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Introduction

A PARABLE

At the beginning of each chapter, we introduce each topic with the fictional story of a pastor, his church, and their engagement with the topic of creation care.[1] Stories convey ideas in ways direct argument or didactic writing cannot. Hopefully, our visits with Pastor Gabriel Lang and friends will give us additional grist for the mill as we consider the nature of environmental stewardship.

> *What's that saying, again,* Pastor Gabriel Lang thought to himself, *about where roads lead that are paved with good intentions?* When he decided to preach a few months ago on what the Bible had to say about creation care, he had thought it would be a way of helping his congregation wrestle with how to apply the Bible to their everyday lives regarding an issue of contemporary significance. What he didn't expect was the beehive of activity it would set off. To be sure, some of this activity was exactly what he had hoped for. People were engaging with one another, Scripture, and God in prayer and thinking about ways they could put their convictions into action. But in the mix, you would periodically hear mutterings of discord: remarks here about "those greedy businesses" or there about "those long-haired tree-huggers." Nothing usually came out of those *sotto voce* comments,

1. Daniel Taylor first gave us the idea of mixing fiction and non-fiction in this way (Taylor, *The Myth*).

but even worse, when a discussion actually did occur, Gabriel would see the two proverbial ships passing in the night. Instead of talking to one another, people seemed to talk past each other. It gave Gabriel a bad feeling; they reminded him of the minor earthquakes that come prior to the eruption of a volcano.

Which finally happened. It had started with Arnold Banks's suggestion at the monthly meeting of the church's creation care committee that the church leadership, on behalf of the church, sign a petition being circulated around town asking the Town Council to turn down the request of Acme Industries for a permit to expand its factory. "This expansion," Arnold explained, "would destroy the Franklin marshes, one of the last wetland areas that has remained unchanged since the pioneer days when the town was first settled." Clearly, Arnold continued, obedience to God's creation care command demanded the church align itself with the right side on this issue.

"But, Arnold," replied Ralph Lee, "that expansion will provide hundreds of jobs, and Acme has already set aside funds to purchase and restore a separate parcel of former wetland, nearly twice the size of the Franklin marshes. The environmental impact studies show that the ecological worth of the restored wetland area is much higher and will even provide increased flood protection for area businesses; their flood insurance rates may even decrease."

Ramona Anderson rolled her eyes. "Why is it always about money with you business owners, Ralph? Haven't you been listening to Pastor Gabriel's sermons? God cares about His creation, regardless of whether it makes us rich or not."

Ralph glared. "Ramona," he began, "yes, I have been listening to Pastor Gabriel." He paused. "I also want to take care of creation. But the problem with you tree-huggers is that business is always wrong and people are the cause of all our problems. Frankly," and here his brows furrowed, "I sometimes feel like you tree-huggers would be happier if human beings didn't exist at all."

The room grew quiet. People looked at their feet, shuffled papers, or checked their smartphones. Lourdes Garcia broke the silence. Like her geographical namesake, Lourdes had a heart for healing, and it didn't matter whether it was the healing of broken bones at her medical practice or the healing of frazzled relationships. "Ralph," she said, "I don't think Ramona meant that people have no legitimate needs, and Ramona, . . ."

"Lourdes," Ramona cut her off, "don't bother. It's high time people showed their true colors. The preponderance of the

science is clear, that we are hurting the environment, so the real question is: are we going to obey God or not? That's what it comes down to. And I'm sick and tired of people pretending they're following God's commands to be green when they're really following mammon . . . ."

Ralph Lee pushed his chair from the table and walked out of the room. The people who remained heard his car door shut, engine start, and his car drive away. Everyone looked at Gabriel, but he didn't know what to say. Finally, he broke the silence: "Maybe we all need a little time to get our bearings. I'll email everyone to find a time for another meeting." People nodded and politely left. Gabriel locked up the building and started turning off the remaining lights. As he reached the last switch, his eyes glanced at the "Save energy, save God's world" sticker next to the switch. *I guess we'll have to add some relationships to the list of things that need saving,* he ruefully thought, as he turned out the last light.

WHY THIS BOOK?

Over the last several decades, the global environmental movement has grown in ways few could have imagined just a century ago. People from all kinds of backgrounds—different ethnicities, religious beliefs, socioeconomic classes, etc.—have begun to wrestle deeply with environmental issues. In parallel, a movement has grown within the evangelical church that seeks to renew her calling to live as a steward of creation. Theologians, philosophers, scientists, and other Christian leaders have faithfully reminded us of the Scriptural foundation for such a mandate and have prophetically exhorted us to consider ways we might live differently, both personally and as a society, in order to better fulfill this mandate. In response, whether in the form of policy declarations, lobbying efforts, youth rallies, Bible studies, or churches and individuals carefully and consciously changing their lifestyles to support environmentally-friendlier options, Christians from all walks of life, all political stripes, and all throughout the nation have begun a grassroots movement to obey God's call to us as stewards of creation. Yet for all the clear and compelling work that has been done regarding the importance of creation care to God and His church, comparatively little work has been done regarding how to translate those commands into obedience.

For many in the church, the idea of a difference between the two—that an understanding that God commands human stewardship of creation does not automatically tell us how we are to obey that command—seems

exceedingly strange. After all, when confronted by a command in Scripture, we should not respond, "Let me think more about what obedience means," but, "Let's do it!" When God commands us not to steal, we do not reply, "How do I go about obeying this command?" We just stop stealing. And given the clarity of Scripture regarding our responsibility as stewards, as well as the lessons from science regarding environmental problems and solutions, the idea of needing to translate command into obedience seems more than odd: it seems evasive. Why do we need more clarity in order to properly obey the environmental stewardship command?

Consider the following thought experiment.[2] Pretend there are two Earths, identical to each other except in the following way:

1. In the first Earth, which we will call the "Fossil Fuel" world, human-caused greenhouse gas emissions are projected to result in a 2.8 degrees Celsius increase in global mean temperature by 2100, with attendant effects on climate, extreme weather, ice sheet melting, species population impacts, etc.
2. In the second Earth, which we will call the "Solar Variability" world, changes in solar luminosity are projected to result in a 2.8 degrees Celsius increase in global mean temperature by 2100, with attendant effects on climate, extreme weather, ice sheet melting, species population impacts, etc.—the same effects as in the "Fossil Fuel" world.

In both worlds, the certainty of the science describing the mechanisms involved are the same. Assuming a Scriptural creation care mandate, what should be our response in each of the two worlds? Are our responses the same or different between the two? Why or why not?

One possible response is that our actions in the "Fossil Fuel" and the "Solar Variability" worlds should be different: In the "Fossil Fuel" world, because the problem is due to human activity, we should act by stopping the emission of greenhouse gases to prevent the warming, but in the "Solar Variability" world, we should not (or cannot), do anything because the problem is natural. But why should the nature of the cause of the problem (human or natural) make a difference in our response? In both worlds, regardless of the cause of the warming, the same warming, with the exact same consequences to both human and non-human creation, will occur. If the translation of stewardship commands into obedience is straightforward, then does not "care" for the environment demand responses in both cases to prevent the effects of global warming?

2. This thought experiment comes from Roger A. Pielke, Jr., a professor of environmental studies and a science-policy researcher at the University of Colorado at Boulder.

Of course, other responses are possible; the point here is not which response is correct. Rather, the point is this: If we conclude in the "Fossil Fuel" world the correct response is to do something, while in the "Solar Variability" world the correct response is to do nothing, we have translated the biblical commands into obedience not directly, but rather through a number of mediating assumptions about the meaning of creation care. For instance, we may have decided that the goal of creation care is to keep the Earth "natural" (where we have defined this as meaning "unaffected by people"), and thus mitigating actions in the "Solar Variability" world are wrong, while the opposite is true in the "Fossil Fuel" world. The same is true if we believe we should act in both the "Fossil Fuel" and "Solar Variability" worlds: We also *have not directly translated biblical commands into obedience.* Rather, we have used a number of mediating assumptions about the meaning of creation care. Examining the question of how to translate biblical commands into obedience, with respect to creation care, requires more than getting our theology right.

If it takes more than faithful exegesis in order to determine how we are to obey God as stewards of creation, we might expect different groups of evangelical environmentalists, while agreeing on the imperative of creation care, to advocate very different prescriptions for that care. In fact, we see just such a dynamic in current evangelical approaches towards creation care, with various Christian environmental organizations emphasizing different practices of creation care: some emphasize the importance of living a life of simplicity, others focus on worship, others on social justice, while still others focus on the connection with mission work.

These differences, however, can encompass more than emphasis in a response. Consider two of the major evangelical declarations regarding creation care:[3] On the Care of Creation: An Evangelical Declaration on the Care of Creation[4] ("Evangelical Declaration") and The Cornwall Declaration on Environmental Stewardship[5] ("Cornwall Declaration"). Both declarations prominently proclaim a conviction of God as Creator and nature as His good handiwork: The Evangelical Declaration affirms, "The cosmos, in all its beauty, wildness, and life-giving bounty, is the work of our personal

3. By "evangelical," we mean declarations that have attracted support from notable evangelical leaders; the declarations themselves may or may not have been authored exclusively by evangelicals. The Cornwall Declaration, for instance, is an interfaith document, but includes prominent evangelical leaders such as James Dobson, Bill Bright, and Charles Colson, as signatories.

4. EEN, "Evangelical Declaration."

5. Cornwall Alliance, "Cornwall Declaration."

and loving Creator,"[6] while the Cornwall Declaration teaches, "The earth, and with it all the cosmos, reveals its Creator's wisdom and is sustained and governed by His power and lovingkindness."[7]

This similarity in core convictions regarding the relationship of nature to its Creator, as we might expect, is coupled with some similarity in the goals of the two declarations. And yet, we find their goals are far from identical, and that the two declarations even have substantial differences in their understandings of what constitutes environmental degradation. For instance, the Evangelical Declaration, on the one hand, claims:

> These degradations of creation can be summed up as 1) land degradation; 2) deforestation; 3) species extinction; 4) water degradation; 5) global toxification; 6) the alteration of atmosphere; 7) human and cultural degradation.[8]

while the Cornwall Declaration claims:

> While some environmental concerns are well founded and serious, others are without foundation or greatly exaggerated. . . . Some unfounded or undue concerns include fears of destructive man-made global warming, overpopulation, and rampant species loss.[9]

Agreement regarding the biblical understanding of the nature of creation, its connection to its Creator, and even the imperative of creation care, appears an insufficient condition for agreement regarding the nature of environmental problems or their solution.

Of course, there are many reasons why such differences exist, some creditable and others not. The absence of consensus regarding how to obey God's command to care for creation is also not necessarily undesirable; we should be grateful that the multi-faceted nature of God's gifts to the church would also find a multi-faceted expression in the fulfillment of creation care. The presence of such differences, however, provides an additional clue to us regarding the nature of the command to steward the environment. Through following this, and other clues like it, in this book we aim to unpack how the creation care command differs from other commands, explain how the process of translating command into obedience is more difficult than is usually appreciated, and make a modest contribution to understanding what it means to obey the command to be stewards of creation.

6. EEN, "Evangelical Declaration."
7. Cornwall Alliance, "Cornwall Declaration."
8. EEN, "Evangelical Declaration."
9. Cornwall Alliance, "Cornwall Declaration."

WHAT WE NEED TO KNOW TO TRANSLATE COMMAND INTO OBEDIENCE

For any command or request, we can identify three issues or questions that need to be addressed in order for us to fully understand how to obey that command. These "criteria for obedience" are the importance, goals, and practice of the command. By "importance," we mean there has to be an understanding of the imperative of the command. The importance of a command tells us how to weigh it with respect to other commands and priorities. All commands require such an evaluation: even commands from God do not necessarily have equal weight in all circumstances. Jesus, after all, tells us there is a "greatest" commandment[10] and that the other of God's commands "hang on"[11] the first two commandments. And, in his criticism of the legalism of Israel's leaders, Jesus says, "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former."[12] In doing so, Jesus reinforces the obligation we have to obey everything God commands us while at the same time pointing out not all parts of the Law have the same importance.

Motivation for the command, the type and scope of the command, the value of the command, and the value of obeying the command are some of the issues to consider when evaluating a command's importance. In some cases—such as in Jesus's answer to the man who asked what was the greatest commandment—we are explicitly told the importance of a command. In other cases, understanding the importance of the command requires the appropriate use of wisdom, reason, love, intuition, and other means of judgment. As an example of such a means of judgment, consider a schema proposed by philosopher Charles Taylor. Taylor notes that there are two kinds of "evaluations" we make of desires, what he terms "strong" and "weak" evaluations.[13] In the latter, the depth of evaluation is superficial—we are interested merely in outcomes—while in the former, the worth of the desires is judged.[14] Strong evaluations thus are deeper, possess a richer language of articulation, and are of greater life import.[15] Commands requir-

10. Matt 22:37–38.
11. Matt 22:40.
12. Matt 23:23.
13. Taylor, "What Is Human Agency?" 16.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid., 16–27.

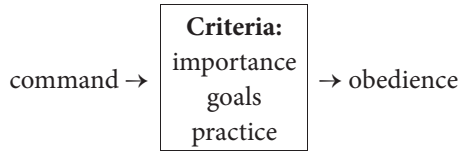
ing strong evaluations to understand and obey would, in this schema, have greater worth and thus importance than commands requiring only weak evaluations to understand and obey.

The "goals" of the command describe what will result from following the command and in doing so clarifies the purpose of the practice. The goals represent what we are aiming to accomplish in following the command. Often, the range of possible goals for a command is broader than the range of rationales for the importance of a command. We can define multiple goals for a command, none of which are mutually exclusive. The goals of a command might be some sort of environmental state but could also be an outcome for a single individual (e.g., becoming a certain kind of person), group of individuals, or for a community or society as a whole. Goals also do not have to be material: emotional, ethical, and spiritual outcomes are also possible goals for following a command.

How do the goals of a command differ from the importance of a command? On one level, the two are certainly related: one reason a command may be important is that the goals of the command are compelling or important. Or, for some commands, the only goal of the command may merely be that the command is obeyed. But in many, if not most, situations, it is useful for us to separate the two criteria. As we will see later in this book, the range of determinants of the goals criterion is often broader than the range of determinants of the importance criterion. In addition, the kinds of concerns addressed by the determinants of each criterion often differs: the importance criterion is often mainly concerned with questions of meaning and purpose while the goals criterion is often more open to incorporating pragmatic concerns.

Finally, "practice" refers to the actual actions that implement the command. As in the case with the goals criterion, there is a wide range of possible practices. Practices may be individual or corporate. Practices can be physical or material activities, but practices can also be mental, emotional, or spiritual activities. While public policies (e.g., laws, regulations) are one form of practices, they are by no means the predominant form. Practices unrelated to policymaking—say, the everyday activity of an individual person or the combined activity of a club or group—are often the main practices through which we obey a command.

In sum, "importance" tells us why we should follow the command, "goals" tells us what that following the command will result in, and "practice" tells us how we will put that command into effect. Thus, the model of translating command into obedience is:



We can define two kinds of commands based on the kind of clarity a command has regarding the criteria for obedience of that command. When the criteria for obedience are clear, a command leads directly to obedience. By clarity, we mean either the answers for the criteria are clear or that it is clear that more detailed analysis, description, or understanding of the criteria is unneeded for obedience. When there is such clarity, we call such obedience "simple obedience." (Note that the adjective "simple" does not refer to whether the command is or is not easy to obey but rather that the connection between command and obedience is direct and clear.) When the command lacks this clarity, obedience requires thoughtful and detailed analysis of the three criteria for obedience. We call this kind of obedience "considered obedience."

The earlier example of "do not steal" is a simple obedience command. In terms of importance, the command is required and context independent. In terms of goals, there may be any number of goals—character development, social peace, love of neighbor, etc.—but because of the non-negotiable importance of the command, perfect clarity in goals is unneeded for obedience to be possible.[16] Finally, the practice of the command is also clear: do not take that which you do not own.

The creation care command lacks such simple clarity: The importance, goals, and practice are multi-faceted and complex, and understanding how to obey God's stewardship command requires detailed examination of the three criteria for obedience. Questions regarding the importance of creation care include: Is it central to the fabric of God's purposes, or peripheral, and in what way? If it is central, how does this command compare to other central commands? Questions addressing the goals of creation care include: What is the purpose of creation care? Is it to minimize human influence, or to shape nature in a certain way? Finally, in examining what creation care practices will accomplish those goals, questions we might ask include: what frameworks and tools can we use to ascertain which practices will best accomplish those goals? Are the practices primarily individual or cultural and societal too? What are the roles of economics and government, if any?

16. If the criterion of importance tells us the command is a non-negotiable duty, clarity in goals usually does not matter for obedience to be possible.

Again, because God has commanded us to care for creation, the question in addressing these criteria is not whether we should care for creation—that is non-negotiable—but what that care should look like.

While each of these three criteria are in some ways independent of each other—for instance, we can engage in a practice as part of obeying a command without necessarily believing in the command's importance (outside of it being commanded of us) or understanding the purposes of obeying the command—a healthy or proper response to the command, rather than a misguided, legalistic, etc., response, requires we rightly understand all three criteria collectively. Usually, we go through these three criteria in order, starting with understanding the importance of the command, then the goals, and finally deriving the practices that fit those goals. Sometimes, however, we may address these criteria out of order. For instance, when practice comes first, and our thinking changes in response to our actions, sociologists call this "praxis." Still, order is not as important as the fact that all three criteria are addressed.

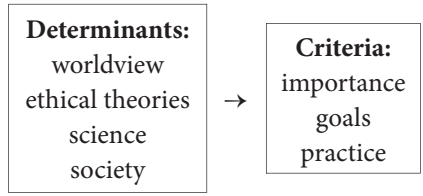
In our discussion thus far, it may seem that understanding the three criteria for obedience is an entirely analytic or rational endeavor. While reason is important, it is not the only means to knowledge and understanding. Other ways of knowing exist (e.g., intuition) and those ways of knowing can also contribute to our understanding of the three criteria. Even subjective phenomena such as love, compassion, and aesthetic apprehension can be ways of knowing about a subject and have a place in our understanding of the three criteria. What kinds of knowing exist, how these different kinds of knowing interact with one another, and what are the strengths and weaknesses of each kind of knowing, will be (at least implicitly) addressed later in this book. For now, suffice it to say that as we make a detailed effort to understand the three criteria, we may use more than one way of knowing.

If importance, goals, and practice are the three criteria for obedience to a biblical command for creation care, what influences determine these three criteria? For the case of creation care, there are four such categories that determine the criteria for obedience: worldview, ethical theories, science, and society. We will call these four categories the "determinants" of the criteria for obedience:

Determinants:

worldview — nature of reality
ethical theories — value of nature and weighing values
science — knowledge about nature and connecting to policy
society — politics and economics

These determinants are not necessarily mutually exclusive and can affect one another. Combinations from these four determinants together address each of the three criteria, with some categories providing more or less to a given criteria. Schematically, this can be given as:



The term "worldview" commonly refers to a person's understanding of the ultimate nature of reality.[17] Many such worldviews are religious in nature (e.g., Christian, Buddhist, Muslim), but some are non-religious (e.g., nihilist, postmodern).[18] In this book, we use worldview in a narrower, more literal sense: what do we see when we view the world, especially the natural world? What is the world? Some worldviews would answer "something sacred," while other worldviews may see the natural world as primarily a source of raw materials. Still others see the world primarily in an aesthetic sense, perhaps as the canvas of a Master painter. Whatever our understanding, a worldview provides the foundation upon which our decisions of how to treat nature are based. This is not to say worldviews are completely determinant: We may act inconsistently with our worldview—for instance, we may say we believe God created the world but then treat His creation with disrespect—but the inconsistency highlights the foundational nature of worldviews, for eventually the cognitive dissonance will be resolved one way or the other, either by a change in practice or by a change in worldview.

Ethical theories provide the bridge between worldviews and practice. If worldviews tell us *what* nature is, ethical theories help us understand the *value* of nature: both what has value and how to weigh different values against one another. Put another way, worldviews specify the ontology of nature (i.e., the essence of the existence of nature) while ethical theories tell us the moral standing of that nature. Ontology and ethics are, of course, closely related. For instance, someone who considers nature to be created by God as an artist creates a work of art may be expected to feel a sense of responsibility to care for nature as a gift, in the same way we might care for

17. James Sire provides a definition of "worldview" in this sense: "a commitment, a fundamental orientation of the heart . . . [one holds] about the basic constitution of reality, and that provides the foundation on which we live and move and have our being." (Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, 17).

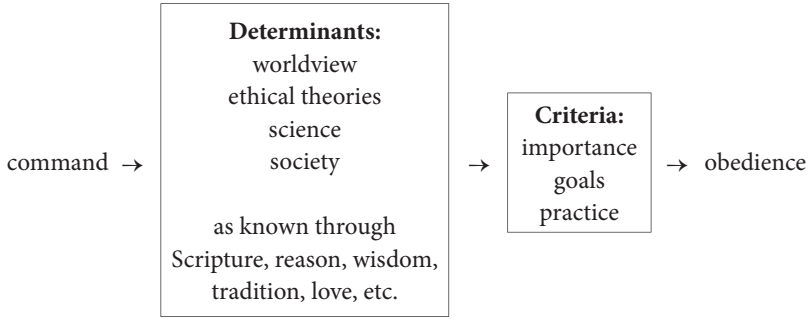
18. Ibid., Contents.

a portrait given to us by a painter. Such a valuing of nature, however, would differ from a valuing of nature as having intrinsic value or a good of its own.

Most of the work by evangelical Christians regarding creation care has focused on wrestling with worldviews and ethical theories. Comparatively little work has addressed the role of science in determining the content of creation care or the roles of political and economic systems in narrowing policy choice. Consideration of science often begins and ends with getting the science "right." For some, this results from a belief that once biblical exegesis has established the importance of creation care, science automatically prescribes the practice of creation care. Since science does so automatically, there is no need to analyze how science acts as a determinant for the criteria for obedience.

Science and society, however, play crucial roles as determinants for the criteria for obedience. In the case of science, proper creation care requires understanding the strengths and limits of scientific knowledge (e.g., its epistemology), as well as the ways science and policy can connect with each other. In the case of society, the way communities are organized and allocate power and responsibility (politics) and goods and money (economics) profoundly impact what creation care looks like. Creation care is conducted not only by individuals but also by communities: private and public, for profit and non-profit, free associations and state actors. As such, how the polity is organized affects which creation care practices work and which do not. And, because creation care logically affects creation, which in turn nearly always impacts the production and distribution of economic goods, an analysis of the proper system of economics is needed to help determine proper creation care practices.

What sources of knowledge can we bring to bear in fleshing out these four determinants? Scripture, as always, provides the authoritative understanding for all questions of faith and practice, including our worldview, ethical theories, and understanding of science and society; in chapter 3, we examine what Scripture says about these topics. But as we saw earlier in our thought experiment, Scripture provides only a partial answer to issues surrounding creation care, and so we expect other ways of accessing truth (e.g., reason, wisdom, tradition, love, etc.) may also help shape our worldview, ethical theories, science, and society. Thus, in this book we will look at the parts of the following picture of all the areas that make up considered obedience with respect to creation care:



We can think of these determinants of the criteria for obedience in the following way: Our worldviews tell us, "what is nature," while ethical theories tell us, "what is the value of nature" and what ways are there to weigh those values against one another. Our understanding of science includes both the status of scientific knowledge and how science combines with ethics and other determinants to form policy. Our beliefs about the political and economic foundations for society further determine acceptable solutions. These determinants can each influence each of the criteria for obedience alone or in tandem with other determinants. In some cases, certain determinants tend to be related to specific criteria. For instance, worldviews and ethical theories, because of their foundational nature, usually address the importance of creation care commands more than science and society do. On the other hand, all four determinants contribute to the practice criteria. Ultimately, however, all four determinants are needed to evaluate the criteria for obedience.

A ROADMAP FOR THE REST OF THIS BOOK

In this final section of the chapter, we provide a preview or "roadmap" of the rest of the book. In this roadmap, we first list the topics and content of each subsequent chapter of the book and describe the approach we will take. Roadmaps, however, in addition to describing the path ahead can also describe pitfalls along the road. Thus, after our summary of the book, we address some possible concerns readers may have about our approach and method. We close with comments regarding our hopes for the reader.

In the subsequent chapters, we examine each of the determinants laid out in this introductory chapter. In chapter 2, we summarize some of the most prominent worldviews, their understanding of creation, and their relationship to environmental stewardship. Though other more comprehensive

treatments exist, in chapter 3 we review the Scriptural understanding of creation care and summarize what Scripture can and cannot tell us about the importance criterion. In chapter 4, we examine different ethical theories used to understand environmental goods and how these assumptions relate to the imperatives from Scripture. Science—its meaning, authority, and relationships to policy—is considered in chapter 5. Chapter 6 broadly describes how various political and economic theories impact the content of environmental stewardship. Each of the chapters examining the determinants of the criteria for obedience (chapters 2–6) follows a similar outline, examining: what is the nature of the determinant, what does the determinant tell us and not tell us about the criteria for obedience, and how does our understanding of the determinant ultimately impact our understanding of the content of creation care. In chapter 7, we focus on the practice of environmental stewardship, examining the range of responses and some considerations when selecting amongst possible responses. In chapter 8, we outline the goals and process for synthesizing the determinants of the criteria for obedience.

Our approach in this book can be characterized as "synthesis through dialogue." This book is, first and foremost, a work of synthesis. This can be a synthesis of principle (that is, a synthesis regarding theories of environmental stewardship) as well as a synthesis regarding an issue (that is, a synthesis regarding a specific environmental problem). Regardless of the scope of the synthesis, we are convinced that one major difficulty in crafting excellent creation care solutions is the lack of synthesis through dialogue, both intellectually (since different disciplines are often siloed from one another) as well as personally (with people, instead, often talking past one another). When it comes to environmental issues, there is no lack of verbiage or polemic, but genuine dialogue, which is truly open to considering and possibly incorporating alternative viewpoints, is more lacking.

Synthesis through dialogue requires we consider multiple viewpoints. As a result, we consider a broad range of determinants and tap into a rich history of work in theology, ethics, epistemology, politics, economics, and science-policy studies. In addition, within each sub-topic, we examine a full range of positions possible for a given topic. Thus, for many of the determinants, we will describe a spectrum of positions that are reasonably consistent with the creation care command. As we do so, however, we will avoid claiming one view along the spectrum is "right" while others are wrong. Instead, we will focus on clarifying the assumptions that go into each position, the strengths and weaknesses of the position, enumerate the kinds of questions we might ask to judge which position (or positions) are better than others, and describe how these positions influence what we conclude about the three criteria for obedience.

The motivation for our study, as well as its analytical structure, may lead to a number of concerns. Before beginning the meat of our argument, we address three of those concerns. First, the argument that Scripture often does not fully dictate the content of creation care (or, in the secular context, that deontological categorical imperatives do not fully dictate the activities of environmental stewardship), may seem as if we are denigrating Scriptural authority, God's concern with His creation, or the duty to live responsibly. Many (if not most) treatments of environmental ethics begin with some sort of foundational theme or principle and from that theme directly derive personal and public policy responses. The approach we are advocating, it seems, overthrows this methodology for an academic version of "Stone Soup": a little bit from this discipline, a little bit from that discipline, throw it all into a pot, and *voilà,* we have the content of creation care. But, it starts with nothing more than a stone: there is no unifying theme or principle.

In reply, we argue that while the idea of directly deriving the content of creation care from a foundational belief is attractive, for many environmental problems, this is neither feasible nor advisable. As we examine each of the determinants, we will build upon the motivating arguments of this introductory chapter and find additional reasons why for many environmental problems, we need to exercise considered, not simple obedience. Additionally, in saying that we often cannot directly derive the content of creation care from a foundational belief, we are not saying foundational beliefs have no role in considered obedience. In the subsequent chapters, we will consider a variety of foundational beliefs and find they have much to say about environmental stewardship. Nonetheless, what foundational beliefs say and how they say it falls short of the enabling of simple obedience that many assume foundational beliefs make possible.

A second concern about our methodology is the suspicion that the model of human action we are using to understand environmental stewardship—with its large number of determinants of the criteria for obedience—is too complex to be successfully used. Is it possible to bring so many disciplines in fruitful dialogue with one another? Can we reach any kind of answer or synthesis of so many topics? Will this book merely ask a lot of questions without providing an answer? If so, is the real purpose of the book to argue that we cannot figure out one "right" understanding of the content of creation care, and thus environmental stewardship is ultimately a pragmatic endeavor?

In reply, we argue that because environmental stewardship involves so many facets of human endeavor, we cannot ascertain what excellent environmental stewardship entails without examining all the determinants of the criteria for obedience. Whether we can successfully synthesize these

disparate fields, we admit, is an open question. While we believe our attempt in this book at synthesis does contribute something to our understanding of the nature of environmental stewardship, we concede that many questions remain unanswered. We see this work as a first step towards a broad synthesis, a work that proposes a taxonomy that can be used in further work in synthesis and one that prepares the ground for more fruitful dialogue. The entire endeavor of analyzing what environmental stewardship looks like in the modern world, we suggest, is itself quite young: much of the work done in the field has been done in the mid- to latter half of the twentieth century. While much scholarship has been done, much more remains to be done. To use an analogy with the history of mechanics, with regards to environmental stewardship, we have, perhaps, moved past an Aristotelian mechanics to a mechanics informed by Galileo and Kepler, but we have not yet arrived at a Newtonian mechanics, much less one that includes Maxwell's unified electromagnetic field theory, Einstein's general and special relativity, and quantum phenomena. Thus, if our attempts at synthesis fall short, this does not mean such a synthesis is not possible or that the only alternative is pragmatism. It is premature to make such definitive conclusions.

Third, our strategy of considering a range of options for each determinant, and our reluctance to claim one option in that range as "correct," may lead some readers to conclude the ultimate message of this book is that it does not really matter what we believe regarding creation care as any position is legitimate. In reply, we argue that the absence of a clear "position" in this book with regards to a number of the determinants does not mean that we believe all positions are equivalent nor that we do not have our own deeply held positions. However, because the goal of this book is to set out a taxonomy for understanding creation care, and to do so in a way that enables dialogue, the use of polemics would be fatal to the entire enterprise. Dialogue requires the views of all sides to be presented as accurately and winsomely as would be presented by those who hold those views.

That being said, implicit in our argument for a synthesis that covers all the determinants of the criteria for obedience is the contention (or, at least, the suggestion) that some aspects of the determinants and criteria for obedience regarding environmental stewardship are underdetermined. This does not mean everything is relative: there is truth and we can know at least some of that truth. But being underdetermined means that there are limits as to what of the truth we can know as well as limits as to the status of the truth we do know.[19] Being underdetermined also can mean that we may

19. In mathematics, an underdetermined system of equations is one where the number of equations is less than the number of unknowns. Being underdetermined does not mean the equations have no solution or that we can say nothing about a solution

understand some aspects of the truth about a determinant in some situations while in others it may be less clear. For instance, in chapter 5, regarding science, we will find different views of the epistemology of science lead to different views of its authority and, thus, different views of how science interacts with policymaking. This spectrum of views regarding the latter exists, partly, because the problem of demarcation (of determining what is and is not science) has not been convincingly solved,[20] and partly because for some kinds of environmental problems, science interacts with policy in one way while for other kinds of environmental problems, science interacts with policy in another way. In this book, we examine some of the reasons for this, but it is beyond the scope of this book to do so exhaustively. Our analysis, however, suggests that the role of science in environmental stewardship is more complex than is commonly appreciated.

Taken more broadly, we find that some aspects of environmental stewardship, in general, are also underdetermined. Rather than science (or Scripture, politics, etc.) automatically prescribing the practice of creation care, the contribution of the determinants is sometimes difficult to fully describe. This, however, neither denies truth nor the possibility of action. The philosopher and theologian Blaise Pascal has said:

> One must know when it is right to doubt, to affirm, to submit. Anyone who does otherwise does not understand the force of reason. Some men run counter to these three principles, either affirming that everything can be proved, because they know nothing about proof, or doubting everything, because they do not know when to submit, or always submitting, because they do not know when judgement [sic] is called for.[21]

The underdetermined nature of environmental stewardship does not mean that there are no moral absolutes regarding environmental stewardship. It does mean that the path from principles to practice is often incredibly complex and multi-faceted, not simple, and requires the highest levels of creativity to bring together many different fields of study—with different kinds of authority and expertise and different limitations in the kinds of knowledge provided—into an uneasy and unfamiliar dialogue with one another.

As far as we are aware, there are relatively few works that have sought to bring the breadth of topics considered by this book into dialogue with one another within a common framework.[22] By examining how each of

but merely that there is not enough information to determine a unique solution.

20. Hutchinson, "Warfare and Wedlock," 93.

21. Pascal, *Pensées,* 53–54 [Fragment 170].

22. Geographer Janel Curry's "social framework of analysis" regarding Christians

the determinants each inform each of the criteria for obedience, we hope to create such a taxonomy in the hopes that this kind of framework and the dialogue it supports can help us think more clearly and precisely about environmental stewardship. Along the way, we will find that the call to not only faithful stewardship but also excellent stewardship of creation is much more difficult than is commonly appreciated, and that the seeming simplicity behind the mandate to care for creation has within it pitfalls and snares that can harm creation and lead to a misguided conviction of biblical (or scientific, etc.) warrant for a given policy. We hope this book will help point the way towards some alternatives.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The author argues that the Bible, while authoritative for all matters of faith and life, does not directly prescribe much of the *content* of creation care. What do you think of this argument? What are its strengths? Weaknesses? Why?
2. Is the distinction between the content of creation care and other aspects of creation care (e.g., motivation) a useful distinction to make? What pitfalls are possible for us to fall in if we make such a distinction? In what ways is that distinction helpful?
3. The author suggests proper obedience to God's commands requires clarity in three criteria: importance, goals, and practice. Can we obey without clarity in these criteria? Why or why not? Would you add or subtract any of these criteria? Why?
4. The author draws a distinction between determinants and criteria for obedience. Does such a distinction or taxonomy seem valid? Why or why not? In what ways might such a distinction be useful in trying to understand the nature of creation care?
5. What additional determinants would you subtract from the list the author provides? Why? Are there other determinants the author did not include that you would argue are vital if we are to understand the nature of creation care? Why?

and climate change, which integrates views on eschatology, how humans, nature, and God relate to one another, and models of responsibility of social change, is one attempt at a broad understanding of factors that affect one's understanding of climate change. (Curry, "Social Framework")