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Laudato Si: An Evangelical Response

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I Introduction

Catholics, evangelicals, and Protestants globally have expressed their desires to collaborate purposefully in witnessing for the gospel.¹ As a step towards collaborative witness between Catholics and evangelicals, this paper² presents an evangelical reading of Pope Francis' *Laudato Si (LS)*.³ I seek to show how evangelicals can build on the initiatives encouraged by the encyclical regarding care for the biosphere in conjunction with Catholics and other Protestant groups.

To prepare churches for prospective collaboration, one must consider

entrenched evangelical reservations about creation care,⁴ as well as the prevailing evangelical positions about dialogue or engagement with other Christian organizations.⁵ Evangelicalism generally has moved from ambivalence and reservations towards accepting some developments in the modern ecumenical movement.

This paper begins with a concise review of evangelical positions on caring for creation. Next, I review *LS* and place it in a broader context by discussing relevant Catholic social teaching and mainstream responses to the release of the document. I then summarize evangelical responses of affirmation, ambivalence, and abstinence towards this document's appeal. I con-

1 Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium* (Rome: Vatican, 2013); *Together Towards Life* (Geneva: WCC, 2013), 10–11; *The Cape Town Commitment* (Cape Town: Lausanne Congress on World Evangelization, 2010), 218–22; *Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and World Evangelical Alliance, 2011).

2 I wish to thank Dr Gail Trzcinski for proof-reading the original and revised drafts, and Ms Sherry Hamilton for copyediting the final version.

3 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si* (Rome: Vatican, 24 May 2015), hereafter cited as *LS*.

4 An example of fruitful Evangelical–Catholic dialogue is the Third Annual Evangelical and Catholic Conversation, at University of St. Mary of the Lake, Mundelein, III, 2–5 September 2015.

5 David W. Cloud, *Evangelicals and Rome*, rev. ed. (Port Huron, Michigan: Way of Life Literature, 1999); Gabriel Fackre, *Ecumenical Faith in Evangelical Perspective* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993); Brad Harper and Paul Louis Metzger, *Exploring Ecclesiology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009).

clude by affirming the possibility of collaborative ecological witness.

II No Longer Observers: Evangelicals, Social Witness and Earth Care

Evangelicalism's approach to eco-care has mirrored its larger struggle to embrace social witness as a core commitment to the gospel. Evangelicals who trace their roots to the eighteenth-century pietistic and Wesleyan movements in Europe and North America have always been committed to the direct and indirect proclamation of the gospel in thought and action.⁶ Overall, however, evangelicalism has maintained an uneasy stance regarding social witness and activism that do not directly proclaim the salvific message of Jesus Christ. Thus, evangelicals have also been critical of liberation theology, which was first developed in Latin America⁷ and which has been regarded in some quarters as subverting the gospel's central message about the eternal salvation of souls.

From the 1960s through the 1990s, evangelicals were ambivalent at best towards environmental initiatives by committees of the World Council of Churches.⁸ Often the reason was a mis-association of these initiatives with developments that evangelicals considered unacceptable, such as New

Age beliefs, interreligious unity and liberal Protestantism.⁹ Consequently, evangelicals have not been regarded as avid supporters of ecological care, despite earlier invitations by theologians like Francis Schaffer and, three decades later, by John Stott.¹⁰ Both Schaffer and Stott reminded evangelicals of their God-given responsibility in the creation mandate to care for the earth.

Today, evangelicals are no longer merely observers on eco-care. A proliferation of literature attests to their commitment.¹¹ In recent years, evangelicals in North America have organ-

9 John Grim and Mary Evelyn Tucker, *Ecology and Religion* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2014), 87; Jonas Jonson, *Wounded Visions* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013), 22, 31–2, 43, 50, 60, 128. A favourable evangelical exception is Douglas John Hall, *Imaging God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986).

10 Chris Sugden, 'Evangelicals and Environment in Process', *Evangelical Review of Theology* 17.2 (1993): 119–21; Francis Schaeffer, *Pollution and the Death of Man* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1970); E. Calvin Beisner, *Where Garden Meets Wilderness* (Grand Rapids, MI: Acton Institute and Eerdmans, 1997); John Stott, foreword to R. J. Berry, *The Care of Creation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2000), 7.

11 Loren Wilkinson, ed., *Earthkeeping* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1980) and *Earthkeeping in the Nineties* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991); Fred van Dyke, David C. Mahan, Joseph K. Sheldon, and Raymond H. Brand, *Redeeming Creation* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 1996); Ed Brown, *Our Father's World* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2008); Steven Bouma-Prediger, *For the Beauty of the Earth*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010); Richard Bauckham, *The Bible and Ecology* (Waco: Baylor University Press, 2010) and *Living with Other Creatures* (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2011); Daniel L. Brunner, Jennifer L. Butler, and A. J. Swoboda, *Introducing Evangelical Ecotheology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2014).

6 Michael P. Young, *Bearing Witness against Sin* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007).

7 Carl F. H. Henry, *The Uneasy Conscience of Modern Fundamentalism* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1947).

8 Ulrich Duchrow and Gerhard Liedke, *Shalom* (Geneva: WCC, 1987).

ized forums and issued statements on science and faith, chemical safety, clean air and water, mercury exposure, and threats to the environment. In the US, the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) has featured environmental concerns,¹² and the Southern Baptists, generally viewed as evangelical, have published a statement on the topic.¹³ Nationally, however, the 2014 US Pew Religious Landscape Study (released on 3 November 2015) reported that evangelicals tend to disdain stricter environmental laws because enforcement hurts the economy and costs too many jobs.¹⁴

At a global level, the World Evangelical Alliance's Creation Care Task Force organized its first project—the Joint Lausanne–WEA Global Creation Care Consultation in Jamaica from 29 October to 3 November 2012.¹⁵ The WEA Global Issues Series saw publications on evangelical engagement with environmental ethics, public ethics, and responsible creation care in 2014 and 2016. These built on the initiatives and statements adopted by the WEA membership at its General Assembly in

2008, its consultation with the Micah Network in 2009, and the co-hosting of a global Call to Action with the Lausanne movement in 2012.¹⁶

Transformation has indeed occurred among American evangelicals with regard to their role and participation in climate change.¹⁷ Relative to their prior ambivalence (primarily due to assessing it as a social-gospel emphasis), evangelicals have now been more willing to accept eco-care as a Christian responsibility. But this resurgence of hopeful engagement on eco-care is limited for the most part to working with fellow evangelicals.¹⁸

A backlash against evangelicalism's support for environmental care came from the Cornwall Alliance, a non-profit, evangelical, earth steward-

¹² On the NAE, see <http://nae.net/tag/environment/> (accessed 21 April 2017). The Creation Care document has received signatories from hundreds of Evangelical leaders.

¹³ 'A Southern Baptist Declaration on the Environment and Climate Change', <http://www.cfr.org/religion/southern-baptist-declaration-environment-climate-change/p15847> (accessed 21 April 2017). The declaration has hundreds of signatories.

¹⁴ 'U.S. Public Becoming Less Religious' (Pew Research Center, 3 November 2015), 105.

¹⁵ See Evangelical Environment Network, <http://creationcare.org/> (accessed 21 April 2017).

¹⁶ Ken Gnanakan, *Responsible Stewardship of God's Creation*, rev. ed. (Bonn: Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft, 2014), and Thomas Schirrmacher and Thomas K. Johnson, *Creation Care and Loving Our Neighbors* (Bonn: Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft, 2016). See *Declaration on Creation Stewardship and Climate Change* (adopted by the WEA General Assembly, 2008); *On the Care of Creation* (the collaborative initiative with the Micah Network, 2009); and WEA's co-hosting of a global consultation, *Call to Action* (with the Lausanne Movement, 2012).

¹⁷ Victor Lam, 'The Heat Is On: The Role and Transformation of American Evangelicals in Climate Change Dialogue in the United States', *Human Dimensions of Climate Change* (2014): 1–11.

¹⁸ David Landis Barnhill and Roger S. Gottlieb, eds., *Deep Ecology and World Religions* (New York: State University Press of New York, 2001); Roger S. Gottlieb, ed., *This Sacred Earth* (New York: Routledge, 2003; rpt. Taylor & Francis, 2004); Anne Marie Dalton, *Ecotechnology and the Practice of Hope* (New York: State University Press of New York, 2010).

ship organization.¹⁹ This group warns that ‘radical environmentalism’ represents a ‘false religion’ of secular and pagan religious environmentalism. It warns that the National Association of Evangelicals’ *Creation Care Declaration* (2006) will be ‘deadly to the gospel of Jesus Christ’.²⁰ The Cornwall Alliance has also expressed reservations about Pope Francis’ encyclical on the environment.

III *Laudato Si*: An Integral Ecology

1. Background

The Pope’s encyclical, *Laudato Si* (*LS*), was released on 24 May 2015. This document’s weighty, multi-disciplinary analysis may have come as a surprise for those who would have expected it to focus solely on religious responsibility for creation. Advance leaks about the document caused *LS* to be greatly anticipated. It is a substantive, important contribution that we can study with interest and profit.

Though not Pope Francis’ first encyclical, *LS* stands out from his others as well as from the declarations of previous popes in at least three ways, which make it an important document for evangelicals to examine as they

consider the possibility of collaborative witness with Catholics.

First, *LS* is the only encyclical devoted to ecological care, and it addresses the widest possible audience. *LS* is aimed at the whole world, unlike *Lumen Fidei*’s address ‘to the bishops, priests, and deacons, consecrated person[s], and the lay faithful’.²¹ It calls all people to recognize and act on an urgent responsibility before us—to care for creation—as an expression of our commitments to God, creation and future generations. Francis expressly desires to ‘dialogue with all people about our common home’.²² He continues to call for widespread action, such as in his recent address to the UN General Assembly, which may be read as the quintessence of *LS*.²³

Second, *LS* presents a compelling case for a broad and interdisciplinary openness to caring for creation. It not only discusses environmental issues but also explains how the many and immense social and political crises of our time (e.g. consumerism, global inequality, social degradation, human trafficking, wars and conflicts, statecraft) are interwoven with the ecological crisis. *LS* explains why an effective ecological care program cannot compartmentalize or focus narrowly on environmental issues. Caring for the earth would also have to address

¹⁹ Cornwall Alliance, www.cornwallalliance.org/about/what-we-do/ (accessed 21 April 2017).

²⁰ Cf. 12-part video, ‘Resisting the Green Dragon,’ cited in John Collins Rudolf, ‘An Evangelical Backlash Against Environmentalism’, *New York Times* (30 December 2010), http://green.blogs.nytimes.com/2010/12/30/an-evangelical-backlash-against-environmentalism/?_r=0 (accessed 21 April 2017).

²¹ Cf. *LS* 3, p. 2 with Pope Francis, *Lumen Fidei* (Rome: Vatican, 29 June 2015).

²² *LS* 3, p. 2.

²³ Pope Francis’s Address to 70th Session of the United Nations General Assembly (25 September 2015), http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2015/09/25/pope_francis_addresses_the_un_general_assembly/1174588 (accessed 21 April 2017).

many pressing and interrelated social, economic and political concerns. The reason for the global appeal is that all of life is interconnected.²⁴

Third, *LS* is the only papal document in recent decades to have generated great interest both before and after its release (on 24 May 2015).²⁵ Episcopal Church of Europe Bishop Pierre Wahlon predicted that *LS*' impact will be felt politically and in 'the major environmental and economic debates of our time'.²⁶ Various Catholic agencies have produced documents to instruct, apply and act on *LS*' recommendations. These activities and the designation of the World Day of Prayer for Care of Creation (1 September 2015) indicate the extent of *LS*' impact.²⁷

²⁴ *LS* 138, p 40.

²⁵ Jim Yardley and Laurie Goodstein, 'Pope Francis, in Sweeping Encyclical, Calls for Swift Action on Climate Change,' *New York Times* (18 June 2015), www.nytimes.com/2015/06/19/world/europe/pope-francis-in-sweeping-encyclical-calls-for-swift-action-on-climate-change.html?_r=0 (accessed 21 April 2017).

²⁶ Pierre Wahlon, 'Laudato Si: What's Missing, What's Not,' *The Huffington Post* (22 June 2015), www.huffingtonpost.com/bishop-pierre-whalon/laudato-si-whats-missing-whats-not_b_7630516.html (accessed 21 April 2017).

²⁷ See examples from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/human-life-and-dignity/environment/; Catholic Social Teaching (UK) (www.catholicsocialteaching.org.uk/themes/care-creation/reflection/); Cindy Wooden, 'Pope designates Sept. 1 as World Day of Prayer for Care of Creation,' *Catholic News Service* (10 August 2015), www.catholicnews.com/services/englishnews/2015/pope-designates-sept-1-as-world-day-of-prayer-for-care-of-creation.cfm (all accessed 21 April 2017); for Catholic Climate Covenant program initiatives, www.catholicclimatecovenant.org/# (accessed 21 April 2017).

2. Structure

LS contains six chapters after the introduction which hails Francis of Assisi as an example par excellence in caring for the vulnerable and for his integral ecology.²⁸ The introduction frames the papal teaching as continuous with his predecessors' teachings, and in unison with philosophers, environmental scientists, civic advocacy groups, and leaders from other ecclesiastical traditions.²⁹ There is substantial mention of ecological thoughts from the works of the medieval theologian Bonaventure. *LS* also contains eighteen references to documents from various world conferences of Catholic bishops.

Chapter one reviews the present ecological crisis in light of the wide-ranging and interweaving socio-political factors that have impacted the rapid loss of biodiversity in our common home. Chapter two argues that the Judeo-Christian theology of creation and the message of the gospel call Christians to commit to the environment. Chapter three analyses the human roots and deepest causes of the ecological crisis. Chapter four presents the possibilities of conceiving intra-individual, intra-organizational, and international solutions as an integral ecology.

Chapter five proposes lines of action. Chapter six broadens the practical

[catholicclimatecovenant.org/#](http://www.catholicclimatecovenant.org/#) (accessed 21 April 2017).

²⁸ *LS* 10, p 3.

²⁹ Francis draws from John XXIII's *Pacem in Ternis* (1963), Paul VI's *Octogensima Adeniens* (1971), John Paul II's *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (1987), *Centesimus Annus* (1991) and *Catechesis* (2001), and Emeritus Pope Benedict XVI's *Caritas in Veritate* (2009). *LS* 3–6, 2–3.

application from concrete ecological action to education and the cultivation of virtues, ethics and spirituality. *LS* ends with two prayers, one of which esteems Mary as the Mother of Jesus and as the Queen of Creation.³⁰

3. The integral care for our home

Humanity lives in a connected world in which the rich, the poor and the vulnerable are engulfed in the economy and the exercise of power (in their many forms and contexts). Humans should neither dominate nor exercise a 'tyrannical anthropocentrism' over creation.³¹ Humanity carries the responsibility to care for the environment.³² Instead of exercising sobriety and tenderly caring for creation, Francis observes that humanity's progress in science and technology in the market-based, consumerist economy has unwittingly driven the environment into a crisis.

In the papal analysis, the scientific and technological advances of recent centuries, despite their immense good and benefit to mankind (especially in alleviating human suffering and pain), have mistreated the ecosystem and have caused drastic harm to the environment and human civilization. By introducing man-made solutions to fulfil utilitarian goals, humanity has inevitably upset the ecocycle, causing the environment to deteriorate at an alarming rate.³³ When humans become

masters, consumers and exploiters of creation for their selfish wants, they trade away their rights to be stewards of creation.³⁴

The encyclical identifies the influence of non-ecological factors that fuel today's ecological crisis: depletion of natural resources, massive pollution, adverse effects on global warming, lack of fresh and safe water, devastating effects of rapid climate change, loss of biodiversity, and collateral damage to life, relationships and economy. This collateral damage has been generated by inefficient structures of production and consumption, the fragility of the deified market interest, and the short-sighted, self-serving vision of political leaders and consumers in accumulating wealth.

The document frowns on the throw-away culture and the inhumane exploitation of the poorest, all conducted at the expense of others in present and future generations. The apathy or indifference to ecological care is evident in the collusion of political, financial and corporate entities to maintain the status quo instead of collaborating to resolve the complex human and ecological plight.³⁵ The earth's goods will not indefinitely supply human wants.³⁶

Francis recommends an integrated program of interdisciplinary dialogue and multi-dimensional and multi-agency efforts to shape a better future.³⁷ He calls for (a) rethinking ecological care processes, (b) correcting the misdi-

30 *LS* 246, pp. 70-2.

31 *LS* 67-8, 82, pp. 20, 24.

32 *LS* 95, 28; cf. Thomas Berry, *The Christian Future and the Fate of the Earth* (New York: Orbis 2009).

33 *LS* 25, 32, 51, 107 and 162, pp. 8, 10-11,

15, 32, 47.

34 *LS* 11, p. 4.

35 *LS*, ch. 1.

36 *LS* 106, p. 31.

37 *LS* 13-5, 53, 141, pp. 4-5, 16, 41.

rected logic underlying the present-day culture,³⁸ (c) convening dialogues, and (d) commissioning regulated action plans to overturn the current downward 'spiral of self-destruction'³⁹ and so as to arrive at a 'global consensus' of thought and action to confront the grave problems facing humanity.⁴⁰

Francis urges individual efforts such as reduced driving, planting trees and avoiding use of non-renewable plastics, as well as teaching and modelling ecological behaviour in the family setting.⁴¹ Religions offer valuable supportive resources and should not be relegated to a negligible role or place in the process.⁴²

4. *Laudato Si* and Catholic social teaching

LS is quite consistent with previous Catholic social teaching, as contained in the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace's *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*.⁴³ Most specifically, fighting poverty, fostering international community and values, taming or positive use of biotechnology (206), responsible sharing of goods, and sensitivity to new lifestyles all contribute to the protection or at least the safeguarding of the environment as a col-

lective good.

The call of *LS* for humankind (and not just the church) to seek common good and collective goodwill and to be in solidarity with and caring for creation, for the most vulnerable, and for the poorest in the market economy is noteworthy. Humanity indeed needs to respect creation and demonstrate ways to preserve the biodiversity and eco-systems of life, minimize pollution, cut back on wasting resources, and restrain the selfish use of human and political will power. It also needs to exercise sobriety in the use of 'technoscience', especially to facilitate human development towards justice, peace, love and beauty in society.

Catholic social teaching also urges correcting infrastructural, institutional, communal and interpersonal inequality and disrespect, along with financial, economic, social and political initiatives to improve the quality of human life, creational co-existence, and society. Moreover, *LS* bases its appeal on the interconnectedness of the universal family of humanity and creation, as Francis urges 'an unwavering commitment' of all people to this fraternal bond and 'universal communion'.⁴⁴

5. Responses from religious groups

Despite general consistency of this document with Catholic social teachings, the secular world seems to have received Francis' appeal as a radically new proposal. To those who have been sceptical about the calls of religious communities for social transformation, *LS* has become an instrument

38 *LS* 197, p. 57.

39 *LS* 163, p. 47.

40 *LS* 164, p. 48.

41 *LS* 211, 213, p. 61.

42 *LS* 199, p. 57.

43 Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church* (Washington, DC: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2004). See also Sean McDonagh's commentary on *LS* in Pope Francis, *On Care for Our Common Home* (New York: Orbis, 2016), Part 1.

44 *LS* 89, 91-2, pp. 26 and 27.

for re-reception of the teachings, convictions and values of Christianity. Thus, *LS* has provoked many different responses from those outside the Roman Catholic Church, ranging from enthusiastic to scathing.⁴⁵ Space does not permit a complete examination of these responses, but I will discuss five responses from religious sources of various prominence and perspectives.

The World Council of Churches' (WCC) Ecumenical Water Network (EWN), which comprises representatives from the Catholic bishops in Latin America and Africa, as well as regional ecumenical organizations and representatives of the Orthodox and Protestant churches in the WCC, issued a document in support of *LS*. EWN evaluates *LS* as a document with 'deep insight and timely commentary', especially 'on the critical and interconnected issues of water, injustice, climate change and the loss of biodiversity'. EWN agrees with Francis' rejection of '“tyrannical” and “distorted anthropocentrism” and ... affirms outright the intrinsic value of all creatures'. It also finds credibility in Francis' analysis that human greed, selfishness, ignorance and self-interest are 'the sources of human misconduct' that contributed to human judgements and decisions that wrecked the ecosystem.⁴⁶

45 See a page in Yale's Forum on Religion and Ecology website dedicated to responses on the encyclical: <http://fore.yale.edu/news-related-to-pope-francis-climate-change-and-the-environment> (accessed 21 April 2017).

46 'Response from EWN on the Encyclical *Laudato Si'*, World Council of Churches (24 July 2015), www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/diakonia/water-network/response-from-ewn-on-the-encyclical-201claudato-si201d-1 (accessed 21

The Plymouth Brethren-born evangelical and internationally recognized climate scientist, Katherine Hayhoe, who co-authored *A Climate for Change*, met with eleven evangelical leaders and a few George Fox Seminary professors from Portland, Oregon, USA before presenting 'Climate Change: Facts and Faith' to the World Affairs Council in June 2015. Acclaimed by *Foreign Policy* as one of the 'Leading Global Thinkers' and by *Time* magazine as one of the '100 Most Influential People,' Hayhoe merits careful consideration.

At the gathering, she affirmed discussion in *LS* of the urgency of pursuing environmental ethics, agreeing that the problems of climate change have transmuted into disproportionate suffering among the poor and the most vulnerable. The most affected, she said, are those who reside in areas affected by heat waves, stronger hurricanes, major changes in growing seasons, wildfires, etc. She expressed agreement with analyses contained in *LS* about the 'indirect impacts of climate change, such as civil unrest and climate refugees'. Hayhoe also mentioned the Pentagon's concern that climate change may exacerbate other social problems and critiqued various capitalist and market economy policies in a fashion similar to *LS*.⁴⁷

Southern Baptist Theological Seminary President, Albert Mohler Jr., though not an expert on ecotheology, has also expressed appreciation for the Pope's appeal. According to Mohler, in 'tell[ing] the poorest nations that

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47 Dan Brunner, 'Climate Change: Evangelicals and the Pope', *Bearings* (Collegeville Institute), 6 August 2015.

they must forego immediate needs for refrigeration, modern medicine, and advances of the modern age',⁴⁸ Francis is not hiding behind an ulterior motive to critique the free market system. Rather, he is urging all nations to become more environmentally conscious in their lifestyles.

An interesting response by a local parish with a commitment to care for the environment came from the Peace Lutheran Church of Seattle, Washington, a member congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). The Peace Lutheran Church of Seattle received *LS* positively. For six consecutive weeks in March and April 2016, it invited members from various local Christian groups to explore how they could accept this document's 'urgent challenge to protect our common home' and 'dialogue about how we are shaping the future of our planet'. Participants agreed to seek 'a non-consumerism model of life, recreation, and community'. They called for wider consensual, collaborative actions between community leaders (such as scientists, activists, business leaders, politicians, and faith community leaders).

Though the Peace Lutheran Church consortium at Seattle affirmed many of the Pope's analyses, they disagreed about how the wealthy regions ought to intervene. They warned that 'under the guise of noble claims' proposals may generate 'new wars'. The disagreement is notwithstanding their agree-

ment about the 'grave implications' that may follow the 'unprecedented destruction of ecosystems'. The group also shared Francis' observation about how the lack of 'culture and leadership' would confront those residing both in the more developed regions and the less developed regions.⁴⁹

In his personal capacity as an ecclesial theologian, Russell R. Reno, the editor of *First Things* and an Episcopalian by birth and who was received into the Catholic fold in 2004, published a weighty analysis of *LS*.⁵⁰ Although Reno affirms Francis' observations about the 'much-needed effort to grasp and respond to today's global realities' and his 'strong, often comprehensive criticisms of the secular technological project' that would impinge upon the global, environmental concerns and the 'central ecological issue today', he also points out what he considers the 'weakness' of the encyclical.

Indeed, *LS* utilizes a 'dire' and 'doomsday ... rhetoric of crisis' to communicate the urgency of the ecological situation. Although there is nothing inherently wrong with such a tactic, Reno contends that phrases in this document such as 'integral ecology' and 'lines of approach and action' fail to provide cogently the 'new synthesis', 'radical change', or 'bold cultural revolution' needed to resolve 'the spiral of self-destruction which currently

⁴⁸ R. Albert Mohler Jr., 'Mohler responds to Pope Francis' *Laudato Si*,' *Southern News* (18 June 2015), <http://news.sbts.edu/2015/06/18/mohler-responds-to-pope-francis-laudato-si/> (accessed 21 April 2017).

⁴⁹ See Peace Lutheran Church, Seattle, Washington's letter of response to Pope Francis, www.peacelutheranseattle.org/?p=2378 (accessed 21 April 2017).

⁵⁰ R. R. Reno, 'The Weakness of *Laudato Si*,' *First Things* (1 July 2015), <https://www.firstthings.com/web-exclusives/2015/07/the-weakness-of-laudato-si> (accessed 21 April 2017).

engulfs us'.

According to Reno, *LS* sounds 'like just another version' of weighing the 'trade-offs' between 'risks and benefits'. Reno deems the current approach to choosing between 'risks and benefits' as the 'signature achievements of scientific and technological mastery'. While *LS* claims to offer a truly 'new, integral and interdisciplinary approach', Reno contends that Francis' recommendations actually resemble the 'best practices' offered by McKinsey consultants.

McKinsey's 'best practices' are read as 'technocratic conceits' of late modernity, 'designed to avoid substantive moral and metaphysical questions'. McKinsey consultants would take God out of the puzzle instead of urging a return to God to solve the problems of humanity. If the root cause of the present ecological crisis is 'the failure to acknowledge God', Reno observes, then Francis' endorsement of the Earth Charter (a secular initiative for sustainable society) does not overcome a humanistic approach that seeks to exclude God.

Reno's mixed review should be placed alongside other Catholic critiques. For instance, Daniel Mahoney observes in *National Review* that Francis' ideological remarks in *LS* 'sometimes, too, confuse Christian charity with secular humanitarianism'. Mahoney also thinks that *LS* has drawn from 'secular apocalypticism' which 'the pope must avoid'. Mahoney claims that at times, 'he [Pope Francis] confuses his personal judgments ... with the full weight of Catholic wisdom'.

Still, Mahoney urges respect for Francis' artful engagement with environmental concerns. *LS* demonstrates

'ample continuities and equally ample discontinuities with the great tradition that preceded him',⁵¹ i.e. Catholic social teaching and the tradition of western political philosophy.

IV Locating an Evangelical Response to *Laudato Si*

In previous time periods, many evangelicals held to a dominionist reading of creation for human ends and did not imagine any possibility of rehabilitating fallen creation (due to doomsday eschatological presuppositions).⁵² Now, evangelicals accept more interconnected theologies of creation and embrace the intrinsic beauty of creation even in its post-lapsarian condition. Contemporary evangelicals recognize more readily their God-given roles as witnesses to eco-care, and to morality in various socio-political contexts.

This shift is demonstrated most clearly in *Introducing Evangelical Eco-theology* (2014).⁵³ The book presents evangelicals' journey in several parts: biblical-theological, historical and praxis. The authors affirm (a) the necessity of 'listening to scripture' for eco-care, (b) 'the grandeur and groaning of the earth', (c) the history of Christian engagement with creation as

51 Daniel J. Mahoney, 'Laudato Si and the Catholic Social Tradition,' *National Review* (10 October 2015), www.nationalreview.com/article/425349/laudato-si-and-catholic-social-tradition-daniel-j-mahoney (accessed 21 April 2017).

52 Kyle S. Van Houtan and Michael S. Northcott, eds., *Diversity and Dominion* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2010).

53 Brunner, Butler and Swoboda, *Introducing Evangelical Ecotheology*.

a journey 'in the wilderness', and (d) the Trinitarian call to restore earthly Eden. Evangelicals could follow the book's commitment to pursuing eco-activism in six ways: justice, mercy, heavenly-minded living for earthly good, embodied earthly living, supporting greening efforts of the church, and maintaining hope in the resurrection.

In the spirit of promoting evangelical eco-care, and against the backdrop of shifts in evangelical ecotheology, I craft in this section of the paper a possible tripartite response to *Laudato Si* for evangelicals. My purpose is to consider how Francis' appeal relates to evangelical understanding and thus to what extent evangelicals may accept *LS*' appeal to witness collaboratively on eco-care.

In considering this question, we should locate the appeal of *LS* for collaborative witness for the sake of the gospel as one among other such invitations extended in the *Cape Town Commitment* (2010), *Christian Witness in a Multi-Religious World* (2011), *Together Towards Life* (2013), and *Evangelii Gaudium* (2013).⁵⁴

1. Affirmations with additions

Like the biblical, theological treatment found in *LS*, the evangelical imperative to care for God's earth rests on a biblical basis for ecotheology.⁵⁵ However,

LS makes no substantial mention of eschatological presuppositions and implications, which is a drawback in his treatment. I hold that eschatology is an integral aspect of Christian dogmatics and theology, and that it ought to influence the shape of ecotheology and be viewed as praxis of discipleship (as God's stewards in caring for life and creation).

Adding an eschatological dimension to an appeal for creation care is also relevant for evangelicals who have been wearied by controversies in eschatology. The eschatological reality of the future should not inhibit evangelical participation in eco-care in the present time, regardless of one's eschatological stance.⁵⁶

Evangelicals need not fear the eschatological dimension of ecotheology. We need not reject 'this-worldly' concerns to live an 'otherworldly' life or vice versa. Neither do speculations about the plight of the earth at the eschaton (as complete destruction, recreation, or the transformation of the present universe into a new heaven and earth) imply the meaningfulness or futility of pursuing ecological praxis in the present life.

⁵⁴ See references in note 2. See also my reading of these documents in Timothy T. N. Lim, 'The Holy Spirit in EG, TTL, and CTC: The Pneumatological Impulse for Christian Mission,' *International Review of Mission* 104.2 (November 2015): 203–16.

⁵⁵ Bouma-Prediger, *Beauty of the Earth*, 81–110 and 111–29; Calvin B. DeWitt, 'The Scientist and the Shepherd: The Emergence of

Evangelical Environmentalism,' in *The Oxford Handbook of Religion and Ecology*, edited by Roger S. Gottlieb (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 568–87.

⁵⁶ See Thomas N. Finger, *Evangelicals Eschatology and the Environment* (Wynnewood, PA: Evangelical Environmental Network, 1998); for more recent developments, see Jacques Berlinerblau, *Thumpin' It* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008), ch. 2, 'The Bible and the Environment: Evangelicals Discover Climate Change and Democrats Discover Evangelicals'. See also Bouma-Prediger, *Beauty of the Earth*, 57–80.

If the gospel entails the restoration and renewal of the earth and all creation as part of Christ's incarnational mission (Rom 8:21–23), then the mandate of living the gospel includes our part in seeking the renewal of creation, which will be reconstituted in Christ.⁵⁷

As eschatological theologian Brian Hebblethwaite explains, drawing from Jürgen Moltmann's *The Coming God*, 'the ultimate hope of resurrection, anticipated in Jesus Christ ... opens up, empowers, and demands Christian hope for this-worldly liberation in all its aspects', which would include the pursuit of an ecological restoration as a this-worldly responsibility for the other-worldly life to come. Hebblethwaite continues, 'Just because the resurrection of Jesus is the anticipation of the end of universal history, the Christian must hope and work for the transformation of every aspect of the present.'⁵⁸

Secularists, dating back to Lynn White in 1967, have frequently blamed Christians' otherworldly eschatology for lack of interest in, or even for exacerbating, the environmental crisis. However, evangelical ecological views have matured, showing that there is plenty of room for believers to care for this world as well. Christian eschatology generally values the transformation of creation, not its rampant destruc-

tion, even if God may put an end to this earth at a future time unknown to us.⁵⁹

The social costs of greed, carelessness and ignorance have been enormous. Exploitation of the environment and other socio-economically and politically irresponsible decisions have furthered ecological degradation and caused our ecological crises to spiral. All humanity is responsible for preserving our complex, multi-layered, interconnected, bio-diverse, ecological and atmospheric home. In response to Francis' plea, evangelicals may affirm with Catholics their eco-concern for making the world a better place.

2. Ambivalence amidst agreement

Yet, unlike the explicit openness of *LS* to the use of the work of secular scientists and environmentalists to inform a Christian response to the ecological crisis, some evangelicals remain ambivalent about 'environmental justice', which is read as a notion advanced by secular environmentalists in either too cosmocentric (and not sufficiently anthropocentric and theocentric) or too biocentric terms.⁶⁰ Although scientific findings do inform an understanding of

⁵⁷ William J. Dumbrell, *The Search for Order* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994), 297–8; Shane Clifton, 'Preaching the "Full Gospel" in the Context of Global Environmental Crises', in *The Spirit Renews the Face of the Earth*, edited by Amos Yong (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2009), 117–34.

⁵⁸ Brian Hebblethwaite, *The Christian Hope* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 181, 187.

⁵⁹ Lynn White Jr., 'The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis,' *Science* 155 (10 March 1967): 1203–7; for a response, Richard T. Wright, 'Responsibility for the Ecological Crisis,' *Bioscience* 20.15 (August 1970): 851–3.

⁶⁰ For secular environmental ethics, see Renee Skelton and Vernice Miller, *The Environmental Justice Movement* (Natural Resources Defense Council, 2016). <https://www.nrdc.org/stories/environmental-justice-movement> (accessed 5 May 2017). For an evangelical appropriation of ecojustice, see Brunner, *Introducing Evangelical Ecotheology*, 162–7.

the natural world, not all evangelicals could accept secular environmentalists' *de facto* assumption that the sciences provide concrete authority for their pursuits in environmental care.⁶¹

Neither do all evangelicals, especially American capitalistic evangelicals, agree with *LS*' analysis that economic policies have exacerbated the ecological crisis rather than contributing to human flourishing.⁶² Evangelicals generally see themselves as hopeful agents of God's transformation,⁶³ amid some literalists who still hold a more ephemeral view of the earth because of a doomsday or pre-millennial eschatology.⁶⁴ Also, not all evangelicals

agree that salvation includes a healed creation.⁶⁵

Even so, evangelical theology agrees on the value of all life, not just human life, as does *LS*. However, evangelicals typically affirm the 'instrumental value' of creation. This is in contrast to *LS* which agrees with environmental justice ethicists in recognising the 'intrinsic value' of the non-human natural world.⁶⁶ For those evangelicals, only humans are moral beings, with the right to exercise dominion over other creatures, and non-human species are resources for the use of humanity.⁶⁷ Still, creation is more than and not less than a resource for humanity, because, as the psalmist declared, creation sings forth the glory of God (Ps 19:1).

Humans do not own creation, but are stewards entrusted with the care of creation. Together with all crea-

61 Evangelicals' reservations about the sciences are more complex than a choice of either affirmation or rejection. See David N. Livingstone, D.G. Hart and Mark A. Noll, eds., *Evangelicals and Science in Historical Perspective* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999); Michael Roberts, *Evangelicals and Science* (New York: Greenwood, 2008).

62 *For the Health of the Nation: An Evangelical Call to Civic Responsibility* (Washington, DC: National Association of Evangelicals, 2004) demonstrates a willingness not just to urge policy changes but also to collaborate in socio-political spheres and, in that sense, to draw upon the political economy as a change agent.

63 Jürgen Moltmann's works *The Future of Creation*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1979), *The Coming of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1996), *The Spirit of Life*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992) and *In the End—The Beginning*, trans. Margaret Kohl (London: SCM, 2004), among other works, have been appropriated in various evangelical eschatologies despite Moltmann's pantheistic tendencies. For a different eschatological reading, see Hans Schwarz, *Eschatology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000).

64 Stanley J. Grenz, *The Millennial Maze* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1992), 213–4.

65 Howard A. Snyder, *Salvation Means Creation Healed* (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2011); cf. Ernst M. Conradie, ed., *Creation and Salvation*, 2 vols. (London: LIT Verlag, 2012).

66 Norman Wirzba, *The Paradise of God* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 61–2. Among other things, Wirzba also critiques contemporary culture for abandoning the interconnectedness, which aids flourishing of life, and for displacing the relevance of God in contemporary understanding of creation.

67 Several corrections have emerged. David S. Cunningham, 'The Way of All Flesh: Rethinking the Imago Dei', in *Creaturely Theology*, edited by Celia Deane-Drummond and David Clough (London: SCM Press, 2009), 100–18 rejects the *imago dei* as a distinctive feature of the human creation. Ryan Patrick McLaughlin, *Christian Theology and the Status of Animals* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), affirms cosmo-sacramental of peace. On Christian animal rights, see Stephen M. Vantassel, *Dominion over Wildlife?* (Eugene, OR: Resource Publications, 2009).

tion, humanity showcases the Creator's handiwork, and in our earth and animal stewardship, we too join all creation to give God the glory! As the late Reformed scientific theologian, Thomas Torrance, reminds us, 'an unbreakable bond' in the Christian hope of redemption and recreation 'extends not just to human beings but to the universe as a whole'.⁶⁸

Thus, though evangelicals have maintained ambivalence about how to respond to the ecological crisis because of conflicting data in ecological science, technology and theology,⁶⁹ the invitation of *LS* provides an example for collaborative action amid disagreements. However, I am not claiming that evangelicals have to formulate their responses based on controversial scientific findings.

The relationship between science, theology and ethics has been rigorously discussed among a wide range of evangelicals, and to date no clear consensus has been reached.⁷⁰ For our purpose, even if evangelicals may not agree with the reading in *LS* about the findings of secular scientists, environ-

mentalists, economists and anthropologists, we can still heed its appeal to collaborate with others, not just Christians, in repairing the world we inhabit.

Francis' theological understanding, charitable spirit and recognition of the urgency of the crisis have motivated his appeal for a holistic and interdisciplinary adoption of creation care, working alongside constituencies outside the Catholic tradition. Evangelicals can learn from Francis' goodwill and willingness to work with others for the sake of 'saving' the world ecologically. Ecological conversion is a part of the gospel.⁷¹

3. Abstinence

Notwithstanding many evangelicals' positive appraisal of Pope Francis and/or *LS*,⁷² some within the evangelical camp would likely resist (or at least abstain from following) *LS* and its appeal to activism, and in doing so they would demonstrate historic continuity with much of their own tradition. Evangelicals abstained from participation in the early days of global ecological coalitions, such as in 1972 when the Unit-

⁶⁸ Thomas Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 244.

⁶⁹ John Jefferson Davis, 'Ecological "Blind Spots" in the Structure and Content of Recent Evangelical Systematic Theologies,' *Journal of Evangelical Theological Society* 43.2 (June 2000): 273–86.

⁷⁰ J. P. Moreland, *Christianity and the Nature of Science* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1989); Phillip E. Johnson, *Reason in the Balance* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995); Jürgen Moltmann, *Science and Wisdom*, trans. Margaret Kohl (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003); James K. A. Smith and Amos Yong, eds., *Science and the Spirit* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010).

⁷¹ Denis Edwards, *Partaking of God* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2014), Part 3.

⁷² For example, Evangelical Environmental Network President and CEO, Mitchell C. Hescox, 'All Children Deserve a Healthy Climate', *National Catholic Reporter* (3 June 2015), <https://www.ncronline.org/blogs/ecco-catholic/all-children-deserve-healthy-climate> (accessed 21 April 2017); University of Wisconsin–Madison environmental scientist. Calvin B. DeWitt, 'Evangelical Contributions to Earth Stewardship: *Laudato Si* and Stewardship as Con-Service', presented at the 100th anniversary of the Ecological Society of America, 18 June 2015.

ed Nations first convened an ecological conference titled 'Only One Earth'. Evangelicals have also had limited representation at the Earth Charter, a global ethical project that declares ethical principles of building a sustainable future and which held a worldwide civil society consultation in 2000.⁷³

Historically, evangelicals' distrust of government and suspicion of global coalitions have led them to mis-characterize these entities as unfavourable developments or even as works of the anti-Christ. Yet changes are evident, particularly since evangelical John Houghton's involvement as co-chair of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and the initiation of American mega-church pastor Rick Warren's PEACE program.⁷⁴

Moreover, ideas about 'natural spirituality' have frequently been intertwined in the quest for eco-care, and evangelicalism maintains a studious distance from New Age movements or groups that seek a harmonization with 'Mother Earth'. This harmonization schema is an essential belief and practice of many New Age proponents, but evangelicals view it as incompatible with Christian belief.⁷⁵ The acqui-

escence of *LS* in engaging with native, non-Christian, planetary spiritualities would sit uncomfortably with Evangelicals who have had unfriendly encounters with folk spiritualities, and thus some degree of abstinence is to be expected.

In light of these historic and contemporary cases of evangelical reluctance to join in global collaborations, albeit for noteworthy causes (such as the care of creation), one can likely project that some evangelicals will not be excited about the call of *LS* for global collaboration on eco-care, though they may be unlikely to speak against the necessity of joint or complementary efforts at some level.

Still, with regard to these evangelical reasons for abstinence, it may be relevant to consider George Fox Seminary faculty member Randy Woodley's inquiry as to whether there can be a different reception of 'harmony' through the notion of shalom.⁷⁶ Or could biblical scholar Walter Brueggemann's urge for harmony among all creation be fruitfully appropriated to redirect some evangelicals' tendencies towards abstinence?⁷⁷

V Preliminary Preparations for Collaborative Witness

The recommendation for evangelicals to participate collaboratively with Catholics and others in 'caring for our common home' entails the following

⁷³ See The Earth Charter Initiative 2006; <http://earthcharter.org/virtual-library2/the-earth-charter-text/> (accessed Apr. 21, 2017).

⁷⁴ Brunner, *Introducing Evangelical Ecotheology*, 94, 153; cf. Bob Goudzwaard, Mark Vander Vennen, and David van Heemst, *Hope in Troubled Times* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 16–23.

⁷⁵ Douglas R. Groothuis, *Unmasking the New Age* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1986); Ron Rhodes, *The Counterfeit Christ of the New Age Movement* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1991) and *New Age Movement* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995).

⁷⁶ Randy Woodley, *Shalom and the Community of Creation* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2012).

⁷⁷ Walter Brueggemann, *Peace* (St Louis: Chalice, 2001), 13–4; cf. Brunner, *Introducing Evangelical Ecotheology*, 129.

preliminary preparations, especially in light of the prior considerations of why some evangelicals may be cautiously open to an action plan while others remain ambivalent or choose to abstain from such collaborations.

1. Extending the conversation

Evangelicals could intentionally extend their conversation to others who may not think, conceive, and act like us—Christians and non-Christians, religious and non-religious, governmental and non-governmental, etc.

Evangelicals have been comfortable talking and collaborating among themselves. Though some may interpret willingness to dialogue as a tacit approval of other groups' beliefs and practices, in most cases dialogue merely provides an occasion for understanding ourselves and others better.

Because evangelicals do not have resources like the Catholic magisterium and do not look to an authoritative teaching office, esteemed evangelical para-church organizations such as the World Evangelical Alliance ultimately do not confer with or claim to establish any authoritative power over others in the diverse evangelical conscience and polity. Thus, collaborations with constituencies within and outside evangelicalism could occur only as voluntary participation.

2. Providing resources

Evangelical leaders could provide a more representative set of resources to assist the re-thinking of a theology, practice and ethics of dialogue, participation and collaboration with participants outside evangelicalism for the care of creation.

Although many notable individuals have published various useful resources, documenting officially the principles of dialogue and the ethics of collaborative eco-witness will prepare evangelicals 'to enter into critical dialogue with the religious (and non-religious) convictions of other people'.⁷⁸ As these resources have highlighted in their examination of aspects of creation care, many potential challenges may inhibit meaningful engagement.⁷⁹ Still, without a representative commission of sorts, these individual voices do not speak for the diverse evangelical community.

Along with these insights, I wish to emphasize that collaboration is also about partnership and that there is value in learning the dynamics of group interaction and of intra- and inter-group engagement. Skilful use of group processes can help dialogue partners to overcome inhibitions, encourage effective group interaction, and prevent collaborative pitfalls.⁸⁰ A call for more

⁷⁸ Schirmacher and Johnson, *Environmental Ethics*, 60.

⁷⁹ For instance, Schirmacher and Johnson's *Environmental Ethics* (2016) has indirectly shown that the evangelical conscience does impact how we support of appeals for the right to drinking water, respond to inappropriate dualities in public ethics, converse with other religious and non-religious, secular groups on their approaches to creation care and the use of technology, and so forth. Gnanakan's evangelical adumbration of the theological, ecclesiological and practical aspects of eco-understanding in *Responsible Stewardship of God's Creation* (2014) can help congregations to formulate an evangelical consciousness of and response to the environmental crisis.

⁸⁰ I have written on the dynamics of collaboration among churches in *Ecclesial Recognition* (Leiden: Brill, 2017). See also Christena

representative efforts from the diverse evangelical community will hopefully provide resources for enabling effective dialogue and facilitating collaboration.

3. Articulating a response

Evangelicals who have been at the forefront in the appreciative use of technology could come together to articulate a much-needed response, both to those who are ambivalent and fearful about technological advancement (because they are horrified by the enormously ‘unprecedented proportion’ of destructive capacities of technology), and to avid champions of technological research.

Given the weighty caution *LS* has issued about technology (while acknowledging technological contributions to well-being and civilization) and the many emotional and highly charged and contentious debates for and against *LS* in both religious and secular communities, it seems that a fresh piece of deeper theological reflection is necessary ‘to clarify our [humanity’s] dependence, fragility, and finitude’: how should humans remain responsible in the development, production and use of technology?⁸¹ Technology may promise utopia, yet improving material conditions, business practices, living standards and lifestyle convenience and comfort cannot eradicate the world’s most pressing problems.

As realistic supporters of technological research and use, evangelicals are poised to provide a balanced response. Evangelical theology reflects realism (not naïvete) about the fallibility of humanity, the ethics of responsible stewardship and the needed anchor of spirituality in a pleasure-seeking, consumeristic, fallen world. Evangelicals have much to offer a world filled with misaligned hopes for the capabilities of science and technology. God alone satisfies humanity’s deepest yearnings, and contentment is not measured by what the world offers or by the conditions and situations of our life.⁸²

4. Sharing results

Evangelical non-profit and advocacy groups could gather to share their successes and failures in influencing the wider culture. Evangelical lobby groups, which have had various levels of success in bringing about cultural change, could draw on their experiences in policy-making and advocacy to start and lead new initiatives.

I am not implying that a more graniose plan is better or more effective. From its small beginnings, the Earth Charter has generated substantial interest in environmental care. Evangelicals too, by pulling resources together and galvanizing support, could more effectively generate awareness, influence policy-making, and mobilize action.⁸³

Cleveland, *Disunity in Christ* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2013).

⁸¹ I borrow insights from David Lewin, ‘Technology,’ *Oxford Handbook of Theology and Modern European Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 457–76.

⁸² James M. Houston, *Joyful Exiles* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2006).

⁸³ 2000-2010 *Earth Charter Initiative: At a Glance* (San Jose, Costa Rica: Earth Charter International Secretariat, 2009).

5. Envisioning outcomes

If envisioning a wide plan of action, which could be disseminated among evangelicals' global networks, is achievable, what are some possible outcomes of a compelling, massive initiative?

I am implicitly asking here if the appeals contained in *LS* and key evangelical documents may be resources for evangelical agencies' officials to begin conversations about inviting concrete participation across their relational and ecclesial networks. Which evangelical or non-evangelical bodies and their leaders are willing to be the organizers? Maybe, after decades of dialogue, we are now more ready to join hands with others to serve the world we live in and are called to serve.

VI Collaborating for Creation Care

I began by noting the expressed intent of various Catholic, evangelical, and Protestant agencies to collaborate for creation care. Yet efforts by the agencies in these communions have largely been stand-alone projects. Surely, we can do more together than if each group makes its case separately or independently.

Though evangelicals are less likely than Catholics or secular environmentalists to call eco-actions a movement towards 'environmental justice', this article has also demonstrated evangelicals' deep acknowledgement of their biblical-theological ecological responsibility as stewards and witnesses of God. Perhaps the time is right for for-

mulating ethical guidelines for encouraging collaboration among Catholics, evangelicals, and other Protestants. Maybe we need not more declarations but an acknowledgement of what Kusumita Pedersen summarizes as the fourfold norms of eco-care: solidarity, sustainability, sufficiency and participation.

As Pedersen argues, the present milieu is poised to welcome multiple approaches to prophetic and pragmatic action in eco-care, rather than a further deferral of our moral responsibility. Despite our various religious worldviews and their differing senses of eco-responsibility, after decades of conversation at varying levels, we ought to be able to draw from cross-cultural resources to catalyze change concretely, not just for our generation but also for posterity, so long as the Lord Jesus tarries.⁸⁴

Maybe it is time for our concrete action to correct secular environmentalists' still-unjust criticism that Christianity contributes only to ecological denigration. Maybe eco-care can bring the churches together in unprecedented ways.⁸⁵ May the Trinitarian Spirit, who renews all creation, help us in our witness, ecologically and in all areas of discipleship, and pour out the Spirit again without measure, for the transformation of our home.

⁸⁴ Kusumita P. Pedersen, 'Religious Ethics and the Environment: A Review Essay', *Journal of Religious Ethics* 43.3 (2015): 558–85.

⁸⁵ Max Oelschlaeger, *Caring for Creation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1994), 120.