

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AND ESCHATOLOGY IN *REVELATION*⁺

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ABSTRACT

The concept of environmental justice is not new. While some scholars and activists trace its origins as part of the ongoing American Civil Rights Movement—a movement which emerged within the interdisciplinary connection of law and religion—this Essay argues that the concept of environmental justice has deep origins in the Holy Bible. With a foundation in the Old Testament Hebrew scriptures, this Essay combines the disciplines of law and religion by arguing that the Book of Revelation should be read ecologically, as a clarion call to protect the environment in anticipation of the time the triune God will return to live on the planet Earth, which will exist as a new heaven.

To support the thesis that the Book of Revelation calls members of Judeo-Christian faith traditions to be protective stewards of planet earth, this Essay is organized into five interconnected parts, undergirded by religious views on the environment and the concept of environmental justice. Part I is an introductory overview, which lays a foundation for the

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matters related to law, religion, and ecological eschatology detailed herein. Part II builds upon Part I by transitioning into a substantive analysis of environmental justice, as detailed by John in Revelation. Part III then moves in chronology from a time when Judeo-Christian morals influenced ecological eschatology, millennia before antiquity, by exploring the same influences on environmental justice in the post-modern era. Part IV outlines policy considerations related to the continuing environmental justice movement from a Judeo-Christian thought perspective. Finally, Part V of this Essay is a synthesis and conclusion, where the author attempts to harmonize the themes and theories detailed herein, all at the proverbial intersection of law and religion.

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I. INTRODUCTION

President Barack Obama's administration has placed an emphasis on "environmental justice."¹ Notwithstanding the Obama Administration's environmental policy focus, the term environmental justice remains inherently ambiguous—implying and meaning different things to different groups such as citizens, corporate entities, and governmental regulators.² Moreover, in

1. See, e.g., Press Release, United States Environmental Protection Agency, Obama Administration Advances Efforts to Protect Health of U.S. Communities Overburdened by Pollution (Aug. 4, 2011), *available at* <http://yosemite.epa.gov/opa/admpress.nsf/bd4379a92ceceac8525735900400c27/28420a5ae8467cf5852578e200635712!OpenDocument> (stating that "[a]ll too often, low-income, minority and Native Americans live in the shadows of our society's worst pollution, facing disproportionate health impacts and greater obstacles to economic growth [E]nvironmental justice [is one] . . . of my top priorities for the work of the EPA, and we're glad to have [the] President[']s . . . leadership") (internal citations omitted); see also Juliet Eilperin, *Environmental Justice Issues Take Center Stage*, WASH. POST (Nov. 21, 2010, 8:23 PM), <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/11/21/AR2010112103782.html> ("Obama administration officials are looking at hazardous waste storage, toxic air emissions and an array of other contaminants to try to determine whether low-income and minority communities are disproportionately exposed to them."). Further, under the leadership of Administrator Lisa Jackson, the EPA has also released a comprehensive environmental justice strategy plan. See generally, *Plan EJ 2014*, UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY (September 2011), *available at* <http://www.epa.gov/environmentaljustice/resources/policy/plan-ej-2014/plan-ej-2011-09.pdf>. To be fair, it bears noting that:

[D]uring George H.W. Bush's administration, the EPA administrator . . . established the Office of Environmental Equality (under the Clinton Administration it was renamed the Office of Environmental Justice) and produced *Environmental Equality: Reducing Risks for All Communities*, one of the first comprehensive government reports to examine environmental hazards and social equity.

Robert D. Bullard, *Introduction*, in *THE QUEST FOR ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE: HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE POLITICS OF POLLUTION* 3 (Robert D. Bullard ed., 2005) (citing E.P.A., *Environmental Equity: Reducing Risks for All Communities* (June 1992), *available at*

http://www.epa.gov/compliance/ej/resources/reports/annual-project-reports/reducing_risk_com_voll.pdf).

2. In attempting to provide a clear definition, Bob Kuehn, a nationally reputed environmental law professor, writes that:

"Environmental justice" means many things to many people. To local communities feeling overburdened by environmental hazards and left out of the decision making process, it captures their sense of the unfairness of the development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws and

addition to the already complex relationship between environmental justice stakeholders, the concept is also defined by the participatory role of external advocacy groups.³ Despite these variances, the Obama Administration has pressed forward with several initiatives, including those focused on environmental sustainment, by allocating significant fiscal resources to support ecological development.⁴ These initiatives challenge America to move away from the oil and gas industry of yesteryear and toward green job growth.⁵

The usage surge of terms like “green economy” and “green jobs” indicates the direction in which American law and policy are evolving. Communities across the United States are intentionally using renewable energy technology because green infrastructure, recycling, and brownfield redevelopment create jobs, improve economies, and make communities more attractive places to live

policies. To regulated entities facing allegations that they have created or contributed to injustices, environmental justice is an amorphous term that wrongly suggests racial-based or class-based animus or, at the very least, indifference to the public health and welfare of distressed communities To governmental officials often the target of environmental justice activists' ire, the term may imply that they are executing their responsibilities in a biased or callous manner.

Robert R. Kuehn, *A Taxonomy of Environmental Justice*, 30 ENVTL. L. REP. 10681, 10681 (2000).

3. See, e.g., Robert R. Kuehn, *Denying Access to Legal Representation: The Attack on the Tulane Environmental Law Clinic*, 4 WASH. U. J.L. & POL'Y 33 (2000) (discussing the well-publicized community friction between former Louisiana Governor Murphy J. “Mike” Foster, the then-leadership of the Tulane Environmental Law Clinic, and the Louisiana Supreme Court's modification of standards for student attorneys/clinicians to assist clients after the clinic's success in pursuing environmental discrimination claims against the Shintech Corporation).

4. As an example of the Obama Administration's ecological focus, part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, Pub. L. 111-5, 123 Stat. 115, 516 (also referred to as The Stimulus or ARRA), allocated \$78.6 billion for developing environmentally-friendly jobs to help jumpstart the United States' then-lagging economy. See generally Tracey de Morsella, *The Stimulus Bill Includes Numerous Green Initiatives—Find Out Exactly What They Are*, THE GREEN ECONOMY POST (2009), <http://greeneconomypost.com/stimulus-bill-green-initiatives-533.htm>. As an example of the Administration's ecological focus, in Louisiana, \$2.3 million of ARRA funds were allocated to the Louisiana Workforce Commission, through the U.S. Department of Labor, to evaluate the prospects of growing a “green economy” in a state that has traditionally been dependent on crude oil. See generally Jonathan C. Augustine, *A National Model for Disaster Recovery: Growing Green Jobs in the Age of Energy Efficiency*, 37 T. MARSHALL L. REV. 179 (2012).

5. The White House, Office of the Press Secretary, Remarks by the President in State of Union Address, United States Capitol, Washington, D.C., Jan. 25, 2011, available at <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2011/01/25/remarks-president-state-union-address>.

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and work.⁶ Although very popular at the current time, the modern policy focus on ecological sustainment is anything but new. It actually originated with the *Genesis* creation narrative.⁷

Recent scholarship shows that while the legal basis of environmental justice began with religious and social activists during the post-Civil Rights Movement (the Movement)⁸ era of

6. John C. Dernbach, *Creating the Law of Environmentally Sustainable Economic Development*, 28 PACE ENVTL. L. REV. 614, 615 (2011) (internal citations omitted).

7. Laura Kerns, *The Context of Eco-theology*, in THE BLACKWELL COMPANION TO MODERN THEOLOGY 466, 467-68 (Gareth Jones ed., 2004) (arguing that religious ecology regards God's *Genesis* 1:28 gift of "dominion" to humankind as implying a stewardship to care for creation); see also, *infra* notes 93-95 and accompanying text.

8. Scholars differ in opinion as to when the Movement began and as to whether it ever ended. I argue the Movement began with Rosa Parks' civil disobedience in refusing to vacate her seat on a public bus on December 1, 1955 in Montgomery, Alabama, notwithstanding the then-legality of *de jure* segregation in the Jim Crow Deep South. Jonathan C. Augustine, *The Theology of Civil Disobedience: The First Amendment, Freedom Riders, and Passage of the Voting Rights Act*, 21 S. CAL. INTERDISC. L.J. 255, 257 (2012). Other scholars argue that the Movement was already underway in the early 1950s, as evidenced by the Supreme Court's historic decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, 347 U.S. 483 (1954). See, e.g., ANTOINE L. JOSEPH, THE DYNAMICS OF RACIAL PROGRESS: ECONOMIC INEQUALITY AND RACE RELATIONS SINCE RECONSTRUCTION 115-20 (2005) (describing the still relatively "weak" Movement of the 1950s, along with the socioeconomic reasons for its growth and expansion). Regardless of when the Movement began, I respectfully argue it is ongoing. Consequently, the environmental justice movement is but a part of the ongoing efforts to achieve socioeconomic and racial justice, as exemplified in other ongoing social justice movements like that of current day education reform. See generally Jonathan C. Augustine, *America's New Civil Rights Movement: Education Reform, Public Charter Schools and No Child Left Behind*, 59 LA. BAR J. 340 (2012) (arguing a new civil rights movement exists in education reform and chronicling events in American history to support this assertion); see also Jonathan C. Augustine & Craig M. Freeman, *Grading the Graders and Reforming the Reform: An Analysis of the State of Public Education Ten Years After No Child Left Behind*, 57 LOY. L. REV. 237 (2011). As an example of how the environmental justice movement protects people of color in low-income communities, sociologist Beverly Wright, founder of the Deep South Center for Environmental Justice at Dillard University, describes the Tulane Environmental Law Clinic's opposition to the Shintech Corporation, *supra* note 3, as follows:

[T]he people of Convent[,] [Louisiana] became involved in the fight for their lives and the fight for their community as they knew it. The Japanese-owned Shintech Corporation made plans to build in this town the world's largest polyvinyl chloride plastics production facility. Convent . . . is a rural town of approximately two thousand people. At the time, the makeup of the part of the town closest to the proposed Shintech site was eighty-two percent African American The residents of Convent bitterly complained about the pollution in their community. They reported numerous health problems such as asthma, respiratory problems, cancers, and other diseases they associated with the chemicals spewing from the many [chemical] plants in the neighborhood Greenpeace and the Tulane University Environmental Law Clinic, representing

American history,⁹ the theological basis of environmental justice originated with the canonical compilation comprising the Holy Bible's epistles and narratives, with an eschatological focus,¹⁰ all written well before antiquity.¹¹ As an interdisciplinary exegesis of law and religion, this Essay focuses on the concept of environmental justice from an eschatological perspective.¹² It

Convent residents and sixteen environmental and public interest organizations, filed a citizens' petition, or administrative complaint, under Title V (the permitting program) of the Clean Air Act [O]n September 18, 1998, Shintech announced that it had scrapped its plans to build a plant in Convent and had decided instead to move about twenty-five miles upriver to Plaquemine, Louisiana, near Baton Rouge. Moreover, the size of the plant would be drastically reduced The Shintech case has been described as being as important to the environmental justice movement as *Brown v. Board of Education* was to the civil rights movement.

Beverly Wright, *Living and Dying in Louisiana's "Cancer Alley"*, in *THE QUEST FOR ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE: HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE POLITICS OF POLLUTION* 100-02 (Robert D. Bullard ed., 2005). For this Essay's purposes, therefore, the environmental justice movement is indeed part of the American Civil Rights Movement.

9. See, e.g., CLIFFORD RECHTSCHAFFEN, EILEEN GAUNA & CATHERINE A. O'NEILL, *ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE: LAW, POLICY & REGULATION* 3-4 (2009); Alice Kaswan, *Environmental Justice: Bridging the Gap Between Environmental Laws and "Justice"*, 47 AM. U. L. REV. 221, 225-28 (1997). For a more-detailed analysis of the environmental justice movement, see generally, ROBERT D. BULLARD, *UNEQUAL PROTECTION: ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE AND COMMUNITIES OF COLOR* (1994).

10. The term eschatology (last things from the Greek word *eschatos* (last) and *logos* (word) is commonly used in the theological academy to denote a belief in the *parousia* (second coming of Jesus Christ) and the anticipated end of the world. MARIAN L. SOARDS, *THE APOSTLE PAUL: AN INTRODUCTION TO HIS WRITINGS AND TEACHINGS* 199 (1987) (defining *parousia* as the second coming of Jesus, the foretold messiah, and explaining its messianic influence on the Apostle Paul's theology); JAIME CLARK-SOLES, *ENGAGING THE WORD: THE NEW TESTAMENT AND THE CHRISTIAN BELIEVER* 78 (2010) (discussing eschatology in the authentic Pauline epistles); see also JAMES H. CONE, *A BLACK THEOLOGY OF LIBERATION: TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY EDITION* 135 (1990) (defining eschatology as a study of the future; that which is called the "last things."). Indeed, a theology of eschatology is prevalent in the New Testament. See, e.g., 1 *Corinthians* 7:8-9, (writing to the church at Corinth, the Apostle Paul encouraged women not to marry and have children because there was a fundamental belief that there simply was not enough time in that Jesus' second coming was imminent). As this Essay highlights, the theology of ecological eschatology is a key component of *Revelation*. See *infra* Part II.

11. See, e.g., Barbara R. Rossing, *For the Healing of the World: Reading Revelation Ecologically*, in *FROM EVERY PEOPLE AND NATION: THE BOOK OF REVELATION IN INTERCULTURAL PERSPECTIVE* 165 (David Rhoads ed., 2005) (providing an exegetical commentary on *Revelation* and other biblical texts from an ecological perspective); see also PAUL SANTMIRE, *THE TRAVAIL OF NATURE: THE AMBIGUOUS ECOLOGICAL PROMISE OF CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY* 200 (1985) (discussing the New Testament as being shaped by ecological motif, albeit eschatologically construed).

12. As an example, theologians Owen Thomas and Ellen Wondra provide a

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demonstrates continuity in Judeo-Christian thought, extending from the time John wrote *Revelation* to the current theological influences on President Barack Obama—a president elected at the crossroads of race and religion in America.¹³

Specifically, in discussing the environmental justice movement,¹⁴ this Essay argues that *Revelation* delivers a clarion

historical basis of eschatology in Judeo-Christian philosophy, writing that:

During the early Christian centuries, eschatological teaching amounted largely to the exposition of the biblical themes of the *parousia*, the general resurrection, the last judgment, heaven, and hell. A unique feature of early eschatological teaching was the widespread affirmation of millennialism, the idea that, at the *parousia*, Christ will reign on earth with the saints for a thousand years before the final fulfillment.

OWEN C. THOMAS & ELLEN K. WONDRA, INTRODUCTION TO THEOLOGY 245 (3d ed. 2002) (citing *Revelation* 20:4f). This Essay's purpose is to build upon such scholarship by arguing that eschatology must also be viewed ecologically.

13. See generally Roslyn Satchel Augustine & Jonathan C. Augustine, *Religion, Race and the Fourth Estate: Xenophobia in the Media Ten Years After 9/11*, 1 TENN. J. RACE, GENDER & SOC. JUST. 1, 16-17 n.34 (2012) (discussing the often awkward juxtaposition of race, law and religion influenced by American media in the decade following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, and associated assumptions regarding President Obama's religion); Charlton C. Copeland, *God-Talk in the Age of Obama: Theology and Religious Political Engagement*, 86 DENV. U. L. REV. 663, 663 n.6 (2009) (discussing the controversy of then-candidate Obama's membership in Trinity United Church of Christ and long-term association with its former pastor, the Rev. Dr. Jeremiah A. Wright).

14. Environmentalism and the associated concept of environmental justice is indeed a movement. See Dernbach, *supra* note 6, at 619 (noting the policy move toward "green growth" and energy efficiency as having originated in the 1970s, as the effects of environmental pollution, exploitation of natural resources, population growth, and poverty became obvious to policy makers and environmentalists). Further, similar to environmentalism, scholars also argue that Christianity began as a movement. CONE, *supra* note 10, at 110-28 (providing a liberationist view of the gospel narratives wherein Jesus is viewed as leading a movement as a member of the oppressed and marginalized class, not the dominant and controlling factions in society). For a movement to exist, there must be a dominant and controlling sociopolitical or economic force against which people organize and assemble as a means of protest. See, e.g., Augustine, *The Theology of Civil Disobedience*, *supra* note 8, at 265-74 (detailing how the clergy and committed laity banded together in opposition to Jim Crow segregation in the Movement); see also CHARLES MARSH, THE BELOVED COMMUNITY: HOW FAITH SHAPES SOCIAL JUSTICE, FROM THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT TO TODAY 87-93 (2005) (highlighting the social activism of members of the clergy and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee a/k/a SNCC as part of a movement rising up in opposition to an oppressive culture). In *Revelation*, the dominant and controlling sociopolitical force damaging the earth is the Roman Empire, often referred to in code as "Babylon." See Rossing, *supra* note 11, at 167 ("Babylon represents the city of Rome as well as the entire Roman Empire with its exploitative political economy."); see also *Revelation* 14:8, 16, 17:5, 18, and 21 (wherein John calls on the book's readers to join the movement by opposing imperial domination).

call to all members of Judeo-Christian faith groups to be protective stewards of planet Earth, as they live in joyful anticipation of the time when the triune God will descend to live on Earth as a new heaven.¹⁵ To support the foregoing thesis, this Essay is organized into five parts, all undergirded by theological and sociopolitical views on the environment and the concept of environmental justice. Part I lays the foundation by providing an introductory overview. Part II offers a substantive analysis of *Revelation*.¹⁶ Part III traces the origins and development of the environmental justice movement, and discusses the nature of the movement itself.¹⁷ Part IV then outlines policy considerations related to the continuing environmental justice movement, from a Judeo-Christian thought perspective.¹⁸ Finally, Part V is a synthesis and conclusion, harmonizing this Essay's themes and theories, juxtaposed at the proverbial intersection of law and

15. For specific imagery of a "rapture in reverse," whereby God comes down to earth to live, see, e.g., *Revelation* 21:10 ("And in the spirit he carried me away to a great, high mountain and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God.") (emphasis added); see also *Revelation* 21:2 ("And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of the heaven from God . . ."). Anecdotally, although *Revelation* is arguably the least favorite book in the Bible for many regular worshipers and biblical readers, scholars like Barbara Rossing, a professor of the New Testament at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, advocate reading *Revelation*—especially its last two chapters—as revealing a message of hope and love from God as believers prepare for the world's apocalyptic end. See generally Barbara R. Rossing, *Introduction to the Revelation Study*, YOUTUBE,

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n_03axPvnMQ (last visited Apr. 14, 2012).

16. See *infra* Part II.B. Within Part II.B, this Essay uses the organization of Professor Rossing's scholarship in arguing that *Revelation* must be read ecologically. Rossing, *supra* note 11, at 167-68 (explaining the methodology upon which her exegetical commentary is structured). Specifically, in drawing upon liberation theology as the lens through which *Revelation* should be read, Professor Rossing emphasizes five elements of interpretation: (1) the "rapture in reverse" where God descends to live on earth rather than humans ascending to heaven (see *Revelation* 21-22); (2) *Revelation's* frequent "woes" as the divine cry or lament of the earth, bemoaning the devastating conquest of the unjust Roman Empire; (3) the "end" as envisioned in *Revelation* is not so much the end of the earth, but instead an end to the Roman imperial order that is oppressing and destroying the earth; (4) the plagues of ecological destruction in *Revelation* are molded after the plagues in *Exodus* and God will liberate the earth from environmental destruction in *Revelation*, just as the children of Israel were liberated from Egyptian dominion in *Exodus*; and (5) *Revelation* as affirming an ethic of healing and renewal such that humans must care for the earth just as God cares for humans. *Id.* Part II.B mirrors Professor Rossing's methodological structure.

17. See *infra* Part III.A and III.B.

18. See *infra* Part IV.

religion.¹⁹

II. ECOLOGICAL THEOLOGY ACCORDING TO JOHN: *REVELATION*

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them as their God; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe out every tear from their eyes . . ." Then he said to me, "It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. To the thirsty, I will give water as a gift from the spring of the water of life."²⁰

A. *REVELATION'S* MESSAGE OF HOPE

Revelation arguably reads like a piece of contemporary pulp fiction.²¹ According to New Testament scholar Brian Blount, president of Union Presbyterian Seminary, John's *Revelation* narrative does not move in a straight line. Instead, *Revelation* begins in the "middle of the story, provides multiple peeks at the arrival of the end of time from unique camera angles (seventh seal, seventh trumpet, seventh bowl), [and] flashes back to the beginning of the story, in the middle of the narrative . . ." ²²

Professor Blount also notes that as *Revelation* shifts to its "wondrous" end in chapters 20 and 21, the approach has already

19. See *infra* Part V.

20. *Revelation* 21:1-6.

21. Brian K. Blount, *Revelation*, in TRUE TO OUR NATIVE LAND: AN AFRICAN AMERICAN NEW TESTAMENT COMMENTARY 523 (Brian K. Blount ed., 2007); Margaret Mitchell, *A Tale of Two Apocalypses*, 25 CURRENTS IN THEOLOGY AND MISSION 200, 200-09 (1998) (suggesting that ancient apocalypses had an entertainment function similar to contemporary disaster movies); see also HARPER COLLINS STUDY BIBLE: NEW REVISED STANDARD VERSION 2309 (Wayne A. Meeks ed., 1993) ("Many Jewish apocalypses use a great deal of symbolism, often quite bizarre (e.g., *Dan.* 7:2-8), and *Revelation* is no exception.").

22. Blount, *supra* note 21, at 523; PAUL J. ACHEMEIER, JOEL B. GREEN & MARIANNE MEYE THOMPSON, INTRODUCING THE NEW TESTAMENT: ITS LITERATURE AND THEOLOGY 564 (2001) ("*Revelation* does not order these logically and neatly into an end-time scenario, but recasts apocalyptic eschatology in light of John's Christian theology and immediate pastoral concerns.").

been screened three times in chapters 1 through 6.²³ Further, other scholars of various sociocultural hermeneutic²⁴ perspectives view *Revelation* as “unveil[ing] the vision of a world-in-the-making, a vision of justice and peace embodied in a new heaven, . . . earth, and . . . Jerusalem . . . deliver[ing] a . . . challenge for believers to *withdraw from the Empire and to live in . . . service of the God who is making all things new.*”²⁵ Accordingly, notwithstanding *Revelation*’s apocalyptic nature, it bears a message of optimism and hope that springs eternal.²⁶

Furthermore, John wrote *Revelation* in the sociopolitical and cultural context of first century Rome. During this period, as evidenced by the re-conquest of Palestine and destruction of Jerusalem at the end of the Jewish revolt, the Roman conquest was at its height.²⁷ It is from this foundational and sociopolitical understanding of the Roman Empire’s imperialism and influence on John’s writing of *Revelation* that attention is now directed to the ecological aspect of John’s theology of eschatology.

23. Blount, *supra* note 21, at 523. Furthermore, in exploring *Revelation*’s salvific beauty, Professor Blount writes that “[w]ith even death destroyed, eternal life parades into a scene so glorious that John can only describe it as a cosmic wedding in a brilliant new city whose name is Jerusalem, but whose heritage is Eden.” *Id.* at 525. Indeed, this eternal relationship with God describes salvation. *Id.*

24. Hermeneutics is a word commonly used by theologians and biblical scholars to describe scriptural interpretation based on religious experience. The word is derived from the Greek god Hermes (the Roman god Mercury), the messenger or interpreter for the other gods. MICHAEL J. GORMAN, ELEMENTS OF BIBLICAL EXEGESIS: A GUIDE FOR STUDENTS AND MINISTERS 140 (2008); JAMES H. HARRIS, PREACHING LIBERATION 55-62 (1995) (discussing preaching styles influenced by a scriptural reading aimed at uplifting the marginalized).

25. David Rhoads, *Introduction*, in FROM EVERY PEOPLE AND NATION: THE BOOK OF REVELATION IN INTERCULTURAL PERSPECTIVE 1 (David Rhoads ed., 2005) (emphasis added) (providing the introduction to a cultural anthology of African, feminist, Hispanic, womanist, immigrant, Brazilian, African-American, and ecological interpretations of *Revelation*). The concept of “withdrawal” builds upon Jewish tradition as it is reminiscent of God withdrawing the Hebrew slaves from Egypt under Moses’ leadership. *See Exodus* 13-14.

26. The “eternal spring” is expressly described in *Revelation* 22:1. For an excellent cultural exegesis of *Revelation* 21-22 as providing hope to marginalized Blacks, *see generally* Blount, *supra* note 21, at 553-54 (drawing a parallel between John’s transformative imagery in *Revelation* to Dr. King’s transformative imagery in the famous August 1963 “I Have A Dream” speech); BRIAN K. BLOUNT, CAN I GET A WITNESS? READING REVELATION THROUGH AN AFRICAN AMERICAN LENS (2005); *see also* Brian K. Blount, *The Witness of Active Resistance: The Ethics of Revelation in African American Perspective*, in FROM EVERY PEOPLE AND NATION: THE BOOK OF REVELATION IN INTERCULTURAL PERSPECTIVE 28 (David Rhoads ed., 2005).

27. Rossing, *supra* note 11, at 173-74.

B. REVELATION'S ECOLOGICAL MESSAGE

In transitioning from a general overview to look more specifically at *Revelation* through a lens of ecological eschatology, there is a contrasting vision between Babylon (a code name for Rome) and “New Jerusalem.” This offers a perspective on environmentalism and ecological imperialism, in contrast to the promise of a renewed urban world wherein God takes up residence on earth.²⁸ John uses the imagery of both cities, Babylon (Rome) and New Jerusalem, to critique Roman dominion during the last decade of the first century, when Domitian was emperor.²⁹ John’s contrasting imagery in *Revelation*, therefore, uses Jewish symbolism in inviting the reader to leave one city to participate in the other.³⁰ In further giving *Revelation* an ecological interpretation, attention should now be given to the five categories comprising the methodology with which to examine John’s hopeful eschatology.³¹

1. THE “RAPTURE IN REVERSE”

As a fundamental starting point, part of the popularly described New Testament rapture theology underscores a common belief that humankind will ascend into the heavens to be with God at the *parousia*.³² In *Revelation*, however, there instead is a “rapture in reverse” whereby God descends to take up residence on Earth.³³ As such, *Revelation* indicates that God loves the Earth and comes to dwell on it.³⁴ The entire book leads

28. See generally Barbara Rossing, *River of Life in God's New Jerusalem: An Ecological Vision for Earth's Future*, in CHRISTIANITY AND ECOLOGY 206 (Dieter T. Hessel & Rosemary Ranford Ruether eds., 1999).

29. Blount, *supra* note 21, at 524-25; see also Rossing, *supra* note 11, at 167. For other images of a “new” or heavenly Jerusalem, see, e.g., *Tobit* 13:16-17, 14:5-7 (apocryphal/deuterocanonical scriptures); see also *Galatians* 4:21-31.

30. Rossing, *supra* note 11, at 167. “[W]ith regard to its symbolic images[.] . . . they all come from Jewish prophetic and apocalyptic language and . . . cover up reference to . . . historical realities—especially ones related to Rome and its persecutions of the early Christians—so that the book might not provoke the wrath of the evil authorities.” Most Rev. Metropolitan John of Pergamon, *The Book of Revelation and the Natural Environment*, RELIGION, SCIENCE, AND THE ENVIRONMENT (July 2006), <http://www.rsesymposia.org/themedia/File/1151635502-Natural.pdf>.

31. See *supra* note 16 (using the previously detailed methodological organization).

32. See, e.g., 1 *Thessalonians* 4:16-17 (describing how the Lord will descend from heaven and humans will be caught up in the clouds to meet him).

33. *Revelation* 21:2-3; see also *supra* note 15 and accompanying text.

34. See *Revelation* 21:10 (discussed *supra* note 15).

up to John's vision of God's descent to Earth and the renewal of the world.³⁵

After chapter 21:2-3, heaven is not mentioned again in *Revelation*, a striking fact given how central heaven is in the narrative up to this point.³⁶ Indeed, "[t]his is because God's throne moves down to [E]arth *Revelation* emphasizes that our future dwelling will be with God on Earth, in a radiant, thriving city landscape. The New Jerusalem comes down out of heaven to earth, and the home of God will be with his people."³⁷ In *Revelation*, John writes that "in the spirit, [God] carried [him] away to a great, high mountain and showed . . . the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God."³⁸ *Revelation* therefore encourages humans to be wise stewards of the Earth because it provides that God will descend to live with humans, as opposed to humans ascending to live with God in heaven.³⁹ This is the very essence of a "rapture in reverse" environmental theology.

2. "WOES" IN *REVELATION*

As previously noted, *Revelation's* organic structure is anything but linear. As Professor Blount argues, its "beginning" is in chapter twelve.⁴⁰ In building upon *Revelation's* rapture in reverse theology and noting chapter twelve's introductory nature, the concept of 'woes' should be understood within this biblical context. Terrifying declarations of woe permeate *Revelation's* middle chapters, causing some to believe the book predicts destruction for the Earth.⁴¹ "Beginning with the fourth trumpet of *Revelation* 8, in the middle of *Exodus*-like plagues, such announcements of "woe" are frequent—and they are cited by rapture proponents and others to argue God consigned the earth to suffer plagues of ecological disaster and ultimate

35. See *supra* note 15.

36. Rossing, *supra* note 11, at 171.

37. *Id.*

38. *Revelation* 21:10 (emphasis added); see also *supra* note 20 and accompanying text.

39. Rossing, *supra* note 11, at 171-72 (providing an ecological exegesis of *Revelation* 21-22 and arguing that John's apocalyptic vision is that God will descend to live with humans); see also *Revelation* 21:2-3.

40. Blount, *supra* note 21, at 523.

41. Rossing, *supra* note 11, at 172.

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destruction.”⁴²

In actuality, however, with *Revelation*'s “woes” God is not pronouncing a curse. Instead, God is only offering “a lament, bemoaning [E]arth’s conquest and abuse by Roman imperial powers.”⁴³ Additionally, “*Revelation*’s ‘woes’ must be read in light of the book’s overall critique of Rome.”⁴⁴ Consequently, in linguistically interpreting *Revelation*’s “woes”, it should be noted that:

The Greek word that is usually translated “woe” (*ouai*) is not easy to translate into English. It is a cry or sound in Greek that can be used to express lamentation or mourning [T]he Greek word *ouai* is better translated consistently as “alas!” or “How awful!” throughout the entire book of *Revelation*. Lamentation or “alas” is clearly the sense of the word *ouai* that is used⁴⁵

This linguistic distinction is critically important to show that John’s theology of eschatology does not suggest God has pronounced a curse but only laments Rome’s abuse of Earth’s natural resources.⁴⁶

3. THE END OF ROMAN DOMINATION OF THE EARTH

As previously referenced, a movement builds upon the traditions of an oppressed people or a group rallying against a dominant power.⁴⁷ The environmental justice movement is no different.⁴⁸ In *Revelation*, John depicts the end of Roman domination of the Earth by indicating that the time has come for the Earth’s destroyers to be destroyed themselves.⁴⁹ Thus, according to this critically important verse, God will not destroy the Earth. Instead, in the interest of justice, God will only destroy those that seek to marginalize and objectify others—the very acts of the dominant imperial regime described in *Revelation*. “In the view of *Revelation*, God will not tolerate

42. Rossing, *supra* note 11, at 172.

43. *Id.*; see also *Revelation* 8:13, 12:12.

44. Rossing, *supra* note 11, at 172.

45. *Id.*

46. See *id.* at 173.

47. See *supra* note 8 and accompanying text.

48. See *supra* note 14 and accompanying text.

49. *Revelation* 11:18 (explaining the wrath of God’s judgment and how those that destroy the Earth will themselves be destroyed).

Rome's destruction of the earth much longer, despite Rome's claim to rule forever. In fact, [*Revelation's*] so-called end-times language was probably chosen deliberately . . . to counter Rome's imperial and eschatological claims to eternal greatness."⁵⁰ This scriptural hermeneutic makes a crucial difference in terms of both an eschatological and ecological understanding of the Bible's last book.⁵¹ *Revelation* is an invitation to join in a movement against marginalization and imperial domination, knowing that justice will indeed prevail.

4. THE PLAGUES OF *EXODUS* IN *REVELATION*

Elisabeth Schussler Fiorenza, a professor at Harvard Divinity School, argues that much of *Revelation's* imagery, including Jesus as the Lamb who takes on the role of Moses, originates in *Exodus*.⁵² Professor Fiorenza's insight confirms the Judeo-Christian nature of John's *Revelation* narrative, linking together the ancient Hebrew Scriptures with the Christian New Testament's fulfillment of the messianic promise. Indeed, there is a connection and parallelism between the Christians' journey out of Rome and the Israelites' journey out of Egypt.⁵³

In writing the *Revelation* narrative, John calls on its readers to "come out" of Babylon, with a connection to Moses and the *Exodus* narrative wherein God's servants sing the song of Moses.⁵⁴ Accordingly, *Revelation* directly connects to its readers with a re-reading of *Exodus* by calling on them to come out of Rome. It is with this understanding that the biblical reader can appreciate the ways in which *Revelation* uses the *Exodus* story and images of plagues as a wake-up call, warning Roman oppressors to repent.⁵⁵ Accordingly, there is a direct link between

50. Rossing, *supra* note 11, at 174.

51. *Id.* at 173.

52. See generally ELISABETH SCHUSSLER FIORENZA, *REVELATION: VISION OF A JUST WORLD* (1998).

53. See generally *Exodus* 15:1-19 (detailing the Song of Moses sung by the Israelites in praising God for delivering them from bondage in Egypt and destroying their oppressors); see also Rossing, *supra* note 11, at 175 (arguing that John's visions of plagues and destruction in *Revelation* are directly based on the plagues detailed in *Exodus* and the destruction of the Egyptians who oppressed the Israelites).

54. See *Exodus* 15:1-4; see also *Revelation* 18:4 ("Then I heard another voice from heaven saying, 'Come out of her, my people, so that you do not take part in her sins, and so that you do not share in her plagues' . . .").

55. See generally *Revelation* 16 (providing a narrative account of the consequences for oppressors who commit injustices, resulting from the instruction

an ecological appreciation of *Revelation* and the ancient Hebrew Scriptures.

5. *REVELATION'S CALL FOR HUMANS TO CARE FOR THE EARTH*

As humankind waits for God's throne to descend to Earth, *Revelation* calls for humans to care for the Earth. In post-modernity, biblical readers can appreciate *Revelation's* ecological message by drawing on the contrast, described by John, demonstrated in its two competing cities.

While Babylon (Rome) represents an ethical critique of environmental oppression, New Jerusalem represents limitless opportunity. Accordingly, the biblical reader is invited to reject oppression and choose opportunity by rejecting Babylon and accepting New Jerusalem. Thus, "the Babylon vision can offer a prophetic critique of environmental injustice and ecological imperialism."⁵⁶ This cultural hermeneutic is consistent with liberationist interpretations, including those by womanist, feminist, and black-liberation theologians.⁵⁷

In light of the foregoing, "*Revelation* 17-18 depicts the Roman Empire as a powerful market economy, a great prostitute that has 'seduced' and 'intoxicated' rulers and nations with its trafficking."⁵⁸ Accordingly, as believers await the rapture in reverse, John's *Revelation* narrative invites them to reject environmental injustice and embrace environmental justice.

III. THE MOVEMENT PROGRESSES: A BRIEF HISTORY OF ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE IN POST-MODERNITY

Contemporary liberation theologies stress the direct connection between eschatological tension and ethics. They criticize the use of eschatology to justify the delay of social justice and ecological responsibility. They insist that the eschatological character of Christianity requires solidarity with all forms of creaturely suffering, and active

given to seven angels to pour out the wrath of God). Indeed, God's wrath in *Revelation* 16 is almost identical to certain Old Testament texts. See, e.g., *Exodus* 7:17-21; see also *Isaiah* 49:26.

56. Rossing, *supra* note 11, at 177 (internal citations omitted).

57. See generally Carlton Waterhouse, *A Call to Environmental Action* (2007) (unpublished manuscript) (on file with author).

58. Rossing, *supra* note 11, at 177 (internal citations omitted).

participation in the renewal of the whole creation.⁵⁹

A. THE MOVEMENT'S ORIGINS

Alice Kaswan, a noted environmental law and policy scholar and law professor at the University of San Francisco writes to specify when the environmental justice movement began. Specifically, she describes the 1982 opposition of an African-American community in North Carolina to a potentially hazardous waste landfill being placed within their community and the consequential national exposure that precipitated numerous national studies on the distribution of environmental hazards.⁶⁰ As a result of these initial studies, in "1990 . . . the Environmental Protection Agency created the Environmental Equity Workgroup . . . to examine the distributional issues raised by environmental policies and enforcement."⁶¹ These significant events laid the foundation for the Clinton Administration, in 1994, to issue "an Executive Order designed to assess and address the demographic issues associated with federal actions and to improve public participation procedures."⁶²

The general consensus of scholarship regards the origins of the environmental justice movement as a part of the larger Movement in twentieth century America.⁶³ Yet other scholars argue that the environmental justice movement formed through diverse organization efforts within the larger Movement,

59. THOMAS & WONDRA, *supra* note 12, at 250.

60. Kaswan, *supra* note 9, at 226.

61. *Id.*

62. *Id.*

63. See Colin Crawford, *Strategies for Environmental Justice: Rethinking CERCLA Medical Monitoring Lawsuits*, 74 B.U. L. REV. 267, 268-69 (1994) (discussing the 1982 North Carolina arrests of noted civil rights activists, including United Church of Christ Executive Director Dr. Benjamin Chavis, Jr., Congressman Walter E. Fauntroy, and Dr. Joseph Lowery, president of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, because of their protests of North Carolina's ultimately successful effort to place a dump for highly toxic polychlorinated biphenyls in the mainly black community of Warren County); William C. Scott, *Environmental Justice: A New Era of Community Empowerment, Political Activism, and Civil Rights Litigation*, 7 ENVTL. CLAIMS J. 5, 11 (1994) (noting that grassroots environmental justice groups applied the same techniques as civil rights activists); see also Robert D. Bullard & Beverly H. Wright, *The Quest for Environmental Equity: Mobilizing the African American Community for Social Changes*, in AMERICAN ENVIRONMENTALISM 40 (Riley E. Dunlap & Angela G. Mertig eds., 1992) (arguing that the environmental justice movement's origins are from the civil rights and antiwar movements of the 1960s).

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including Native Americans, labor, and to a lesser extent, the traditional environmental movement.⁶⁴ In a broadening sense, therefore, the environmental justice movement came to revolve around “more than skewed distributional consequences of environmental burdens to communities of color.”⁶⁵

Furthermore, as the environmental justice movement “[became] multi-issue and multi-racial in scope, the movement began to address disparities borne by the poor as well as people of color, acknowledging the substantial overlap between the two demographic categories.”⁶⁶ Indeed, the communities most affected by decisions pertaining to environmental regulation were excluded from the decision-making process, either intentionally or because of a lack of resources and structural impediments.⁶⁷ Regardless, however, members of those communities engaged in direct action, including protests and demonstrations to bring awareness to their cause.⁶⁸ In an unmistakable manner, therefore, the environmental justice movement’s methodologies of direct action and grassroots campaigns in the 1980s and 1990s originated within the larger Movement, dating back to the 1950s and 1960s.

As a further testament to the interdisciplinary connectedness between law and religion within the Movement, the United Church of Christ’s Commission on Racial Justice (UCC) was intimately involved in the early environmental justice movement, producing a 1987 report—only four years after the United States’ General Accounting Office’s (USGAO) 1983 report—detailing environmental hazards in poor and minority

64. LUKE COLE & SHEILA FOSTER, FROM THE GROUND UP: ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM AND THE RISE OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE MOVEMENT 19-28 (2001). Indeed, it was not until the 1990s that more traditional academics began to see the value in environmental justice as a basis of sound scholarship. See, e.g., Richard J. Lazarus, *Pursuing “Environmental Justice”: The Distributional Effects of Environmental Protection*, 87 NW. U. L. REV. 787, 787 n.* (1992).

65. RECHTSCHAFFEN ET AL., *supra* note 9, at 3.

66. *Id.* Indeed, “[s]ince most of the participants in the environmental justice movement are community groups engaged in local action, the movement is often categorized as a “grassroots” movement.” Kaswan, *supra* note 9, at 226 (citing KATHLYN GAY, POLLUTION AND THE POWERLESS: THE ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE MOVEMENT 20-21 (1994)); see also Regina Austin & Michael Schill, *Black, Brown, Poor & Poisoned: Minority Grassroots Environmentalism and the Quest for Eco-Justice*, 1 KAN. J.L. & PUB. POL’Y 69, 75 (1991).

67. RECHTSCHAFFEN ET AL., *supra* note 9, at 3.

68. *Id.* For a comprehensive analysis on how direct action influenced the Movement, see generally Augustine, *The Theology of Civil Disobedience*, *supra* note 8.

communities.⁶⁹ The USGAO's 1983 report found that three of four major offsite hazardous waste facilities were located in predominately African-American communities.⁷⁰

Further, the UCC's 1987 report also "found a positive correlation between racial minorities and proximity to commercial hazardous waste facilities and uncontrolled waste sites."⁷¹ Additionally, there was also a follow-up UCC report, published twenty-years after the initial findings were made public.⁷² The essential public awareness, achieved through direct action demonstrations and white papers, was arguably the first step in achieving distributional justice within the environmental justice movement.

B. THE MOVEMENT'S NATURE

1. CHALLENGING DISTRIBUTIONAL OUTCOMES

As previously emphasized, this Essay regards the environmental justice movement as a part of the larger Movement in America.⁷³ Regardless of whether one assumes that the Movement originated with Rosa Parks' act of civil disobedience in 1955, or argues that it was already in motion at least as early as 1954, the environmental justice movement is a continuing part of the Movement because, by definition, it requires acts of "civil challenge" to petition the government on behalf of stakeholders.⁷⁴ Indeed, given the previously described

69. Kaswan, *supra* note 9, at 226 n.7, 232.

70. See generally RECHTSCHAFFEN ET AL., *supra* note 9, at 3 (discussing U.S. GEN. ACCOUNTING OFFICE, SITING OF HAZARDOUS WASTE LANDFILLS AND THEIR CORRELATION WITH RACIAL AND ECONOMIC STATUS OF SURROUNDING COMMUNITIES, GAO/RCED-83-168 (1983); and UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST COMMISSION FOR RACIAL JUSTICE, TOXIC WASTES AND RACE IN THE UNITED STATES, A NATIONAL REPORT ON THE RACIAL AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF COMMUNITIES WITH HAZARDOUS WASTE SITES (1987)).

71. RECHTSCHAFFEN ET AL., *supra* note 9, at 3-4. It bears noting that "the study found that race was a more statistically significant variable than income. The early activism also culminated in an extraordinary gathering of the grassroots activists at the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit . . ." *Id.*

72. See generally ROBERT D. BULLARD, PAUL MOHAI, ROBIN SAHA & BEVERLY WRIGHT, TOXIC WASTE AND RACE AT TWENTY: 1987-2007 (March 2007), available at <http://www.ucc.org/assets/pdfs/toxic20.pdf>.

73. See *supra* note 8 and accompanying text.

74. See, e.g., Augustine, *The Theology of Civil Disobedience*, *supra* note 8, at 263 (describing how interested parties employed the First Amendment to petition the government for redress of their grievances during the Movement). For an excellent

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origins of the environmental justice movement, it should come as no surprise that it began in the South, a place with a history of racial issues where marginalized groups were forced to seek governmental redress.⁷⁵ Thus, the environmental justice movement's very nature uses the First Amendment to petition the government to remedy injustices,⁷⁶ a means of civil challenge.⁷⁷

2. IMPROVING DISTRIBUTIONAL OUTCOMES

Legal scholars argue that President Clinton's Executive Order 12,898 (the Order)⁷⁸ was the most well-known effort to improve the distributional outcomes of environmental decision making.⁷⁹ In relevant part, it required that each federal agency make environmental justice part of its mission by identifying and

analysis of the Petition Clause's history and implementation after the First Amendment's adoption, *see generally* Gregory A. Mark, *The Vestigial Constitution: The History and Significance of the Right to Petition*, 66 FORDHAM L. REV. 2153 (1998).

75. *See generally*, Jonathan C. Augustine & Hon. U. Gene Thibodeaux, *Forty Years Later: Chronicling the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and its Impact on Louisiana's Judiciary*, 66 LA. L. REV. 453, 478-80 (2006) (discussing some of the South's racial problems in voting such that African-Americans were required to seek governmental intervention by making Equal Protection Clause challenges); *see also* Jonathan C. Augustine, *Rethinking Shaw v. Reno, the Supreme Court's Benign Race-Related Jurisprudence and Louisiana's Recent Reapportionment: The Argument for Intermediate Scrutiny in Racial Gerrymandering According to the Voting Rights Act*, 29 S.U. L. REV. 151 (2002) (discussing the problem of race in Louisiana, such that the Voting Rights Act remains a necessity to ensure fair and equitable elections).

76. In relevant part, the First Amendment provides "Congress shall make no law . . . abridging the freedom of speech . . . or of the people to peacefully assemble, and to petition the government for a redress of grievances." U.S. CONST. amend. I (emphasis added). Although the First Amendment's express language obviously refers to Congress, it was made applicable to the states and "state action" through the Fourteenth Amendment's Due Process Clause. *See* *Gitlow v. New York*, 268 U.S. 652, 666 (1925); *see also* *Wallace v. Jaffree*, 472 U.S. 38, 48-49 (1985). Accordingly, since the pursuit of environmental justice necessarily requires stakeholders to petition the government for change, it will always employ "civil challenge" to do so. *See, e.g., supra* note 3 and accompanying text.

77. Similarly, *Brown v. Board of Education*, 347 U.S. 483 (1954) was a clear example of civil challenge. *See* Augustine, *The Theology of Civil Disobedience*, *supra* note 8, at 263, n.26; ROBERT J. COTTROL, RAYMOND T. DIAMOND & LELAND B. WARE, *BROWN V. BOARD OF EDUCATION: CASTE, CULTURE, AND THE CONSTITUTION* 101-18 (2003) (discussing the NAACP's many efforts in challenging "separate but equal" in public education).

78. Executive Order 12,898 was entitled "Federal Actions to Address Environmental Justice in Minority Populations and Low-Income Populations." *See* Exec. Order No. 12,898, 3 C.F.R. § 859 (1995).

79. Kaswan, *supra* note 9, at 244-45.

addressing disproportionately high and adverse environmental effects of the agency's programs, policies, and activities on minority and low-income populations.⁸⁰ Moreover, the Order also required federal agencies to develop environmental justice strategies, identifying distributional implications of existing programs, and mandating that federal agencies gather information regarding the demographic consequences of their policy decisions.⁸¹ Indeed, "by explicitly requiring that demographic information be gathered and incorporated into the decision-making process, environmental justice advocates hope[d] the Executive Order would lead to fairer distribution of the consequences of federal agency actions."⁸²

Furthermore, in addition to providing that existing laws require federal agencies to consider demographic effects, the Order also provides that under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964,⁸³ "federally funded programs and agencies are prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, or national origin."⁸⁴ This proactive governmental perspective with regard to setting environmental justice policy continues under President Obama.⁸⁵ Even though governmental agencies have rule-making authority, some scholars argue that legislation is still necessary to address environmental justice concerns.⁸⁶

80. See generally Kaswan, *supra* note 9, at 244-45.

81. *Id.*

82. *Id.* at 245 (internal citations omitted).

83. 42 U.S.C. §§ 2000d-2000d-7 (2006).

84. Kaswan, *supra* note 9, at 246 (citing *President's Memorandum on Environmental Justice*, 30 WKLY. COMPILATION PRESIDENTIAL DOC. 279, 280 (Feb. 11, 1994)). Indeed, in addressing a social justice theology, Professor Cone writes, "[a]n eschatological perspective that does not challenge the present order is faulty. If contemplation about the future distorts the present reality of injustice and reconciles the oppressed to unjust treatment committed against them, then it is unchristian and has nothing to do with the Christ who came to liberate . . ." CONE, *supra* note 10, at 137.

85. See, e.g., *Plan EJ 2014*, *supra* note 1.

86. See, e.g., Carlton Waterhouse, *Abandon All Hope Ye That Enter? Equal Protection, Title VI, and the Divine Comedy of Environmental Justice*, 20 FORDHAM ENVTL. L. REV. 51, 105-11 (2009) (discussing failed 2007 legislation filed in the House and Senate, by then-Rep. Hilda Solis and Senator Richard Durbin, and emphasizing the importance of President Clinton's Executive Order 12,898 being codified into law).

IV. ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE POLICY CONSIDERATIONS ARE UNDERGIRDDED BY JUDEO- CHRISTIAN BELIEFS

To put it bluntly, apocalyptic imagery affirms that Jesus is Lord, Caesar is not! Eschatology is the affirmation about the completion of the creation through an interpretation of a whole family of symbols, expressing Christian hope. We do not know the content of our hope through some special revealed gnosis (knowledge) about how and when history will end.⁸⁷

Environmental scholars like John Dernbach, a distinguished professor at Widener University Law School and active member of the Episcopal Church, blend the secular and sacred by advocating an ecological reading of the Holy Bible. For example, on Earth Day in 2001,⁸⁸ Professor Dernbach was invited to preach the homily at the Cathedral Church of St. Stephens in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania.⁸⁹ In blending the secular and sacred, Professor Dernbach emphasizes the connection between the planet God gave humanity and humanity's obligation to be a prudent trustee of God's gift.⁹⁰

As part of his sermon, Professor Dernbach preached about the synoptic gospels'—*Matthew*, *Mark*, and *Luke*—portrayal of the story in which Jesus says there are two great commandments.⁹¹ In specifically describing the Markan account, Professor Dernbach notes that when one of the scribes asked Jesus which commandment was first of all, Jesus answered by proclaiming that:

87. TYRON INBODY, *THE FAITH OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH: AN INTRODUCTION TO THEOLOGY* 307 (2005).

88. Earth Day is officially recognized as April 22nd of each year. Various religious organizations already formally recognize Earth Day's significance. For instance, as part of ecumenical observance of Earth Day's significance, the United Methodist Church has a special dedicated focus on environmental justice. See *generally Worship Resources*, GLOBAL MINISTRIES: THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH, http://www.gbgm-umc.org/ncnyenvironmentaljustice/worship_resources.htm (last visited May 31, 2012).

89. John Dernbach, Earth Day Sermon at The Cathedral Church of St. Stephen, Harrisburg, PA (Apr. 22, 2001) (internal citations omitted) (manuscript on file with author).

90. See *generally id.*

91. See *generally id.*

The first is “Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.” The second is this, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” There is no other commandment greater than these.⁹²

According to Professor Dernbach, the ecological exegesis of Jesus’ response finds its origins in the Old Testament’s *Genesis* 1:28.⁹³ As such, having “dominion”⁹⁴ over the Earth has an associated responsibility of loving the Earth’s resources because they are shared with one’s neighbors. In relevant part, Professor Dernbach preached:

God does say in *Genesis* . . . that humans are to have dominion over the fish of the sea and every living thing that moves upon the earth. But dominion is not the same as domination or degradation. Dominion, I am told, is the English translation of a Hebrew word that means taking appropriate care or exercising appropriate rulership *So the commandment to love God with all of our being also requires us to care for what God has made* When God says in *Genesis*, have dominion over every living thing, he absolutely doesn’t mean to use the environment in ways that hurt other people.⁹⁵

Professor Dernbach’s Judeo-Christian philosophy is applied through some of the state of Louisiana’s policies, as the state moves towards becoming a national leader in alternative energy production.⁹⁶ In finding alternative sources of fuel to protect the environment, an important part of President Obama’s political agenda,⁹⁷ the state and its universities are following Professor Dernbach’s admonition. As part of the state’s rebuilding efforts in the wake of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, as well as the BP Deepwater Horizon explosion, research and technological advances at Louisiana State University are giving the state’s construction industry significant new opportunities for pollution

92. Dernbach, *supra* note 89, at 1.

93. *Id.* at 2.

94. See Kerns, *supra* note 7, at 467-68.

95. Dernbach, *supra* note 89, at 2 (emphasis added).

96. See Augustine, *Growing Green Jobs*, *supra* note 4, at 199, 212.

97. See *supra* notes 1 and 4 and accompanying text.

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reduction through advances in common building materials.⁹⁸ Of particular national significance, as an example of exercising “dominion” over the Earth:

[P]ollution-absorbing concrete is being laid and tested for the first time in the United States. Professor Marwa Hassan in the Construction Management and Industrial Engineering Department has teamed with Pureti, Inc., a company known for pioneering products that benefit the environment . . . to install and monitor photocatalytic pavement.⁹⁹

Furthermore, with respect to renewable energy, Louisiana is becoming an important contributor to national projects by collaboratively building upon existing technology within its universities in developing biofuels from algae, a natural resource extremely prevalent on the state’s bayous.¹⁰⁰ For example, in 2008, the Louisiana Department of Economic Development partnered with an energy consulting, testing, and certification firm “to evaluate algae-to-energy potentials [T]he state’s capacity for algae-to-energy production could be up to 1.5 billion gallons of fuel per year, which would mean twenty-five facilities capable of producing sixty million gallons of fuel per year and \$4.5 billion in added revenue.”¹⁰¹ Indeed, whether intentional or coincidental, the philosophy undergirding eco-theology is exhibiting practical and policy-oriented application as technology and research enable humans to be wise stewards of the Earth while exercising dominion over it.

V. SYNTHESIS AND CONCLUSION

As this Essay shows, although usage of the term environmental justice was popularized in post-modernity, its origins precede antiquity. The basis for humans behaving as wise stewards of the Earth’s precious resources is literally as old as time itself. In *Genesis*, biblical readers can see God’s desire for humans to protect the environment by exercising wise dominion over it. Moreover, from *Revelation*, readers can also understand this desire as they anticipate God’s return to live on Earth with humankind. The very concept of environmental justice was built

98. See Augustine, *Growing Green Jobs*, *supra* note 4, at 203-05.

99. Augustine, *Growing Green Jobs*, *supra* note 4, at 207 (internal citations omitted).

100. See *id.* at 209.

101. *Id.* at 208-09 (internal citations omitted).

upon this theology, as members of the clergy and committed laity employed nonviolent tactics to protect minority and low-income groups so that they could safely inhabit the Earth, as well.

While citizens in civilized societies have a duty to respect laws, they also have a greater responsibility when self-identifying with Judeo-Christian faith groups. For example, just as someone would not commit murder because of society's penal laws, if the individual is a faith practitioner, their refusal to commit the crime would presumably be preempted by the Sixth Commandment, a part of the law handed down from Moses well before any criminal statutes or ordinances were enacted. In much the same regard, just as someone might not pollute the environment because of potential legal consequences, if the person is a member of a Judeo-Christian faith tradition, this Essay urges environmental stewardship according to canonical hermeneutics.

Although *Revelation* has been popularly regarded as a prediction of doom, this Essay urges an interdisciplinary, reconsidered view of *Revelation* as a source of hope. Believers should rejoice in the anticipated *parousia* as they await the foretold "rapture in reverse." In preparation for God's return, believers are called on to be a part of the environmental justice movement and do today just what John urged in *Revelation*—reject Rome's (the post-modern dominant power structure's) abuse of the Earth and be wise stewards of it in anticipation of the joyful end.