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**CHRISTIANS AND
THE ENVIRONMENT**

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SOCIAL ISSUES BULLETIN

News, Articles and Reports from the Social Issues Team

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Christians and the environment

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Editorial

Evangelical Perspectives on Creation and Environmentalism

In this issue of the Social Issues Bulletin, we present three articles that explore the complex intersection of evangelical faith and environmental concerns, offering distinct but complementary perspectives on how Christians should engage with creation care in a world increasingly shaped by environmental debates.

Hadden Turner's *An Evangelical Case for Creation Care* (page 3) lays a theological foundation, arguing that caring for God's creation is a biblical imperative rooted in the cultural mandate and the glory of God. Turner urges evangelicals to embrace stewardship as a privilege that honours our creator God and enhances our evangelistic witness, addressing those who may question the relevance of environmental action for Christians.

In Turner's second article, *The Dangers of Environmentalism* (page 10), he shifts to a pastoral tone, cautioning evangelicals about the theological and ideological risks of secular environmentalism, such as doctrinal drift or despair-driven narratives. While affirming the importance of creation care, he guides Christians to engage faithfully, prioritising the gospel and avoiding unbiblical extremes, offering practical wisdom for those navigating environmental involvement.

This Bulletin's abridged version of Dr Paul Mills' *The False Religion of Climate Alarmism* (page 16) provides a critical analysis of exaggerated climate narratives, which he defines as apocalyptic claims about human-driven catastrophe. Grounded in a biblical framework, Mills challenges the quasi-religious structure of alarmism and its policy implications, urging discernment in balancing stewardship with social and economic realities.

We hope that, presented together in this Bulletin, these articles form a rich dialogue. Combined with the two book reviews (page 49 and 51), we trust readers will engage with these perspectives and reflect on how evangelical faith can shape a response to environmental challenges that glorifies God as creator.

An Evangelical Case for Creation Care

By Hadden Turner

Creation's beauty and brokenness

We live in a world of immense beauty full of awesome wonders and breathtaking delights: from towering mountains topped with pure white snow, to delicate butterflies whose wings shimmer like stained-glass windows; from distant rainforests full of unknown creatures awaiting our discovery, to local English heathlands that erupt in vibrant purple hues each summer. Wherever we look, we see the glorious wonders of creation richly displaying the wisdom of God's design and showcasing his glory. Creation is a masterpiece, a gift from our gracious God for all to enjoy, and a masterpiece that points ultimately to him.

However, though we live in a beautiful, 'very good' world (Gen 1:31), it cannot escape our attention that all is not as it should be. This world is fallen as well as beautiful, and the effects of the fateful Fall and the resultant curse have impacted the very fabric of creation – thorns and thistles, diseases and death, earthquakes and hurricanes tarnish creation's beauty, order, and health, causing frustration and devastation to human and beast alike.

Not only is creation fallen and cursed, but so too is humankind's interaction with creation. Our actions upon creation all too often are a curse rather than a blessing – the cause of ecological degradation rather than ecological flourishing. Over millennia, the sum of our failures in stewardship – some due to our ignorance and weakness, many more due to sin – have accumulated in substantial ecological and environmental harms such as widespread pollution, habitat loss and degradation, soil erosion, and species extinction.¹ The overall state of creation stands in many places as a solemn testament to our ecological failures and shows just how far we have fallen from God's perfect standard and his design for us as stewards of his masterpiece.

To cite just a few pertinent examples of our failure: beautiful Appalachian mountains with their biodiverse forests have been blasted away to get at the coal beneath;² many cherished species of butterfly and farmland birds have disappeared from British hedgerows, farmland, and meadows at astonishing rates;³ extraordinarily valuable rainforests have been bulldozed to make way for giant monocultural farms that degrade soils;⁴ and our rivers and seas have become a dumping ground for sewage, chemicals, and plastics.⁵ Wherever we look, we see the effects of the fall and sin staining and marring the masterpiece. Humankind has not treated this immense and precious gift from God well.

1 Though it must be said that significant progress has been made in the UK in recent decades concerning pollution, with current air pollutant levels significantly lower than in the 1960s. Global air pollution, however, remains a severe and growing issue.

2 This is the infamous Mountaintop Removal, a form of environmental degradation that Ellen Davis likens to an act of de-creation: returning the earth to a void and formless state without life. See Ellen F. Davis, *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 13.

3 <https://www.bto.org/understanding-birds/biodiversity-loss-and-uk-birds>

4 <https://news.mongabay.com/2022/11/growing-soy-on-cattle-pasture-can-eliminate-amazon-deforestation-in-brazil/>

5 <https://www.port.ac.uk/news-events-and-blogs/news/scientist-helps-to-find-evidence-that-great-pacific-garbage-patch-is-growing-rapidly>

The call for Christian stewardship

It is evident, then, that creation requires significant care, or in the words of Francis Schaeffer, ‘substantial healing’.⁶ The secular world is keenly alert to this with the emergence of green political parties, a multitude of environmental charities and NGOs, and high profile multi-national conferences over the last few decades to respond to what they term ‘global environmental catastrophes’. Much of the work they have done has achieved significant common good for both humanity and creation⁷ and is a pertinent example of the outworking of God’s common grace. However, secular ideology or an overtly ecocentric focus can sometimes result in unethical and unbiblical conservation practices being implemented, such as fortress conservation and shoot-to-kill anti-poaching policies.⁸ It is clear, then, that secular conservation and environmental action are far from perfect and need reform. An opportunity presents itself for Christians to be the necessary ‘salt and light’ influence in the world of environmental stewardship and reorient their aims and focuses towards God glorifying aims.

However, environmental action – or, better, creation care – is an issue that Christians (particularly evangelicals) have tended to neglect.⁹ Some have even questioned if concern for the environment is an issue Christians should be concerned about at all, arguing that environmental degradation is either broadly blown out of proportion or that it is a serious problem, but not one that Christians or the church should be particularly concerned with.¹⁰

All the while that debates persist as to the merits, demerits, or legitimacy of Christian involvement in environmental concerns, degradation to God’s creation is intensifying and our witness to the world is harmed by infighting and poor ecological practice and lifestyles among some believers. Furthermore, the secular world has often pointed the finger of blame at Christian theology and the attitudes and practices that it has led to for the poor state of the environment.¹¹ Even though critical analysis, such as that done by Schaeffer in his book *Pollution and the Death of Man*, shows that many of these criticisms are strawmen or misinterpretations of orthodox theology, we must accept that some Christians have been proponents of extreme dominion theology and our broad apathy to the environment, coupled with our general acquiescence of the materialist and consumerist lifestyles of the world, means that some level of blame is justified.

In light of our complicity, and in a world where environmental degradation is exacerbating; where narratives of environmental despair and catastrophism dominate our secular media;¹² where our young people are increasingly burdened and anxious about the future of the environment; and where the blame for the state of the environment is often levelled at Christians, the question of whether evangelical Christians should be concerned with and involved in creation care is more important than ever to discuss.

6 Francis Schaeffer, *Pollution and the Death of Man*, (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1970) 66.

7 Such as the Montreal Agreement which phased out the use of CFCs which were causing a hole in the ozone layer.

8 <https://climate-diplomacy.org/magazine/conflict/fortress-conservation-heading-crisis-cant-come-soon-enough>

9 See the resistance of Peter Harris, the evangelical founder of Christian environmental charity A Rocha faced in his memoir *Kingfisher’s Fire*. And R. J. Berry, *Creation Care: A Brief Overview of Christian Involvement*, in Colin Bell and Robert S. White [eds.] *Creation Care and the Gospel*, (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2016), 107-108.

10 For example, the Cornwall Alliance

11 Most notably, Lynn White’s often cited and highly influential paper in the 60s *The Historical Roots of our Ecologic Crisis* where White broadly labels orthodox Christian theology, especially the doctrine of mankind’s dominance over the animals as the root cause of our ecological problems. See Lynn White Jr, *The Historical Roots of our Ecologic Crisis*, *Science*, 1967, vol, 155 pp. 1203-1207.

12 For a critical analysis of apocalyptic climate narratives, see Dr Paul Mills’ *The False Religion of Climate Alarmism* in this issue.

I firmly believe that care for God's creation is an issue we should all be concerned with, both individually and collectively, and with varying degrees of focus and responsibility.¹³ Evangelical Christianity can bring to the subject of environmentalism and creation care – a theocentric approach which grounds our environmental action and philosophy in a concern in God's truth and for his glory. The theocentric perspective is vital in enabling us to care for God's creation in a manner which honours him, is socially just, and benefits holistically the whole of the created order.

The theological approach I will take is twofold. Firstly, I will argue that creation care forms a core part of our responsibility as God's image bearers – that it is a duty that originates from the cultural mandate and has become ever increasingly more imperative as the effects of the Fall multiply and accumulate throughout time. Secondly, and ultimately, I will argue that creation care matters because God matters. We were made to love what he loves, and God loves what he has made. He has pronounced it to be 'very good' and has given us the astounding privilege of being good stewards of his precious masterpiece. There are few greater privileges and few more important tasks than this.¹⁴

It is commanded: Creation Mandate

Though direct commands to care for creation are few in Scripture, many indirect applications can be deduced from a range of passages.¹⁵ One of the places where the Bible is explicit about our duties towards creation, however, is in the cultural mandate. Here, mankind is commanded by God to subdue and have dominion over creation, which is then demonstrated by naming the animals.

A necessary part of subduing and having dominion will involve forceful action and causing change to creation. The verb for subdue strongly implies this.¹⁶ Agricultural cultivation, harvesting, mining resources, and building houses and infrastructure all involve some degree of shaping and changing creation to make life easier and more conducive to human flourishing. Some level of 'destruction' of creation is unavoidable in these activities such as felling trees to make way for a housing development, though as Francis Schaeffer notes, this destruction should be limited to what is necessary and should never be wanton or destructive for the sake of being destructive.¹⁷

However, the verbs 'dominion' and 'subdue' have been subject to much misinterpretation which has influenced the actions of many professing Christians throughout the ages. Some have interpreted these verbs as giving mankind free rein to use creation as we wish, saying the only proper use of creation is that which directly benefits man. This interpretation has often justified abusive, destructive, and exploitative use of creation. Additionally, secular individuals and organisations who critique Christianity from an environmental lens often point to these verbs as evidence of the inherent ecological destructiveness of Christianity and why Christian doctrine should be rejected. Thus, it is

13 For example, as mentioned to me at a recent conference, the responsibility for creation care of a single mother on a low income is considerably different to the responsibility of a wealthy couple whose children have flown the nest.

14 Though of course, the Great Commission is the primary and most important task given to Christians. However, as others have pointed out, the Great Commission should not be considered in isolation from the cultural mandate. Both supplement, enrich, and mutually serve each other (e.g. by being an attractive witness to the world). See Andrew J. Spencer, *Hope for God's Creation* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2023), 147-159.

15 Such as in commands against greed, seeing as greed is at the root of much environmental degradation.

16 See David L. Baker, *Genesis 1-2 and the Environment*, in Jonathan Moo and Robin Routledge [eds.] *As Long as the Earth Endures* (Nottingham, Apollos, 2014), 56.

17 Schaeffer, *Pollution and the Death of Man*, 75.

imperative that such misinterpretations are corrected by considering these verbs in the context of the entire Bible and especially God's covenantal relationship with his people.

By applying this contextual and covenantal lens, we can see the Bible prohibits this domineering and exploitative understanding of dominion.¹⁸ Mankind is given the command to have dominion over creation in the context of God having dominion over Adam (it is telling that God names Adam; he does not let Adam name himself). As an image bearer and a subject of God's rule, Adam's dominion is fundamentally modelled upon the dominion of his maker. Adam's dominion over creation is meant to reflect to the rest of creation the dominion God has over him. John Frame argues that having dominion is the prime way that mankind images God. Our dominion of creation must therefore reflect his perfect dominion of us.¹⁹ Throughout Scripture we see what God's dominion looks like. It is a covenantal dominion characterised by love, care, forbearance, and wisdom. Fundamentally, God's dominion seeks the good and flourishing of the ones being ruled over. These same dispositions and aims must characterise our dominion over creation.²⁰

The act of naming is another factor which influences how mankind is meant to exercise dominion. Naming denotes ownership and rulership but also a sense of ongoing responsibility. When we name something or someone, we are conferring an identity upon them and a relationship is formed. This relationship implies an ongoing commitment of the one bestowing the name for the well-being of the named.²¹ An ongoing responsibility to love and care for what we have named is indeed an integral part of our stewardship over the creatures.

What then should our dominion look like? Douglas Green succinctly sums it up when he remarks:

*When God 'subdues' the land, he makes it verdant and fruitful and when he 'rules over' the creatures, their numbers increase and they fill the earth. So, if God's vice regents want to exercise dominion on his behalf, then their subduing and ruling must have the same creation enhancing character.*²²

Our stewardship of God's creation should thus be a beautifying, order-enhancing, biodiversity-promoting form of dominion that seeks the good of all God's creation and all mankind as far as it is possible, whilst accepting that our efforts will be subject to frustration and futility in a fallen world and that compromise solutions will need to be found in balancing the needs of mankind (who has priority) against the needs of the rest of creation. This being said, it is worth stressing that a fundamental part of our dominion over creation is enabling the species around us to multiply and flourish (as they have been commanded by God to do in Genesis 1:22) and protecting habitats from harm and destruction, and all this for the praise and glory of God.

18 Baker, *Genesis 1-2 and the Environment*, 56.

19 John Frame, *Nature's Case for God* (Bellingham: Lexham Press, 2018), 61.

20 Edward R. Brown, *Ruling God's World God's Way: Dominion in Psalm 8*, in Bell, C. and White, R. S. [eds.] *Creation Care and the Gospel*, (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2016), 21-22.

21 See Hadden Turner, *Naming Creatures*, Plough Quarterly, 2024 for an extended treatment of this idea. <https://www.plough.com/en/topics/justice/environment/naming-creatures>

22 Douglas J. Green, *When the Gardener Returns*, in Noah J. Toly and Daniel I. Block [eds.] *Keeping God's Earth* (Nottingham, Apollos, 2010), 270.

It is our privilege: Creation care glorifies God

Having said all this, mankind is not strictly necessary for creation care. God can and does care for his creation continually. Psalm 104 wonderfully portrays that God is actively sustaining his creation, providing the creatures with food, and causing the rains to fall on the earth. As Chris Watkins says, we are ‘gloriously unnecessary’.²³ God has no need for us; he did not need to create us as he was not deficient in any way before we were made. Therefore, there is certainly no reason to suggest that God *must* use us in stewarding, protecting and improving his creation. Yet in his grace and wisdom, he has chosen to do so. He has ordained for us to be his stewards even though he knows our weaknesses and limitations and knew that we would one day fall into sin.

When we think about what it is we are to steward, we come to see what an amazing privilege we have been given to do. The person who cares for the crown jewels considers their job an utter privilege by virtue of the immense worth of what they have been entrusted with. We have been given an immeasurably greater privilege: to steward and care for God’s priceless creation. And not only that, but in our dominion and subduing, we are to make what he has declared very good, even better. Eden was very good, but it was not yet perfect and complete.²⁴ God is in the process of building a new and better Eden, and he invites us to be part of his work. Maintaining and creating order, enhancing beauty, and cultivating a space where both man and the rest of creation can flourish and fill the earth is the glorious, exciting, and noble responsibility we as image bearers have been given to do. And in doing this, we are to have God’s glory as our ultimate aim.

Calvin called creation the ‘theatre of God’s glory’.²⁵ That is creation’s primary purpose: to display God’s glory. And it is the prime reason why we should be concerned to protect and care for it. Though creation provides us with all we need to survive, work, rest, and play, mankind’s utility is not the ultimate reason for creation’s existence. Creation, firstly and primarily, exists for its maker’s glory and delight.

When we survey a sublimely beautiful landscape, an ingeniously designed creature, or consider the immense complexity and design behind any ecosystem, we see the power, wisdom, ingenuity, and glory of God visibly displayed. Each species and each habitat are a unique and precious display of God’s glory revealed in his creation. Augustine highlights in *The City of God* that every species God has made is good because it has been made by a perfect God who, by virtue of his unalterable goodness, can only create things that are good.²⁶ This is reason enough to be concerned with the protection of all the species God has made: they are all unique creations and expressions of the goodness of our wonderful God. It matters profoundly when we lose to extinction one of these individual unique expressions of the overflow of God’s goodness.²⁷

Not only does creation display God’s glory, but it also – especially those places and species blessed with astounding beauty – inspires and impels us to worship. Though beautiful species may have many ecological functions and roles such as pollination, pest control, or providing food for other species, their ultimate ‘function’ is to visibly display the wisdom, glory, and design of the Creator and inspire

23 Chris Watkins, *Biblical Critical Theory* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2022) 60.

24 <https://www.crossway.org/articles/10-things-you-should-know-about-the-garden-of-eden/>

25 John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 1.5.1

26 Augustine, *The City of God*, Book XI, chapters 22 and 23.

27 I tread carefully here and wish to stress that when we lose a species to extinction or destroy a habitat we are not destroying or losing part of God’s glory. That would be impossible. But we are losing, or at best, obscuring an expression, declaration, or reflection of his glory.

us to worship him. We must not fall into the idolatrous trap of worshipping creation itself, as other religions have done. However, worship of the Creator God is the proper and right response to seeing beauty and awe in his creation.

Environmental degradation destroys or degrades creation's many signposts and prompts to worship. Through our sinful actions of environmental abuse, neglect, and carelessness, we are, in effect, working to obscure the glory of God in creation and impede the revelation of his 'second book'. No one who surveys a degraded landscape or a sickly creature is inspired to fall on their knees and worship God. Instead, what they see is the sinfulness of man visibly portrayed. In degrading the environment, we not only harm ourselves and the creatures for whom we are supposed to care, but we damage the visible expression of God's glory as revealed in the beauty, awe and wisdom of what he has made. This is a deeply sinful tragedy which impedes the witness of creation to the unbelieving world that there is a God who is wonderful, mighty and beautiful, and we must worship him. The ramifications of environmental degradation extend well beyond ecological concerns to matters of theology and doxology. In short, the ramifications are of ultimate importance.

Thus, the primary reason we must care for creation is because of the supreme importance of God's glory. As Christians, nothing should matter more to us than the glory of the One we love. By conserving, protecting, and stewarding creation with wisdom, prayerfulness, and sacrificial self-denial, we safeguard and enhance a powerful evangelistic witness and inspiration to worship and are protecting the handiwork of the One whom we love, and the One who declared his work to be very good, and who continues to care for it. Conversely, it says a great deal about our relationship to God if we destroy and abuse the gift he has given us. Let it not be said of our generation that we were the generation who despoiled the gift of the Creator we professed to love.

Conclusion

Finally, we must highlight a vital reason for evangelicals to embrace creation care: its profound connection to evangelism.²⁸ As this article has shown, God deeply loves His creation, declaring it 'very good' (Gen 1:31) and sustaining it with care (Psalm 104). Our stewardship of this masterpiece reflects the heart of the God we proclaim – a creator who delights in his world and calls us to love what he loves. In a secular world, especially among younger generations, where environmental concerns are paramount, this shared passion opens doors for the gospel. People today, burdened by fears of ecological collapse, are seeking not fleeting optimism but a solid hope grounded in truth. This is what the gospel offers.

Creation care embodies this hope, showing the world that we serve a God who values his creation enough to redeem it. By caring for the environment – whether through protecting habitats, reducing waste, or promoting biodiversity – we mirror God's love and wisdom, making our evangelistic witness more compelling. We cannot promise that all environmental challenges will be resolved in our lifetime, but we can point to the one who, through his death and resurrection, has secured salvation for both humanity and creation. When Jesus, the true gardener, returns, he will transform our imperfect efforts in creation care into a beautiful, sustainable, and wholesome new creation (Rev 21-22). In this renewed

²⁸ It could also be argued that evangelism is the greatest need for creation care. As sinners convert, repent, and are sanctified one outworking of this should be that they begin to interact with creation in the manner which God intends for His stewards. Ecological sins of greed, exploitation, over-consumption and wastefulness should be progressively being put to death in the believer.

world, all creatures will join in ceaseless praise of the one who made and saved them, with humanity leading the chorus.

This is the magnificent hope we offer – a hope rooted in Jesus, through whom all things were made and are loved (Col 1:16-17). Creation care matters because it reflects the heart of the God we proclaim, inviting others to know him through the beauty and care of his world. By stewarding creation faithfully, we not only honour God but also draw others to the gospel's transformative power, showing that he matters infinitely.

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The Dangers of Environmentalism

By Hadden Turner

In a previous article in this issue, I outlined a case for creation care from an evangelical perspective.¹ I have purposefully refrained from using the term environmentalism to discuss matters concerning creation due to the negative connotations this term has amongst conservative evangelicals. Although I want to suggest that several aspects of secular environmentalism² cohere strongly with biblical creation care, I understand the reticence and scepticism evangelicals may have with environmentalism (or *environmentalists*). Often, this scepticism is wholly warranted. In this article, I will outline and analyse some of these concerns, putting environmentalism under the microscope of biblical truth, science, and social policy.

As Andrew Spencer wisely warns, ‘No Christian who gets deeply involved in any cultural activity [including creation care] should forget the dangers for a moment (2 Tim 2:4). The dangers are real, are subtle, and bear significant consequences.’³ It is necessary, therefore, to warn Christians who are endeavouring to care for creation of some of the dangers they are going to face, especially so when they engage with secular environmentalism.

Detraction from the gospel

An obvious concern among many evangelicals is that an increased focus on environmental issues detracts from our primary duties: evangelism, discipleship, and worship. There is certainly merit for this concern, and examples from the liberal church have shown how quickly environmental concerns can become the dominant focus of individual Christians and churches⁴ as well as how an eco-theological focus can result in doctrinal drift to unorthodox positions such as universalism, panentheism, and Liberation Theology.⁵ In some of these individuals and churches, the message of salvation has become environmentally orientated and centred on present world temporal concerns to the neglect of evangelism and concern for eternal matters. In some cases, this has led to universalism being preached.⁶

As Spencer warned us above, the danger of the gospel taking second place is a danger for any Christian involved in social action, no matter what the issue is. Worship, discipleship and evangelism must be our primary focuses as the church and as individuals. However, this does not mean that other social, moral, or ethical concerns should be ignored. Rather, they must be properly ordered. Just because the danger exists for creation care to supersede the gospel, that does not warrant

1 See *An Evangelical Case for Creation Care* in this issue.

2 Such as a concern for species loss, a concern that environmental degradation disproportionately affects the poor, and a desire to safeguard beauty.

3 Andrew J. Spencer, *Hope for God's Creation* (Nashville: B&H Academic, 2023), 19. We have included a review of this book in this issue of the Bulletin.

4 An example, in my opinion, of overdoing creation care within the life of the church is the award framework from Eco congregation Scotland <http://www.ecocongregationscotland.org/award/>

5 See Andrew J. Spencer, *Doctrine in Shades of Green* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2022) for an extended analysis and critique of liberal and ecotheological Christian belief in terms of creation care from a conservative evangelical position.

6 Spencer, *Doctrine in Shades of Green*, 95.

evangelicals neglecting it entirely. The care of God's creation – a creation which glorifies him – is far too important an issue to simply be surrendered to the liberal church and secular society.

Instead, it should be noted that when creation care is biblically practised and biblically ordered, it supports and adorns our evangelism by making our witness more attractive to the world and gives us a hearing and opportunity to preach the gospel among those who would otherwise have dismissed us out of hand.⁷ Vice versa, advocates for creation care should understand that environmental degradation is ultimately a matter of greed, sin, and a lack of appreciation for God's glory. The ultimate need for creation thus is evangelism whereby sinners repent and are sanctified by the Spirit, which includes repenting of their sins that harm and damage God's creation.

Inappropriate conceptualisations of the environment

Another pertinent concern conservative evangelicals have towards environmentalism is the inappropriate views, dogmas, and philosophies some environmentalists hold concerning the environment. In recent times, the concept of Gaia has raised concerns among evangelicals, as discussed further below.⁸ Ultimately, though, Gaia is simply an expression of a deeper and more fundamental issue, and that is the ecocentric position that environmentalists take concerning creation. This puts creation's needs and importance above those of humanity.

One manifestation of the ecocentric position is that some environmentalists oppose almost all actions by humans upon the natural world, thus holding a strict preservationist position. Whilst strict preservation as a practice and conservation methodology is justified where natural habitats are particularly fragile and valuable, or where it is in the public interest to preserve areas of outstanding natural beauty as wilderness areas, as an ideology, strict preservation goes against the creation mandate which gave mankind the right and obligation to subdue, manage, and change the created realm as God-ordained stewards.

It is worth considering the underlying values of the strict preservationist position. Many preservationists would argue that they are trying to safeguard the beauty of nature and the health of ecosystems. These are laudable aims, especially when we consider that creation displays the glory of God. However, it is also true that humankind's involvement within creation often results in enhanced biodiversity and beauty and many of the habitats we see and cherish in Britain today are semi-natural: the result of the interaction between humans and nature over centuries. Rather than always being a curse to creation, as the preservationists would often assume, humankind's actions are often a cause of blessing to creation and the species it contains. And this is what God intended.

Another more troubling value held by some strict preservationists is the deification of the environment. This is expressed by the notion that creation must not be changed because it is sacred or divine. Whilst the belief is non-mainstream, pockets of this belief are present in the Western world, and the belief is widespread amongst indigenous peoples worldwide. Sensitive but firm engagement with these false beliefs is required to undermine and subvert them whilst offering a biblical

⁷ I have personally experienced this and was able to share the gospel with some of my fellow students at university because they saw that I was environmentally concerned and that we had this in common.

⁸ Gaia refers to a view, inspired by the Gaia hypothesis, that portrays the Earth as a living, self-regulating system, sometimes revered as a quasi-divine entity in certain environmentalist circles, which can conflict with biblical teachings about creation's relationship to God. For a broader critique of such quasi-religious narratives, see Dr Paul Mills' *The False Religion of Climate Alarmism* in this issue.

alternative concerning the inherent (not intrinsic) value creation holds⁹ and why protecting creation is still important.

An additional position that needs to be considered is that a minority of environmentalists and strict preservationists view humanity as an unequivocal curse for creation, and that the solution for environmental degradation is for humankind to commit to voluntary extinction.¹⁰ This radical position is thankfully not held by many, but a softer form is present among many environmentalists, whereby they see humans only as a problem for creation and thus call for severe reductions in the global human population.

This anti-human stance must be rejected by Christians. The Bible clearly states that humans are above creation hierarchically (Ps 8) and that humans are the only creatures made in the image of God and meant to fill the world. Furthermore, God has commanded humanity to be involved with and act upon his creation as stewards (Gen 1:26). Human involvement with creation, when done according to God's design of good stewardship, is a blessing to creation. An example of good stewardship is that many traditionally managed agricultural habitats are among the most biodiverse habitats in Europe, and it is precisely because humans have sensitively and wisely managed creation that this is so.¹¹

However, it must be reckoned with that human beings are sinners as well as image-bearing stewards, and this has affected our dealings with creation. All too often, sin results in our actions being a curse to creation and a cause of its groaning rather than a blessing. In this regard, we should concede that the environmentalists have a point about the detrimental impact that humans have had upon creation throughout history,¹² though they have taken this to an unbiblical extreme. This should be a call for repentance on our part. We have not always treated God's creation well in a way which honours him and protects the visible expression and declaration of his glory.

False religions

Linked to the concerns above, animism, paganism, and the quasi-worship of Gaia are all in ascendance in society, and much of this is connected with environmental movements and groups.¹³ While there is potential for Christians to collaborate with those of other beliefs on environmental issues, care must be taken to avoid endorsing or appearing to endorse unbiblical doctrines. When engaging with such groups, Christians should approach interactions thoughtfully, ensuring their actions reflect biblical truth. Similarly, when introducing young people to diverse perspectives within environmentalism, we should guide them wisely, providing space to discuss and discern these ideas critically rather than leaving them to navigate such influences alone. This approach equips them to live faithfully in a complex world while upholding Christian convictions.

9 Intrinsic value would suggest creation holds value in and of itself apart from its relationship to God. Inherent value conversely states creation's value is contingent on the value God has ascribed to it. See Andrew Spencer, *Hope for God's Creation* for a thorough treatment of this distinction.

10 See here: <https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2020/jan/10/i-campaign-for-the-extinction-of-the-human-race-les-knight>

11 See my essay here for more on this: <https://overthefield.substack.com/p/a-landscape-rich-in-people-and-in>

12 Mark Stoll's book *Profit: An Environmental History* (Polity: Cambridge, 2023) is a good book to explore the history of environmental degradation, written by a secular scholar who is sympathetic to Christianity (and especially the Puritans!).

13 See: <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/nov/29/ten-things-weve-learned-from-the-england-and-wales-census>

It is also worth considering how Extinction Rebellion and similar organisations are structuring themselves almost as quasi-religions.¹⁴ Extinction Rebellion have a doctrine of sin: carbon emissions/ environmental destruction; a doctrine of repentance: sustainable lifestyle change or a commitment to veganism; a doctrine of sanctification: becoming increasingly eco-conscious and doing activism; a doctrine of evangelism: they are among the world's most active and effective proselytisers; a doctrine of the devil: big oil and capitalism; a doctrine of God: Gaia; and a doctrine of salvation: net zero.¹⁵

Although not all members of these organisations would ascribe to all these doctrines, or even perceive them as quasi-religious doctrines, and while many of the actions prescribed by the doctrines are not wrong in and of themselves (such as eco-consciousness and the theoretical concept of net zero),¹⁶ when taken as a whole, the comparison to a false religion becomes evident, and the dangers of environmental legalism and idolatry become hard to avoid. Thus, it is my firm opinion that Christians should not be members of such groups. Instead, Christians who wish to address environmental concerns in a collective manner should set up distinctly orthodox creation care organisations or institutions or should partner with existing secular environmental organisations which do not display the troubling attributes listed above.

Hopelessness and despair

Another troubling aspect of secular environmentalism is its hopelessness. This is a growing phenomenon with some environmentalists falling into despair and hysteria, encapsulated by Greta Thunberg's pronouncement: 'But I don't want your hope. I don't want you to be hopeful. I want you to panic. I want you to feel the fear I feel every day. And then I want you to act.'¹⁷

Christians must avoid adopting such narratives. Our lives must not be characterised by hopelessness and despair, partly because this is a poor witness to the hopeless world, and more so because we have the amazing hope of the gospel. Additionally, we have the sure and steadfast hope that even if the future is bleak environmentally, socially and economically (as it is for the majority of our brothers and sisters around the world), we know that on one great day, Christ will return and renew all things in the new and glorious creation. We also know that God will not let his creation suffer utter destruction due to our actions and that, as Psalm 104 repeatedly reminds us, he is actively sustaining his world. These are precious hopes we can offer to a despairing world.

The burden of world saving

Closely linked to the concern of hopelessness is the improper focus of many environmental organisations and advocacy groups who advocate the 'need to save the world'. I can remember being told this on the conservation degree that I finished in 2018, and the message has become ever increasingly prevalent and radical since then. This burden to save the world is, I believe, at the

14 The religious aspect and spiritual undertones of these groups has also been broadly overlooked as this paper outlines <https://religioninpublic.leeds.ac.uk/2020/01/23/fa-series-the-religion-of-extinction-rebellion/>

15 Dr Mills unpacks these quasi-religious elements further in his article *The False Religion of Climate Alarmism* later in this issue.

16 Though I believe there are significant practical, social, energetic and material challenges associated with Net Zero which hamper its real-world effectiveness and suitability. However, this is not to suggest that we should not endeavour to reduce greenhouse gas emissions as much as possible. We should do this.

17 From a speech given at Davos in 2019 <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2019/jan/25/our-house-is-on-fire-greta-thunberg16-urges-leaders-to-act-on-climate>

core of much of the paranoia and despair we see among young environmental activists. And this is understandable. The burden of saving the world is too great a task to be placed upon the shoulders of any group of people, let alone individuals in society. It is an impossible endeavour, well beyond the capacity of our fundamental God-given limitations. When faced with the monumental scale of global environmental challenges, apathy from world leaders, and their own inherent limitations, it is no wonder that the burden of world saving is leading increasing numbers of people to despair and paranoia.

But this is a burden that should not be borne by anyone. Firstly, because we have never been commanded to save the world, and likewise, none of us has been given individual responsibility for the whole of God's creation. 'Saving the world' and maintaining the created order is God's responsibility and prerogative. Some of us may be called to work at the global environment policy level, but this will be a select few with a distinctly limited purview.

Secondly, based on a thorough acceptance and understanding of the goodness of our God-given limitations, Christian truth can offer a liberating alternative to the burden of world saving. We can argue that each person has been given the responsibility to be a good steward of their God-given local place; they have not been given the responsibility to steward, let alone save, the entire world. Demarcating the boundaries of our care in this manner creates a more humane-scaled responsibility that is coherent with our limitations and our ability to care.

To take a pastoral example: the pastor of a church of 50 members can, simply by nature of the smallness of his flock, devote more time and more personally tailored care to each member than the megachurch pastor who has a church of 5,000. It is the same with creation care. Trying to save the world will only lead to burnout and despair. However, working to steward well and contributing to the amelioration of the environmental problems in your local area is a task sufficiently great, and sufficiently small, for us all.¹⁸ We all can care well for our local areas with wisdom and local knowledge – we cannot do this for the whole world. I strongly believe that actions, advocacy, and sustainable living enacted at the local level can achieve the significant healing of God's creation that Francis Schaeffer argues should be one of our aims in this life as Christians and stewards of God's good creation.¹⁹

Radical action

Finally, one of the major concerns conservative evangelicals have with environmentalism is the radicality of some of the solutions and practices proposed by environmentalists. Some of these practices can be quickly dismissed as wholly inappropriate for evangelicals to be engaged in. The trend of defacing public artwork as an attention-grabbing stunt is one such practice which not only is foolish but also self-defeating in that it antagonises the general public rather than wins them over to environmental concerns. Other actions to be rejected have had more damaging effects such as the blocking of roads and crucial infrastructure.

More complex to assess are the solutions proposed in climate mitigation. These call for nuance and scientific, social, and economic analysis and trade off. It is beyond my expertise to make an

¹⁸ For example, by committing to buying some of your food from farmers who are seeking to manage their lands in an ecologically sound manner, or by joining a conservation work party.

¹⁹ Francis Schaeffer, *Pollution and the Death of Man*, (Wheaton: Tyndale House, 1970) 66.

assessment of the models and projections of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change with regards to climatic change. But if they are correct, it is likely that rapid decarbonisation is required to avert severe climatic change. However, rapid decarbonisation comes with its own challenges and societal ramifications, which are often dismissed or overlooked by advocates of rapid decarbonisation and net zero.

Rapid decarbonisation would require a significant reduction in economic activity to compensate for the shortfall in energy generation capacity, as the transition to renewables and clean energy will take time. This would cause a significant economic shock far exceeding the impact that the COVID-19 lockdowns had. The resultant severe social, economic, and cultural ramifications will immediately affect vast swathes of the global population.²⁰ The social upheaval and inevitable political unrest may result in impacts to human wellbeing that are more severe than those caused by future climatic change. However, on the flip side, severe climatic change is likely to cause permanent ecological and infrastructural damage, which in the long run may prove more difficult to ameliorate than immediate short-term societal and economic shocks caused by rapid decarbonisation.²¹ Regardless, rapid decarbonisation is a radical proposal whose implications have not always been thoroughly worked out by its advocates. It should be viewed with extreme caution.

Finally, it is worth considering that there are significant technical problems and natural resource constraints facing those advocating for net zero and rapid decarbonisation. Much of their hope is pinned on a rapid energy transition to widespread clean energy and renewables. However, as Vaclav Smil notes in his paper *Examining energy transitions: A dozen insights based on performance*, it is unlikely that there are enough reserves of the metals and materials needed for a complete global clean energy transition.²² These realities and constraints need to be acknowledged by environmentalists. Otherwise a significant amount of effort and investment may be wasted on schemes and projects doomed to fail.²³ Compromise solutions are needed to resolve complex energy problems, but the current environmental discourse deals in extremes and zero-sum games rather than compromise and collaboration.

Conclusion

Though the dangers facing Christians who embark on environmental action are significant and many, I would hate for the outcome of this paper to be that Christians are dissuaded from doing actions of creation care or engaging with environmentalists. As I have said, creation care is far too important an issue to leave to the liberal church and secular environmentalism. God loves his creation. It showcases and declares his glory and is a means of his common grace flowing into our lives. He has given us the immense privilege of being stewards of his immeasurably valuable gift, and thus we have a responsibility to be good, sustainable, wise, and benevolent stewards of his great and beautiful gift to us. Mindful, yes, of the dangers, but more so thankful for the immense privilege we have been graciously given to do.

20 <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0360544220311324#sec6>

21 Such as if the gulf stream broke down, a scenario that an increasing number of climate scientists are warning is a possibility in our lifetime <https://geographical.co.uk/climate-change/what-would-happen-if-the-gulf-stream-collapsed> These projections are based on complex modelling that makes it difficult to judge the merits of these claims.

22 See: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S2214629616302006>

23 This is not to suggest that future projects for renewables and clean energy should not go ahead, but that environmentalists need to be realistic about the scale of what they can achieve.

The False Religion of Climate Alarmism¹

By Dr Paul Mills

This article critiques climate alarmism, defined as the belief that human influences on the climate, through greenhouse gas emissions, will lead to catastrophic outcomes if unchecked, arguing that this perspective does not align with a biblical response to environmental concerns. While many claim that human activity contributes to climate change and requires action, the accompanying exaggerated or apocalyptic narratives warrant scrutiny from a Christian perspective.

Such alarmism often adopts quasi-religious characteristics, reflecting a deep emotional commitment to environmental causes. This is evident in the passionate rhetoric and symbolic actions of some activists, such as those in movements like Extinction Rebellion, who engage in dramatic protests or disrupt infrastructure to highlight their concerns. It is often argued that these extreme narratives have filled a spiritual void in Western societies as adherence to Christianity has declined.

Given these religious overtones, one might have expected Christians to be cautious in endorsing such thinking, but some denominations have fully embraced the ideas of climate redemption. For example, The Church of England (CoE) is committed to net zero emissions by 2030 and, in 2022, took on £250mn of debt to fund green projects.² Pope Francis asserted that humanity is unquestionably responsible for climate change while excoriating ‘climate change deniers’.³ Evangelical climate advocate Katherine Hayhoe says she is motivated by her faith to warn of the ‘unprecedented’ climate changes to come.⁴ Such Christians often apply the imperative given to steward the Garden of Eden (Gen 2:15) as a requirement to decarbonise energy usage. Christian sceptics are therefore criticised for not understanding the ‘integrated gospel’.⁵

To aid Christian discernment, this paper describes the religious worldview aspects and trappings of climate alarmism and assesses its ‘fruit’.

The religious worldview of climate alarmism

As with other worldviews, that of climate alarmism can be categorised as one of creation (original state), fall (the problem), redemption (the solution), future judgement (apocalypse), and heaven (the ideal future state).

- **Creation.** The natural world is viewed as inherently benign. Hence the pre-industrial climate was relatively stable, natural and good.

1 A longer version of this paper, with fuller references, is available at: <https://www.jubilee-centre.org/blog-/the-false-religion-of-climate-alarmism>

2 “Decarbonisation must permeate every aspect of our lives” - The Bishop of Norwich, 21st September 2023: <https://www.churchofengland.org/media/press-releases/bishop-norwich-responds-net-zero-statement>.

3 Laudate Deum, 2023. <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2023-10/laudate-deum-pope-francis-climate-crisis-laudato-si.html>

4 “Evangelical Scientist Warns”, Evangelicals Now, 1st July 2022: <https://www.e-n.org.uk/world-news/2022-07-evangelical-scientist-warns/>

5 See: <https://www.e-n.org.uk/features/2025-02-why-arent-christians-leading-on-climate-change/>

- **Fall/the Problem.** Humanity is held responsible for despoiling the Earth not only through pollution and habitat destruction but also by releasing greenhouse gases (notably carbon dioxide (CO₂), but also methane and nitrogen oxides) into the atmosphere, thereby inducing 'catastrophic climate change'.
- **Redemption/the Solution.** Humanity can atone for its sins of greenhouse gas emissions by decarbonising energy usage imminently.
- **Future Judgement/the Apocalypse.** If emissions continue, then humanity will face judgement through rising global temperatures, which are then forecast to unleash droughts, forest fires, rising sea levels, flooding and extreme weather events.
- **'Heaven'/the ideal future state.** Embedded within this worldview, the ideal outcome would be a return to 'Eden', that is, pre-industrial human emissions and global temperatures.

The religious trappings of climate alarmism

As with all religious paradigms, the framework of the worldview has social and moral manifestations. These include:

- **Moral purity.** The righteous life is one in which emissions are minimised through recycling, eating less (or no) meat, reducing car and air travel and using non-carbon emitting sources of electricity, heating and transport.
- **Indulgences/penances.** Remission for one's sins of emission can be obtained by purchasing carbon offsets and installing solar panels and heat pumps to generate electricity, thereby assuaging the guilt associated with air travel or a steak.
- **Priestly caste.** The highest esteem is afforded to those politicians, billionaires, climate scientists and celebrities who promote the alarmist narrative. Faux-sainthood is even bestowed upon some.⁶
- **Prophecies.** Climate alarmism often emphasises dire predictions about rising temperatures and extreme weather, urging immediate action to avert catastrophic outcomes.
- **Overriding priority.** The belief in an urgent climate crisis can lead to prioritising decarbonisation over other considerations, usually without fully exploring cost-benefit trade-offs.
- **Heretics.** Those who question aspects of climate science or policy are often labelled 'climate change deniers,' an insult intended to stifle open debate.
- **Miracles.** The view that trace CO₂ emissions are the primary driver of global temperature,⁷ or that power grids can rely solely on intermittent renewables, involve significant leaps of faith.

⁶ <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/environment/2019/09/28/greta-thunberg-first-saint-cruel-new-environmental-religion/>;
<https://thecatholicherald.com/tv-wildlife-presenter-poses-as-st-francis-of-assisi-in-new-portrait/>

⁷ Carbon dioxide currently constitutes around 430 parts per million (ppm) of atmospheric gases, roughly 0.04%. It is dwarfed by water vapour – a far more powerful greenhouse gas. It has risen from around 270ppm since the mid-C18th. Of this 160ppm rise, the large majority has likely been natural.

- **Ignoring history.** Some alarmist narratives overlook the natural variability of Earth's climate, such as cycles of warming and cooling, including the relatively cold period (the 'Little Ice Age') we are emerging from.

Even for those convinced that there is a scientific consensus on human-made global warming, some caution should be exercised regarding this religious approach.

Yet, in this debate, we are presented with a stark choice in which the stakes could not be higher. A climate apocalypse is predicted if action is not taken imminently. This message has been repeated by some Christians without qualification in terms of the theological perspective or the scientific limitations.

For example, it could be argued that the costs of decarbonising are so vast that its achievement would entail significant depopulation and immiseration. How can Christians who care about both stewarding creation and the alleviation of poverty be discerning?

This is especially difficult because the overwhelming majority of us are not climate scientists and cannot easily weigh up the evidence. We might be convinced that the climate is different to when we were younger, but how much is natural cycling, how much is actually caused by human activity, how much can we actually do about it and at what cost, are complex questions.

The 'bad fruit' of climate alarmism

Some of the 'bad fruit'⁸ of climate alarmism includes:

Predictions have been inaccurate: a series of dated forecasts that have proved to be wildly incorrect, from an ice-free North Pole, to the inundation of coral atolls, to dwindling polar bear numbers and coral reefs.

Environmental impacts. The shift to renewable energy sources, such as wind and solar, requires significant land use and mining of heavy and rare earth metals, sometimes under ethically concerning conditions. The claim that burning biomass, such as wood, is carbon-neutral has contributed to the loss of ancient forests, raising questions about whether such initiatives align with environmental goals, especially as rising CO₂ levels are linked to increased global vegetation growth.⁹

The push for decarbonisation at all costs results in policies which aren't always fully thought through. The UK pays wind turbine operators £0.4bn a year to shut off when there is too much wind and £0.6bn to back-up generators when there is too little; we pay another £0.9 bn to subsidise the burning of wood chips from ancient US forests; we have banned fracking and new coal mines thereby increasing global emissions through energy imports at extra cost; we are conducting experiments to dim sunlight whilst subsidising uneconomic solar power. Dangerous chemicals are being fed to cattle just to reduce methane emissions. Only the zealotry of a false religion can accommodate such contortions of logic.

Censorship of opposing views. As the 'Climategate' scandal revealed, climate alarmists sought to prevent the inclusion of sceptical viewpoints in the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC); the UN is advocating the criminalisation of climate misinformation; and the G20 recently

⁸ Matthew 7:15-17.

⁹ <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0034425724005200?via=ihub>;

pledged to step up efforts to censor sceptical viewpoints. Only a dogmatic religious perspective would seek to suppress opposing viewpoints on such a controversial scientific topic.

Economic and social consequences. Access to affordable, reliable energy is crucial for economic prosperity and human well-being. However, the push for rapid decarbonisation has led to higher costs, deindustrialisation, and challenges for poorer nations seeking to develop their energy infrastructure. This raises concerns about balancing environmental goals with the needs of vulnerable populations.

The fabrication and manipulation of data. Climate alarmists have frequently adjusted and manipulated data. This has ranged from the notorious ‘hockey stick’ graph from the IPCC’s 2001 report to studies claiming that ‘97% of climate scientists agree that humans are responsible for climate change’. Such deception extends to the continuing use of temperature data from poorly sited stations prone to upward bias through urbanisation (the ‘urban heat island effect’).

The corruption of ‘science’. Climate alarmists often claim that the science is ‘settled’. Apart from the most trivial of questions, this should never be the approach to scientific enquiry, let alone that concerning the climate, which poses perhaps the most difficult modelling problem in nature. The IPCC’s cohort of climate models all over forecast global temperatures. Yet these simplistic and flawed models are used to justify the outlay of vast resources.

Climate alarmism has achieved a negligible impact on humanity’s emissions despite huge subsidies, just as atmospheric CO₂ levels rise inexorably. Those subsidies have yielded some improvements in electric vehicles, solar and battery technologies, but fossil fuels still supply over 80% of the world’s energy. The nuclear power renaissance may be the only lasting benefit to humankind that the imperative to decarbonise may impart.

A Biblical view of climate

In contrast to the alarmist religious framework, what does a biblically based position look like?

- i. Creation.** Initially, God declares Creation to be ‘very good’ (Gen 1:31) and entrusts his image-bearers with the responsibility to subdue, populate and care for the Earth and Garden (Gen 1:28; 2:15).
- ii. Fall.** The disobedience of God’s image-bearers results in the created order being cursed (Gen 3:17-19). As a result, ‘the creation was subjected to frustration’ but will one day ‘be liberated from its bondage to decay’ (Rom 8:20,21).
- iii. Flood.** Due to humanity’s wickedness, God judged both the Earth and humanity through the ultimate climate emergency – a global inundation that only eight people survived (Gen 6:5-8:19).
- iv. The Noahic Covenant.** Following the Flood, God commits never to curse the ground or flood the earth again (Gen 8:21; 9:8-11). He specifically promises that harvests, temperature variations and seasons will not cease (Gen 8:22). The mandate to procreate is given to animals (8:17) and reaffirmed for humanity (9:1). It is never subsequently rescinded or modified.
- v. The Mosaic Covenant.** Having rescued the people of Israel from oppression, God promises that if his law is obeyed, the people will enjoy the blessings of regular rainfall, abundant harvests and increasing population (Lev 26:3-13). However, drought, poor harvests, depopulation and exile would be the result of disobedience (Lev 26:14-46).

- vi. Old Testament history.** These latter promises were carried out, notably regarding the drought brought as punishment for the idolatry practised under Ahab and Jezebel (1 Kgs 17-18) and at the time of Jeremiah (ch.14).
- vii. Jesus' prophecy of the 'end times'.** When describing the period before the 'end', Jesus notes that the time prior to his re-appearing will be characterised by seeming normality, with life events (feasting, marriage) occurring as usual (Matt 24:37-41).
- viii. The final destruction will be by fire, not water.** The current created order will be destroyed by fire (2 Peter 3:7,10), consistent with God's promise not to flood the Earth again.

What can Christians discern from this teaching that is relevant to the climate debate? Briefly, we can see that:

- **Creation is not to be worshipped but subdued and stewarded.** We should not regard the natural world as sacred, but a place to be both developed for humanity's good and cared for, both for its intrinsic value to God and for future generations.
- **The mandate to procreate still applies.** The Bible is unequivocally pro-natalist, with the birth of children always a blessing. The sense of the Noahic covenant is one of measured optimism over humanity's resource and environmental future, rather than strident Malthusian apocalypticism.
- **God is sovereign over extreme weather events.** God's power over storms, floods, hail, etc. is never in doubt (e.g. Job 37,38; Ps 107:25,29). However, outside the Mosaic covenant, it is hazardous to attribute any specific weather event directly to God's particular judgement.
- **God promises that seasons and harvests will continue until Christ returns.** The sense of the Noahic covenant is one of an equilibrating, stable system that will self-correct if disturbed (c.f. Eccl 1:4-7). Jesus prophesied that the time prior to his return will be strikingly 'normal'. The end of the world will not be widely anticipated.

The Christian response to climate alarmism

Christians need to be discerning about the substantial costs and technical challenges of decarbonisation, which may have limited impact on global emissions. While some argue that a moderately warmer planet could pose significant risks, such as disruptions to ecosystems or increased extreme weather, the evidence does not indicate that these changes would fundamentally threaten the survival of humanity or nature as a whole. True stewardship involves carefully weighing these potential risks against the economic and social consequences of rapid decarbonisation, such as increased poverty or reduced access to reliable energy. Christians supporting this agenda should consider whether it aligns with the biblical call to care for the global poor, as the trade-offs could exacerbate hardship for vulnerable populations.

For those unconvinced by this analysis, I would make various pleas. First, please do not disparage fellow Christians who think differently. It is not a belief necessary to uphold gospel truth or unity within a fellowship. It is a matter over which we can legitimately differ (e.g. 1 Cor 8:4-13). Stewardship of the environment should never be conflated with support for net-zero emissions – indeed, in many ways, they are diametrically opposed. The pejorative label of 'climate change denier' should be banished from our fellowships.

Second, please examine seriously the religious, scientific and economic claims underpinning climate alarmism. Just because a consensus has been reached amongst some¹⁰ doesn't make it correct, as advocacy of eugenics in the 1930s and global cooling in the 1970s demonstrate. Any science worthy of the name should welcome challenge to its received tenets, not censor and disparage sceptics. Christians, above all, should value intellectual humility, for only God is omniscient.

Finally, please resist the pessimism inherent in the alarmist mindset. There are numerous benefits from a gently warming planet, and we should thank God that we no longer endure the 'Little Ice Age'. The world will only end tomorrow if Christ returns. Before then, God has promised that seedtime and harvest will continue. Have children if possible, invest in the future, eat meat if you like and travel without any artificial feelings of fear or guilt. For these are the trappings of the false religion of climate alarmism.

Dr Paul Mills is Chairman of Jubilee Centre, an organisation dedicated to teaching Christians a biblical relational worldview and its applications to public and private life. He previously held roles at the UK Treasury and the International Monetary Fund.

¹⁰ There are numerous, eminent earth scientists, physicists etc. who disagree with the assertions of climate alarmism; see the Clintel Declaration: <https://clintel.org/world-climate-declaration/>.

Current Bioethics Issues - Summer 2025

By Dr Calum MacKellar (June 2025)

Scotland, England, and Wales votes for assisted suicide

On 13 May 2025, the *Assisted Dying for Terminally Ill Adults (Scotland) Bill* passed by 70 votes to 56 in the Scottish Parliament. This Bill would allow terminally-ill, mentally competent adults to seek help to end their lives through assisted suicide. This 'Stage 1' vote was on the general principles of the Bill which would need to clear two more stages of parliamentary scrutiny to become law, which are expected to take place between September and October 2025.

Similarly, on 20 June 2025, the *Terminally Ill Adults Bill*, which would cover England and Wales, was accepted in the UK Westminster Parliament by 314 votes to 291. This has a similar remit to the Scottish Bill in seeking to legalise assisted suicide in certain circumstances. The Bill will now go to the House of Lords for further scrutiny.

UK House of Commons votes to decriminalise self-abortions until birth in England and Wales

On 17 June 2025, and after less than two hours of debate, MPs voted by 379 votes to 137 in support of an abortion up to birth amendment to the government's crime and policing bill. This is the first time, in many years, that such a significant abortion amendment has been accepted in the House of Commons. Unfortunately, no consultation with the general public on this law change took place.

The amendment seeks to modify the law so that it would no longer be illegal for women to perform their own abortions for any reason, including sex-selective purposes, at any point up to (and during) birth. This is likely to lead to an increase in the number of women performing dangerous late-term abortions at home. Medical Abortions can take place up to 34 weeks, though the experience is both painful and traumatic for the woman who has to discard the foetal remains herself.¹ This amendment will now be sent to the House of Lords for further discussion.

All newborn babies in England will have their complete DNA decoded

NHS in England has indicated, on 21 June 2025, that every newborn baby born in England in the next 10 years will have their DNA completely decoded using blood samples from their umbilical cords, taken shortly after birth. The resulting DNA biobank would then be used to assess the risk of hundreds of diseases under a government drive towards predicting and preventing illness by providing faster

¹ In June 2023, Carla Foster was sentenced to 28 months in prison for terminating a pregnancy between 32 and 34 weeks. She had obtained pills supplied in good faith, after a remote consultation during lockdown.
Hannah Al-Othman, MPs vote to decriminalise abortion in step forward for reproductive, The Guardian, 17 June 2025, right-
<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2025/jun/17/decriminalisation-abortion-vote-mps>

diagnoses and an early warning signal for disease. The UK Health Secretary, Wes Streeting, indicated that gene technology would enable the health service to 'leapfrog disease, so we're in front of it rather than reacting to it'. Government funding for the new initiative would give England one of the world's largest research databases, with the goal of containing the complete DNA of over 500,000 persons by 2030.²

However, the information (which is likely to be stored forever) could also be considered for other uses. For example, with such a large number of study participants, coupled with modern computing power, it could enable polygenic traits, such as certain forms of intelligence, sporting abilities, and even good looks, to be better identified. This could then be considered for future eugenic selection of children.

In addition, a judge could still overrule any commitments to confidentiality of the study to solve a crime if police find biological material at a crime scene. However, DNA analysis is not infallible; technical limitations, such as contamination, degradation of samples, or errors in sequencing, can lead to inaccurate results. Furthermore, human bias in interpreting DNA evidence or managing the database could introduce errors or misuse, potentially implicating innocent individuals or relatives whose DNA partially matches crime scene samples. Concerns also exist that, if an undemocratic regime came into being, it would facilitate the identification of its opponents if their biological cells were found in certain places.

No other country in the world has followed NHS England in such a project, and, unfortunately, very little discussion is taking place in England relating to the risks of establishing such a genetic data bank.

Creating human-nonhuman living beings considered to be offensive to human dignity in Europe

A decision by the European Patent Office Board of Appeal on 4 September 2024 was able to provide some important guidance on the interpretation of European Law in the context of creating living human-nonhuman combinations.³ The decision considered the patentability of human-animal chimeras (organisms containing cells from humans and animals). This indicated that a patent application that includes methods of integrating human cells into the brain and reproductive cells of chimeras is offensive to human dignity.

The case related to the possibility of creating pigs with humanised organs for transplantation, but the Board of Appeal concluded that the process for making such pigs should be excluded from patentability since a realistic probability exists that human cells may be found in their brains or reproductive cells. Interestingly, researchers from the USA were reported (in June 2025) to have been able to create chimeric mice with human neurological cells in their brains.⁴

In the UK, the creation of such human-nonhuman chimeras has already been legalised provided a licence is obtained under the *Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 2008* (if the living being is

2 Maia Davies, NHS plans to DNA test all babies to assess disease risk BBC News, 21 June 2025, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c1ljg7v0vmpo>

3 T 1553/22 (Human-pig chimeras/UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA) 04-09-2024; <https://www.epo.org/en/boards-of-appeal/decisions/t221553eu1>

4 Joanne Delange, Mice, pigs and humans: chimaera research at the ISSCR conference, 23 June 2025, BioNews 1294, <https://www.progress.org.uk/mice-pigs-and-humans-chimaera-research-at-the-isscr-conference/>

‘assumed’ to be human) or under the *Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act 1986* (if the living being is ‘assumed’ to be nonhuman).⁵

UK Supreme Court ruled that sex means biological sex

Five judges of the UK Supreme Court ruled unanimously, on 16 April 2025, that the terms ‘woman’ and ‘sex’ in the UK *Equality Act 2010* only relates to a biological woman and to biological sex. In other words, the terms did not include transgender women who hold Gender Recognition Certificates. The case was brought by the gender-critical campaign group *For Women Scotland*. It is expected that the decision may have significant ramifications, including greater restrictions for trans-women accessing services and spaces reserved for women.⁶

However, the Supreme Court decision did not clarify how biological sex was to be defined especially in cases of disorders of sexual development (intersex conditions). This is a general term used to describe persons who may have biological attributes of both sexes in their bodies.

UK Government has postponed proposed updates to 40-year-old surrogacy legislation

In a letter to the Law Commission of England and Wales in April 2025, the UK health minister, Baroness Merron, has indicated that the Government is unable to prioritise surrogacy reform and do not intend to put forward such a legislative proposal at the current time. In the UK, surrogacy is regulated by the *Surrogacy Arrangements Act 1985* and the *Human Fertilisation and Embryology Act 2008*, but the Law Commission of England and Wales published a joint report with the Scottish Law Commission in 2023, proposing comprehensive reforms (and liberalisation) of surrogacy law.

It should also be noted that a motion in the Scottish Parliament was also lodged, on 7 April 2025, calling for a complete prohibition of surrogacy on ethical, legal, and human rights grounds.⁷ Countries such as France, Germany, Italy, and Spain have already rejected surrogacy as incompatible with the protection of women’s rights and dignity. Indeed, the Spanish Supreme Court has recently indicated that all surrogacy contracts, even those conducted abroad, are invalid under Spanish law. Italy has classified all forms of surrogacy as a universal crime.⁸

Dr Calum MacKellar is affiliated to the Centre for Bioethics and Emerging Technologies at St Mary's University in Twickenham, London. He is also a member of the United Free Church of Scotland in Edinburgh

5 Calum MacKellar and David A. Jones, *Chimera's Children*, London - New York: Continuum/Bloomsbury Academic, 2012.

6 Severin Carrell, Legal definition of woman is based on biological sex, UK supreme court rules, *The Guardian*, 16 April 2024.

7 <https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/votes-and-motions/S6M-17076>

8 Rachel Amery, Calls to ban surrogacy in Scotland over 'ethical, legal and human rights' concerns, *The Scotsman*, 14 April 2025.

Latest News of Significant Individual Cases

The following are summaries of the story so far in some of the significant recently resolved or still unresolved cases involving Christians responding to a wide range of legal, police or disciplinary action against them. Seeking a remedy by means of litigation can be a lengthy process – sometimes taking several years for a closure to be reached. All these cases are being handled by either the Christian Legal Centre or the Christian Institute's Legal Defence Fund.

Pastor Johnston

The Christian Institute is supporting retired pastor, Clive Johnston, a former president of the Association of Baptist Churches in Ireland.

Pastor Johnston is being prosecuted under abortion buffer zones laws for an open-air sermon on John 3:16, even though abortion was never mentioned.

He is facing two charges under the Abortion Services (Safe Access Zones) Act (Northern Ireland) 2023 for holding an open-air Sunday service on the fringes of a buffer zone on the other side of a dual carriageway from Coleraine's Causeway Hospital on 7 July last year.

The Act means it is now a criminal offence for people to be 'impeded, recorded, influenced or to be caused harassment, alarm or distress' within the eight 100-150m buffer zones that were created around hospitals and abortion clinics in Northern Ireland.

Mr Johnston, who pastored several churches in Northern Ireland, is accused of seeking to 'influence' people accessing the hospital's abortion services and for not immediately leaving the area when asked to do so by police. He is not accused of impeding or harassing.

Crucially, it is not alleged that he even mentioned abortion. Nor were there any abortion placards or banners.

The case potentially raises significant human rights and devolution issues which may require satellite litigation in a higher court to resolve. Pastor Johnston has therefore instructed John Larkin KC, Northern Ireland's former Attorney General, to lead his defence team in seeking to refer the case to the Court of Appeal for a ruling on whether the buffer zones laws really do outlaw acts of worship that have nothing to do with the issue of abortion. These issues may be referred ahead of any trial of the charges in the Magistrates' Court.

Pastor Johnston denies the charges against him.

Darlington Nurses

The health secretary, Wes Streeting, has told NHS England to urgently resolve the female changing room issues at Darlington Memorial Hospital, so that nurses can return to the female changing rooms without the fear of having to undress in front of a man.

After visiting the hospital a few weeks ago without warning, a senior member of NHS England has subsequently described the provision for female staff as 'inadequate', apologised to a

Darlington nurse and promised to act 'with speed' by providing male, female and gender-neutral changing rooms.

'We want you to feel comfortable and safe', the Darlington nurse was told.

Backed by the Christian Legal Centre, 8 nurses, dubbed 'The Angels of the North', have been locked in a high-profile legal battle with County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust after being forced to share a changing room, without warning or consultation, in front of a man who 'identifies' as a woman called 'Rose'.

After raising concerns about the Stonewall inspired NHS policy that allows any man to do this, HR bosses told the nurses that they needed to get 're-educated', 'compromise', and 'be more inclusive'.

Instead, the nurses launched landmark legal action on the grounds of harassment and victimisation, and have received significant public support.

After going public with their case in the lead up to the General Election in June 2024, however, a now infamous poster appeared on the female changing room door.

With an NHS rainbow logo, it read in capital letters: 'INCLUSIVE CHANGING ROOM SPACE: DO NOT REMOVE THIS SIGN.'

The hospital then ostracised and humiliated the nurses by saying that they would provide a 'temporary' converted office for any female staff members who did not want to get undressed in front of a man.

The room does not have a proper lock and opens on to a public corridor which is part of a clinical area. The nurses have now had to use the office for 11 months while Rose has continued to use the female changing rooms.

Wes Streeting: 'I'm horrified'

At the same time as the nurses were being forced out of their own changing room, Wes Streeting made a public statement on the case after being questioned on X by Times' columnist, Janice Turner.

Mr Streeting said in June 2024: 'I support the nurses and I'm horrified that they've had to resort to legal action. We've got to find a better way through this and I'd be happy to meet them. We've got to find a way through that treats trans people with respect and respects women's safe spaces.'

In October 2024, the nurses met him at the Department for Health where he told them that he was committed to the fact that 'sex is biological' being reflected in the day-to-day running of the NHS under his watch. He also asked the nurses to send their policy proposals on how these issues could be resolved.

After receiving no support from their unions, the nurses formed their own union, Darlington Nursing Union and submitted their proposals to Mr Streeting's policy team.

The draft guidance provides a fair and manageable way forward to protect safe biological single-sex spaces for all NHS staff in line with the equality law, whilst also acknowledging the legal rights of those with the protected characteristic of 'gender reassignment', under the Gender Recognition Act 2004.

Leader of the Opposition, Kemi Badenoch, also met the nurses in March 2025 and discussed their case on the floor of the House of Commons. She said in a statement:

A woman should never be forced to get undressed in the presence of a man. The case of the Darlington Nurses is yet another example of women being demonised and patronised for raising legitimate concerns about single-sex spaces.

I fought against gender ideology in government, and I will continue to do so as Leader of the Opposition. There is no place for gender ideology in the NHS. These brave nurses have my full support in their fight to restore common sense to an environment where single sex spaces should be non-negotiable.

Supreme Court ruling

After months passed with no action, Mr Streeting was then pressed for an answer by the Darlington Nursing Union on what action he was going to take.

In a letter, he acknowledged that it was an 'important' issue but said that 'given the sensitivity' he was awaiting the judgment in the Supreme Court decision in a case brought by For Women Scotland before he could take concrete and lasting action.

The ruling delivered in April made it clear that men who identify as women do not qualify as women for the purposes of single-sex spaces or employment protections, even if they possess a Gender Recognition Certificate (GRC). It confirmed that when services or spaces are designated for women only, men cannot demand access, regardless of self-identification or legal documentation.

Following the ruling, Mr Streeting gave an interview to the Sun, which was described as a major win for the Darlington nurses, where he promised new guidance for the NHS based on the Supreme Court ruling. He said:

I want to make sure that the NHS is upholding the sex-based rights of women who work for the NHS as well as women who use the NHS...I don't want to see a situation where NHS staff are having to drag their employers through courts and tribunals to uphold their rights.

Karen's story

Then, one of the Darlington nurses, Karen Danson, who had, until then asked to remain anonymous found the strength to go public with her harrowing and highly concerning story.

Karen, who had met with Wes Streeting at the meeting in Westminster in October 2024 and had told him her story, spoke about how the presence of a man in the changing room had triggered her experiences of childhood abuse.

When she told him her story at the meeting, Mr Streeting leant forward on his chair and said to Karen: 'I cannot sit here and tell you, you need to "broaden your mindset"'. Which was the language used by the Trust to the nurses when raising their complaint.

Karen describes how she had had panic attacks and flashbacks to trauma after being repeatedly asked alone in the changing room by 'Rose' if she was 'getting changed yet'.

Despite raising her story, she has been repeatedly ignored by hospital bosses who it has been revealed would have forced her to have ‘Rose’ assist in her gynaecological operation, but for an intervention by Christian Legal Centre lawyers.

Royal College of Nursing order ignored

Last month (May 2025) it was also revealed in the media that, even before the Supreme Court ruling, the Royal College of Nursing had written to the Darlington Trust telling them they were acting unlawfully. The letter ordered the Trust to provide single-sex changing rooms ‘without delay.’

Over 70 days since this order, however, the Trust has not only taken no action but has instead re-published the policy that allows male staff into female changing rooms.

‘A way forward promised’

Bethany Hutchison, Darlington nurse and President of the Darlington Nursing Union, said:

We hugely appreciate the action initiated by Mr Streeting, NHS England and the RCN who have promised a way forward to restore our safety and dignity in the workplace in line with the law.

We thank everyone for the amazing support and promise that we will not stop until this action is extended urgently to female workers across the NHS without any unnecessary delay.

We hope that Wes Streeting and his team put into action what they have promised.

Hearing adjourned

Despite having 18 months to investigate the nurses’ claims, and 10 months since the launch of their legal claim, the County Durham and Darlington Foundation Trust made another application to adjourn the hearing, claiming it has not had enough time to complete its internal investigation.

A preliminary hearing took place on the 2 April 2025.

Judge Robertson, said the Trust had ‘failed’, that its actions were ‘wrong’ and had ‘Subordinated [employment tribunal proceedings] to an independent investigation.’

Nonetheless, he ruled that an adjournment was necessary and the full hearing is now likely to be heard in October 2025.

Abbasi Haastrup Supreme Court Judgment

In a landmark judgment delivered on 16 April 2025, the Supreme Court has severely curtailed the secretive practices of the Family Division judges in cases involving withdrawal of life-saving treatment from critically ill children.

Rashid and Aliya Abbasi and Lanre Haastrup were taken to court by respectively by Newcastle-Upon-Tyne NHS Foundation Trust and King’s College Hospital who sought permission to withdraw life-sustaining treatment from their children in two different ‘best interests’ applications.

Following high-profile controversies in the 2017-2018 cases of Charlie Gard and Alfie Evans, family judges routinely granted life-long anonymity to all doctors, nurses and other NHS staff involved in similar cases.

However, the panel of five justices chaired by the President of the Supreme Court, Lord Reed, has now ruled that permanent gagging orders may only be granted exceptionally to protect a specific individual based on 'compelling evidence' of "a real and continuing threat of a serious nature" to that individual.

The untold stories of cruelty

The Abbasis, both of whom are doctors, have described the 'toxic environment' surrounding the medical care of their daughter Zainab, which involved the shocking arrest (caught on video) of father, Dr Rashid Abbasi, at his 6-year-old daughter's bedside in intensive care. Zainab died shortly afterwards and before the case was considered by the court.

Mr Haastrup's baby son, Isaiah, had suffered fatal brain injuries due to medical negligence at King's College Hospital's maternity ward. The Hospital later admitted the negligence and paid financial compensation to the family, but nevertheless persuaded the court to authorise withdrawal of life support from Isaiah against his parents' wishes. Isaiah died several hours after life support was withdrawn in March 2018.

Both families were threatened with imprisonment for contempt of court if they ever revealed the identities of any of the doctors or other staff involved in the death of their children.

The long legal battle

Years after both children's deaths, the families applied to the courts to discharge the injunctions to be able to talk about their experiences in public.

In 2021 Sir Andrew McFarlane, the President of the Family Division of the High Court, refused the parents' applications and ordered for the injunctions to continue in force forever. However, the Court of Appeal panel which included two successive Chief Justices of England and Wales, Lord Burnett and Lady Carr, overturned Sir Andrew's ruling in 2023. Both NHS Trusts, supported by the BMA, RCN, RCPCH, PCCS and FICM, appealed to the Supreme Court, which has today upheld the decision of the Court of Appeal and has discharged both injunctions with immediate effect. That decision is final and may not be appealed further.

'Legitimate public interest'

In giving written reasons for its decision, the Supreme Court has stated:

The treatment of patients in public hospitals is a matter of legitimate public interest, and that the medical and other staff of public hospitals are public figures for the purposes of the Convention, with the consequence that the limits of acceptable criticism are wider than in the case of private individuals.

Commenting on Dr Abbasi's and Mr Haastrup's criticisms of how their children were treated, the Supreme Court has observed:

Dr Abbasi has explained that his motivation for ventilating these matters is not personal vilification, but to achieve an improvement in systems and procedures, and to prevent a repetition

of what he sees as the failures of the Newcastle Trust and its staff. He wishes to stimulate a public debate.

Mr Haastrup has also identified the areas of public, as well as private, concern about which he wishes to speak. These include: (1) the negligence of King's staff during Isaiah's birth; (2) the alleged financial motivation for taking the end-of-life route, in the context of the Trust's liability in damages for medical negligence; and (3) the circumstances surrounding Isaiah's last day of life.

The Supreme Court has criticised the President of Family Division for failing to consider whether the parents' criticisms 'could be rejected as totally without substance or merit' given the recordings of the Abbasis' meeting with the clinical team and of Dr Abbasi's arrest immediately after the meeting were produced in evidence, and that 'Dr Abbasi's criticisms of Zainab's treatment were based on his and his wife's medical expertise and experience, including his expertise and experience as a consultant respiratory physician. As regards the Haastrup case, the negligence of King's staff during Isaiah's birth was admitted.'

Important first step towards justice for victims

Speaking outside the Supreme Court in response to the judgment, Dr Rashid Abbasi said:

As a senior doctor myself, it was a shock for me to see the behaviour of some of my colleagues when my little daughter's life was in their hands. Not only was Zainab denied life-saving treatment – which I, as a respiratory consultant, knew was appropriate. She was denied even the comfort of a peaceful death.

Instead, the Hospital chose to declare an all-out war against us as her parents, to the point of deploying a police force to drag me away from my daughter's bedside. We were brutally silenced both before and after Zainab's death. Now, after six years of fighting in courts, we are finally allowed to tell our story.

In a lifetime of working for the NHS, I have had the privilege of working together with many good, conscientious and kind doctors and nurses who always put patients first. However there are inevitably also some bad apples in this basket – and they are the ones who most need secrecy.

It is extremely unfair that, while the real culprits hide behind the court-imposed anonymity, the entire medical profession is painted with the same brush in the eyes of the public. Today's judgment will hopefully put a stop to this unfairness, and by identifying the bad apples, protect the reputation of our profession as a whole.

Lanre Haastrup said:

Today's judgment is the important first step towards achieving justice for our beloved Isaiah, for Zainab Abbasi and for other children like them. We have lost our children and they cannot be brought back, but if we leave this system in a better shape than we found it, we will know our children have not died in vain. All the cruelty and lies we have experienced were only possible under the cover of secrecy. When the public and Parliament hear the full truth of what some people within the NHS have done to families like us, nobody can defend the indefensible and the law will certainly have to change.

Jennifer Melle

Jennifer Melle is a Christian nurse who referred to a male, trans-identifying patient as ‘Mister’. Even though she was subjected to racial abuse, she faces disciplinary action by St Helier and Epsom University Hospitals Trust for telling the truth and has been suspended.

For not referring to him as a woman, the paedophile patient lunged at and repeatedly racially abused Jennifer Melle while she was on duty.

Despite Jennifer raising what she had experienced during an investigation into the incident, the Hospital chose to ignore the abuse and instead gave her a final written warning and reported her to the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC). The NMC confirmed they would be scrutinising Jennifer’s fitness to practice as a nurse because she posed a ‘risk’ to the public and the reputation of the NHS for not using the patient’s preferred gender identity.

Jennifer has since been suspended by the Trust for a ‘potential data breach’ for whistleblowing what had happened to her in the media.

It has recently been exposed that the Trust, while investigating Jennifer, waited a year to look into the racist abuse, and only did so following media scrutiny.

Leaked Trust statement

A leaked statement by an NHS Trust in response to a landmark Supreme Court ruling has brought into question whether a fair process is possible in the high-profile case of Christian nurse, Jennifer Melle.

Following the ‘For Women Scotland’ Supreme Court ruling which gave clarity on the law regarding biological sex there have been calls for Jennifer to be reinstated and given a full apology. The ruling made it clear that men who identify as women do not qualify as women.

This week, however, even after the EHRC’s interim guidance, putting the word woman in speech marks, Victoria Smith, Group Chief People Officer at the Trust, sent this statement to all staff on behalf of the Executive team:

Following the recent Supreme Court ruling on the legal definition of a “woman”, we want to take a moment to reaffirm something that remains at the heart of who we are at [St George’s, Epsom and St Helier University Hospitals and Health Group] everyone deserves to be treated with dignity, respect and compassion.

That includes our transgender staff, patients and community members, as well as those whose gender identity is nonbinary or different from the sex they were assigned at birth.

While we await further national guidance on any practical implications, our commitment remains unchanged. Inclusion isn’t just a value we talk about – it’s something we live through our policies, our practice, and the way we treat one another, every day. The ruling does not affect the legal protections in place for trans people.

Background to the story

On the night of 22 May 2024, Jennifer began her shift at the hospital, where a Pride Progress Flag – symbolising support for transgender rights and gender identity affirmation – flew from the rooftop.

Miss Melle, who came to the UK from Uganda as a child and has worked her way up to become a senior nurse, had been told along with her colleagues that Mr X had been brought in for treatment from a Category C men's prison and was a sex offender.

He entered the hospital chained to two guards and was clearly masculine in appearance, standing over six feet tall and of large build.

At 10pm, a junior colleague approached Miss Melle in a distressed state saying that Mr X wanted to self-discharge. He was shouting and upsetting other elderly and vulnerable patients on the ward.

The doctor had been called for guidance on the discharge but had not yet responded. As the senior nurse on the ward, Jennifer followed her colleague to take charge of the situation and to provide support.

Looking at the patient's medical records, she saw that the patient was recorded as male, not female or transgender. On the name board next to the bed, it simply gave the feminine name.

With her colleague finally getting through to the doctor on the phone, Jennifer requested to speak to him. She said to the doctor that: 'Mr X would like to self-discharge.' Overhearing the call, enraged Mr X screamed: 'Do not call me Mr! I am a woman!'

Still on the phone to the doctor, Jennifer called back to Mr X that she was speaking to the doctor and was working out what medication could be given before he was discharged. Finishing the call, she approached the patient's room.

'Imagine if I called you a n***?'**

Stepping inside, Jennifer found Mr X pacing up and down in chains.

Jennifer politely said: 'I am sorry I cannot refer to you as her or she, as it's against my faith and Christian values but I can call you by your name.' She then began to relay what the doctor had said, but then the abuse and vitriol escalated.

'Imagine if I called you n*****', Mr X yelled. 'How about I call you n*****? Yes, black n*****!'

Jennifer said if he carried on, she would have to call security. Mr X then lunged threateningly towards Jennifer and pursued her out of the room until he was eventually held back by the guards.

He then shouted: 'I want your name and NHS number and am going to report you to the police for homophobia and to Patient Advice and Liaison Service' (PALS).

One of the guards approached Jennifer and said: 'Why can't you just call him what he wants?' Jennifer reiterated what she had already said about her Christian beliefs, and the guard said no more.

Returning, Jennifer said, using Mr X's feminine name: 'I got you your pain relief.' After having the painkillers, Mr X calmed down and was quiet until the morning.

'God created them male and female'

Afraid and upset, but keeping it inside, Jennifer handed over to colleagues on the next shift but felt unable to speak to anyone about what had happened.

Another colleague, who is not black, also called Mr X 'he' that evening but was not disciplined for doing so.

Shortly after arriving home, Jennifer received a call from a colleague who had taken over her shift. They said that Mr X had been shouting for her and repeating the threat that he was going to make a complaint to PALS.

Sleepless nights followed.

The next time Jennifer was on night shift, she was pulled aside by a ward manager and asked to make a statement about what had happened.

After Jennifer relayed that she was still feeling impacted by the racial and potential physical attacks, she was told that despite that she still had to respect 'equality and diversity' according to the Nursing and Midwifery Council code of conduct.

Jennifer said she had no issues with people's sexuality but also asked where the respect was for her Christian beliefs and said that she 'could not deny biological reality'. As a Christian, Jennifer believes that the Bible is unambiguous about human sex, as it is written in Genesis 1:27, that: 'God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them.'

Over the next few days Jennifer said she felt pressured to provide management with a statement. She was then told that she must attend a meeting with HR and that if she refused to comply, she would be sent home until an investigation was completed.

She was then redeployed to another unit, which she found to be hurtful and demeaning.

Regulatory breach

An investigation report subsequently concluded that: 'the Code of Conduct outlines that in order to treat people as individuals and to uphold their dignity nurses should avoid making assumptions and should recognise Diversity and individual choice.'

The report cited the NMC Code of Conduct which states that nurses should:

Not express your personal beliefs (including political, religious or moral beliefs) in an inappropriate way. Therefore, although [Jennifer] felt unable to identify Patient X using the preferred pronouns due to her religion, as outlined in the NMC Code of Conduct, it could be perceived that [Jennifer's] actions could...be seen as a potential breach of the code.

She was accused of 'not respecting the patient's preferred identity' and told her actions and behaviour had 'fallen short of the Trust's value of Respect'.

Summoned to a disciplinary hearing in October 2024, Jennifer was given a final written warning and has been referred to the Nursing and Midwifery Council (NMC).

Under severe pressure within the system, and with her career and livelihood under investigation and at serious risk, Jennifer is taking legal action against the Trust on the grounds of harassment, discrimination, victimisation and human rights' breaches, in a case that is believed to be unprecedented.

‘Hannah’

Employment Judge Peter McTigue has dismissed the legal claims of Christian teacher, ‘Hannah’, against Nottinghamshire County Council, which runs the school.

The reporting restrictions on publication of anything that might identify the school, Hannah or any other teacher in the school have been extended 'to remain in place indefinitely', to protect the child's 'right' to hide their biological sex 'for the remainder of their life', including in particular from their future 'partners' and even from the child's own future children.

Dismissal

Hannah alleged that the school dismissed her, and reported her to a raft of regulators, for blowing the whistle on uncovering the school's ‘trans affirming’ policy practice which she believed endangered 8-year-old ‘Child X’ and other children.

Promoted with staff training under the direction of a Stonewall Champion working at the local authority, the policies did not include any detail on the risks a ‘trans affirming’ approach has to children. Under the policy, Hannah was told ahead of the new school year in 2021, that an 8-year-old joining her class must be addressed by the child's new name and pronouns and therefore would be treated as ‘transgender’, be ‘affirmed’ in the belief that they were ‘born in a wrong body’ and be allowed to use toilets and changing room facilities of the opposite sex.

Hannah said that she could not go against her conscience and Christian beliefs in affirming what she believed would cause Child X, and other children in the school, short and long-term harm.

Following all the correct safeguarding procedures and backed by expert evidence, Hannah raised safeguarding concerns which were repeatedly ignored by school bosses, governors and the local authority.

Faced with no option but to pursue a judicial review of the school and council's refusal to properly act on her concerns, Hannah was dismissed for giving her lawyers information on what was happening in the school which the school argued was confidential.

The original hearing of her case collapsed last year after it was discovered a member of the presiding panel had made a string of anti-Christian and anti-conservative posts on X. Judge Victoria Butler, presiding over the case, was forced to recuse herself and the whole panel for a ‘perception of bias.’

At the start of the re-hearing in March 2025, another member of the panel, an ex-president of Unison, was also required to step down for ‘apparent bias’.

'I was treated like a criminal'

Giving evidence, Hannah said that after carrying out research over the summer holidays, which included interviews with some of the experts she later relied on, and watching YouTube videos of de-transitioners who had regretted their decision, she said she felt she needed to 'speak up' about the potential harm the school's approach could cause Child X.

Raising concerns with the school's head teacher, Hannah was told her she had no choice but to use Child X's preferred pronouns because it was the parent's request and that she had to 'go along with it'. After telling the head teacher she did have a choice and could not 'in good conscience go along

with it', Child X was moved to a different class and Hannah was suspended later that month while a disciplinary investigation was carried out for failing to comply with a 'reasonable request'.

Hannah said she felt the school had ignored her attempts to navigate the situation by using a gender-neutral name for the child, and had shown a 'draconian' response to her safeguarding concerns.

She added that she believed the school was 'encouraging Child X on a path to self-destruction', and that she was 'treated like a criminal' for believing so and disclosing her safeguarding concerns to a third party after her concerns were repeatedly brushed aside and ignored.

Stonewall concerns 'not reasonable'

In his ruling, released this week, however, Employment Judge Peter McTigue ruled that despite Child X being guided through 'social transition' by extreme gender identity groups, Mermaids and Stonewall, there was no evidence that the 8-year-old was at risk of any harm, and therefore Hannah's concerns were 'not reasonable.'

Mermaids have been investigated by the Charity Commission as a safeguarding concern for sending chest binders to girls who want to identify as boys without parental consent.

Stonewall has been widely discredited and abandoned by major institutions after, for example, promoting prescribing puberty blockers to children and ordering schools and institutions to stop using the word 'mother'.

Hannah provided the school with international expert evidence which said gender identity affirmation leads to 'catastrophic outcomes' for children.

However, Employment Judge McTigue said that the expert evidence did not apply to the case of Child X. Judge McTigue said:

In short, [Hannah] believed that her opinion was correct and that the approach adopted by the School and by Child X and their parents was incorrect. That was clearly unreasonable as [Hannah] was not in possession of all relevant information regarding Child X at any point in time including, for example, Child X's medical information.

This ruling therefore suggests that a teacher cannot raise a safeguarding concern about a 'socially transitioning' 8-year-old under the guidance of Stonewall, without having access to the child's medical records.

Biological sex should be hidden from children, says judge

During the hearing, Judge McTigue repeatedly refused applications to lift tribunal restrictions on the media reporting her identity.

In the last paragraph of his ruling, Employment Judge McTigue said that gender-distressed children should have anonymity over their true biological sex 'for life' and should even be able to hide their true sex from their own children when they become adults.

He said:

We also conclude that the restricted reporting order should remain in place indefinitely. In short, the right for X to live a life in their chosen gender identity for the rest of their life prevails over

[Hannah's] Article 6 and 10 rights. If we were to place a restriction on the duration of the restricted reporting order, there is a risk that the biological sex of Child X could become known in the future. This could result in Child X's biological sex becoming aware to groups of people including for example their future classmates, employers, partners, friends and indeed, in time, their own children. Child X has a right to privacy regarding their biological sex for the remainder of their life. Through the process of jigsaw identification, there is a substantial risk that Child X's identity and biological sex would become known if the Claimant's name were made public. We therefore conclude that the indefinite time duration is justified given the substantial interference with Child X's Article 8 rights in this matter.

'I have to appeal'

Responding to the ruling, Hannah said:

I am very disappointed with the judgment. It misrepresents the facts. I ask myself if the courts are afraid of hearing any evidence that socially transitioning young children is harmful. The ruling goes to great lengths to support those who silence, discredit, and remove anybody who dares ask if we are doing harm.

Like all teachers at the school, I owed a safeguarding duty to Child X.

I could not participate in causing harm to Child X. The tragic stories of 'detransitioners', clear expert scientific evidence, and the recent Supreme Court ruling, back and vindicate me.

Teachers are being bullied not to question trans affirming policies, but evidence shows these policies put the welfare of children at serious risk.

I was informed by my conscience as a Christian to live right before my God and also by the body of evidence I had researched which informed me clearly that social transitioning young children is harmful."

Backed by the Christian Legal Centre, Hannah will shortly be filing appeals to the Employment Appeal Tribunal both against the dismissal of her claims and the reporting restrictions, which require her to maintain her own anonymity for the rest of her life and entail a sanction of imprisonment for contempt of court for any breach.

'Maria'

A Christian woman who fled Islamic persecution to seek asylum in the UK has won the legal right to remain in the country despite resistance from Islamic elements in the Home Office and evidence of 'tampering' with her application.

'Maria' who cannot be named or identified for security reasons, says she and her family essentially received the 'death penalty' from the Home Office, before a dramatic legal reversal allowed her and her family to remain safely in the UK.

She had taken the Secretary of State for the Home Department to court for refusing her asylum application after fleeing forced conversion and abduction attempts in her country of origin because of her Christian faith.

Maria, who has been supported by the Christian Legal Centre, is now speaking for the first time about her case following leaked documents that have revealed that there is an Islamic network of over 700 staff members in the civil service. The network states that they aim to: 'promote the recruitment, retention and progression of Muslim staff in the Home Office' and 'influence policy makers so that policy is more inclusive of Muslim needs'.

Her story reflects concerns of the growing Islamic influence at the heart of UK government and institutions and raises serious concerns as to whether the UK is or will be a safe place for Christians to seek asylum.

Christian persecution

Married, middle class, Christian mother of one, Maria, was working in a high-flying role with her employer. But one day, everything changed.

After leaving university, Maria began working professionally and was the only Christian in her department and her Muslim colleagues tried to convert her. In her country of origin, Christians and Muslims live separate lives and mostly in peace. But things are not easy for the Christian community; especially not for Christian women.

Forced Islamic conversion

Initially, the attempts of Maria's co-workers were inoffensive: sharing Islamic videos and talking to her at work. But when she refused to convert, their tactics changed. She found herself in trouble at work, accused of committing a fraud, despite being sure that she had done nothing wrong.

However, her Muslim managers offered her a way out. If she converted, the problem would go away.

Her husband was away, so she was unable to talk to him and too afraid. There is also significant stigma and shame for men in this region if they are unable to protect their family. Maria wanted to protect her husband from this and believed she could deal with what was happening to her.

Under immense pressure, she agreed to 'convert'. Apart from a new identity card in her 'Muslim' name, nothing changed at first, but soon the pressure increased.

She was told that she would have to have her Christian cross tattoo removed, that she would have to leave her husband, that her daughter was now a Muslim and that she would have to wear a veil. Initially, she acquiesced. But then she stood up to her Muslim managers and told them she was still a Christian and that she would never convert.

Attempted abductions

Legal evidence documents reveal that then, just before Christmas, two men approached her daughter's school bus on motorbikes. They opened the doors and went in, asking for her daughter. The driver and another bus driver fought the abductors back.

Then a few days later, as Maria was pulling out in her car, a black car blocked her car, and she noticed her manager in the car with two other men. One of the men put his hand in through the window and pulled her by the hair. She started screaming as the man tried to hold her arm and threatened to kill her. But when the men saw another car pulling up, they fled.

Following this, Maria finally decided to tell her husband. They spoke to a Christian priest who put them in touch with a Christian lawyer. The lawyer advised that it was almost impossible to change her ID card from Muslim to Christian, and her life would be in danger forever if she chose to remain Christian and in this country.

Islamic conversion certificate

Maria, her husband and their daughter fled to the UK. They had a holiday visa and friends and family in the UK. They thought the UK would be safe and would welcome them with open arms.

A Muslim Home Office investigator rejected Maria's claim. Not only did the investigator say she believed Maria was making it all up, in her report she repeatedly misinterpreted passages from various international reports and the Home Office's own reports on this country, to make it appear that it was a safe country for Christians. Maria appealed to the Immigration Tribunal.

On the day of the trial, her documents, and most importantly her Islamic conversion certificate, was received back from the Home Office.

A judge later confirmed that her certificate had been 'tampered with' by someone at the Home Office. The certificate, the primary evidence of her forced conversion, had been lost and the Home Office posted back a photocopy.

The trial then proceeded to hear from Maria, her family, her UK vicar and Dr Martin Parsons (an expert witness on the Islamic world).

Dr Parsons told the tribunal that 'the pattern that [Maria] has described of being first invited to voluntarily embrace Islam, then following her rejection of this, being coerced into converting, exactly parallels the pattern set out in Shari'a law.'

Maria produced police reports, witness statements, and WhatsApp texts, all evidencing what happened.

However, Judge Chaudhary rejected all their evidence as it was all too 'incredible'.

Maria appealed again, this time to the Upper Tribunal who overturned the original verdict ruling that Judge Chaudhary had not properly considered all the documents that were put before the tribunal and there was a 'total absence of reasoning' at times given for rejecting the expert's opinion.

Unlawful ruling overturned

The case was then remitted for retrial before Judge JL Barker. In his ruling, Judge Barker said that the original refusal 'decision is in breach of the UK's obligations under the Refugee Convention; and unlawful under Section 6 of the Human Rights Act 1998.'

Maria wept for joy when the verdict arrived. After three years, her and her family were finally granted asylum.

On how Maria was treated in the workplace by Muslim colleagues, Judge Barker said Maria:

Was questioned regularly and subtle attempts were made to discredit her beliefs and persuade her that Islam was better. I accept that this aspect of [Maria's] account is entirely plausible and

consistent with the country information about the treatment of Christians, particularly in a predominantly Muslim workplace such as this.

I also accept that this pressure increased over the course of approximately two years, from gentle persuasion, to become more sinister and aggressive in nature, and involved the unfair treatment of her including an increase in work; a refusal to give her the breaks she was entitled to; and the insistence that she work when unwell, and that this treatment culminated in her effectively being set up and placed in a position where she had little option but to comply with their demands, or face losing her job, or worse.

On forced conversion to Islam:

Having taken a step back, and considered the evidence in the round, I am satisfied that [Maria] has demonstrated that it is reasonably likely that she was forced to convert to Islam against her wishes, and has accepted she was born into and continues to embrace Christianity.

In essence, the evidence provided by Dr Parsons is clear, the Appellant's attempts to convert back to Christianity would be considered as apostacy, for which Sharia law starkly dictates the death penalty even for women, or if a different school of Islam is followed, the punishment would be at least imprisonment and beatings until they repent.

On the attempted abductions, the judge said:

Having considered this evidence in the round with the other evidence available to me, I find that it is reasonably likely that these incidents did occur as claimed by [Maria].

He added that 'I also accept that the issue of honour and shame that would be perceived by [Maria] would also prevent her from sharing her problem with those close to her.'

On the 'tampering with certificate' Judge Barker said:

Perhaps most significantly, in support of her account to have converted to Islam, [Maria] claims to have submitted the original Conversion Certificate that she received from [the mosque]. However, and this was the subject of much discussion at the first appeal hearing, [Maria] asserts that the document provided to the Tribunal previously by the [Home Department] is in fact not the document that she provided to them during her asylum interview...

It is clear from the [Home Department's] refusal letter that the author of the refusal letter considered a laminated copy of the Conversion Certificate and did not accept that it was reliable evidence in support of [Maria's] claim. When that document was eventually submitted to the Tribunal...I accept that it appears to be the same laminated copy referred to by the author of the refusal letter. However, [Maria] has consistently claimed that this is not the document that she submitted to the [Home Department], and she has given evidence repeatedly that the version she submitted was the original, containing the original photograph taken of her wearing a Hijab, stapled to the top left corner of the document.

It seems that [Maria] isn't just suggesting that the [Home Department] has lost or misplaced the original, and produced a copy to the Tribunal instead, but she is asserting that the [Home Department] has produced a laminated copy of the original. I struggled to understand the sense of this during the hearing, and am still puzzled by why the [Home Department] would laminate a copy, rather than simply submitting a copy if the original if that is what was submitted by [Maria].

However, the reality is that I don't know why this would happen, but any consideration of this must be purely speculative, and whilst doing such an act deliberately may be unusual in my experience, I must not speculate. Having considered the evidence, including the content of the refusal letter itself which states that the document considered at that time was a laminated copy, I accept this and find that the document provided to the Tribunal...is not in fact the document that [Maria] submitted to the Home Office at the time of her asylum interview...

In those circumstances, I find that the criticism contained within the Respondent's refusal letter is an unfair one, given that by my findings the Appellant submitted the original document, and this was then not seemingly considered by the person making the refusal decision.

In order to try to rectify this, the Appellant has in fact submitted a further document in support of her claimed conversion, and provided the original to me during the hearing. Mr [X] did not wish to examine the original when offered to him, but I did, and it was wholly consistent with the evidence given by the witnesses about the type of paper used and the style and format of the document used in the original Conversion certificate. I find that this adds support to the assertion that the document submitted by the Appellant during her asylum interview was an authentic and reliable document. The certified copy contains the same information as the copy of the original certificate, and examination of both reveals nothing of concern, and I am satisfied from the document itself and the evidence of its provenance, that this is a reliable document, worthy of some weight.

'I can no longer be silent'

Maria said:

I can no longer remain silent about what happened to me. The original dismissal of my evidence by the Home Office and tribunal was essentially a death penalty to my family and I. How many others have experienced this and not had the support I have had?

At times I completely lost hope of proving my innocence and securing safety myself and my family. How many others have lost hope and not had the extensive legal, material and emotional support that I have had?

All along, despite all the trials, I knew that God was in my heart and with me and had a plan for my life.

I and my family were overjoyed to receive justice after years of struggle and trauma. We do not want this to happen to anyone else.

Life is still hard, but we are safe. We believe it is crucial for other genuine Christians fleeing Islamic persecution to receive the support and protection they need.

VAT on schools

On 13 June 2025 the High Court ruled against parents and pupils from the award-winning Emmanuel School in Derby, the Branch Christian School in Yorkshire, The King's School in Hampshire and the Wyclif Independent Christian School in South Wales and the schools themselves.

The Christian claimants, supported by the Christian Legal Centre, sought to judicially review the government's amendment of the VAT Act 1994, arguing that it illegally discriminated against them and

that the tax measure was unlawful and incompatible with their human rights under various articles of the European Convention on Human Rights by disproportionately interfering with their right to engage in private Christian education.

The Christian Claimants with the continued support of the Christian Legal Centre, plan to appeal the judgment. The Claimants (parents, pupils and the schools) were all part of the new low-cost independent Christian education movement that seeks to provide true Christian education on a shoestring for not just Christian parents and children but other parents from other faith backgrounds typically in deprived areas typically with a disproportionate number of special educational needs children.

The case challenged the decisions of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Rachel Reeves, and ultimately the Finance Act 2025. Interested parties and interveners included: the Commissioner for HM Revenue and Customs, the Speaker of the House of Commons and the Secretary of State for Education, Bridget Philipson.

Ultimately the High Court found that it was for Parliament to make decisions about tax policy, and that their right to do so enjoyed a wide margin of discretion. The High Court acknowledged that Parliament's decision would affect around 159,000 pupils who fall into the bottom half of the household income distribution. It also accepted the government's assessment that 3,000 pupils would be immediately displaced as a result of the new measures.

The High Court reasoned that while there is right to start and run private schools, there is no general obligation upon the government not to hinder access to private education.

The government's decision to impose VAT on the provision of education by independent schools has made the UK an outlier among the 46 Council of Europe States.

The Court also rejected the government's assertion that VAT exemption was a subsidy or 'tax break', instead referring to it as a tax change.

Private schools across the country are already beginning to close after the policy began to take effect on 1 January 2025 despite significant opposition.

A tax targeting private Christian education

The judgment makes no qualms about the fact that the purpose of the new tax is redistributive. It is intended to raise tax revenue from private educating families, to be then spent largely on public education, despite the fact that the Claimants already pay taxes towards public education as part of their general tax obligations. The government's argument that these families are simply paying their fair share ignores the fact that private educating families are being asked to pay more taxes on public education than families who actually have their children in public schools. A targeted tax of this nature is by definition, discriminatory.

The High Court agreed that the discrimination complained of did fit within the ambit of Protocol 1, Article 2 (right to education), taken in conjunction with Article 14 (prohibition of discrimination). However, it found that the tax was justified as a revenue raising measure, and that Parliament had weighed the burden placed on private educating families and voted for the measure in any case. The Court declined to interfere with the decision-making process, arguing that there is 'no process of legal reasoning which can justify one view in preference to the other.'

The perversion of the right to education

Our courts, including the European Court of Human Rights, have increasingly diluted the protections afforded to Christian parents in the area of education. Both domestically and internationally, this had led to a dystopian vision of education. While the courts have, for example, held that governments are forbidden from charging fees to illegal migrants for public education and that it is discriminatory to deny migrants with unsettled status access to student loans for university, they have in this case allowed the government to target hard working Christian families struggling to pay their children's school fees with additional tax burdens because of their desire for an authentically Christian education.

While the Court accepted the government's argument that private Christian schools can become voluntarily aided schools, the reality that accepting government funds requires schools to fundamentally change the way they teach and what they teach. Private education is, for many parents, the only way they feel secure that their children are receiving an authentically Christian education.

A father's battle for Christian education

One parent bringing the claim was bookseller Stephen White. Mr White has chosen to live in one of the most deprived areas of Bradford so that he can afford to send his four children to the Bradford Christian School based in the Yorkshire city.

Mr White, whose 14-year-old son, Josiah, was also a claimant in the case, said: 'As Christians, we believe that it is our duty as parents to raise our children in line with our beliefs. This policy denies us this right and choice and must be challenged.'

He says the government's policy is 'unjust and 'discriminatory' and will force him to home-school his children as the heavy secularisation of state schools, and even Church of England schools, mean that his children would not be taught in line with the family's Christian beliefs.

'Pupils not from affluent backgrounds'

Headteachers at four independent Christian schools were also claimants in the case:

The Branch Christian School in Dewsbury, West Yorkshire is an independent school providing Christian education for children aged 3 – 18 years.

Headteacher, Jill Holt, said ahead of the April hearing:

Most of our parents come to us because they want their child to be taught in a school that agrees with their Christian values. Whilst many parents of our students would feel compelled to home school if we were not able to remain open, most of our parents need to work which means they aren't in a position to home school; additionally, many of them don't feel adequately equipped to home school.

The Government claims to be imposing the VAT to secure extra funding for state schools; the reality is that it would cost the government more if our students went to state schools as they give state schools over £7,000 per 5–16-year-old. The addition of VAT would be an increased burden for the parent of nearly £800. For some of our lower income families this is a significant amount. We keep our fees low to be able to give all parents, no matter their economic status, the right to choose

the education for their child. In respect to small schools like ours that exist on very low fees, the argument just doesn't add up.

Wyclif Independent Christian school in South Wales (WICS), which is the only school of its type in the region. Launched in 1982 by two fathers who wanted to provide Christian education to the area, it now has 200 pupils, but is now preparing to be significantly impacted by the policy.

Adam Fairman, a Governor at WICS, said: 'We have a long history of keeping Christian education affordable for all families who want it. We have joined this case to keep it that way as 20% VAT would put us out of reach of low income families.'

Caroline Santer, is Headteacher at **The King's School, Fair Oak, in Hampshire**, said:

After over two months of waiting, this judgement comes as a huge disappointment, but we will continue to challenge the legality of this policy. Four times as many pupils as the government expected have left independent education, which means it is increasingly likely that no money will be raised by this policy for state schools, or housing as we have recently heard.

As a small independent Christian school already struggling with extremely narrow profit margins, this legislation and the increase in business rates has hit us hard. We keep our fees low in order to be accessible to low income families who want to choose Christian education as is their right, but parents are finding the increase in school fees a huge burden on their already stretched finances. Across the sector, smaller schools are struggling to remain financially afloat, which was already a challenge even before the imposition of VAT on fees, which was an ideological move against freedom of choice.

Taxing the provision of education in this way is a breach of the right to education guaranteed by the European Convention on Human Rights and the policy disproportionately affects certain groups, including military families, those with children with special educational needs (SEND), and individuals with specific religious or philosophical beliefs, like those in our school.

Consequences devastating

Ben Snowdon, Headteacher at **Emmanuel School in Derby**, an award-winning Independent Christian School which has been providing small group Christian education for over 30 years, said:

The consequences of this policy will be devastating for independent Christian schools and many other low-cost independent schools across the country. It is especially concerning to parents who are not from affluent backgrounds and who have children with special education needs.

At Emmanuel School we share the government's desire to ensure that all children have access to high quality education, but we're deeply concerned that the government's VAT proposals will hinder this aim.

Rushmore Council and Aldershot and Farnborough Council

A Labour council has been forced into a dramatic U-turn after it sought a court injunction to criminalise Christian prayer, singing and evangelism in public.

On 7 March 2025, Rushmoor Borough Council sought an injunction at Aldershot and Farnham County Court that would have imposed draconian restrictions on Christian Street preachers in Aldershot and Farnborough.

Supported by the Christian Legal Centre (CLC) and working with local churches and Conservative Councillors, Gareth Lyon and Ade Adeola, the preachers resisted the injunction and following a meeting on 23 April at the council offices, the Council has said it 'will pause' their application for an injunction.

At the meeting various faith leaders (the local vicar, an Army Chaplain, pastors of independent evangelical churches) and local preachers made their objections known to the council.

Sally McGuinness, a cleaner and regular street evangelist broke down in tears as she recounted the burden the threat of criminalisation placed on her over the last few weeks. She told the council that once she was aware of the council's intentions, she attempted to contact the council on no fewer than five occasions but not once did the council engage with her.

Council officers were told at the meeting by CLC lawyers representing the preachers that the injunction application was unprecedented and particularly poorly drafted such that the injunction would almost certainly result in the criminalisation of carol singing and handing out Christian leaflets.

By the end of the meeting, many were calling for the complete withdrawal of the injunction application.

Since 2023, Rushmoor council appear to have been preparing the injunction which it says was made 'to control the behaviour of the defendants' who are 'unknown'.

A number of local preachers and evangelists often share the Christian faith in the Aldershot and Farnborough town centres through public speaking, sharing leaflets, offering prayer and healing and providing outreach support to the homeless and vulnerable.

Preachers challenging the injunction, recognise that sometimes there are some who are young, passionate and in training who occasionally get carried away, but that this is rare. They add that the nature of preaching the Christian message of salvation inevitably leads to a few members of the public being 'offended' by that message.

However, the preachers say that it is not a criminal offence to offend someone and say that the council is disproportionately focusing on negatives while giving no respect or recognition to the good that Christian witness brings to the community.

The Council claiming that it wanted to 'prevent alarm and distress' the applicant for an injunction was issued last month pursuant to section 22 of the Local Government Act 1972 and sections 1 and 2 of the Anti-social Behaviour Crime and Policing Act 2014.

The injunction sought to ban prayer, singing or preaching, breaking the injunction could result in fines, arrests and prosecutions and even prison. The maximum custodial sentence for breaching an injunction is two years.

Praying and singing would be banned

The injunction applied to prohibit, for example:

Praying, whether with outstretched arms or otherwise, for anyone visiting, working or living within the Town Centres of Aldershot and Farnborough, as shown outlined in red on the attached plan, without their prior permission.

Touching anyone visiting, working or living within the town centres of Aldershot and Farnborough...for the avoidance of doubt this includes the laying of hands in anyone in prayer.

Approaching anyone who is not themselves street preaching for the purpose of engaging them with discussion about religion or belief.

'Engaging in street preaching which is hostile towards anyone with the protected characteristic of age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.

The council's anonymous legal representative who drafted the injunction says this strikes 'a fair balance between the rights of all concerned' and said that the council had 'considered its public sector equality duty.'

Despite not consulting the preachers or members of the public, the injunction claims that: 'the only way to mitigate the impact' of the street preaching was 'to apply the injunction' and that members of the public can still preach but with extensive 'restrictions on offensive behaviour.'

'Christian preaching = non-inclusive environment'

Examples cited by the council to justify the injunction, included a member of the public who said they are gay and had a 'transgender son' who was worried about the 'non-inclusive environment for certain members of the community' and the risks that she might experience if she came into contact with these preachers.'

Under the injunction, however, it is the preachers who would face censorship and potential prosecution.

Other complaints cited by the council include preachers using portable PA systems, evangelising, and preaching on topics that may cause 'harassment, alarm and distress'.

Members of the public have said Christian preaching makes them 'angry and upset' and that it 'ruins their day' when 'they are judged.' One even complained that preaching during the day had impacted their sleep.

Other complaints even include Christians praying for a homeless person and offering healing prayer to the sick.

Following legal support from the Christian Legal Centre, the council postponed the court hearing which sought to seal the injunction and have said they now intend to re-write it. The court have not yet relisted the matter.

The council's approach appears to have united the preachers and local churches who are prepared to challenge the proposed measures as far as necessary to protect their Christian freedoms.

'I couldn't believe it'

One preacher, Jamie Broadey, who is a trained evangelist, said:

When I first saw the application, I thought that they must have made a mistake... I felt complete unbelief that it was saying that you can't have religious discussions, you can't pray or sing, and people have to come to you, you can't go to them and share the gospel which Christians have done freely in this country for centuries.

However, following the meeting, it seemed that the council have taken onboard our concerns. We welcome the news that the council has withdrawn its application, but it is highly concerning that they made this attempt to criminalise the Christian faith in the first instance.

'Silencing the gospel'

Another preacher, Sally McGuinness, who preaches in the area and does a lot of work supporting the homeless and the most vulnerable in the community, said:

This injunction attempted criminalise me for helping the homeless and infringing on my rights to do good. I think the council has failed to see the good that Christians bring through proactive outreach.

We are still awaiting an apology from the council and assurances that nothing like this will ever happen again.

Bernard Randall

Giving judgment on 4 March 2025, His Honour Judge James Tayler has ruled that the previous employment tribunal decision which upheld the sacking of Rev. Dr Bernard Randall is 'unsafe' due to revelations of anti-Christian bias on the presiding panel.

As a result, Judge Tayler ordered Dr Randall's case to be remitted urgently back to the Employment Tribunal for a full retrial and ordered £20,000 costs against Trent College.

This permission hearing ruling comes after Rev. Dr Bernard, who is supported by the Christian Legal Centre, took legal action against Trent College in Derbyshire following his dismissal for a sermon he gave in 2019.

The sermon was on the CofE's own teaching on marriage, in a CofE chapel, in a school with a CofE ethos. He gave the sermon saying it was ok for students to question and debate LGBT teaching after Trent College invited extreme gender identity group, Educate and Celebrate (E&C) into the school to 'smash heteronormativity'.

The group has since been closed down on the quiet by the Charity Commission following a series of scandals, including one of its patrons being charged with multiple accounts of sex abuse against children, including rape and conspiracy to kidnap. At the new hearing, Dr Randall's legal team should be able to submit the developing Educate and Celebrate scandals as 'new evidence.'

Employment Tribunal

Dr Randall's case was heard at a full employment tribunal at Nottingham Justice Centre in September 2022 before a presiding panel of three, which included Judge Victoria Butler, and lay member Mr Jed Purkis.

Before and after Judge Butler's ruling was made on the case, which found against Dr Randall on every point, Mr Purkis made a series of anti-Christian and anti-conservative posts on social media.

All of this lay undiscovered and unknown, until In March 2024, at the same Nottingham tribunal, Judge Butler and Mr Purkis also began presiding on another similar Christian Legal Centre case, involving Christian teacher, 'Hannah'.

Hannah was taking legal action after being sacked for raising safeguarding concerns about an 8-year-old 'transitioning' under the guidance of Stonewall in a primary school. During this hearing, Mr Purkis' anti-Christian posts were discovered, and a recusal application was made by Hannah's lawyers for 'apparent bias'.

In a rare move, Judge Victoria Butler was forced to recuse the whole panel, including herself, and the hearing collapsed.

The Judicial Conduct Investigations Office, supported by the senior president of tribunals and the Lord Chancellor, subsequently said that Mr Jed Purkis' comments amounted to misconduct and he was given a formal rebuke.

Dr Randall's lawyers then added a 'bias' ground to his appeal and argued in court on 4 March 2025 that there could be no sensible objection or delay to Dr Randall's appeal proceeding on the bias ground alone.

'Holding my life back'

Responding to the ruling, Dr Randall said:

I am very pleased and thankful for today's decision and am relieved that Judge Butler's previous ruling has been exposed for what it was. We now start from the beginning, which gives the opportunity to bring new evidence, especially on Educate and Celebrate. Nevertheless, the continuing long wait for justice is painful and holding back my life.

Queer Theory, which E&C promoted, aims to 'deconstruct [or smash] binaries' including the clear distinctions between adult and child, right and wrong. As such it leaves the door wide open for malignant persons to indulge some of the most wicked behaviour imaginable. It is, to say the least, wholly inappropriate in a school, and in wider society.

The injustice of how I have been treated because I opposed the introduction of this agenda in a school should by now be obvious to all. I am only sorry it takes the disclosure of such heinous crimes clearly to reveal the dangers of the 'smash heteronormativity' agenda. It is well past time for the Church of England to recognise how badly they have got this wrong and give me my life back.

It is also very concerning that a group like E&C has been funded by the government and given so much access and influence, for they are not the only ones who promote Queer Theory. Indeed, I saw the sticky fingerprints of such activism all over the judgment which has now been set aside.

I will keep pressing on for full justice and am thankful to everyone for their continued support and prayers."

Vindications

Since Judge Butler and Mr Purkis ruled against Dr Randall in February 2023, Dr Randall has had a series of vindications.

Prevent (the government assessors of extremist and terrorist threat), the Local Authority Designated Officer (LADO), the Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS), and the Teaching Regulation Agency (TRA) have all said that he has no case to answer.

Following his sacking, in 2022 he was blacklisted as a safeguarding risk to children by the CofE in Derby Diocese for his sermon.

Dr Randall pursued a serious complaint of misconduct over the decision to blacklist him, but this was blocked by the then Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby. (ABC) However, a senior Church legal officer for clergy discipline found that the Archbishop had ‘misunderstood the scope of his powers’, and was ‘plainly wrong’.

The same investigating officer described the blacklisting of Dr Randall as ‘egregious’ and ‘gross’ error. Justin Welby was forced to order a review of the safeguarding processes within the Derby diocese.

A year since this decision, the situation is still not resolved and Dr Randall remains without ‘Permission to Officiate’ within the CofE.

We now wait for a new date for the evidence to be considered by a newly constituted tribunal.

Book Review

The Environment

Christian Compassion, Convictions and Wisdom for Today's Big Issues (Talking Points)

By Dave Gobbett

The Good Book Company, 2022 (80pp. £3, The Good Book Company)

This short book is part of the helpful *Talking Points* series produced by The Good Book Company. Other topics covered in the series include: Abortion, Assisted Suicide, Porn, and Transgender. The idea for the series is to have short biblical introductions to current controversial topics.

In this aim, Gobbett succeeds admirably. He uses Greta Thunberg's apocalyptic, 'I want you to panic' as a starting point for discussion. There is a short history of the environmental movement highlighting, for example, the ozone layer, Al Gore's *Inconvenient Truth*, the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, the 2015 Paris Agreement, and current 'net zero' targets. Some key stats on pollution, biodiversity, and deforestation are provided before he asks: 'how we are to respond?'

Gobbett outlines three ways people respond to environmental issues. First, panic – this is Greta Thunberg's approach, second, passive – we can't do much about it, and third, prudence – this is Gobbett's middle way between the two other extremes. He neatly deals with the foolish objection that evangelism is all that matters, and argues that Christians should be keen to talk about environmental issues since we have something positive to say – in contrast to issues like sexuality or gender identity when it can feel like we are constantly on the defensive.

He outlines a biblical theology of the environment, with a perfect creation damaged by the fall, and helpfully points out that environmentalists often idolise the planet, while those passively avoiding the issue may equally be idolising personal autonomy! He notes the promise of Genesis 8:22 that 'cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night, will never cease', pointing out that even if the climate is changing, God's promise here rules out apocalyptic environmentalism.

There is some more theological analysis of the biblical mandate for creation care from Genesis 1. He notes that 'human' (Hebrew 'adam') is made from the 'ground' (Hebrew 'adam-ah') which parallels 'husband' (Hebrew 'ish') and 'wife' (Hebrew 'ish-shar'). He argues that this suggests a strong link with humans and creation, captured by the English word 'husbandry'. The Hebrew 'adam' is a gender neutral term for 'human' so Iain Provan suggests 'earthling' would be a better translation.¹ There is clearly a word play here suggesting similarity of material, and perhaps interdependence, though inferring responsibility from this word play feels like a stretch to me. In any case this is not the strongest point to make from the text.

What Gobbett doesn't tackle is the meaning of Genesis 1:26 where humans are given 'dominion' over other creatures, or verse 28 where they are told to 'subdue' the earth. These verses are misused to argue that Christian theology justifies man's exploitation of nature for his own ends without care for creation. The allegation made, in the words of Lyn White's incredibly influential article from over 50

¹ Iain Provan, *Seriously Dangerous Religion: What The Old Testament Really Says and Why It Matters* (Waco, Texas: Baylor University Press, 2014), 80

years ago, is that Christianity is ‘the most anthropocentric religion the world has ever seen’.² I suggest that Gobbett would have done better to address a proper interpretation of these verses rather than the word play around ‘adam’ and ‘adam-ah’.

Gobbett has a helpful chapter on eschatology in which he argues on the basis of various Bible texts that ‘the implication definitely seems to be that one day we’ll move out of this place ... and go to another place – a better place’ (p61). Some would argue for more eschatological continuity, but even with a discontinuous view, Gobbett notes that we will still be held accountable for our treatment of creation. Further, our treatment of creation is part of Christian witness, and our confidence in biblical eschatology means we can dismiss the claims of apocalyptic environmentalists.

Gobbett concludes with a postscript, copying the title of Greta Thunberg’s bestselling book: *No One Is Too Small to Make a Difference*.³ Here he relates what a day in the life of a Christian engaging prudently with creation might look like.

Gobbett writes well, with an engaging style. The book is highly readable, and its shortness will appeal to those lacking the time or motivation to engage with a more in-depth treatment. Some resources for further study are also provided at the end. It is a useful and up-to-date short introduction to a biblical perspective on the environment. It comes recommended for that purpose.

Review by Tim Dieppe, Head of Policy at Christian Concern.

2 Lynn R. White, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis," *Science* 155, no. 3767 (1967), 1205

3 Greta Thunberg, *No One Is Too Small to Make a Difference*, (Penguin, 2019)

Hope For God's Creation

Stewardship in an Age of Futility

By Andrew J. Spencer (B&H Academic, 2023)

176pp. £18.69, Amazon.co.uk

The book aims to provide a Christian theology of creation care rooted in gospel hope. In this it partly succeeds. 'Partly' only because I found the book a little too wordy, discursive and hard work. Hard work in the sense that it was difficult to pull all the many (particularly theological) strands together into a clear mental picture. The key points of the discussion are covered, but the narrative at times segues from one point to another and left me wondering where I'd come from and why, and as a serial read I struggled to maintain attention. This, of course, could just be me.

The book draws on Francis Schaeffer's *Pollution and the Death of Man*, published in 1970. Schaeffer reflects that era and focuses on ecology, whereas Spencer is also engaging with today's big issue of climate change. I found myself referring to Schaeffer's sharper 55 pages to keep focused as I followed Spencer's twists and turns. Schaeffer is, I think, more theologically penetrating and spiritually direct in taking you to the core principle and challenge driving Christian environmentalism: I love God, I love what he has made. If I don't love what God loves, do I really love God?

Hope for God's Creation is generally easy to read but does require a reasonable level of theological understanding and is perhaps best suited to theology students. It has the feeling of an academic thesis adapted for group Bible studies; it contains 657 references, and each chapter is usefully summarised, with a conclusion and an accompanying list of keywords and study questions. This is no bad thing as the issues it covers, particularly in translating our theology into practice, do not have quick and easy answers.

Its stated audience is, on the one hand, faithful, orthodox Christians who have seen little reason to practice creation care and on the other, readers who are passionate about environmentalism and are questioning whether Christianity can be good for the environment. It certainly provides meat for these audiences and for those drifting in the turbulent waters between these states. If you sit in the first category, the one I'm closest to, you will be challenged. If you are closer to the second group, perhaps less so.

Neatly divided into three parts – The Background of Creation Care, A Theology of Creation Care, The Practice of Creation Care – it provides opportunities for section hopping. For example, tackling first some of the thorny issues raised in Part 3 may well stimulate a search for answers in Part 2.

Part 2, A Theology of Creation Care, is covered in five chapters: A Theology of Creation Care, Sources of Moral Authority, The Value of God's Creation, Anthropology and Stewardship and Near and Distant Hope for God's Creation. This last chapter explains Schaeffer's 'substantial healing' concept, which is presented as the practical aim of Christian environmentalism. It's worth waiting for, but you do have to wait.

The 'Hope' of the title is the hope of a renewed creation at the end of this present age. Spencer discusses renewed creation, new (ex nihilo) creation and destroyed creation and concludes that renewed creation is the best reading of Scripture and the one that generates the most convincing hope to motivate substantial healing. I agree on the renewed version, but it's not clear from Spencer's treatment of these ultimate scenarios that the other interpretations don't lead to an equally motivating outworking of the core biblical principle.

He takes, for instance, the position of Gale Heide, who concludes that a finally destroyed creation provides us with little more than a stewardship responsibility, whereas a renewed creation, perhaps, requires more.

This approach seems to detract from the key argument for renewed creation, which is that, like our renewed bodies, renewed creation will in some way bear the evidence of its treatment in this age. Christ's risen body bore the scars of his crucifixion; renewed creation will bear the evidence of our scarring and our healing. Consequently, if renewed creation works in this way, it is clearly more motivating for Christian action now than the alternatives.

Surprisingly, Spencer invokes a form of Pascal's wager argument to justify a Christian environmental stance where a person might doubt catastrophic climate change. Pascal's argument is primarily a utilitarian one. In this context, it demands a view of nature valuing it either intrinsically or instrumentally, rather than valuing it for its inherent worth as created by God. While Spencer does not wholly reject instrumental value, he rightly prioritises inherent value. Using a Pascal-like wager as a motivation for Christian action shifts the focus away from God – the love of what God loves – a position he argues against elsewhere in the book.

Part 1 provides a comprehensive review of historical and contemporary debates and positions around environmental ethics and sets the context for a biblical Christian approach. He argues against a 'big idea' approach because it can easily become an ideology, where one central animating idea justifies any means to meet its ends. He encourages Christians to engage, but in mindfulness of our greater gospel responsibilities and points out that 'The planet will survive, and God's purposes will not be thwarted by our action or inaction toward better environmental stewardship' (p. 26).

He tackles the criticism raised by Lynn White in a 1966 paper to the American Association for the Advancement of Science that Christianity is at fault for contemporary ecological problems. As Schaeffer did before him, Spencer acknowledges truth in White's argument but concludes that the problem is not that Christianity is bad for the environment as White maintained, but that bad Christian theology, leading to bad actions, is bad for the environment.

In Part 3, Spencer concludes with three chapters on practical application. The first of these chapters covers environmental activism in the context of the wider mission of the church and again alerts us to possible distractions from our primary mission. The second chapter (Chapter 9) deals with conspiracies and conflict and warns that an emphasis on conspiracy thinking or political conflict undermines the gospel. Having identified and discussed the hazards that could shipwreck our Christian engagement, the final chapter of the book focuses on everyday practicalities. These are helpfully encapsulated in terms of Paul's exhortation to the church at Thessalonica: '...and to aspire to live quietly...' (1 Thess 4:11). Spencer posits that a quiet life tends to be more ecologically sound and more spiritually healthy.

If you are seeking to work out and examine what a Christian view of ecology and environmentalism looks like with a view to applying it in your Christian life, this book is sound and will be helpful. As mentioned earlier, it is probably most effectively employed in the context of group Bible study.

The above review was submitted by an independent, bona fide contributor, who, for professional reasons, has asked to remain anonymous. We are happy to agree to this request.

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