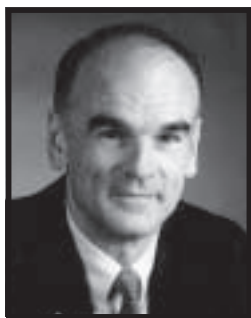


## Free Markets Best Protect the Environment



### Interview: Hon. Donald P. Hodel

A longtime advocate for the free market's role in resource management, the Honorable Donald P. Hodel served President Ronald Reagan as Under-Secretary of the Interior, Secretary of Energy, and during President Reagan's second term, Secretary of the Interior. He is currently a consultant in the energy and natural resource field.

***R&L: Now that communism has been defeated and discredited, many see radical environmentalism as the next great threat to freedom. Do you agree with this analysis?***

**Hodel:** Yes, and I define radical environmentalism as a mechanism for permitting the collectivist mentality to feed its impulse to control society. In other words, there are very valid environmental concerns we all care about; I've never run into anybody who isn't an environmentalist. No one wants dirty air and water or wants to pass on that condition to his or her grandchildren. But radical environmentalism seeks to alter the form of government and in the name of the environment imposes on individuals the kinds of controls

we fought against in the name of economics, such as the collectivism of communism.

***R&L: But people are afraid that allowing the market a freer reign will endanger the environment. What is the role of the market with regard to environmental issues?***

**Hodel:** Human behavior affects the environment, whether under collectivism or freedom. The impact of communism on the environment is now proven to be demonstrably worse than anything we have seen in this country in at least fifty years. On the other hand, capitalist countries—the United States, Western Europe, and developing countries outside the communist bloc—

reached a stage where quality of life became enough of a concern that people took steps to protect or to improve their environment.

In one sense it is a problem of the commons; if nobody owns something, nobody takes care of it. In fact, there is a school of thought that is well-documented and quite scholarly that says the best way to protect the future of national parks, wildlife refuges, and wilderness areas is to convey the ownership of them to groups that are dedicated to the operation and protection of those kinds of properties.

***R&L: Can you cite some other examples of how private property protects the environment?***

**Hodel:** A good example is the Audubon Society's Rainey Wildlife Sanctuary. On this refuge the Audubon Society has permitted drilling for and production of natural gas in a way that is absolutely compatible with the management of a good refuge. It has generated revenues that have helped the Audubon Society not only operate that refuge

**INSIDE THIS ISSUE • Interview:** Hon. Donald P. Hodel ☺ **Articles:** "Have Dominion Over All These" by John Michael Beers, and "Shining a Light in a Dark Place" by E. Calvin Beisner ☺ **Review Essay:** "Earthkeeping through Markets" by Peter J. Hill ☺ **Book Review:** Peter A. Laird on *The Cross and the Rain Forest* ☺ **Column:** "Our Stewardship Mandate" by Rev. Robert A. Sirico ☺ *Plus Book News.*

but also do many other positive things.

There are other ways private property protects the environment. One way to protect an endangered animal is to allow it to be hunted. The hunters will protect it and see that it increases in number. Ranchers who own rangeland are always trying to enhance it. If rangeland isn't owned by anyone, it isn't in anyone's interest to spend money to improve or protect it.

Timber owners are the same way; if they own forestland, they want it replanted so they can harvest the timber again in the future. People who provide wilderness experiences in parks and wildlife refuges—fishing and hiking trips, backpacking, and horseback riding—are in a practical sense among the most concerned environmentalists I've ever encountered. They don't want people to trash wilderness areas because they're their livelihood. They care about them.

**R&L:** *So it's less ideological and more personal.*

**Hodel:** Absolutely. It's based on a real human response that recognizes that their personal benefit is tied to

the maintenance of a quality experience that will bring back next year's customers.

**R&L:** *What are some examples in which government intervention has actually harmed the environment?*

**Hodel:** Perhaps one of the most serious examples right now is that

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there are indications that some of these clean-burning automobile fuels—gasolines that have been touted for the purpose of reducing carbon monoxide emissions—may have carcinogenic effects. If it's true, it's a perfect example of the law of unintended consequences. You seek to solve one problem here, and you create a different and perhaps more serious one over there.

Another one I experienced per-

sonally while I was Secretary of the Interior was when Yellowstone Park burned. That fire was partly the result of a longtime policy of the Department of the Interior and the National Park Service to fight man-caused fires but not naturally caused fires, and also not to do anything in the park that altered the natural windfall, loss of limbs, and so forth, from trees. The result was that over the decades the park had a forest that was getting older and older, trees were dying and becoming standing snags waiting to be ignited by something. When this combined with long dry spells and high winds, the resulting fires ultimately burned over half that park.

**R&L:** *Do I recall that they allowed it to burn?*

**Hodel:** The initial response was to follow the original policy: Fight the man-caused fires and only observe and monitor the natural ones. The park service very quickly realized that this was a very serious situation and decided to fight all the fires. We ended up spending a hundred million dollars, had nine thousand men on the fire lines and almost four hundred fire engines in the park, and,

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as I say, ultimately more than half the park burned. There was one day when the fire jumped fifteen miles. There were situations where the fire was starting half of a mile in front of the flames. We couldn't put fire fighters in front of it for fear they would be engulfed by the flames and killed. There is an argument to be made that the government's policy helped create this situation.

Another totally different example: The United States has imposed strong environmental restrictions on things like oil refineries, pipelines, and exploration for oil and gas on United States soil. By intervening in this fashion and looking only at the effect in the United States, we are forcing these activities to go overseas. If we really care about the environment, we would look at the consequences of shutting down a refinery in the United States, where the restrictions on the operation are very stringent, and permitting it to be built someplace in the world where the restrictions are nominal. The net result to the world environment is much more pollution than if we allowed the refinery to be maintained in this country under our rigid rules.

Oil tankers are probably one of the more hazardous activities because occasionally a tanker will stray, run aground, and break up—and we know about the large spills that creates. Statistically, drilling for oil is vastly less likely to cause a spill and damage the environment. So theoretically, if we were, in fact, concerned about the environment rather than serving some other purpose, we would produce oil from domestic wells rather than increasing our dependence on imports and requiring more tankers. But our policy is one hundred and eighty degrees in the opposite direction. It's crazy.

***R&L: Another major theme of environmentalism is that the human population is growing past the capacity of the earth's resources to support it. Population control—birth control and abortion—is therefore called for. Do you think this is a legitimate concern, and to what extent does biblical faith support or refute it?***

**Hodel:** The concern about overpopulation is an old, old impulse. In a way it is supremely arrogant for someone to say that because he is unable to imagine how the world will cope with greater energy, population, and food demands, then the ability to meet those demands does not exist.

For example, the Club of Rome produced a report in the late 1970s that argued we were running out of everything from clean air and water to energy resources. The fact is that analyses done more recently have shown that since the Club of Rome's report essentially all the significant resources it identified as supposedly running out have increased. There

that we would soon be able to shut down the patent office because essentially everything that could be invented and patented had been. That was before they had issued one million patents; the last time I checked there were over four million.

***R&L: What about the spiritual component in environmentalism? Many environmentalists speak of their cause in religious terms. To what extent is radical environmentalist spirituality compatible with orthodox historical Christianity?***

**Hodel:** It's fundamentally incompatible. As I understand it, spiritual environmentalism is, in Christian terms, idolatry.

I have testified before Congress on several occasions. On one particular occasion I was testifying with regard to how the Department of the Interior had managed its wilderness areas. I found that under both Republican and Democratic secretaries the total number of improper intrusions into the wilderness areas of the United States totaled something like

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I am better able to be responsive to my God and His teachings in a free society than if I am in a controlled society where somebody else who may not share my stewardship view is in charge.

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is known to be more oil in the world, more natural gas, much more coal, and there is definitely more clean water and air in the United States than there was twenty years ago.

In other words, all the trend lines, in fact, have not run the direction they were predicted. It's like the classic story about the head of the U.S. patent office who in the 1890s said

five hundred. Of those, only one was serious enough actually to mar the area, and that one had been restored so that no one would be able to know it had been marred.

I thought, *Well, I'm in great shape for this hearing.* I went to the hearing, and the reaction to my testimony was incredible. It turned out that going to that hearing and say-

ing “Look, we have repaired the only serious intrusion, and the others haven’t been serious” was like telling an orthodox Jew that someone treading on the site of the Holy of Holies was inconsequential because it had left no footprint. That wilderness area turned out to be sacred ground in the eyes of the chairman and some of the other questioners, and it had been desecrated by entry that was not authorized. When I finally realized that, from there on I cast all my responses at that and future hearings with the recognition that I was dealing with people for whom this had become their idol.

The appeal of pantheism and nature worship is that because it is a human construct, God becomes whatever humankind says God is. If a person constructs his god, then his god will do and say and be what he wants him to be. I think it’s an age-old desire to be God or to control God, and quite contrary to the Judeo-Christian God of Scripture.

**R&L:** *Would you say it’s an accu-*

of the creation of the world.

**R&L:** *Man’s stewardship of creation is a primary biblical theme. How can we faithfully observe this mandate from both an orthodox Christian and free-market perspective?*

**Hodel:** The Judeo-Christian tradition does impose stewardship obligations on us, both as individuals and as nations. The stewardship obligation is that we are not placed in charge of the environment to destroy it but to be stewards of it. It is such that if I follow the mandates of my faith, I will be a good steward of the environment. Furthermore, I am better able to be responsive to my God and His teachings in a free society than if I am in a controlled society where somebody else who may not share my stewardship view is in charge. The government may not want anything to do with the concerns of stewardship, but people in a free market can band together to protect property.

I love to point out to people that the national park system in this

passed on for the enjoyment of future generations.

Now, by the way, with the changing environmental ethic and the worship of nature rather than the appreciation of nature, there is a significant constituency who believe that only the elite should be allowed to visit a national park. They want to reduce and restrict access unless one happens to be very wealthy and can take advantage of some of the high-cost options for entry. To my way of thinking, that is a total distortion of the original and proper intent of the national park system.

**R&L:** *There is a great deal of activity in different churches calling for involvement in environmental issues. What is the appropriate role of the Church with regard to environmentalist activism?*

**Hodel:** It is an appropriate role for individual Christians, but it is not an appropriate role for the Church. The Church’s role is to worship God and to evangelize. The movement to involve the churches is, in my opinion, coming from people who are world population-control advocates. In a sense, this is the modern serpent. We should be very concerned about the view that man is a cancer and the world would be better off if man were eradicated.

God tells us something very different in Scripture—that we’re created in His image. He also imposes on us the obligation of stewardship, although we have often failed to discharge it. For the Church to become involved in environmentalism is to turn the Church into a political organization in cahoots with people who are supporting the worship of something other than the God of Scripture. A

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We should be very concerned about the view that man is a cancer and the world would be better off if man were eradicated. God tells us something very different in Scripture—that we’re created in his image.

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**rate characterization of some of the more radical environmentalists to say they presuppose the only unnatural thing on the planet is man?**

**Hodel:** Yes, I would. Their vision of the world is that it was perfect until man came. This stands in contrast to the Judeo-Christian teaching that the creation of man was the completion

country was not only begun by, but has enormously benefited from, private individuals who either bought land and donated it to the park system or contributed money to purchase property. The national parks initially were largely the result of philanthropic people who saw great natural areas they felt should be enjoyed by existing generations and



# Have Dominion Over All These

John Michael Beers

I recently visited a friend of mine in Tuscany, an American artist named Shelly Goldstein. Shelly paints impressionist landscapes of the Tuscan countryside, with plenty of poppies, olive groves, herds of oxen, orchards, and usually the remains of an ancient *torre*, or an isolated chapel already centuries old when Columbus was a boy in Genoa, or off in the distance a typical little Tuscan town perched on a hilltop. Shelly paints in other parts of the world as well—Africa, Hawaii, New England, and the American Midwest—but I have never found his portrayal of those parts of the world as appealing as his depiction of the Tuscan countryside. During a recent visit, Shelly explained to me what he thinks I must find appealing in his Italian work; he said that what I see in his Tuscan landscapes is the hand of man who has worked upon the divine creation. That hand, which has developed the environment, is absent in most of his work in Africa, Hawaii, and even in his New England landscapes, all depictions of primitive, untamed nature.

As the hand of God formed all from nothing, He has entrusted His creation to the hand of man to do something with it. This is the purpose of creation: that man develop what God created. That is what I see and admire in the Tuscan orchards, vineyards, olive groves, and the herds of cattle and oxen; they are planted and led by human hands.

They have not lain fallow; human stewardship is evident in their development. Even the wild poppies spring up in the midst of human order. Here we see man and nature in harmony as God intended.

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As the hand of God formed all from nothing, He has entrusted His creation to the hand of man to do something with it. This is the purpose of creation: that man develop what God created.

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The Tuscany of Shelly Goldstein's paintings is not at all far-removed from the Umbria of Saint Francis of Assisi, embraced today as the patron of most environmental and ecological movements, but what is the relation of man to nature in the thought of Saint Francis and in Shelly's art? The oxen portrayed are not in the preserve of some PETA commune; rather, they are in the employ of farmers. In fact, Shelly portrays some employed by Franciscan friars in the tilling of their fields. In other words, work animals legitimately make possible the livelihood of farmers, including those Franciscans whose simplicity of life demands that they be self-supporting and develop the environment for their use and livelihood, as intended by the providential hand of God.

This true stewardship of creation, as admirably embraced by the Fran-

ciscan friars and depicted by Shelly Goldstein, entails the responsible use of the gifts of creation. A good steward does not coddle the resources entrusted to him and let them lie fallow and undeveloped.

Rather, he uses them, develops them and, most appropriately, attempts to the best of his ability to realize their increase so that he may enjoy his livelihood and provide stewardship for the good of his family and other dependents.

In the area of business, for example, the employees are dependent upon the stewardship of their employer who has invested his capital so they may be engaged to the mutual good of both the employer and the employees in the enterprise of realizing their livelihood—impossible were there not good and responsible stewardship. A profit from stewardship is clearly shown in Scripture as an appropriate good as Christ commends the “good and faithful servant” for stewardship that realizes a profit in contrast to those “faithless” ones who have buried their treasure or have merely returned the original resources with no increase.

## Responsible Stewardship

In *Free Market Environmentalism*, Terry Anderson and Donald Leal give some excellent examples of responsible stewardship. The International Paper Company, for example, employs specialists to oversee wildlife preservation and development

on its lands, including the sixteen-hundred-acre Southlands Experiment Forest, outside Bainbridge, Georgia. Here IPC researchers develop forest management practices that enhance wildlife populations as well as corporate profits. The habitat for white-tailed deer, turkeys, rabbits, and quail is improved by controlled burning and tree-cutting practices that provide needed coverage and plenty of forage for wildlife, a greater benefit than if they lived in the wild. This stands in stark contrast to the abusive hand of man in the deforestation of northern Michigan a century ago, when loggers were concerned solely with their immediate profit, with no thought to the needed replenishment of those resources. Today's responsible stewards now enjoy both financial profits and the satisfaction of contributing to environmental preservation and enhancement.

In Nebraska, Sandhills Outfitters, Inc., offered a profitable alternative

passed down over generations—the ownership of which was threatened by the previous underuse—at a still greater profit than previously realized through tax-supported government subsidies. All the while the environment is both developed and protected, with wildlife allowed to flourish on a preserve considerably more supportive than if they were left to predators in the wild.

North Maine Woods, Inc., was formed to offset problems from recreational use of land, such as soil erosion, overcrowding, littering, and the constant threat of forest fires. Registration fees and camping permits (ranging from two dollars per day to seventeen dollars for a whole season permit) generated revenue sufficient for the construction and improvement of campsites, a trash collection system, and public education on the environment. Clearly, the efforts here to make the environment more accessible at rates affordable to everyone, while protecting the eco-

ties. As these goods rise in value, entrepreneurs will make efforts to capitalize on profit opportunities by establishing property rights. In many cases, however, government interferes with the private sector's potential by distorting markets and erecting institutions that make it prohibitively costly to establish private property rights to natural resources."

### Man, Creation's Greatest Resource

Nothing could be further removed from the faith of Judaism and Christianity, that faith of Saint Francis of Assisi, than the New Age worship of the environment. In the Judeo-Christian tradition that spans nearly four millennia, Saint Francis rightly stands above all other religious thinkers for his high regard and love for the environment, but he acknowledges that nature is no more than the gift of the Creator, given for human domination, development, and stewardship. God the Creator is alone deserving of worship. Like all Christians, Saint Francis knows that of all creation only humanity has been ennobled by the Incarnation; it was the Father's will for our salvation that his Son should be one of us, a human being.

For a single human being to starve or to lack the means of livelihood because of deference shown to any other created being, animal, or plant, is a denial of the dignity that humanity alone enjoys, that dignity that Saint Francis recognizes to be uniquely the highest in all the created order. Many environmentalists will present the depletion of the Amazon rain forests as an argument for creating nature preserves to be kept free of all "unnatural" human intrusion. This, however, is nothing more than a "straw man" argument, for they refuse to acknowledge that



"The most valuable resource in all creation of course remains the human person, who alone of all creation has the potential for renewing resources."

—John Michael Beers

to ranchers who were in danger of losing their ranches because of the drastic decline in cattle prices. In 1987, they leased hunting rights to more than one thousand acres of private ranches, which provide a habitat for waterfowl, pheasant, sharp-tailed grouse, and prairie chicken. Families are able to maintain ownership of property that has been

system, are more successful than the much touted but tax-subsidized, efforts by the Department of the Interior and the National Park system.

As Anderson and Leal observe: "These examples suggest that it is not a lack of entrepreneurship that is preventing the private sector from producing more outdoor recreational and environmental ameni-

nature has, in fact, over millennia depleted these forests to a far greater degree than has the human use and development of these resources; this is the natural order of things.

Likewise, the systematic replenishment of these resources through responsible human stewardship has resulted in a far richer and balanced ecosystem. Roberto Calmanowtiz, the president of IVECO, the biggest producer of cartons in Brazil and one of the largest in the world, is fully conscious of his responsibility to replenish the natural resources from which his profitable product is derived, while making possible a livelihood for hundreds who would otherwise be reduced to certain poverty in the barrios.

It is not "Earth in the Balance" but unbalanced reasoning that finds the most common expression in the ecological and environmental movement. As advanced by environmentalists, the refusal to develop a resource such as the rain forest would tragically result in the loss of employment for hundreds of thousands of workers. The workers are the descendants of the aboriginal workers of that land and can rightly lay claim to making their livelihood from that land, made possible only by the investment of others' capital. Lacking this, they in turn would be unable to provide a livelihood for themselves and their families, resulting in poverty so great that the family itself is threatened as the poor worker is forced to consider contraception or abortion as his only alternative to bringing a child into this life of poverty. Thus, the value put on the environment is made at the expense of human life itself.

The natural replenishment of resources looks for its mandate to a beneficent Creator. The most valuable resource in all creation, of

course, remains the human person, who alone of all creation has the potential for renewing resources. Sadly, this fact is lost sight of by those who promote the destruction of human life in the womb, thereby diminishing the potential for renewed natural resources. With the loss of human life through abortion, there is in economic terms also the loss of the most

seph the Worker:

"*The most important product of work is man himself.* Through his own activity, man forms himself as he discovers his own abilities and puts them to the test. At the same time, he gives himself to others and to society as a whole. Thus he establishes his own humanity through work, and becomes in a certain sense a gift

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As a worker, man has an *opus* to perform; as such, he can be said to be a cooperator with God, who as Creator of the *opus* that is the universe, must be the archetypal Worker.

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valuable natural resource, the one that can alone replenish other resources.

#### The Gift of Work

Not only does this extreme sensitivity for environmental matters endanger human life and jeopardize human livelihood, but it denies the human person his dignity as advanced with consistency in the Judeo-Christian ethic. Work of itself seems to be part of the original divine plan; otherwise, God would not have charged man with domination over creation. That requires and presumes work on the part of man. It is only with his Fall that man brings upon himself the "sweat of the brow" as a human consequence of the divine gift of work. Work is not a punishment; the sweat is. As a worker, man has an *opus* to perform; as such, he can be said to be a cooperator with God, who as Creator of the *opus* that is the universe, must be the archetypal Worker.

Pope John Paul II put this perfectly in his Address to Workers on March 19, 1994, the feast of Saint Jo-

seph the Worker.

As the Pope knows too well from his own experience of totalitarian regimes, work can be dehumanizing, so he is concerned to add:

"Work should be carried out by man for man. Only then does it correspond to the proper order. Otherwise the Creator's plan is foiled and destroyed."

Man rising to the fullness of his humanity exercises those original gifts in the garden: the human mind, each other, and nature, exercising rightful dominion over these of which the Creator has said: *Omnia dabo vobis*. In his responsible stewardship of nature, man enjoys his God-given dignity. A

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**Rev. John Michael Beers, Ph.D., S.S.L.,** is a priest of the Diocese of Allentown and a member of the Acton Advisory Board. An associate professor of homiletics and systematic theology at Mt. St. Mary's Seminary, Emmitsburg, Maryland, he is currently completing his third doctoral dissertation in historical theology at the Pontifical University of Saint Thomas, Rome.

# Shining a Light in a Dark Place

E. Calvin Beisner

To anyone familiar with its vast and growing literature, the environmental movement seems dominated by darkness. Consider the messages of just a few of its more vocal segments:

- The biological egalitarianism of the “Deep Ecologists,” whose founder, Norwegian ecosopher (philosopher of ecology) Arne Naess declares, “*the equal right to live and blossom* is an intuitively clear and obvious value axiom. Its restriction to humans is an anthropocentrism with detrimental effects upon the life quality of humans themselves.”

- The mystical, gnostic, and New Age thinking of the Gaia Hypothesis, popularized by James Lovelock in *The Ages of Gaia: A Biography of Our Living Earth*, which some environmentalists have incorporated into a modern pantheism.
- The unremitting charge by many environmentalists that historic Christianity, with its belief that God made man to subdue and rule the earth (Gen. 1:27-28), is fundamentally responsible for environmental degradation.

Confronted by these challenges, it is tempting for Christians to throw up their hands in dismay at the entire environmental movement. But those who do are making a big mistake, first because it will not just disappear, and second, because thoughtful Christians should contribute to the environmental debate. And some are doing just that.

Many evangelicals, like the Evan-

gelical Environmental Network, are contributing to the discussion by offering an attractive and persuasive alternative to the anti-Christian thinking that underlies much environmentalism, whether secularist or New Age.

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Many evangelicals are contributing to the discussion by offering an attractive and persuasive alternative to the anti-Christian thinking that underlies much environmentalism.

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Ronald J. Sider, a founding leader of the Evangelical Environmental Network, wants Christians to recognize the religious dimensions of environmentalism as an open door for evangelism. “I think we shouldn’t miss a very important evangelistic opportunity here,” he said during one radio talk show. “There is a very important change going on in our society. The intellectual community used to be very secular and naturalistic and didn’t believe in anything other than what science could talk about. There’s a groping for spiritual meaning and depth going on in our society [now]. But only if Christians get out there with a full Biblical faith and show how it meets the things that they’re struggling with can we really respond....”

Sider is right, and he and various other evangelical environmentalists have thoughtfully set forth how

Christian faith and ethics offer the best solution to environmental problems. Perhaps the best effort at this is Richard Young’s *Healing the Earth*, which deftly and winsomely answers both secularist and New Age attacks on Christianity as promoting environmental degradation and explains why Christianity offers the only worldview that simultaneously upholds human dignity and leads to sound environmental stewardship.

Sider, Young, and others in the evangelical environmental movement rightly insist that neither a secularist, technicist worldview nor a New Age, mystical, pantheist worldview can provide an adequate foundation for environmental reform. The only real solution must be based on a truly biblical understanding of God, man, and the cosmos, one that recognizes both the sinfulness of man and his inescapable responsibility for earth stewardship.

However, while there is much to commend about evangelicals’ contributions to environmental understanding, there is, as in any human endeavor, room for improvement.

## Does Nature Know Best?

First, though evangelicals rightly criticize the worldviews of secular and New Age environmentalists, their own understanding of environmental problems would be improved by more thorough and careful development of their own worldview. For example, while they



rightly emphasize that God's creation was good (Gen. 1) and that human sin often degrades it (Gen. 3), they rarely discuss another important biblical teaching: that in response to man's sin God *cursed* the earth, subjecting it to corruption, decay, and unfruitfulness (Gen. 3:17b-19). When they mention the Curse at all, they usually confuse it with the Fall or admit confusion and disagreement about it. But the Fall was man's act; the Curse is God's, and it has important implications for how we view the natural world.

Properly distinguished from the Fall, the Curse implies that the universe is not now as it was when created (unmixedly good) and that man's sin is not the only thing that has changed it. God's curse has, too. It has made the world hostile to man, naturally unfruitful by comparison with its original fruitfulness, and full of death and decay. Consequently we should not expect, as environmentalists frequently insist, that "nature knows best," or that left to itself, nature knows what to do and it is this "looking after itself" that is nature's mark. Like their secular and New Age cousins, evangelical environmentalists have a tough time admitting that nature by itself can do anything harmful. Yet as self-professed liberal Democrat environmentalist Gregg Easterbrook details in *A Moment on the Earth*, nature's destructive powers far outstrip anything humanity has done or can do.

While some evangelical environmentalists have rightly emphasized the cosmic effects of redemption in Christ, they have failed to tie those effects, as the apostle Paul did, to the Curse, showing that although God did indeed curse the earth He did so "in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the

glory of the children of God" (Rom. 8:20-21).

### Misuse of Scripture

Second, though evangelical environmentalists generally have founded their thinking on major themes of Scripture, and though they have effectively refuted the charge that the cultural mandate of Genesis 1:27-28 supports human domination and exploitation rather than wise and accountable development of nature, often they misuse specific texts in their attempts to claim biblical authority for their views. Consider two examples:

No doubt many land uses are abuses, causing widespread harm to habitats. Such harm deserves condemnation, and ordinarily forethought would recommend quite different uses. But in zeal to condemn such activities, evangelical environmentalists sometimes misapply Scriptures. Thus, in *Ecology and Life* Wesley Granberg-Michaelson

*tion of the environment*," and Calvin DeWitt cites it as applying to "global toxification" by discharge of chemicals into air, water, and soil. But the passage names not wasteful, destructive environmental practices as the sins that defiled the land but idolatry, spiritual rebellion, and infidelity to the covenant (Jer. 2:5b-8, 13), and it explains that God, in judgment, has sent foreign invaders (v. 15; cf. 4:6-7) and drought (3:3), making the once fruitful land "formless and empty" with "no people" or even birds, "a desert" with "all its towns... in ruins" (4:23, 25-26).

This means that sometimes environmental devastation is God's judgment on human sins that have nothing to do with poor resource management. Consequently, one important message evangelicals can communicate to help restore the environment may focus not on the scientific questions of ecology but on fidelity to God and His law. Our most significant message is not prag-

"While there is much to commend about evangelicals' contributions to environmental understanding, there is room for improvement."

—E. Calvin Beisner



cites Jeremiah 2:7 ("...I brought you into the fruitful land, to eat its fruit and its good things. But you came and defiled My land, and My inheritance you made an abomination.") as condemning clear-cutting of forests, calling the passage "one of numerous biblical references portraying the unfaithfulness and sins of humanity *expressed in the destruc-*

matic (use contour plowing, reduce carbon dioxide emissions, reduce dependence on fossil fuels) but ethical: Worship and obey the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Pragmatic instructions are useful, but they are secondary. Ethics is primary—ethics defined by the revealed law of God in Scripture, not by current "best wisdom" about pol-

lution control and ecology (Deut. 7:12-15a; 28:15-24).

Perhaps the most widespread and implication-laden misuse of Scripture by evangelical environmentalists occurs in their frequent discussion of the cultural mandate of Genesis 1:28 (“...and God said to [Adam and Eve], ‘Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky, and over every living thing that moves on the earth.’”). In their understandable resolve to blunt the charge of secular and New Age environmentalists that Christians have used this passage as a license for vicious, careless domination of the earth, they have gone toward the opposite extreme, robbing the passage of all mandate for forceful rule.

First, they have argued that the words *subdue* and *rule* here are qualified by the words *cultivate* and *keep* in Genesis 2:15 (“Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.”); and second, they have argued that the word *cultivate* in Genesis 2:15 means to serve, i.e., makes man not master but servant of the

can mean to serve when its object is another *person*, its sense when its object is a *thing* is to work, to cultivate, or to shape. Properly understood, subduing and ruling the *earth* should unfold gradually into cultivating and keeping the *garden* as man progressively transforms earth into garden.

### Inhuman Priorities

Third, in keeping with the nature-first thinking of most secular and New Age environmentalists, evangelical environmentalists have, if only by default, embraced environmental priorities that, if acted on consistently, would put people—especially poor people—behind plants and animals, geography and geology. The main focus in evangelical environmental writings is on such problems as global warming, acid rain, ozone depletion, species loss, and deforestation. All these are extremely large-scale and mostly hypothetical problems that, whatever their actual scale, tend to be of low risk to human beings. Acid rain in particular has been largely debunked as an environmental problem by the National Acid Precipitation Assess-

heating and cooking fuel in poorly ventilated huts; lack of access to safe drinking water; dumping of untreated sewage and industrial waste; lack of emission controls on factory smokestacks and vehicles; use of low-quality, high-sulfur petroleum and coal for vehicles and electric power generation; and the simple dust kicked up by driving on mostly unpaved roads. These are the environmental problems of poor countries, and their human cost is enormous. (Impure drinking water alone is estimated to kill about 3.8 million children under five every year in developing countries.) But they can be reduced drastically by applying the same technologies that reduced them in developed countries, the cost of doing so is far less than the cost of addressing the sexier problems that preoccupy environmentalists, and the benefits to be derived are far greater and surer.

The irony is that many leaders of today’s evangelical environmental movement were in the 1970s and 1980s at the forefront of evangelical social action on behalf of the same poor people on whom they have now turned their backs—inadvertently, to be sure, but nonetheless really. Because of their past commitment to the world’s poor, they are strategically placed to reorder the priorities of the larger environmental movement, putting the biggest focus on these high-risk, well-understood problems. Let us hope they do so. Then they will truly shine a light in a dark place. A

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Properly understood, subduing and ruling the *earth* should unfold gradually into cultivating and keeping the *garden* as man progressively transforms earth into garden.

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earth. But Genesis 2:15 tells Adam’s responsibility toward the *Garden* of Eden, not the whole earth, and garden and wilderness are distinct and even opposed throughout Scripture. Furthermore, the actual Hebrew words translated *subdue* and *rule* in Genesis 1:28 denote strong, forceful action. And while the Hebrew word translated *cultivate* in Genesis 2:15

ment Program conducted from the late 1970s through the late 1980s by the Environmental Protection Agency.

But major environmental causes of human illness and death are not any of these exotic, hypothetical crises but such mundane, well-understood problems as in-home pollution from burning wood, agricultural wastes, and dried dung as primary

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# Earthkeeping through Markets

A Review Essay by Peter J. Hill

In 1977-78, a group of scholars gathered at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan, to produce an interdisciplinary book on environmentalism from a Christian perspective. *Earthkeeping in the Nineties* was a serious attempt at integrating Christian faith and the insights from several disciplines. That volume was revised substantially and reissued in 1991. The revised edition builds on the scholarship of the first and represents an important contribution to the ongoing discussion of environmental issues. The book is particularly strong in articulating a well-reasoned Christian perspective that is nicely placed in a historical context. How we see and interact with God's creation is very much influenced by our worldview, and *Earthkeeping* traces numerous influences on that view. It is well-written, engaging, and nicely integrated for a book with several authors.

At the end of the book the authors give six biblical principles that I personally have found to be useful and that I have relied upon in my work on the economics of the environment. Each of these is, of course, fleshed out in considerable detail in the book in a most convincing manner. It is clear that religious perceptions are deeply intertwined with environmental concerns, and the Christian who wants a deeper understanding of how his or her faith relates to environmental issues can do well by reading this volume.

In view of the strong scholarship and high quality of exposition in *Earthkeeping*, it would seem that this would be a good place for concerned Christians to turn in order to enhance their understanding of environmental issues. However, despite

***Earthkeeping in the Nineties:  
Stewardship of Creation***  
edited by Loren Wilkinson

Eerdmans Publishing  
1991. 405 pp. Paper: \$20.00

its strengths in several areas, *Earthkeeping* is flawed in several others and therefore should be read somewhat cautiously.

First, the authors repeat the harsh doomsday scenarios prevalent in so much of contemporary environmental writing. Although we do have environmental problems, I regard the crisis mentality as more harmful than helpful and believe that a more carefully nuanced approach to problems is appropriate. For instance, one gets no sense from this book of the dramatic improvement in both air and water pollution in the United States in the last twenty-five years (the EPA reports that total air pollutant emissions fell by thirty-four percent from 1970 through 1990), or that air pollution also substantially improved in the OECD countries over the same period.

*Earthkeeping* also repeats the

widely accepted myth that the world is in imminent danger because of economic growth. But there is considerable evidence that economic growth after a certain level of per capita income leads to improvement in environmental quality rather than deterioration. Nevertheless, since scientific evidence continues to come in on questions about the state of the world, I am reluctant to too harshly criticize a book that was published six years ago. I would hope that if *Earthkeeping* is revised again that the authors will at least look at some of the more positive evidence with respect to envi-

ronmental issues. For instance, one could look at *The State of Humanity*, 1995, edited by Julian Simon; *The True State of the Planet*, 1995, edited by Ronald Bailey; *Rational Readings on Environmental Concerns*, 1992, edited by Jay Lehr; or Gregg Easterbrook's *A Moment on the Earth*, 1995. I also report some of the evidence in my 1994 volume with Joseph L. Bast and Richard C. Rue, *EcoSanity: A Common Sense Guide to Environmentalism*.

Second, the authors fall into the trap of believing that good intentions are all that matter. Although they make some effort at providing a brief analysis of institutions, most of the volume is directed at reforming people's consciousness about creation. This leads them to argue that our main responsibility is as stewards and that if only people have the appropriate stewardship

attitude, environmental problems would be minimized. The difficulty of acting as a steward for the whole environment has been well-explicated in an earlier review by Paul Heyne (*Stewardship Journal*, Winter, 1993), so I shall not dwell upon that anymore here. However, this strong desire to reform intentions and to get values right leads to a third problem, a fundamental distrust of private property rights, limited government, and markets as a coordinating mechanism. They argue that:

- “in a market system price is the only basis for relationship with the outside world.”
- “the highest claim that can be made for a market system is that it is efficient.”
- “...with regards to many goods—things that we hold to be valuable—we do not need, in fact we do not want, to use the price system.”

The authors are correct in asserting that we do need an outside reference point for value other than our

should reject. But is there evidence that an increased role for government reduces the influence of ungodly values? Is government less susceptible to hedonism, selfishness, and secular perspectives? I think not.

In fact, the authors are fundamentally wrong when they assume that a world of markets is one where relationships are only on the basis of price and that efficiency is the primary defense of a system of private property rights and limited government. Under a regime of private property rights people have a substantial realm of control over their own lives, and it is in such a realm that families flourish, resources can be kept out of the marketplace, and decisions can reflect values other than those of a hedonistic, materialistic culture. People who have private property rights have the option of refusing to market goods and can make decisions about how many things they want to place in the market, and which they want to exclude

more realms to the influence of special interest groups, politicking, and general expression of the values of mass-culture.

All of this is not to say that markets are perfect; the very pervasiveness of a successful market order can convince people that too many things can be priced and that all good things in life must be bought or sold. Every system has its weaknesses and the secularization and commodification of life is a significant problem for market driven societies. But private property and limited government offer substantial advantages over “social” (read government) control of resources. Private property rights generate much better information and incentives for decision makers than does government control, and private rights offer the opportunity for people to value creation by standards other than those expressed through majority rule.

Thus, although this volume represents a significant contribution to a good Christian understanding of creation, it should be read with caution. It is important to reform our worldview and to recognize that our existing mechanisms for expressing values are flawed. However, those mechanisms need to be reformed carefully and thoughtfully, and reformed in the direction of giving people greater control over resources and providing better feedback and greater accountability. Free markets and environmental quality are compatible, but one would never learn that from *Earthkeeping in the Nineties*. A



“Private property rights offer the opportunity for people to value creation by standards other than those expressed through majority rule.”

—Peter J. Hill

own subjective feelings. We do not want to price everything, and “valuing of the creation ought to be grounded in the Creator’s norms” (p. 239). However, the authors assume that there are good alternatives to private property rights and markets as a way of valuing creation. It is true that markets sometimes express values that Christians

from it. For instance, groups like Nature Conservancy and the Sand County Foundation of Wisconsin are able to stand against prevailing wisdom and buy up resources and preserve them precisely because of the existence of private property rights. In contrast, the social engineering approach (here the collective control of natural resources) opens up many

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## ***The Cross and the Rain Forest*** ***A Critique of Radical Green Spirituality***

by Robert Whelan, Joseph Kirwan, and Paul Haffner

Acton Institute, 1996

175 pp. Paper: \$16.00

**Review by Peter A. Laird**

**T**he most fruitful and majestic tree in the history of the world was the one on which hung its Savior, Jesus Christ. Today there is a growing trend among some environmentalists to look past the incarnate expression of God's love and see only a violated and barren tree. This trend toward reinterpreting symbols and the created order is an outgrowth of a larger crisis in the belief that God is both Creator and Father.

Uncertainty about God also calls into question the human person. Consequently, those whose divine mission is to exercise dominion over the created order become interlopers, strangers, and, as several authors have called humans, "diseases" upon the earth. The next step toward deifying the earth is a short one, and rather than man judging how the goods of the earth might best give glory to God, man is judged by the earth.

This subversion makes possible a new eco-religion where disciples of the way of the defied earth (Gaia) preach a syncretistic gospel of pantheism, paganism, and devolved Christianity. Indeed, implicit within this "new gospel" is a contradictory message with respect to Christianity. For while eco-religionists rely on the Christian truth that the created order is good and worthy of respect, they deny, if not avoid, the Christian truth that man is to exercise dominion over it.

Yet it is precisely the charge to exercise dominion that serves to balance humanity by emphasizing both the obligation to revere the created order and to develop it. Only the human person, man and woman, has been created "in the image of God" (Gen. 1:27); a singular excellence emphasized in the creation of woman who alone is a fit partner for man (Gen. 2:18-20). Notwithstanding the truth that every creature, rock, and flower bears its own excellence, Saint John Chrysostom articulates the Christian ordering succinctly: "Man—that great and wonderful living creature, more precious in the eyes of God than all other creatures! For him the heavens and earth, sea and all the rest of creation exists" (*In Gen. Sermon*, II, 1).

Chrysostom's insight offers a fundamental principle for Christian ecology: A proper stewardship of the created order ultimately awaits the human person exercising a proper stewardship over himself and his relationships. In other words, ecology, if it is to be successful, needs and must respect theological anthropology.

It is for the purpose of informing people of faith about the theological undercurrents of the environmental movement, specifically "green spirituality," that the authors offer their primer *The Cross and the Rain Forest*. Like Dixie Lee Ray's contribution in helping raise the issue

of whether sound science justified increasingly radical environmentalist claims, the authors seek to cast light on and critique the faulty theological claims of the environmental movement. Indeed, less you think that environmentalism is a benign continuum—that there is no difference, for example, between packing out your trash from a campsite or recycling at home, and many of the ideas that have been proclaimed to "save the Earth"—Whelan, Kirwan, and Haffner convincingly show that ultimately the very notion of God, and thus also the human person, is at stake.

Moreover, that green ideas are increasingly targeted at children both in the classroom and through television should sober any parent who seeks to instill in their children a love of God above all things. For while eco-religionist claims may challenge an adult believer's way of thinking about God, they affect a child at more basic level; namely, eco-religionist claims question whether a child should seek a life with the God of revelation at all. Although it is neither an exhaustive treatment of the religious implications of "green spirituality" nor without its limitations, *The Cross and the Rain Forest* is a helpful and popular introduction for those who seek to be good stewards of the earth.

**I**n the first two chapters Robert Whelan draws out how green thought subverts the Christian understanding of God and the human person by overturning the "Christian matrix of science" and embracing the New Age. Joseph Kirwan considers in the third chapter how it is that in the "green new world" animals are endowed with the same rights as humanity. And in the fourth chapter Fr. Paul Haffner reasserts,

albeit in a preliminary fashion, a vision of a Christian ecology which balances the charge to develop the created order with the obligation to reverence it.

What remains to be presented in another book on the proper relationship of the person to the created order is a more complete account of the Christian vision along the lines Fr. Haffner begins to sketch. Such an account would do well to include a sustained reflection on the "technological movement" that, like the environmental movement, can often embody a similar deformation of the human person's relationship to the created order. While technology can be and often is a tremendous good, a technological approach that so exalts the human person as to render him creator (or perhaps editor) of the created order can also lead to a destructive lack of due reverence of God and the dignity of the human person.

Finally, but not least, churches, as part of their effort to help their members be good stewards, will find the appendix in *The Cross and the Rain Forest*, which treats topics such as global warming and the ozone layer, among the book's most helpful contributions.

More than ever before the Christian is called to integrate his faith and life. *The Cross and the Rain Forest* will help Christians and all people of faith critically discern how to do so in the realm of stewarding the created order and thus avoid the heterodox positions blossoming within the environmental movement. A

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**Peter A. Laird** is a transitional deacon who will be ordained to the priesthood for the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis in May.



## Book News



### **The True State of the Planet**

Ronald Bailey, ed.

*The Free Press*, 1995

472 pp. Paper: \$15.00

In *The True State of the Planet*, editor Ronald Bailey's group of experienced researchers counter the popular and accepted misinformation about the environment. The writers provide documented evidence that the words of doom from radical environmentalists are not to be trusted. *The True State of the Planet* is an important book because it brings to light the truth by using statistics from authentic scientific studies and surveys. This book can be used as a great reference tool in the environmental debate.

### **Facts Not Fear: A Guide to Teaching Children About the Environment**

Michael Sanera and Jane S. Shaw

*Regnery Publishing Inc.*, 1996

300 pp. Paper: \$14.95

In *Facts Not Fear* researchers Michael Sanera and Jane S. Shaw seek to educate the American family about environmental issues. Their goal is to help parents and teachers counter the accepted environmental myths taught to children by popular culture.

The writers dispel misinformation and provide correct information on specific issues about the environment. To facilitate sensible concern and action about the environment, each chapter has questions for family discussion and suggested family activities. The book also provides an

appendix of recommended reading material. *Facts Not Fear* presents well-documented information and stories in a way that is not intimidating or overwhelming. This book is a welcome alternative for families tired of the constant fear-mongering given to children.

### **A Moment on the Earth: The Coming of Age of Environmental Optimism**

Gregg Easterbrook

*Viking*, 1995

745 pp. Hard Cover: \$27.95

Gregg Easterbrook sets forth the argument that Western civilization has made great strides in taking care of the environment. An admitted political liberal, Easterbrook speaks out against the exaggerated claims from what he calls the environmental orthodox. He presents the concept of ecoreality, which recognizes that while we face environmental problems we are not on the brink of global disaster.

This book serves as a warning to alarmists that their message could start having a negative impact on realistic environmental action. Easterbrook details over twenty current environmental concerns exposing faults in extreme arguments of both sides. Easterbrook makes it clear that humanity is not to blame for every environmental problem, nor is man to ignore problems for which he is responsible. Thus, this book provides an in-depth and evenhanded view of the broad debate over environmentalism.

—William M. Hopper



***Rev. Robert A. Sirico***

## Our Stewardship Mandate

**T**he Genesis account of creation is clear on a central point that many secular environmentalists find scandalous: The earth is entrusted to the human family for our use. After God created man and woman in his image, he blessed them with the words: “Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it. Have dominion over the fish of the seas, the birds of the air, and all the living things that move on this earth.” This is the first charge, long before the Fall, given to human beings directly by God. And in the second chapter of Genesis, after God had created the earth for man’s sake, he created man to till the soil. It was an explicit command to mix labor with God’s creation to make more of that which appears in a pure state of nature. God’s covenant with Adam required him to exercise dominion over the earth, to be a steward of creation on God’s behalf.

No doubt there are good and bad ways to till and keep the earth. There are ways that are more pleasing to God, and that have a regard for the essential *telos* for which the material world was made. If we take seriously our responsibility to be good stewards, we must ask what is the best institutional arrangement to allow people to exercise this mandate. Economically, the choice is between some form of central planning and the free market.

Long experience has shown that the state is a bad steward. One reason this is so is because of what has been termed the “Tragedy of the Commons.” Simply put, if everyone owns something, no one person has any incentive to protect or take care of it. This has been graphically demonstrated by the appalling reports of environmental disaster in the former communist countries. Furthermore, the state has many incentives to be a poor steward. For example, the federal government owns a great deal of forest-

land. These forests are supervised by the U.S. Forest service, the mission of which is to cut down trees. Because it is federally funded, the Forest Service has no market incentives to keep its enterprises cost-efficient. As a result, the forest service is logging old-growth forests with a return of pennies on the dollar. Had these forests been supervised by a private company, they would never have been touched.

Likewise, experience has shown that the market is a better steward of the environment than the state. Not only does it allow for private ownership and offer better incentives, but it allows for the

expression of minority opinions in regard to land and resource use. Take, for example, the Hawk Mountain Sanctuary in eastern Pennsylvania. Located along the Appalachian migration route, it provided an ideal location for hunters to shoot thousands of hawks. Conservationist Rosalie Edge decided that those birds ought to be protected, a minority opinion at the time. In 1934 she purchased the property and prevented the hunting of the birds. It is now considered one of the best bird-watching locations in the world. Had Ms. Edge lived in a regime where property was owned by the state, she would have to convince a majority of the lawmakers, bureaucrats, and competing special-interest groups that Hawk Mountain should be a preserve, so daunting a task it is unlikely it would have happened. As it was, she only had to purchase the land.

God has given us the responsibility for the stewardship of creation, a responsibility to which he will hold us accountable. We do well, then, to consider the role free markets can play in this task. A

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***Rev. Robert A. Sirico is president of the Acton Institute for the Study of Religion and Liberty.***

“Socialism easily accepts despotism.  
It requires the strongest execution of power—  
power sufficient to interfere with property.”

—Lord Acton—

## RELIGION & LIBERTY

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