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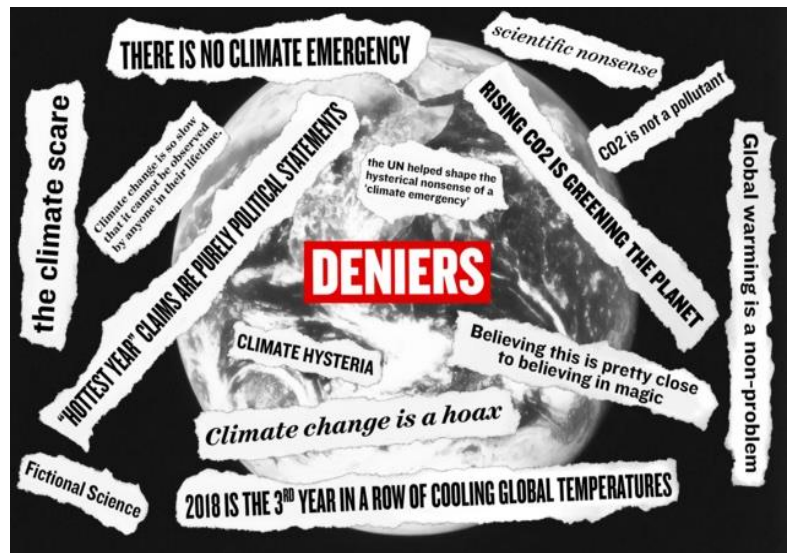
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The Evangelical Spectrum on Climate Change

When addressing issues about the significant changes in climate patterns and the increase in global temperature of our planet, American evangelical conservatives tend to strongly disagree with the scientific study that urges to take measures on climate change and shows that human activities, such as the burning of fossil fuels and deforestation which are the primary cause of this environmental crisis.



(Image courtesy of the (National Resource Defense Council.)
<https://therevealer.org/christian-nationalists-and-climate-skepticism/>

Evangelical Christians are a diverse group with a wide range of theological and political perspectives. The National Association of Evangelicals defines the term “‘evangelical’ comes from the Greek word euangelion, meaning “the good news” or the ‘gospel.’ Thus, the evangelical faith focuses on the ‘good news’ of salvation brought to sinners by Jesus Christ.” Furthermore, according to the NAE, “Evangelicals believe the Bible to be the inspired, the only infallible, authoritative Word of God”.

Those who identify themselves as conservatives or are aligned with conservative political movements have been more skeptical of climate change and have questioned the scientific consensus. The evangelical community is divided into those who believe that action to fight climate change is necessary and those who are more skeptical about the need to prioritize climate change. This division among this group is surprising because they are usually portrayed as homogenous and as indifferent. Yet, there has been a debate going on for years on this matter, but one wonders about the religious and political roots that led them to view climate change as a natural phenomenon.

Some conservative evangelical organizations and leaders have been particularly vocal in their opposition to the idea of anthropogenic climate change—the idea that human activities are causing climate change. For instance, The Cornwall Alliance for the Stewardship of Creation emerged in 1999 in West Cornwall, Connecticut, and was endorsed by 1,500 religious leaders and laymen from around the world. The organization was well known for its promotion of a free-market approach to environmental issues. It argues that efforts to address climate change through policies such as carbon taxes or cap-and-trade schemes are misguided and would harm the poor and the vulnerable. Their advocation is based on: “educating the public and policymakers about Biblical earth stewardship, economic development for the poor, and the gospel of forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God by grace through faith in the atoning death and vindicating resurrection of Jesus Christ.”

However, what they believe is that the scientific consensus on climate change is uncertain and that there is still significant debate within the scientific community about the causes and extent of global warming. They also argue that the costs of policies aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions would be high and would result in significant economic harm that would affect the poor. Moreover, the efforts that were made to address climate change are based on a worldview that elevated nature above humanity, and the latter is incompatible with Christian values, therefore, humans have been given the responsibility to steward Earth, and this includes using its resources for human benefit. "God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground.'" Genesis 1:28.

In 2000, Cornwall published “The Cornwall Declaration on Environmental Stewardship” to articulate a biblically based perspective on environmental stewardship and to provide a framework for public policy on environmental issues. It emphasizes the importance of responsible stewardship of the natural world, based on biblical teaching that humans are called to care for the Earth as God’s creation. It also acknowledges the potential for environmental degradation to harm human well-being and to violate the principles of justice and compassion. Thus, the declaration expresses concern about the potential for environmental policies to undermine economic growth, individual freedom, and national sovereignty. It argues that policies aimed at protecting the environment should be based on sound science, should respect human dignity and the rule of law, and should prioritize economic growth and job creation.

The declaration acknowledges the need to address environmental problems but opposes greater governmental regulation. It identifies "three areas of common misunderstanding" that contradict the goal of using "sound theology and sound science" to guide public policymaking. Firstly, it criticizes the view of people as "consumers and polluters" rather than "producers and stewards," failing to recognize humanity's "potential, as bearers of God's image, to enhance the earth's abundance." The second point of the Cornwall Declaration argues for human involvement in shaping the natural world instead of leaving it untouched. It advocates for "human stewardship that unlocks the potential in creation for all the earth's inhabitants as good". In the third claim, the declaration aims to differentiate between legitimate environmental concerns and exaggerated ones. It identifies fears of manmade global warming, overpopulation, and rampant species loss as examples of overstated or baseless concerns while recognizing the existence of well-founded and serious environmental issues.

Conservative Christians view nature as a resource to be used – a gift from God rather than to protect and preserve it. Climate change has been but a political issue that was not a priority for them.