then hey, don’t do it, but I also wouldn’t want to become like the Sadducees and Pharisees and just bogging people down with ‘this is wrong.’

Carmelle from the Southern Baptist church seemed bewildered by the notion of religious leaders talking about cars as moral issues. “What a person wants to drive should be their business... I guess if they can afford to put gas in it, you know, that’s their business.” Even after being told why some religious leaders feel like it is connected to their Christian morality, she maintained that, “It’s still their opinion. It’s just between them and God, basically.”

As a pastor, Dave was concerned that if clergy or the church tries to influence people too much, it would create a system of “legalism. When you start trying to follow rules and regulations, you get really messed up. So that’s why I think I want to influence people’s ability to make decisions based on scripture.” Pastor Dave gave examples using issues of drinking, modesty, and R-rated movies. Though he personally believes in

abstaining from R-rated movies and alcohol, and he believes that women should dress modestly, he does not believe in telling his congregants that they “should” necessarily adopt these same personal rules. “That’s what God has put in my heart, that’s my conviction, but I can’t necessarily place that conviction on someone else.”

However, Pastor Dave and others do feel like they can speak to some issues. They define issues as “moral” if they feel the issue has clear scriptural support. Pastor Dave was so bothered by what he perceived to be the lack of scriptural support of the What Would Jesus Drive campaign that he called the endeavor “heretical.” This emphasis on scripture is the second main characteristic of Type II interviewees. Southern Baptist Pastor Jim’s response to the What Would Jesus Drive question was markedly different from Pastor Dave. Jim agreed that there were some reasons for disliking SUVs. Besides environmental concerns, he saw them as materialistic and a waste of money, which could be better spent on mission work. However, “it (the SUV issue) certainly wouldn’t be something that I would major on,” said Pastor Jim.

My responsibility has so much more to do with the moral issues.... It’s not real prudent for us to be doing some of these things (driving/buying SUVs)... but you’ve got to keep in mind, that you’re dealing with individuals, and I would not be one to stand at the pulpit and preach about what people should drive, even though I may have my personal opinions on some of these things, and I do. But I do not think Jesus would be overexcited about what camel I would ride. He didn’t say a whole lot about that, or whether I should walk or ride. My issues are more from what I think is a Biblical base, and what people drive, I don’t think that’s one of the major issues that Jesus would want me to focus on.

Sonya agreed that driving a “gas-guzzling” SUV was environmentally irresponsible, but said that it wasn’t morally irresponsible. The difference? “Morals are more on a person to person level.” And these moral issues come directly from the Bible. She was a little wary of religious leaders talking about social issues. She agreed that it was “okay, just as long as it wasn’t just his opinion. Because as a religious leader, it’s your job to know the scriptures and teach the scriptures. So as long as he was telling what the scriptures say about the issues, that’s fine.” The issues that she could come up

with that would be appropriate for a religious leader to speak about were the death penalty and abortion.

The impact of this scripturally-specific morality is a focus on different kinds of sin. All of the respondents from the two theologically conservative churches (including those in Type III), focused on the more traditional “sins” such as gambling, lying, drinking, pre-marital sex, homosexuality, and drugs, issues that they believed had a scriptural basis for opposition. Many of them do not believe that the social gospel/*tikkun olam* focus has the same level of textual support. Pastor Jim, who was familiar with the term “social gospel,” explained:

Social gospel churches... do not necessarily preach a real strong Biblical doctrine. They are more involved with meeting social issues, feeding people, clothing people, providing as much help as they can for people, and that's not to say that every church should not be a church that tries to provide as much help as they can, but to me sometimes I feel that they spend so much time trying to meet social needs that they neglect to proclaim the basic need as far as spirituality is concerned, and that is that people need Jesus as their personal Lord and savior, and that to me is my primary goal. ...I feel (they) are too weak in preaching the Biblical aspects, and probably some feel like we major too much on preaching the Bible and not enough in the other.

Without realizing it, Rose, from the United Methodist church responded to the criticisms of Pastor Jim and the others in Type II:

Well, I don't think that the Bible can refer specifically to things in our current time, because how would they have known what to refer to back then... but I think that if you know that you were supposed to take care of the planet... because God said so... you can infer, make intelligent, educated guesses... Just because the Bible doesn't refer to it specifically, doesn't tell me anything about how to behave. There's a ton of things that you can infer direction on from the Bible that aren't specifically (mentioned). Are we waiting for specific directions? Please!

It is worth noting that all of these Type II sins are personal, individual sins, which matches their personal-style faith. This stands in stark theological contrast to the perspective of the Jewish and Methodist respondents. Judaism by nature emphasizes a shared responsibility. The penitential prayers at High Holidays are said as a community

to remind worshippers of their collective shortcomings. Likewise, the United Methodist church, coming out of the social gospel tradition, is also more focused on collective responsibility. Pastor Tom's comments about the What Would Jesus Drive Campaign are indicative. As he tries to remind people in his Voluntary Simplicity Sunday School class:

*This isn't about you. It's not about individuals. It's about us. It's about the culture we've created. It's about being caught up sometimes in things that we feel we have no control over. It's too easy for Americans to feel guilty about our effects on the rest of the world, but not do anything. It's just an excuse that goes along with our individualism. And so I find myself emphasizing with people, it's not about you, it's only about you as part of us, what we're doing together as a culture. So, they're not *not* about individual actions, but they're only about individual action as part of a community.*

Pastor Tom picked up this theme later in the interview several times and added that when encouraging people to make lifestyle changes, it is necessary to provide them the support needed to face the barriers from work, family, children, or the larger culture.

Furthermore, this communal-centered understanding of sin opens us up to responsibility for different types of problems than the traditional sins listed above. Pastor Tom explains:

I think when Jesus told stories like about the prodigal son or the rich man or Lazarus, that he was telling a story to classes and groups within a society, to call communities and to call the people to change as a people. Our first interpretation is that it's about our personal trials, our personal stories, and my story doesn't have anything to do with yours. (That's) the language that I hear whenever I wander into pockets of our congregation or Christian communities that are widely different than mine – that intense focus on personal behavior, drinking, smoking, dancing, playing cards is what we used to talk about, and now it's still the 10 commandments in terms of not violating the morals of the community, which is very self-serving. It doesn't even have the language to talk about the systemic evil and injustice. It takes systemic responses and solutions.

The Type II interviewees were not inherently anti-environmental. Though Pastor Dave and Carmelle demonstrated clear discomfort with the environmental movement, Pastor Jim, Sonya and Paul all made comments in their interviews that showed

environmental concern. The difference between their environmental sensibilities however, and those in Type I, was the spiritual/religious basis. Pastor Jim spoke vividly of growing up in Oklahoma and witnessing how oil wells poisoned the land and destroyed God's creation. Paul spoke of his love for being in the woods and rock climbing, his efforts to eat organic food and how it does not seem right to clear cut the forests. Sonya was quick to volunteer that we need to care for and respect God's creation, for example by not burying nuclear waste, but she would not extend that belief to say that environmental issues are religious matters:

The focus is on the person and the relationship between the person and God, so I think we need to respect the environment and we need to take care of it, but church is more focused on the spiritual part of life. If someone happens to be a Christian, and they happen to be totally involved with the environment, that's fine, but it's not necessarily a Christian thing.

In sum, for Type II interviewees, concern about environmental issues is fine, but it is not mandated by their religious faith, and would only be a matter of personal preference or conviction. Furthermore, since most of their spiritual energy is focused on developing personal relationships with God, there is little time (if any) to devote to motivating people's behavior in what they see as non-scriptural issues.

The individuals categorized as Type III demonstrate the three characteristics identified as markers of FBE, but are not in a congregation with any FBE activity. Amanda and Dan are members of the Southern Baptist church and Ruth attends the Nondenominational church. Amanda, 50, is single and does not have kids. She returned to the church a couple of years ago after not participating since she was a child. She has a high school education and is currently looking for work. Dan is a retired schoolteacher in his mid-70s and has been a Christian since returning from service with the Navy as a young man. He got his first degree at a Bible college and is a Gideon and a leader in his church. Ruth is approaching 60. She is a retired secretary and mother of three. Ruth is not typical of the Nondenominational church because most of the congregants are in their 20s. She was part of a church that lost its pastor and merged with Pastor Dave's original Bible study to create the new congregation. Despite her age difference, she likes being

with the young vibrant fellowship. She has a lifetime of experience as a Christian, including a previous marriage to a minister.

Dan, Amanda, and Ruth all see environmental issues are important concerns, and take steps in their own life to try to be better environmental citizens by buying some organic food, driving less, and recycling conscientiously. Though Sonya and Paul also demonstrated some environmental behavior, the Type III people are distinguished by their religious beliefs about the environment. Each of them expressed a strong belief that we are commanded to protect God's creation, and they view the state of the environment as a religious matter.

During her interview, Ruth very emphatically crossed off the option, "God created the world for us to use as we see fit" and said with great enthusiasm:

That is so self-centered! God created the world so we could use it as we see fit?!? In Psalms it says He is going to call you on the carpet and make you give an account for how you've used the world. And in Revelation and in Psalms it says, 'hurt not the trees.'

When asked if Christians should care more for the environment, she agreed and said that they "should treat it as precious" and "be more aware of the fact that it's not an un-ending blessing that we have; you can use it all up." Ruth believes that her environmental concerns are a result of her generation and her mother's efforts to teach her not to be wasteful. Later in life, she made the religious connection. "...A dawning awareness came as I read the Word, the Bible, and found out that God is concerned with His creation, very concerned. And so of course that makes me concerned, as a follower of God."

Dan also traces his environmental beliefs back to childhood experiences and generational attitudes about waste. He can remember as a boy, "the old-timers who remembered seeing passenger pigeons" before they went extinct. Like Ruth, he believes that God has given us clear instructions to be good stewards of creation. He cannot separate his environmental beliefs from his religious ones, because "there's nothing separate from the spiritual" in his life. "Anything that happens to a Christian has a

relationship to God,” he explained when asked if there was a connection between our relationship to God and our relationship with the environment. He continued, “God doesn’t want us to ignore stuff, and if we do, we are not being as close to God as we could.”

Because Dan is a pre-millennialist, theological conservative, he has to come to terms with the potential ideological conflict between his belief that God calls us to care for creation and his belief that this world will be destroyed by God and a new one built in its place. Unlike the famous comment by James Watt, Dan sees no inconsistency between his pre-millennial perspective and his environmental concern:

Yes, it’s going to be destroyed, but it’s been going on for a lot of years and we don’t know how long it’s going to have to continue. And we should give to our next generation at least as good as we have gotten. I’m not sure what heaven’s going to look like, (and) God can reestablish everything that He chooses, but as long as we’re on this earth, I think we’ve got a responsibility to hand down what we get.

Amanda’s ideas were less formed and she had not necessarily thought through the connections between her religious faith and her environmental concerns. This might be partly due to the newness of her faith, and the fact that no one had ever asked her questions about this topic before. However, she demonstrated that she had no trouble fitting her existing environmental concerns about wetlands, endangered species, and pollution into the framework of God’s creation:

I think he commanded us to protect the world, but I don’t think we’re doing a very good job right now.... Environmental issues could be religious, like trying to save endangered species and stuff, because they’re God’s creation. And they have every right to live, just like everybody else, and ...I think man’s become a very selfish person. They want the land to build and an animal should have a right to live, and a plant should have a right to live, because God created them first to enjoy and we’re just taking them away. It’s almost like a slap in the face to God.... I’m sure He’s probably shaking His head, thinking ‘man’s become a selfish nation. They keep taking away from things I created.’ And I’m sure He’s not very happy about it.

A subtle yet distinguishing difference between Type II and Type III is the somewhat greater tolerance for clerical leadership. Unlike the Type II attitude that clergy should refrain from trying to influence their congregants about social issues, the Type III respondents were a little more comfortable with this kind of leadership. In stark contrast to her Pastor, Dave, who described the What Would Jesus Drive campaign as “heretical,” Ruth said, “I’m glad it’s come out. Maybe it was the right approach, because it’s got people to think about it.” Dan’s response was similar:

I think that when people feel that they have an issue that relates to something in Christianity, I think it is well for them to ask us to question ourselves about that...I think we should all think about things that deal with what we’re doing to our world, how people see us, and other things. It’s well to call it to our attention.

Dan believes that since “big money in this country tries to influence” everything, it is essential for everyone else to take an oppositional stand, including clergy. This was reminiscent of Rose’s comments that someone needs to counteract the advertising and marketing pressures in society, and who better than clergy.

Although Dan, Amanda, and Ruth share the fundamental traits of FBE with the people in Type I, they are much closer in most ways to the other people from their churches, in Type II. Like Type II, they are generally very theologically conservative (each of them brought up the sinfulness of the “gay lifestyle” for example), and focused on a scripturally-based faith over social works. Dan was quick to point out that:

a Christian is a Christian by Faith, period. There is nothing that I can do, have done, or ever will do that can satisfy God as far as my person is concerned. I have to have the salvation by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. That being said... as far as works are concerned, works should come out of that. If I love God, He’s got enough stuff to do around this old earth, people need love, they need care and He doesn’t have hands and feet except for anyone who belongs to His family.

And like the people in Type II, their examples of Christian works were mostly evangelical, like visiting congregants in the hospital, doing “faith presentations,” reading

the Bible, refraining from traditional sins like drinking and cussing, and spreading the gospel.

Whether it is inherent in their theologically conservative faith, or is an outcome of participating in their churches, Dan, Amanda, and Ruth also displayed the same staunch individualism characteristic of Type II. Even though they personally believed there was a connection between their religious faith and the condition of the environment, they wanted to make sure that expectation would not be placed on anyone else. Ruth was concerned that if clergy pushed their opinions too much, she would feel like she was in a cult. Immediately after saying that God commanded us to protect the world, "which entails recycling and watching what kind of vehicle you drive," she qualified it by saying, "but it's a very personal thing. If God hasn't told you, then I don't think it would help for me to tell you. Who do I think I am, God?!" Amanda spoke at length about how SUVs are a sign of greed and a status symbol that God does not care for, but when asked if it was okay for religious leaders to make a statement about that, she hesitated. "I don't know. They have their right to their opinion, just like anybody else. (If they did), it would probably go in one ear and out the other, 'cause everybody's got a right to their opinion."

Despite their similarities with the other respondents from their churches, Amanda, Dan and Ruth are distinct because of their enthusiastic personal connection between their religious faith and their concern for the environment and their greater (though far from absolute) tolerance for leadership from clergy. However, just having the foundational characteristics of FBE (care for creation, belief that environmental issues are religious matters, and evidence of environmentally-conscious behavior) is not enough to produce faith-based environmental activism. Their intense individualism, focus on faith over works, and most importantly, their participation in congregations without any interest in actively promoting FBE are roadblocks for greater development of their ideas and behavior. When asked if she could imagine FBE activities at her church, Ruth figured that the youth were already probably doing it. Upon learning that they were not, she remarked:

well, maybe not in an organizational way, but maybe in a way that really counts, like in their own backyards. We have an amazing garden... so that's probably happening in hundreds of homes... but I don't know if there's anything going on in the church. Pastor Dave is probably pretty busy with other stuff. But it is very important.

Amanda theorized that maybe the only reason it was not happening at her church was because "maybe the word just hasn't gotten out, like 'hey, I heard that this church is doing it, what do you think? Maybe we could treat our environment a little bit better. ... Something like that could happen at our church. ... It'd be kind of neat.'" On the other hand, where Ruth and Amanda could imagine their churches participating in FBE activities, Dan's comments show how his personal beliefs about FBE would not extend to a congregational level. Although he demonstrated a lot of concern about the environment and connects that to his religious faith, even to the extent that clergy could speak to these issues, he still sees the role of the church differently. Comparing his church to churches with congregational demonstrations of FBE, Dan explained:

I think it's where we place the emphasis of the purpose of God's church in the world. Jesus did say, 'Go out into the world and teach others what I taught you.' Preaching the Gospel... and that's the focus of our church. If God gets a hold of us, we'll go along with how we ought to. Any of these situations that come up and are called to our attention, perhaps we'll take a look at it from a Godly standpoint, but we don't feel that the church is in the world to clean up the world. It's in the world to save sinners.... churches that go in for that are more involved ... in dealing with social affairs, where ours is dealing with the spiritual.

The last type of person (IV) is characterized by Norman, from the United Methodist Church. Norman, 70, is a retired successful businessman with family ties at the Methodist church that go back three generations. He described himself as a conservative republican and was happy to offer what he assumed would be an alternative perspective to the other people interviewed from his church. Though probably more conservative than most, Norman actually fit in quite well in his congregation. In describing what it meant to him to be a good Christian, he explained:

I suppose it entails things like following the 10 commandments, not only looking at self, but helping others. I think it's a bit of a lifestyle. I think it's a belief in something greater out there than self. I think there is probably a life of some sort here-after. I don't know what it is, and I'm not really concerned about it.

His liberal theological foundation combined with his belief that it was more important to concentrate on "improving the society we live in now" places him comfortably within the ranks of the Methodist church, if not always on the same side of the fence politically as most of the other congregants. "I think if people take an active issue on things they feel very strongly about and are willing to be counted, I think that's important," said Norman, "but so many of the things people take very strong, I'm probably a little bit on the other side."

Norman agreed that taking care of the environment just made good practical sense. He cited Chernobyl, littered rivers, and polluted oceans as reasons why we should take better care of the environment, but despite belonging to a church where the clergy give Earth Day Sunday sermons and makes other connections between faith and the environment, Norman did not see it as a religious issue any more than many of the Type II people did. "God has created or given us this abundance, let's use it intelligently, in a broad sense, and don't screw it up."

Norman shares the fiercely individualist style that characterizes type II and type III people, but also acknowledges that Pastor Tom's efforts have had an impact on him. To put it simply, Norman might not like leadership, but it is working. When it is a question of having clergy tell people what is right or wrong, he is leery about being "dictated to by a religious leader, like the Catholics are, you've got to do this, you got to do that, you can't do this, you can't do that... That's my choice." He recognizes and respects that his pastors, Lynn and Tom "have strong beliefs about the environment and farm workers and things like that," but he claimed not to be impacted by it. When asked if "religious leaders should not try to influence people's day-to-day consumer... choices (like the food we buy)," he responded:

Well, our associate pastor does this quite strongly. I'm not offended by it, but I don't react to it necessarily. Though in a few cases, when you're able to buy certain things and you pay your money and get a crate of blueberries, I'll do that, because I like them. But as far as getting active in the farm movement, that doesn't appeal to me. It's not my deal....I respect Tom that he's got strong issues on this. That's neat, but I'm not that dedicated to these issues. I can't disagree with some of the things that he's said, but I let some of it just kind of go over my head. I don't think that to be in a church, you have to grab on to everything and do everything. I like choices. And if there are people that want this, and the church provides it, I think it's terrific.

Norman's comments suggested that Pastor Tom's efforts (like his goal of signing congregants up for participation in CSAs) have no effect on him, but upon closer reflection, they do. He acknowledged that he wasn't quick to react to new things, and he was not ready to financially commit to participation in a CSA yet, but "maybe two years from now, I'll try it. I might try it." To think that there is even a possibility that this fiscally and politically conservative 70-old would consider joining a CSA, is evidence that Pastor Tom is having an impact.

Key Themes from Interviews:

Social Gospel/ Tikkun Olam Orientation and Clerical Leadership

Dividing the interviewees into the four categories shows that the initial attributes used to describe faith-based environmentalism in the *previous chapter* (care for creation, belief that environmental issues are religious matters, and a high level of environmental responsibility) are not enough to produce active involvement. The quantitative survey data showed that congregants with a social gospel/*tikkun olam* orientation were more likely to display the fundamental attributes of FBE. Moreover, it showed that the congregation's orientation was as powerful as *individual orientation*. The *in-depth* interviews provide a far more detailed picture than the quantitative data could alone, but point to the same conclusions. One of the key differences between Type I and Type III interviewees was the split between faith-in-action and a faith built on personal

relationship. The other important distinction was the role of clergy (as seen by themselves and by laity).

Although Type III interviewees had the foundational elements of FBE, simply having them did not lead them to be active as such. The intense individualism of their personalized faith is a roadblock to institutionalizing their belief that the environment is a religious issue. As Ruth explained after saying that SUVs would be morally irresponsible for her, but not for others, "We have a personal God... I wouldn't put that on other people, because who knows where they're at with God... I'm not saying that they're wrong, maybe that's what God has them doing." This prevents the people in Type III from organizing around their faith-based environmental ideas. Their focus on a personal faith also means that their energy is spent trying to develop others' personal relationships with God. Acting on their ideas about the environment would take time away from their primary purpose. Despite Dan's committed ideas and behavior, his role as a Gideon would take precedence over any opportunity for religious environmental work.

The Type III interviewees, by definition, are not in congregations (or in contact with clergy) that are motivated by environmental concerns. Having slightly more tolerance for institutional leadership (than Type II) does not make a difference if they are not experiencing that leadership. Interviews with Type I individuals made it clear how crucial the leadership role is.

In a modest way, Pastor Tom acknowledged that despite the fact that there were already a good number of people interested in environmental issues when he arrived at the church, they were not organized. He started organizing the ministry around creation care issues. "It would not have happened without my having experience in doing this," said Pastor Tom without ego, and "the response has been overwhelmingly enthusiastic and positive." Rose agreed that the institutional leadership is crucial:

They (our pastors) give us avenues and opportunities to actually work at those projects inside the church organization. The church is an instrument for me to actually make things happen that I believe in.... (But,) there's got to be some catalyst somewhere, someone who is able to articulate it in a way that causes people to see that it's true, and that they need to

change.... Pastor Tom is the person in this congregation who really is the strong driver of this. He has the personality and connections to make it happen.

Jaime, provided an example from her previous synagogue in Tennessee of the profound impact a clergy can have:

We had a really hot debate going at the synagogue about gender neutral text, and I was all over the idea that God does not have a penis and shouldn't be referred to in that light and the Assistant Rabbi was all over that too. The rabbi was raised conservative and was a conservative guy himself and didn't see any problem with it and listened to debates and pretended to engage in discussion, but just didn't see it as an issue. But then a series of events happened and he had a change of heart and decided that it was important, and all of these people in the congregation who had been on his side and flat against this change, 'we're not changing our text, I've referred to God as king all my life and I'm not going to change it now...', within a week of the rabbi changing his stance, all of them followed!

Like Jaime's old rabbi, all of the interviewees from the synagogue agreed that Rabbi Yehuda and Rabbi Chaim had a powerful impact in the community. Miriam pointed to the efforts to build the new temple with environmentally friendly features, and how Rabbi Yehuda's enthusiasm was encouraging even the most resistant members of the population. The rabbis on the other hand deflected the spotlight. They explained that the key to success was in setting up committees so that it is not only the rabbi speaking on these issues. Rabbi Chaim said:

If the rabbi is saying it over and over again, and only a few are listening, it won't go very far in terms of effect, action, and accomplishment.... But if he's developing committees and constituency, and education, which I believe is going on here, it will go somewhere.

Rabbi Yehuda admitted that the power of starting committees was an important thing for him to discover:

If it's just the clergy speaking like 'Oh, I've got truth from the mountaintop here folks!' who can hear that? It has a very hollow ring, but... if it's the community that's saying, 'this is what we hold as a value.'

...then real change comes about....The formation of committees is really very essential for good communal transformation around these issues.

While the rabbis may place the emphasis on committees, the effort is still a result of clerical leadership. If Pastor Tom or Rabbi Chaim had not established the committees or provided them with the spiritual guidance, it is far less likely that they would have flourished. As Candice explained, “they have more biblical knowledge and are more aware of the connections between our faith and life than we are, so we look to them.”

Dan, Amanda, and Ruth exemplify the importance of clerical leadership and the theological tool of social gospelism or tikkun olam. Though they display the foundational attributes for FBE, their personal, religiously-inspired beliefs in taking care of the environment do not expand to full faith-based environmentalism in action, because they lack the theological and community support for an outwardly-focused faith.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

Global warming, toxic waste, polluted drinking water, deforestation, invasive species, desertification, biodiversity loss, acid rain... The litany of environmental concerns keeps getting longer, and even while the likelihood of catastrophe continues to rise, we fail to change course. Max Oeleschlaeger calls it the “paradox of environmentalism.... Problems keep piling up, but despite knowledge of them, western culture has not thus far been willing to dramatically alter our practices in a way to prevent this continued downhill slide” (1994: 21). Oeleschlaeger and others put great faith in faith to solve the problem:

The question that confronts environmentalism is how to promote discourse that empowers widespread citizen involvement, deals with the ethical issues posed by the ecocrisis, and politically empowers a social movement toward sustainability. The church... is the most likely place for this to happen, since every tradition of faith has resources to support an environmental ethic that cares for creation (Oeleschlaeger, 1994: 81).

Religion can help people begin to change daily practices that have adverse ecological effects... (and) change the lay of the political landscape, primarily through the election of leaders who are genuinely rather than rhetorically responsive to ecocrisis (p. 6).

Oeleschlaeger is correct that every faith tradition is equipped with the raw tools to care for creation, but is that enough? The research presented in this paper agrees that neither Judaism nor Christianity is inherently anti-environmental. The vast majority of the faithful believed that God calls us to protect the environment and respect it as God’s creation. However, only a very small percentage of religious communities are doing anything to tie their faith to environmental concerns. The examples that exist are intriguing: fundamentalists calling themselves Jesus People Against Pollution and fighting for Superfund site clean-ups in Missouri, local congregations turning lawns into vegetable gardens for the poor, Christians protesting car dealerships with placards saying

“What would Jesus drive?” Nevertheless, for as many congregations and people as are engaging in faith-based environmentalism (FBE), there are many more that are not doing anything.

If organized religion is going to answer Oelschlaeger and the many others who believe that it can help us turn the tide on environmental collapse, we must encourage more people of faith to respond. But first, we must understand why some respond while others fail to be connect environmental issues with their religious beliefs. It is necessary to know what variables contribute to active congregational FBE.

The interviewees analyzed in this study often had their own ideas about why FBE is or is not present in given congregations. Some said that is just a side effect of living in a town like Eugene. This study showed however that living in an environmental-friendly city does not predict FBE. There are plenty of congregations in Eugene that are not involved in any kind of FBE, furthermore, based on the attendance at the Cool Congregations event, there are some green congregations in Springfield as well.

Secondly, this study shows that FBE is not just a side effect of an active, growing (revivalist) congregation. The Nondenominational church is a revivalist congregation, yet there is nothing happening there. Likewise, the United Methodist church which is not growing, provides plenty of opportunities for congregants to adopt new environmental behavior and/or explore an environmentally relevant topic.

Some interviewees theorized that like-minded people stay together, and congregations will either be green or brown in personality as a result. However, interviews with respondents like Norman, Dan, Amanda, and Ruth show that there is always a diversity of opinion within a congregation. Pastor Tom and Rabbi Yehuda both spoke to the tension involved in balancing the competing perspectives and desires of subpopulations within a congregation. Phil Zuckerman’s book *Strife in the Sanctuary* (1999), detailed how a previous rabbi from the same synagogue left for that exact reason.

A fourth possibility is that FBE is simply a factor of para-denominational leadership. Do congregations that are part of the NRPE affiliates (COEJL, NCC, EEN, USCC) have access to FBE materials which inspires their activism? Though para-

denominational support does appear to be somewhat helpful, it does not entirely predict FBE. Organizations like NRPE or the Interfaith Network for Earth Concerns (INEC) that is part of Ecumenical Ministries of Oregon (EMO) help says Pastor Tom, “by designing resources and encouraging our congregations to celebrate Earth Day Worship... those are the tools that make it less risky in some ways for clergy and other religious leaders ... to try something in the church that might make some people unhappy.” However, Shibley and Wiggins’ (1997) work shows how few of the churches that received materials from the NRPE actually make use of them. And in Pastor Tom’s own case, he acknowledges that despite a sizeable group of people that were interested in the topic in his congregation, nothing was happening until he arrived and initiated it.

While the theories presented above were shown to be null hypotheses, this study specifically aimed to evaluate the effects of clerical leadership and the theological tools of social gospel/*tikkun olam* as essential components of FBE. Analysis of the survey work shows that a “worldly” faith orientation (a marker for social gospel/*tikkun olam* type theology) is a strong predictor of the foundational attributes of FBE in individuals (care for creation, belief that environmental issues are religious matters, and high level of environmental responsibility). The faith that is preached and practiced at the United Methodist church and the Reconstructionist synagogue is one of action. God is in the details according to Rabbi Yehuda. Much like Guth and Kellstedt (1993), the analysis also shows that regardless of an individual’s orientation (worldly or individualist), simply participating in a worldly congregation increases ones likelihood of demonstrating those foundational attributes of FBE. Context is a powerful factor. Part of context is the leadership of the clergy. What direction are they taking the congregation? And is the congregation receptive? The survey data showed that people who are more receptive to clerical leadership about political and consumer issues, are also more likely to show signs of FBE.

The qualitative analysis of the in-depth interviews supported these conclusions, and fleshed them out more. Hearing people speak in their own voice about their faith priorities helped explain why some people (and congregations) would be less likely to

engage in active FBE. The inwardly-focused, personal-relationship nature of Christianity among the Nondenominationalists and the Southern Baptists makes it difficult for their adherents to tackle environmental issues from a religious standpoint. Even when they personally have strong environmental ethics, like Dan, Amanda, and Ruth, they are loath to place those particular values on other people of faith. Their focus instead remains on what they perceive to be scriptural sin (alcohol, sex, cheating, gambling, homosexuality, etc.) and matters like salvation. Even though Dan, Amanda, and Ruth (and for that matter, everyone, including Pastor Dave who was particularly anti-environmental in most of his sentiments) were able to identify scriptural support for taking care of creation, they did not perceive environmental irresponsibility as “sin” or “scriptural.” This is in part due to a lack of reinforcement from their clergy, who have not helped them make these connections. The clergy from the other two congregations however were very actively leading their communities to consider the environment as a faith issue. The laity and the clergy agreed that the FBE work that was occurring in their congregations was a direct result of the vision of their leaders, even when many people in the congregation already shared similar ideas. Indeed, there needs to be a big enough sub-population in the community to support the clergy’s interest. Ruth may not be enough of a contingency from the non-denomination church to provide Pastor Dave with the necessary support should he choose to explore FBE with his congregants. The survey data from the Southern Baptist church however shows that if Pastor Jim was interested, he may have a little bit more of a foothold. Nevertheless, Jim’s primary focus on saving souls prevents him from spending time on side issues.

The results of this study indicate that while religion does offer some promise for our environmental crisis, it may not be significant or far-reaching enough to have the power that Oelschlaeger and others would suggest. The roadblocks to FBE are too big for a significant number of religious Americans. Sure enough, despite its promise, very little has happened with FBE in the last couple of years. Organized religion in America has been organizing around other topics as of late. While it does show the power of religion to impact social change (11 states passed gay-marriage bans due to the push of

conservative Christianity on November 2nd, 2004), it also leaves the environment out of the picture. The small number of Christians who were not swept away in the anti-gay frenzy have been actively working to defeat such efforts. This leaves faith-based environmentalism a long ways from the agenda.

However, despite the fact that FBE offers less hope than some would like to suggest, that does not require abandoning it. The condition of our global environment calls for support wherever it can be found. Though FBE may not be the “only” or the “best” means for inspiring the cultural change that will improve our relationship with the environment, it is definitely one path. Therefore, it is a path that requires further study in order to understand the best ways to reach people. Future research should include more qualitative work that seeks to better understand how to reach non-mainline Christians. The presence of the Evangelical Environmental Network indicates that there are inroads to FBE from other perspectives than just mainline Protestantism, like United Methodism. Grizzle *et al* (1998) suggest that the work of the EEN is also associated with the social gospel tradition. A qualitative study could determine if the theological tools they are using might be more easily adopted by congregations like the Nondenominational and Southern Baptist ones in this study.

APPENDIX A
QUANTITATIVE SURVEY

The following survey with attached (preceding) cover letter was used in the four congregations to gather quantitative data and find willing interviewees.

The following survey is part of my UO Master's thesis research project on religion and environmental attitudes. It should less than 10 minutes to complete and is entirely voluntary. The surveys are completely anonymous, and the results from the survey will be aggregated before sharing with interested parties to honor your confidentiality. Your participation would be very helpful for me, and I would sincerely appreciate it. Please return your survey to me when you are finished. My primary advisor is Dr. Marion Goldman, UO Department of Sociology (346-5167).

Thank you very much for your time,

*Gretchen Lieberman
Master's Candidate (U of O)
Office phone #: 346-5003
Email: ghughes@darkwing.uoregon.edu*

*In addition to the survey, I hope to talk more with some members of the congregation to round out my research. If you found the questions on this survey interesting, I would appreciate having a chance to talk with you more. If you're willing to participate in an interview, please put your name and contact information below. I'll keep this confidential, and I'll be the **only** person to contact you. Detach this sheet and turn it in separately from the survey*

(Optional) Name: _____ Contact info: _____

- 1.) To what extent do you consider yourself a religious person? Are you . . .
 very religious ▪ moderately religious ▪ slightly religious ▪ not religious at all
- 2.) How often do you attend religious services?
 never ▪ less than once a year ▪ about once or twice a year ▪ several times a year ▪
 about once a month ▪ 2-3 times a month ▪ nearly every week ▪ more than once a week
- 3.) Do you take part in any of the activities or organizations of your church other than attending service?
 no ▪ yes (if yes, what?) _____
- 4.) How important is the Bible/ Torah* in helping you to make decisions about your life.
 very important ▪ important ▪ somewhat important ▪ not very important ▪ not important at all
- 5.) How important are the teachings of your church/synagogue* in helping you to make decisions about your life.
 very important ▪ important ▪ somewhat important ▪ not very important ▪ not important at all
- 6.) How much do you agree or disagree with the following: I try hard to carry my religious beliefs over into all my other dealings in life.
 strongly agree ▪ agree ▪ neither agree or disagree ▪ disagree ▪ strongly disagree
- 7.) Circle the phrase that you feel best completes this statement: A religious person should concentrate on...
 ▪ bringing people closer to God and God's plan.
 ▪ improving the society we live in now.
- 8.) How much do you agree or disagree with the following: Religious leaders should not try to influence how people vote in elections.
 strongly agree ▪ agree ▪ neither agree or disagree ▪ disagree ▪ strongly disagree
- 9.) How much do you agree or disagree with the following: Religious leaders should not try to influence people's day-to-day consumer and lifestyle choices (like the kind of food we buy, the cars we drive, etc.)
 strongly agree ▪ agree ▪ neither agree or disagree ▪ disagree ▪ strongly disagree
- 10.) How much do you agree or disagree with the following: Religious leaders should not try to influence government decisions.
 strongly agree ▪ agree ▪ neither agree or disagree ▪ disagree ▪ strongly disagree
- 11.) Do you think that religious organizations in this country have too much power or too little power?
 far too much ▪ too much ▪ about the right ▪ Too little ▪ Far too little
 power power amount of power power power
- 12.) How often do you think about environmental issues (like pollution, global climate change, endangered species, waste, resource use, etc.)?
 all the time ▪ often ▪ sometimes ▪ not very often ▪ never
- 13.) How often do you make a special effort to sort glass or cans or plastic or papers and so on for recycling?
 always ▪ often ▪ sometimes ▪ never
- 14.) How often do you make a special effort to buy food grown without pesticides or chemicals?
 always ▪ often ▪ sometimes ▪ never
- 15.) How often do you cut back on driving a car for environmental reasons?
 always ▪ often ▪ sometimes ▪ never
- 16.) Circle the statement that most closely matches your perspective.
 ▪ God created the world for us to use as we see fit.
 ▪ God commanded us to care for and protect the world.

17.) Circle the statement that most closely matches your perspective.

- Environmental issues are religious matters.
- Environmental issues are not religious matters.

18.) Are you familiar with any of the following organizations? Circle Y (yes) or N (no).

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| Y | N | ▪ Christian Environmental Council (CEC) |
| Y | N | ▪ The Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life (COEJL) |
| Y | N | ▪ Evangelical Environmental Network (EEN) |
| Y | N | ▪ Interfaith Council for Environmental Stewardship (ICES) |
| Y | N | ▪ Interfaith Network for Earth Concern (INEC) |
| Y | N | ▪ Interfaith Climate Change Campaign/Network |
| Y | N | ▪ The North American Coalition for Christianity and Ecology (NACCE) |
| Y | N | ▪ The North American Coalition on Religion and Ecology (NACRE) |
| Y | N | ▪ National Religious Partnership for the Environment (NRPE) |
| Y | N | ▪ Northwest Jewish Environmental Project (NJEP) |
| Y | N | ▪ Oregon Interfaith Power and Light |
| Y | N | ▪ Religious Campaign for Forest Conservation |

19.) What is your gender? male ▪ female

20.) How old are you? 10-19 ▪ 20-29 ▪ 30-39 ▪ 40-49 ▪ 50-59 ▪ 60-69 ▪ 70-79 ▪ 80+

21.) What is the highest level of education you've completed?

- some high school ▪ high school ▪ some college ▪ bachelor's degree ▪ graduate degree

* = The words "church" and "Bible" were used in the Christian congregation surveys and the words "synagogue" and "Torah" were used in the Jewish congregation.

APPENDIX B

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- 1.) Personal background: age, school, married, kids?
- 2.) How long have you been coming to/participating at ____congregation____? What made you first go and why have you continued?
- 3.) What does it mean to be a good Christian/Jew? (Is that how you wish to identify?)
What do you think God asks of us?
- 4.) *For Christian respondents only:* I know in Christianity there can sometimes be a debate between the importance of faith and works. How do you answer that question.
- 5.) Talk through survey that congregants filled out to get in depth responses.
 - a.) Voting pamphlets at church?
 - b.) Personal responses to particular environmental issues?
- 6.) Some people believe that it is the role of the religious leaders to make social statements; others believe it is not appropriate at all.
The Washington Post has been running a survey asking the question: *Do you agree or disagree with religious leaders who say it is morally irresponsible to drive a gas-guzzling vehicle?* People have had the opportunity to write in and share their opinions. What do you think about that? Are there certain social issues that would be appropriate for a religious leader to teach or promote a particular response to? Can you give some examples of social issues that you've seen religious leaders take a stand on? Are you comfortable with that kind of guidance coming from religious leadership?
- 7.) When you hear the word "environment" what does it make you think of?
Do you see any connection between our relationship to God and our relationship with the environment?
- 8.) Lots of people, particularly students and academics, look at the Genesis text 1:26 and 2:11 for an understanding of how Judaism/Christianity views the environment. What do you think the text says about the environment? Are there other important textual lessons? If Torah/the Bible isn't so important to you, where do you get moral/ethical guidance with regards to the environment?
- 9.) Do you think there's any concern about caring too much for the environment as Jews/Christians?
Do you think that Jews/Christians should be more concerned about the environment?
What would that entail?

- 10.) Have you ever felt like your religious leaders have influenced you to have any opinions about the environment or environmental matters? How so?
If yes, how did you feel about that? If no, how do you feel about that?
- 11.) *For people that demonstrate FBE qualities:* Which came first for you, your religious beliefs or your environmental concerns? Do you think one has influenced the other or has involvement with one of them lead to more of the other?
- a) what are the effects of umbrella organizations, denominational, and congregational leadership?
 - b) Where do you get your ideas about *religious* environmentalism? Books, religious classes? Friends?
- 11.) Why do you think some congregations are more environmentally aware/active than others (and some not at all)?
- 12.) Pseudonym?
- 13.) Other comments/questions

Questions Specifically for Clergy:

- 1.) Tell me how you came to be a pastor/rabbi?
- 2.) What do you think your most important responsibility is as a pastor/rabbi?
- 3.) What does the term "social gospel" mean to you?
- 4.) *For Christian clergy:* I know in Christianity there can sometimes be a debate between the importance of faith and works. What can you tell me about that?
- 5.) Can you give some examples of social issues that you do or don't take a stand on?
Is that privately or as a religious leader?
- 6.) As a religious leader, do you feel like you have ever encouraged your congregants to care about the environment? How so?
If yes, what was the response? Were people enthusiastic? Were they resistant?
If yes, what made you decide to do that? Did it come from you or did people ask you to focus in that direction? What people?
If no, why not?
- 7.) Are there any books or publications that you can think of that would be helpful for me to read to better understand your perspective on this topic?

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