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The Faithful Skeptics: Conservative Christian Religious Beliefs and Perceptions of Climate Change

Wylie Allen Carr

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THE FAITHFUL SKEPTICS:

CONSERVATIVE CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS BELIEFS AND

PERCEPTIONS OF CLIMATE CHANGE

By

WYLIE ALLEN CARR

Bachelor of Arts, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, Virginia, 2006

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Approved by:

Perry Brown, Associate Provost for Graduate Education
Graduate School

Michael Patterson, Chair
Society and Conservation

Laurie Yung
Society and Conservation

Daniel Spencer
Environmental Studies
Abstract
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The Faithful Skeptics: Conservative Christian Religious Beliefs and Perceptions of Climate Change

Chairperson: Michael Patterson, Ph.D.

Global climate change presents one of the most challenging ecological and social problems facing the world today. In order to prevent potentially harmful ecological and social impacts from rising global average temperatures, Americans will need to drastically reduce their greenhouse gas emissions by 2050; our willingness to do so though is questionable as opinion poll data suggests that addressing climate change remains an extremely low priority for most Americans. Social scientists from across a variety of disciplines have suggested a number of reasons why this may be case; however very few have focused on the ways that religious beliefs are contributing to American perceptions of, and responses to, climate change despite the fact that opinion polls also indicate that conservative Christians are one of the most skeptical demographic cohorts in America when it comes to this particular issue. Recognizing that theologically conservative Christians compose a socially and politically influential population in America, this study investigates the relationship between conservative Christian faith and conservative Christian perceptions of climate change.

Using data collected through 35 in-depth interviews with conservative Christians in Dallas, Texas and a hermeneutic approach to interview analysis, this study proposes first that conservative Christian faith does impact adherents’ perceptions of climate change. More specifically, the results of this study suggest five religious beliefs that appear to influence conservative Christians’ views on climate change; these beliefs include biblical inerrancy, God’s sovereignty, human sinfulness, eschatology, and evangelism. These five beliefs do not contribute to participant perceptions of climate change uniformly though. Rather the results suggest ways in which religious beliefs interact with other important factors, leading to a wide range of views on climate change in the sample. These perspectives on climate change range from complete dismissal of its existence to real concern and active engagement including lifestyle changes to reduce carbon emissions. Based on these findings, this study suggests several ways to proceed with both social science research on the intersection between religion and environmental issues and climate change advocacy geared at conservative faith communities.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

Project Justification

Global climate change presents one of the most challenging ecological and social problems facing the world today, and America remains one of the largest greenhouse gas emitters in the world in terms of both total and per capita emissions rates. Americans emitted over 5.7 billion metric tons of carbon dioxide in 2006, more CO$_2$ than any other nation in the world except for China (6.1 billion metric tons) and the average American’s emission rate (18.99 metric tons per capita) was more than four times that of the average Chinese (4.62 metric tons per capita) (Baumert et al., 2005; Marland et al., 2008; NEAA, 2007). Scientists predict that anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions could result in dramatic environmental changes as soon as the end of this century. Potential impacts include drastically increased global extinction rates (with some estimates of a 20-50% loss in worldwide biodiversity by 2100), rising sea levels and low coastal area flooding (which could displace tens to hundreds of millions of people worldwide), increased pestilence and insect borne disease rates, and increased intensity and frequency of weather related natural disasters such as hurricanes, floods, and droughts (Pachauri & Reisinger, 2008; Parmesan, 2006; Stern, 2007). If these projections are accurate, Americans must drastically reduce their overall greenhouse gas emissions (in chorus with a global emissions reduction effort) in order to prevent these and other potential ecological and social impacts from rising global average temperatures.

Furthermore, recent calculations conducted by Robert Corell with the Heinz Center determined that even if every nation in the world were to meet ambitious carbon emissions reduction goals (including an 80% reduction in US emissions below 1990 levels by 2050) we would still see the equivalent of at least 600ppm atmospheric CO$_2$ levels before such concentrations began to decrease. This estimated level of atmospheric greenhouse gas concentrations would result in approximately a 3 - 4°C global average temperature rise (cited in Kerry, 2009). In another recent study, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration scientists found that climate change as a result of increasing greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere is irreversible for approximately 1,000 years after emissions cease (Solomon et al., 2009). Taken altogether, this information indicates that Americans will need to undertake serious climate change mitigation efforts, and that climate change will likely remain a significant social and ecological problem for decades, if not centuries, to come.
The Obama administration has promised to make reductions in American greenhouse gas emissions; however, fewer than half of all Americans believe that climate change is a result of human actions (Pew, 2009b), and a recent survey revealed that Americans feel that climate change ranks dead last out of 21 issues as a domestic priority for the current administration (Pew, 2010). These survey results suggest that Americans, on the whole, are not concerned enough about anthropocentric climate change to support the emissions reductions efforts that may be necessary to prevent an undesirable increase in global average temperature. Therefore, understanding how Americans are thinking about and responding to climate change is an important task for social scientists.

Social researchers have examined American thought on climate change from a number of theoretical approaches up to this point. Some researchers have examined Americans’ understanding of climate change from a risk perceptions perspective (Leiserowitz, 2005), while others have focused on Americans’ misunderstanding of the science behind global warming (Sterman & Sweeney, 2002). Still others have focused on how to make scientific studies on climate change more accessible to interested decision makers (Dilling, 2007). However, there have been few studies to date that examine the relationship between religious beliefs and Americans’ views on climate change. This is particularly interesting considering that a number of studies over the past forty years have determined that religious beliefs do impact many Americans’ environmental values (Boyd, 1999; Brehm & Eisenhauer, 2006; Eckberg & Blocker, 1989, 1996; Guth et al., 1995), and latent Christian theology in Western society has long been hypothesized as a cause of widespread environmental degradation (White, 1967). Furthermore, several sociologists have explicitly found that conservative American Christians are less likely to be environmentally concerned than other Christians, Jews, and non-religious Americans (Boyd, 1999; Brehm & Eisenhauer, 2006; Eckberg & Blocker, 1989, 1996; Greeley, 1993; Guth et al., 1995; Hand & Van Liere, 1984; Peterson & Liu, 2008; Schultz et al., 2000).

This relationship between conservative Christianity and environmental thought and practice is worth examining with regards to climate change in particular because conservative Christians\(^1\) compose a socially and politically influential force in the U.S. The National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) claims that evangelical Christians, “make up fully one quarter

\(^1\) For the purposes of this study, the term “conservative Christian” refers to members of Protestant churches that are traditionally classified as theologically conservative. More specifically, this study is referring to evangelical and fundamentalist Christians (a more extensive discussion of this definition can be found in Chapter 3)
of all voters in the most powerful nation in history. Never before has God given American evangelicals such an awesome opportunity to shape public policy in ways that could contribute to the well-being of the entire world” (N.A.E., 2004, p. 1). Similarly, the Southern Baptist Conference (SBC) (a grouping of churches traditionally classified as theologically conservative), which is unaffiliated with the NAE, claims to represent over 16 million Americans, which makes them the second largest religious group in America behind Catholics (Kosmin et al., 2001).

These numbers, along with the empirical evidence that religious beliefs influence environmental values, indicate the importance of understanding conservative Christian views on climate change; it will take the support and cooperation of religiously conservative individuals to accomplish the drastic and lasting changes necessary to reduce American greenhouse gas emissions. Therefore, this research conducted for this project investigated how religious beliefs relate to conservative American Christians’ perceptions of, and responses to, climate change.

**Research Objectives**

To my knowledge, very few empirical studies to date have examined the relationship between conservative Christian religious beliefs and perceptions of climate change. Therefore the primary research objective of this project is to determine whether or not aspects of theologically conservative Christian faith influence conservative Christians’ perceptions of climate change. If it appears that some aspect or aspects of conservative faith do affect respondents’ perceptions of climate change, then the second research objective is to ascertain which aspects of faith. More specifically, I intended to assess whether or not religious affiliation or identity have any bearing on participant perceptions of climate change, or if particular religious beliefs have any influence on these perspectives. Finally, if aspects of conservative Christian faith do appear to affect participant perceptions of climate change, then I intended to assess how in order to suggest ways that dialog can be improved between the population of interest and climate change researchers and advocates.

**What Lies Ahead**

The remainder of this monograph examining conservative Christian perceptions of climate change is laid out as follows: *Chapter 2: Literature Review* provides some further context for this project by examining previous research on both American perceptions of climate change and research on religion and environmentalism. In addition to these two main bodies of literature, this chapter also examines several secondary sources and how they inform this
project. This examination of past research simultaneously reveals some gaps in previous studies that this project attempts to fill. Chapter 3: Methods moves into an examination of the specific approaches this project utilized to address the research questions and objectives described above. This chapter begins with an explanation of the hermeneutic paradigm that informs this project, briefly discusses the normative commitments of hermeneutics, and then moves into a detailed description of how data was collected and analyzed based on this hermeneutic approach. Chapter 4: Idiographic Results and Discussion is the first of two results chapters that detail the findings of this research project while simultaneously exploring what these findings mean for the project at hand. The idiographic results chapter focuses on analyses of five individual interviews, and suggests how conservative Christian faith and perceptions of climate change relate to one another at an individualized level. The results presented in chapter 4 set the stage for the aggregate data analysis in Chapter 5: Nomothetic Results and Discussion. This chapter turns to an examination of the data set as a whole, discussing the similarities and differences between all 35 interviews collected for this study and suggesting five specific religious beliefs that appear to relate to conservative Christian perceptions of climate change. Chapter 6: Conclusions wraps up the discussion of the results, then proceeds to examine the implications of these results for both past and future research. Four appendices provide important supplemental resources. Appendix A: Quotation Tables contains the qualitative data referenced in the two results chapters. Appendix B contains a document on “Creation Care” authored by one of the study participants. Appendices C and D present the interview guides used with pastors and church members, respectively.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter examines the literature that informs this project. Two separate but related bodies of research provide the primary backdrop for this study. The first described below is social science research examining people’s perceptions of climate change. The second is social science research examining the relationship between religion and environmental thought and practice. Following the discussion of these two bodies of research, the chapter turns to several secondary sources that also contribute to the project at hand. Finally, the chapter concludes with an examination of how this project could speak back to these previous efforts.

Research on Public Perceptions of Climate Change

Researchers from a wide variety of disciplines have examined how people, and particularly Americans, think about climate change. Studies on this topic range from Pew, Gallup, and Harris opinion polls on global warming (Humphrey, 2009; Jones, 2010; Newport, 2008, 2010; Pew, 2006, 2007, 2009a, 2009b, 2010), to psychological investigations of the heuristics people use to make sense of climate change (Marx et al., 2007), to risk perception studies comparing flood victim views on global warming to the general public’s views (Whitmarsh, 2008). The goals of these studies also vary from taking the pulse of American opinions about climate change to enhancing dialog about climate change with elected officials. Despite the varying goals and approaches that mark the literature in this field, several conclusions have been drawn consistently across studies.

First, these studies, up until recently, demonstrated that a large majority of Americans believed global warming to be real and a serious problem (Leiserowitz, 2005). Surveys up through 2008 indicated that over 70% of Americans believed global warming to exist (Pew, 2007) and over 60% of Americans believed that the effects of global warming were already being felt (Newport, 2008). Similarly, 70 – 76% of Americans considered global warming to be a somewhat to very serious problem (Leiserowitz, 2005; Pew, 2006). However, in the past two years, American perceptions of the existence and causes of climate change, and their concern about the issue, have dropped dramatically (Humphrey, 2009; Newport, 2010; Pew 2009b). The latest nationwide surveys indicate a 14 - 20% drop in the belief that the phenomenon of global

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2 “Global warming” and “climate change” are used interchangeably in this section based on the term used in the study referenced.
warming exists (Humphrey, 2009; Pew 2009b, respectively). These same studies found a 5 - 9% drop in the number of Americans who consider global warming to be a very serious problem. A 2009 Gallup poll found decreased concern about climate change across almost every demographic variable that they examined, accompanied by an increase in the belief that the seriousness of global warming has been exaggerated by the media (Newport, 2010). This same study also found that 13% fewer Americans thought that scientists generally agreed that global warming existed than did two years ago. Many of these numbers regarding beliefs in the existence of climate change and concern over climate change are currently at their lowest point in almost a decade.

Additionally, these studies reveal increasing uncertainty amongst Americans about the role of human activity in relation to climate change. Survey data from 2007 indicated that slightly less than half (47%) of all Americans attributed rising average temperatures to human causes (Pew, 2007). The same poll two years later found that only 36% of Americans thought the earth was warming due to human activity (Pew 2009b). Along these same lines, a number of studies indicate that Americans generally do not understand how humans impact the global climate or atmospheric carbon concentrations (Lorenzoni & Pidgeon, 2006; Sterman & Sweeney, 2002), despite the fact that over 80% of Americans recently polled claimed to understand the issue of global warming either ‘very’ or ‘fairly’ well (Newport, 2008).

Finally, findings from a variety of polls and studies indicate that addressing climate change is not a priority for Americans. Surveys suggest that global warming consistently ranks near the bottom of both political and environmental priorities for Americans. According to a Pew survey conducted in January of 2010, Americans ranked global warming 21st out of 21 items as a ‘political priority’ in relation to issues such as the economy, education, health care, and terrorism (Pew, 2010). On a separate survey, Americans ranked global warming 10th out of 12 environmental issues of concern behind items such as air and water pollution, fresh water supply, and habitat and species loss (Newport, 2008). A number of peer reviewed articles support these opinion poll findings (Marx et al., 2007; Leiserowitz, 2005; Lorenzoni & Pidgeon, 2006; Whitmarsh 2008), demonstrating through both qualitative interviews and quantitative surveys that Americans are aware of climate change, but consider this issue to be of little importance to them personally. These results lead researchers to conclude that American misconceptions about, and apathy towards, climate change will likely hinder implementation of the mitigation efforts necessary to prevent a significant rise in global average temperatures.
This previous work on perceptions of climate change has several implications for the study at hand. First, as Lowe and Lorenzoni (2007) suggest, perceptions of climate change are complex, socially constructed phenomena, not straightforward interpretations of scientific findings. This means that Americans’ perceptions of climate change incorporate a number of factors. The studies cited above examine how risk perceptions, psychological processes, personal experiences, and political affiliation, among other factors, contribute to perceptions of climate change. However, little attention has been paid to religion despite the fact that several polls and one seminal study on perceptions of climate change indicate that faith may be relevant to many Americans’ opinions on this issue. Pew surveys from 2006 and 2009 show that white evangelical Christians are the least likely religious group polled to believe that there is solid evidence that the earth is warming, and if so that it is caused by human activities (Pew, 2006, 2009a). Furthermore, white evangelical Christians in the 2009 poll were the third least likely demographic group to believe that global warming existed and was human caused behind Republicans and political conservatives. Maibach, Roser-Renouf, and Leiserowitz (2009) conducted a segmentation analysis of Americans based on their perceptions of climate change and found that those Americans who are disengaged, doubtful, or dismissive regarding climate change are significantly more likely to identify as evangelical Christians than those Americans who are concerned about and engaged with the issue. Unfortunately, neither the opinion polls nor the segmentation analysis delve any deeper into why evangelical Christians appear to be less concerned and engaged with climate change than other Americans.

In fact, to my knowledge, only one previous study in this body of literature has attempted to dig below the surface to examine how religion shapes Americans’ perceptions of climate change. In a book length examination of American environmental values, anthropologists Kempton, Boster, and Hartley (1995) focus on global climate change as an indicator issue for American environmentalism in general. They found over the course of 46 interviews and 142 surveys that Americans derive environmental values from three sources, one of which is religion. Both devout and non-religious participants in this study drew on spiritual and religious language to describe their environmental ethics. The authors conclude that religion is an important factor to consider when examining American environmentalism, and specifically find that some Americans use religious language to justify their opinions about climate change. Kempton, Boster, and Hartley’s (1995) discussion of the role religion plays in relation to climate change does not go into great detail about the specific beliefs that
participants described though, or how these beliefs were distributed across the sample. Their point is simply that religion appears to be an important factor to consider when examining American environmental values in general and more specifically when thinking about global climate change.

In summary, the literature in this field has paid little attention to the role that religion may play in Americans’ perceptions of climate change. However, several polls and social science research projects indicate that religious beliefs, particularly conservative Christians’ beliefs, do impact perceptions of climate change. This lack of research on the relationship between religious beliefs and climate change is important to address because as Maibach and colleagues (2009, p. 2) suggest in the introduction to their study:

The American public does not respond to climate change with a single voice – there are many different groups that each respond to this issue in different ways. Constructively engaging each of these groups in climate change solutions will therefore require tailored approaches. One of the first rules of effective communication is to “know thy audience” – what they currently understand and misunderstand about the issue; how they perceive the threat; their current and intended behaviors; their values, beliefs, and policy preferences; and the barriers to change and underlying motivations that either constrain or can inspire their further engagement with the solutions. Only with this knowledge can effective strategies be designed to help individuals and organizations make more informed decisions, empower them to make and enact better choices, and build public support for policies that institute systemic and structural change (emphasis added).

In other words, effectively addressing climate change at a broad scale will require a better understanding of particular groups within American society and how they are reacting to climate change based in part on their values and beliefs. Drawing on the sparse polling data available, it would appear that conservative Christians compose an “audience” that needs to be better understood when it comes to climate change, and certainly one that could be more effectively engaged on the issue.

**Research on the Relationship Between Religion and Environmental Concern**

The second body of research that provides a backdrop for this project focuses on the relationship between religion and environmental concern. The studies that compose this body of research were largely spawned by Lynn White’s (1967) indictment of Christian theology for the world’s environmental problems in his now famous article, “The Historical Roots of our
Ecologic Crisis.” White (a medieval historian) hypothesized that latent Judeo-Christian beliefs in God-granted, human dominion over the earth were prevalent in Western society. He believed that these largely unrecognized but potent beliefs had resulted in widespread disregard for the environment. This disregard, over time, facilitated human induced environmental degradation on a global scale. White (1967, p. 1205) concluded that, “Especially in its Western form, Christianity is the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen,” and that “we shall continue to have a worsening ecologic crisis until we reject the Christian axiom that nature has no reason for existence save to serve man” (quoted in Hand & Van Liere, 1984, p. 556). White’s assertions have drawn fire from several different perspectives, including critiques of his theological interpretation of the Genesis creation story (Hiers, 1984), and critiques of his historical interpretation of the relationship between religion and science (Serpell, 1986 as cited in Hayes & Marangudakis, 2001; Nash, 1991). In addition to these theoretical critiques, a number of sociologists have attempted to empirically test the so called “Lynn White Hypothesis” and the relationship between religion and environmental concern since the article’s publication. It is this body of research, which has attempted to examine latent religious beliefs in Western culture, that informs the goals and methodologies of this study.

Latent beliefs are, by definition, hidden or taken for granted as part of a widely accepted worldview. White (1967) asserted that Western societal disregard for the environment stemmed from deeply enculturated beliefs in human dominion over the earth. Therefore, as Hand and Van Liere (1984, p. 556) state in the first “empirical” test of the White Hypothesis,

Although White does not directly address the relationship between religion and environmental concern at the individual level, it is logical to hypothesize that individuals more committed to the Judeo-Christian tradition will more strongly accept the dominance of nature doctrine and subsequently have lower levels of concern for environmental problems.

In other words, in order to test this controversial hypothesis, sociologists and social-psychologists turned to populations in which they could compare individuals for whom dominion beliefs are theoretically more salient (namely conservative Christians) with non-Christians, or more theologically liberal Christians. By and large, the thinking behind these studies was that the White hypothesis garners support if a given measure of religiosity is negatively correlated with a given measure of environmental concern.
Between 1984 and 2008, 26 articles (that I have been able to locate) were published in peer-reviewed journals explicitly examining the relationship between religion and environmental concern. Hayes and Marangudakis (2001, p. 141) summarize this body of research succinctly, stating that,

Empirical research on this issue remains...divided...the results as a whole have been inconclusive. A few studies found a statistically significant pro-Dominion stand among either Judeo-Christians as a whole, or just fundamentalist Protestant churches (Guth et al., 1995; Kanagy and Willits, 1993; Eckberg and Blocker, 1989; Shaiko, 1987; Hand and Van Liere, 1984). Other studies found no significant difference in beliefs and attitudes among Jews or Christians as compared to other religions after they controlled for cultural, social, and demographic factors...(Wolkomir et al., 1997a; Kanagy and Nelson, 1995; Woodrum and Hoban, 1994; Greeley, 1993)...In summary, then, the theoretical and empirical relationship between religion and nature remains a highly complex and contentious issue.

The complex and contentious nature of empirical and theoretical research on the relationship between religion and nature is epitomized by the fact that all 26 studies examined in this literature utilized different measurement schemes for religious beliefs and/or environmentalism. For instance, measures of religiosity vary from basic questions about denominational affiliation (Eckberg & Blocker, 1989), to complex scaled item variables intended to estimate various religious beliefs (Guth et al., 1995; Woodrum & Hoban, 1994). Similarly, measures of environmentalism vary from use of the New Environmental Paradigm (Kanagy & Willits, 1993), to measures of support for various environmental policies (Kanagy & Nelson, 1995). Overall though, no two studies use the same combination of religiosity and environmentalism.

In fact, five of the 26 studies used the same data set, the 1993 General Social Survey (GSS); yet all five utilized different combinations of environmental and religious measures in their analyses (Boyd, 1999; Deitz et al., 1998; Eckberg & Blocker, 1996; Sherkat & Ellison, 2007; Woodrum & Wolkomir, 1997). For instance, Eckberg and Blocker (1996) used three scaled variables to measure different aspects of religion and 10 scaled variables to measure environmental attitudes and behavior. By comparison, Sherkat and Ellison (2007) utilized four single item measures of religious variables and four scaled variables to measure environmentalism. Furthermore, the scaled environmental variables (10 in Eckberg and Blocker (1996) and four in Sherkat and Ellison (2007)) in each study incorporated different combinations
of survey items and measured different concepts regarding environmental attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, and concern. In a confession regarding the 1993 GSS data set, which was the most commonly used among the 26 articles examined, Deitz et al., (1998, p.453), admit that, “most environment items included in the GSS are not derived from existing theory or empirical work on environmentalism. Thus, there are no clear hypotheses that could be used to structure a measurement model.” In other words, all statistical analyses run on this data set, in all five studies, were post hoc analyses using measures that were neither theoretically nor empirically validated regarding the phenomena of interest prior to the survey being administered.

Furthermore, 22 of the 26 studies conducted secondary data analyses, meaning only four of the 26 studies conducted original survey research. Therefore 22 of the 26 studies conducted post hoc analyses of data using measures that were not necessarily intended to examine the relationship between religion and environmentalism in the survey design process.

In addition to (and in conjunction with) this inconsistency in measures, previous survey research on religion and environmentalism has also produced inconsistent results. As Hayes and Marangudakis (2001) state above, some studies (11 of the 26 to be exact) have reported statistically significant relationships between certain Judeo-Christian beliefs such as a dominion belief, a literal interpretation of the bible, or certain eschatological views and lower levels of environmental concern and/or action (Boyd, 1999; Eckberg & Blocker, 1989, 1996; Guth et al., 1995; Hand & Van Liere, 1984; Schultz et al., 2000; Shaiko, 1987; Sherkat & Ellison, 2007; Tarakeshwar et al., 2001; Wolkomir et al., 1997a; Woodrum & Hoban, 1994). Seven other studies found statistically significant, negative relationships between religious affiliation and environmental thought and practice (Brehm & Eisenhauer, 2006; Greeley, 1993; Hayes & Marangudakis, 2000; Kanagy & Willits, 1993; Lowry, 1998; Peterson & Liu, 2008; Wolkomir et al., 1997b). However, some of these same studies also found positive correlations between various aspects of religion such as religious participation and prayer with environmental behavior (Biel & Nilsson, 2005; Boyd, 1999; Eckberg & Blocker, 1996; Hayes & Marangudakis, 2000; Kanagy & Willits, 1993; Wolkomir et al., 1997b; Woodrum & Wolkomir, 1997). Additionally, all 26 studies found that controlling for demographic variables such as age, gender, education, and particularly political affiliation and ideology mediated the impacts that various religious measures had on environmental concern and/or behavior. In fact, four studies found that when demographic variables were controlled for, relationships between religion and environmentalism were no long statistically significant, suggesting that demographic variables
provide a better explanation for environmental concern than any religious measures (Biel & Nilsson, 2005; Greeley, 1993; Guth et al., 1995 Kanagy & Nelson, 1995).

After examining this body of literature for his dissertation on the history of the evangelical environmental movement, Larsen (2001, p. 26) concludes that,

Sociological studies on the relationship between Christianity and environmentalism amply show that evangelicals (especially fundamentalist evangelicals) are less likely to embrace environmentalism than other Christians. However, these somewhat contradictory studies have done little to settle the causes of evangelical and fundamentalist indifference to the environment. At best, one can conclude that dominion beliefs, End Times thinking, and political conservatism negatively affect the environmental positions of fundamentalists and other evangelicals.

According to both Larsen (2001) and Hayes and Marangudakis (2001), this series of studies, when taken as a whole, does suggest that some relationships exist between religion and environmental thought and practice. However, the inconsistency in measurement and results means that the exact relationship remains unclear and contested.

Taken as a whole, this body of literature has several implications for this research. First, none of the previous studies have examined climate change. Climate change has not been one of the environmental measures used in any of the 26 surveys to date. Therefore, this body of literature has not yet explicitly investigated the relationship between religious beliefs and climate change. Second, the number of articles that find a statistically significant relationship between Christian beliefs and environmental concern (Boyd, 1999; Brehm & Eisenhauer, 2006; Eckberg & Blocker, 1989, 1996; Greeley, 1993; Guth et al., 1995; Hand & Van Liere, 1984; Kanagy & Nelson, 1995; Peterson & Liu, 2008; Schultz et al., 2000; Shaiko, 1978; Tarakeshwar et al., 2001; Wolkomir et al., 1997a, 1997b) suggest that religion is an important factor to include in examinations of Americans’ perceptions of climate change. In fact, its absence in previous research on perceptions of climate change represents a significant gap in previous efforts. Third, these articles indicate that amongst conservative Christians, religious beliefs appear to be salient factors in determining the nature of environmental concern. Therefore, one could reasonably hypothesize that religious beliefs do consciously influence conservative Christian views on climate change. Fourth, there is little agreement in this literature on the most appropriate measures of religious beliefs and environmental concern. This disagreement indicates the complexity of the concepts being studied, and suggests that, at least at the current
time, quantitative surveys may not be the most appropriate research approach for understanding the interplay between faith and environmentalism.

Finally, as Hand and Van Liere (1984) recognize, there is a disconnect between White’s critique of western culture as a whole and surveying individuals within western societies to empirically confirm or deny the existence of a widespread, historically based cultural beliefs. Shaiko (1987, p. 247) points out that,

It is not possible to confirm or disconfirm White’s thesis with data from a single survey. Survey data provide researchers with contextual “snapshots” of societal interaction. The relationships uncovered through survey analysis exist for a particular place and time and should not be generalized beyond the initial frame of analysis. Confirmation or refutation of White’s thesis would require a much more comprehensive research design including extensive collection and analysis of historical data.

In other words, in Shaiko’s (1987) opinion, researchers cannot empirically test the White Hypothesis using a single survey because the data cannot adequately represent the cultural breadth and historical depth of White’s assertions. Rather, social scientists should attempt to produce a, “contextual assessment of the relationship between religious affiliation and concern for the environment...in terms of just one culturally specific...manifestation” (Hayes & Marangudakis, 2001, p. 142). While several of the studies in this body of literature have focused on specific places and limited their conclusions to smaller populations (Brehm & Eisenhauer, 2006; Hayes & Marangudakis, 2000, 2001; Peterson & Liu, 2008; Shaiko, 1987), the large majority of the studies have used nationally representative data sets to make sweeping conclusions about the relationship between religion and environmentalism at national or even international scales. The complex and contested nature of these relationships makes such large scale studies inappropriate at this time, and demands a much more contextualized investigation.

Secondary Sources

Several secondary sources also suggest the need for an empirical study of the relationship between Christian beliefs and perceptions of climate change. First, Greeley and Hout (2006) and Smith and Emerson (1998) utilize survey research to demonstrate that conservative Christianity is alive and well in the United States. Smith and Emerson, in fact, state that both evangelicalism and fundamentalism are “thriving” based on a number of measures including adherence to religious beliefs, salience of religious beliefs in daily life, commitment to
action based on religious beliefs, membership retention rates, and membership growth rates. They conclude that conservative Christianity is “stronger” than either mainline or liberal Christianity in the U.S. today. These two studies (Greeley & Hout, 2006; Smith & Emerson, 1998) empirically reinforce the idea that conservative Christians are an important social group to study in contemporary American society.

Other secondary sources come from within the conservative Christian community itself. A number of authors have suggested that Christian engagement with climate change will be necessary to garner the support needed to address this problem adequately. Several evangelical writers, including Calvin DeWitt (2007) (Professor, Nelson Institute for Environmental Studies, Ph.D. in Zoology), Tri Robinson (2004) (Senior Pastor, Boise Vineyard Church), and Matthew Sleeth and Richard Cizik (2006) (Former Emergency Room Doctor turned environmental lecturer, and former vice-president of the NAE, respectively) go so far as to claim that Christians must take the lead on climate change and other environmental issues because the secular environmental movement has failed to address these problems adequately. While not necessarily sharing this view, prominent natural scientists including E.O. Wilson (2006), and Sir John Houghton (Neff, 2006) have appealed to Christians to use their social and political influence to support environmental measures including climate change mitigation. Similarly, Posas (2007) argues, in an award-winning essay published in *Ethics in Science and Environmental Politics* that religions have a major role to play in effectively addressing climate change on a global scale.

Finally, several theoretical articles in religious journals have suggested that climate change presents a unique issue with regards to Christian theology, and therefore conservative Christians may be thinking about climate change differently than other environmental issues that have been the topic of previous research (Keller, 1999; Truesdale, 1994). These diverse, but related sources indicate a need for further research on conservative Christians’ perceptions of climate change because of the potential implications that those perceptions have for our ability to adequately address greenhouse gas emissions in the United States.

**Speaking Back - Potential Implications of this Study**

The lack of previous research on the relationship between conservative Christian religious beliefs and climate change is surprising given the amount of literature that points (albeit indirectly) to the importance of such research. Therefore, this research has the
opportunity to speak back to each of the bodies of literature mentioned above. First, this study
could further the ‘perceptions of climate change’ literature by indicating that a connection exists
between religious beliefs and apathy towards climate change mitigation efforts. Or, conversely
this study could suggest that Christian theology does not affect perceptions of climate change,
and therefore need not be studied in greater detail. Second, this study could provide an entirely
new lens through which to frame the study of religious beliefs as they relate to environmental
concern. For the past thirty years, research on religion and environmentalism has focused on
dominion beliefs and how such beliefs relate to generalized environmental issues. This research
could expose other beliefs that contribute to conservative Christian views on the environment,
and also help to refine measures of both religious belief and environmental concern. Finally,
this research could provide valuable information for advocates of climate change mitigation
about how conservative Christians are conceiving of climate change differently than other
Americans. This in turn could shape future appeals to conservative Christians, from both within
and outside of Christianity, for support of climate change mitigating efforts.

Summary
This chapter has examined two primary and several secondary bodies of literature that
inform the present study. This discussion has attempted to outline first the contributions that
previous studies have made to the thought behind this research, and second to point out some
gaps in this same research that the current project hopes to fill. This chapter builds on the
previous Introduction chapter by extending the theoretical and practical justifications for this
project based on previous research and lays the groundwork for understanding the
methodological approach this project takes as examined in the next chapter on Methods.
Chapter 3: Methods

Introduction

This chapter examines how the research for this project was conducted. The discussion that follows describes the justification for the sampling, data collection, and data analysis methodologies used in this study as well as a description of the processes themselves as they played out in real life. The discussion begins though, with an examination of the hermeneutic paradigm that informed the methodologies used in the various stages of this study.

Hermeneutics

In order to fill in some of the gaps found in previous research, this project utilized a hermeneutic approach to investigate the intersection between religion and climate change. This approach differs in many ways from previous studies, and therefore a brief discussion about hermeneutics is necessary to justify the methods employed in this study as compared with previous studies that examined religious beliefs in relation to environmental thought and practice.

Patterson and Williams (2002, 2005) refer to hermeneutics as a distinct scientific paradigm. They define a paradigm as, “a coherent and internally consistent set of research principles” that is based on a set of “normative philosophical commitments,” which are, “the underlying principles and philosophy that guide the practice of a specific approach to science” (Patterson and Williams, 2002, p. 2 & p. 12 respectively). In other words, hermeneutics is a unique approach to scientific research based on a set of coherent ontological, epistemological, and axiological commitments that differ from other paradigms’ ontologies, epistemologies, and axiologies. In addition to examining the normative commitments of hermeneutics below, I also contrast them with the normative commitments of the psychometric paradigm in which all of the previous studies regarding religion and the environment are grounded (conveniently, this is also a paradigm that Patterson and Williams (2002, 2005) frequently contrast with hermeneutics as well).

Ontology

Ontologically, hermeneutic philosophy assumes that “multiple realities exist that vary across time, cultures, and individuals” and that humans ‘co-constitute’ meaning within these multiple and changing realities as they interact with the physical and social structures that exist
around them (Patterson and Williams, 2002, p. 14). This means that social and physical environments are real, but individuals can experience them differently based on the unique context in which they interact with those environments. Therefore, hermeneutics believes that human experiences are best understood as “holistic units” because the parts of an experience lose meaning outside of the context of the experience as a whole. A psychometric approach, on the other hand, might attempt to break human experience into individual units that can be summarized numerically and studied statistically. For instance, previous survey based studies on religion and the environment have attempted to isolate political and religious variables, treat each as an independent factor contributing to environmental concern, and determine whether politics or religion affect environmental concern a priori.

Consistent with the hermeneutic ontology, this study attempts to view individuals’ perceptions of climate change holistically, or as part of larger social and personal contexts that are more than the sum of the individual elements. One example of this would be the idea that an individual’s political and religious views combine to influence their view on climate change in a way that is not easily or appropriately separated. Therefore, the methods employed in this study attempt to capture a more holistic picture of research participants that explains perceptions of climate change more effectively than focusing on any one factor in isolation.

**Epistemology**

Epistemologically, hermeneutics distinguishes itself from other paradigms in several ways. First, hermeneutics acknowledges that researchers are not completely objective in their observations and analyses; rather, theory and researcher biases impact the entire scientific process (Patterson and Williams, 2002). If researchers deny the role of theory in their research, they become blind to potential biases in their observations that lead to problematic conclusions. For instance, R. Stephen Warner (1979) surveyed sociological research on religion and found widespread disregard of evangelicalism as a religious movement, which he attributed to the personal worldviews of the sociologists conducting the studies. Consciously or not, Warner contended, sociologists had considered evangelicalism to be a lower class trend that was politically conservative and historically passé. Therefore, they had discounted evangelicalism’s importance as an emergent religious phenomenon.

Similarly, Gregory Hitzhusen (2007) found that the New Environmental Paradigm and New Ecological Paradigm, commonly used to measure environmental concern in survey studies
on religion and the environment, were inherently biased against certain environmental values, such as values based on anthropocentric environmental ethics. Hitzhusen states that the contradictory results in several studies of this type merely indicate that Christians do not identify with the various NEP survey questions. Therefore, this psychometric scale has little predictive power when it comes to actual environmental behavior among Christians because it imposes researcher perspectives onto respondents in terms of what constitutes an environmental ethic.

Along these same lines, hermeneutics also asserts that numerical representation and analysis of data does not remove interpretation bias. In fact, rather than removing interpretation issues, surveys often shift the “burden of interpretation” onto the respondent (Patterson and Williams, 2002). Survey respondents are forced to decide what a given question is asking. Because different respondents think about the same question differently, their answers will reflect those different interpretations. As a result, a survey question may actually measure different responses even though respondents may have filled in the same answer choice. Furthermore, numerical or statistical analyses do not remove interpretation biases in quantitative research. Rather such analyses impose numerical relationships on social and psychological phenomena that may not fit them or their interactions. The variety of measures utilized in previous research on religion and environmentalism, and the wide range of results those varying measures have produced, indicates that questions regarding religion and environmental values are difficult for respondents to interpret, and the relationship between these variables may not be well represented by numerical systems (Hitzhusen, 2007).

Instead of denying the role that theory and interpretation can play in scientific observation, “these concerns have pushed hermeneutic researchers in the direction of data collection strategies (e.g. participant observation, in-depth interviews, etc.) in which they are in a better position to control, assess, and take advantage of their role in data production” (Patterson and Williams, 2002, p. 25). For this study, this meant breaking from the dominant practice of survey research and conducting in-depth, individual interviews, the actual process of which is described below. Interviews provided insight into participant interpretations of questions both during the interview itself and during later analysis. The flexibility of this approach allowed me to reword and re-ask questions to better negotiate the difference between my interpretation of a question as the researcher and the respondent’s take on the same question. Similarly, this approach placed the burden of interpretation on me as the
researcher in the interview analysis process. Unlike a survey format with fixed answer options, the respondents were free to answer my questions however they liked, and I could then make sense of their answers in the context of the interview as a whole. Furthermore, the interview data and the analyses that follow were not reduced to numerical representations. Some numbers are used to accurately convey certain characteristics of participants in the sample, however these numbers are intended to represent only the sample at hand, and not a larger population in any statistical sense. Textual data from the interviews is cited throughout the results chapters that follow and contained within Appendix A, allowing the reader to see for themselves the richness of the information captured in the interviews. The analyses discussed are intended in part to display the complexity in the data as opposed to oversimplifying the ideas conveyed by participants.

With regards to data analysis, hermeneutic epistemology not only acknowledges the role of previous theory and potential researcher bias, but encourages researchers to acknowledge and consciously build upon their “forestructure of understanding” or what they already know about a phenomenon in the analysis process. This approach enables a dialogue between the researcher and topic of interest that promotes understanding, rather than a focus on numerical, “confirmation or disconfirmation of prior hypotheses” (Patterson and Williams, 2002, p. 24). As previously mentioned, in past studies, researchers have attempted to statistically demonstrate relationships between religion and environmentalism. However this focus on hypothesis testing has prevented these studies from being able to convincingly explain why these numerical relationships either do or do not exist. The results presented in this study are focused on whether or not religion appears to relate to environmentalism, and if so, explaining the hows and whys of that relationship (e.g. how do religious beliefs relate to perceptions of climate change and why?).

Additionally, the results presented in this study incorporate a forestructure of understanding built off of previous qualitative research. This body of research is examined in greater detail in the Organizing System section of the Idiographic Results chapter that follows. However it is important to note here that several articles contribute significantly to the analysis process and results even though they were incorporated into the study after the data had already been collected. In a quantitative, hypothesis-testing based study, the incorporation of new theoretical tools during the analysis phase might be viewed as an unacceptable ad hoc modification of the study. However, in hermeneutics, researchers are encouraged to develop a
rich understanding of the phenomenon of interest recognizing that this understanding is specific to a certain place and time. Furthermore, this need not be the researcher’s final understanding of the phenomenon under study, but rather their “understanding at the moment” (Patterson and Williams, 2002). Therefore, incorporating a forestructure of understanding that enriches this understanding is acceptable in the analysis stages of the research process.

Finally, hermeneutic epistemology shifts the focus of scientific research off of “context-free generalizations and universal laws,” and onto “individual cases and specific occurrences of a phenomenon” (Patterson and Williams, 2002, p. 25). Because hermeneutic ontology views human experiences of the world as highly contextualized, each person’s encounter with a given phenomenon may be unique. Therefore, hermeneutic observation and analysis begins with individual interviews and the idea of “generat[ing] knowledge applicable in a specific instance or situation” (Patterson and Williams, p. 26). Hermeneutic epistemology does not discourage researchers from investigating patterns and themes that exist across individuals; however aggregate analysis is only viewed as appropriate if and when the idiographic level analysis suggests it would be meaningful and useful. The results and discussion that follow this chapter therefore, are focused first on individual interviews and then on the aggregate data set.

Survey observation typically begins with individuals too, however this individualized data is collected solely for the purpose of compiling an aggregate data set. As Patterson and Williams (2002, p. 26) point out, “there are no a priori reasons to assume any structural similarities exist between complex psychological processes in the individual and the logical structure statistics imposes on aggregate data.” Unfortunately though, many of the previous survey studies on religion and environmental concern have made this assumption before trying to understand this complex relationship at the individual level. According to Terwee (1990, as cited in Patterson & Williams, p. 26), “If one puts individuals together in groups before even having looked at their individual behavior, it is clear that one will never learn anything about individual behavior; the results are about group averages, and will be restricted to group averages, or the nonexisting ‘average individual.’” As a result, previous research has suggested that vague connections may exist on average, across certain populations, between religion and environmental values. However, these studies have failed to explain why these connections exist, how they function, and how interested parties might address these connections in a real world setting.
Axiology

The epistemological foundations discussed above begin to illuminate hermeneutic axiology or the goals of hermeneutic research. Axiology is the third and final set of normative commitments that underlie a scientific paradigm according to Patterson and Williams (2002; 2005). The ultimate aim (or terminal axiological commitment) of a hermeneutic approach is understanding. In this context, understanding is defined as “first and foremost the giving of an account that is sensible in the way it addresses current interests and concerns” (Packer 1985 in Patterson and Williams, 2002, p. 29). In other words, the researcher is interested in making sense of the experiences of the research participants in context as opposed to being able to predict the meaning of future experiences for that individual or others. This means that the goal of the analyses that follow is to provide the reader with a rich, contextualized understanding of how and why the interviewees’ connect their faith to their views on climate change. Previous research, on the other hand, was focused more on predicting population level environmental attitudes, values, and behaviors with little emphasis on explaining why people think and act in these ways based on their religious beliefs.

In addition to this terminal goal, hermeneutic axiology includes several instrumental goals, or “criteria by which specific research applications are evaluated as good or bad science” (Patterson and Williams, 2002, p. 30). Patterson and Williams (2002) propose three instrumental criteria for evaluating hermeneutic research, which are, persuasiveness, insightfulness, and practical utility. Persuasiveness in this context means that the reader of the study is able to make a relatively independent judgment of the analysis presented, and its conclusions about the phenomena being studied, based on the data made available. In order for a reader to do so, transparency is key, meaning that sufficient data is provided for an independent judgment to be formulated. Insightfulness refers to the idea that the analysis should provide readers with an increased understanding of the subject under study. Insight therefore is more than summary; insight is interpretation of data that explains the meaning of that data as it relates to the phenomenon of interest. Finally, practical utility refers to the usefulness of the analysis for, “enhancing understanding, promoting communication, or resolving conflict” (Patterson & Williams, 2002, p. 35). So instead of merely demonstrating some statistical correlation that either exists or not, a hermeneutic analysis attempts to facilitate some practical application of the understanding generated. This discussion of the
normative commitments of the hermeneutic paradigm sets the stage for the specific methodologies utilized in this study, starting with a definition of the population.

Study Population

The population of interest in this research consists of conservative American Christians. Conservative Christians are most simply defined as Protestants who hold theologically conservative beliefs (Greeley & Hout, 2006). Of course, not every conservative Christian holds the exact same set of beliefs, or subscribes to each belief with the same level of commitment, but religious researchers have outlined a number of beliefs commonly shared by conservative Christians across denominations and congregations (Gottlieb, 2006; Greeley & Hout, 2006; Hackett & Lindsay, 2008; Marsden, 2006; Melton, 1996; Smith & Emerson, 1998). First and foremost, conservative Christians believe that the bible is the inspired word of God, transcribed completely without error. Conservative Christians also believe in the full divinity of Jesus Christ. Along with his divinity, conservative Christians believe in Christ’s virgin birth; the miracles he performed; his crucifixion and death, which atoned for the sins of humanity; his physical resurrection; and his imminent return to earth. Conservative Christians believe that humans are inherently sinful, and can only be ‘saved’ through an acceptance of Jesus Christ’s atoning death for their sin. And finally, conservative Christians believe that once ‘saved’ they have a responsibility to tell non-Christians about the opportunity for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. One can find visible corroboration of the commonality of these beliefs that scholars use to define conservative Christianity by examining conservative denominations’ public statements about their beliefs (for examples, visit the Presbyterian Church in America website: http://www.pcanet.org/general/beliefs.htm, The Southern Baptist Conference Website: http://www.sbc.net/bfm/bfm2000.asp, or the Assemblies of God website: http://ag.org/top/Beliefs/Statement_of_Fundamental_Truths/sft_short.cfm).

Scholars also commonly define conservative Christianity as a religious movement (Alwin et al., 2006; Greeley & Hout, 2006; Marsden, 2006; Melton, 1996; Smith & Emerson, 1998). This means that conservative Christianity is not limited to any one denomination, or organized religious body. Rather, conservative Christianity is, “a distinct, publicly recognizable collective identity, in relation to which individuals, congregations, denominations, and para-church organizations [are] able to recognize and form their own faith identities and action-commitments” (Smith & Emerson, 1998, p. 15). In other words, religious units, on any scale
from the individual up through entire denominations, may define themselves as conservative Christians based on their understanding of that term and their adherence to the beliefs discussed above. Therefore, individuals or individual congregations may define themselves as conservative Christians even though the larger religious organization that they are a part of does not, and vice-versa.

Additionally, two historically distinct sub-movements, fundamentalism and evangelicalism, compose the larger contemporary movement of conservative Christianity. Both fundamentalism and evangelicalism emerged as religious movements within American Protestantism in the 20th century. The first movement, fundamentalism, emerged in the early 1900’s as a response to what many conservative Christians at the time viewed as the secularization of both America and the Protestant Church (Marsden, 2006). The second movement, evangelicalism, emerged in the 1930’s and 1940’s in response to fundamentalism (Melton, 2005). These two movements both share an emphasis on conservative Protestant theology, meaning they both share the beliefs discussed above. However, these movements also have distinctive theological tenets that designate them as interesting sub-populations for this study. When the fundamentalist movement began, its adherents were unique among American Protestants because they “militantly opposed both modernism in theology and the cultural changes that modernism endorsed” (Marsden, 2006, p. 4). Modernism at the time, “meant first of all the adaptation of religious ideas to modern culture,” the most problematic of which was evolution and the rise of “Darwinism” (Marsden, 2006, p. 146). As the movement developed historically, this opposition to modernism led to an emphasis on premillennial-dispensationalist eschatology and separatism (Melton, 1996). Premillenialism is the belief that both the physical and social world are in a constant state of deterioration until Christ’s return, at which point Christ will begin a 1,000 year reign over the earth. Dispensationalism refers to a belief that the bible describes distinct historical eras wherein God interacts with humans differently. So taken together, the terms indicate a belief that the world is in a constant state of decline that will end when Christ returns. At that time, Christ will usher in an entirely new phase of cosmic history, radically transforming the earth, its inhabitants, and the ways they interact with God. Furthermore, Christ’s return, and the transformation of the degenerate earth into the Kingdom of God are imminent (Marsden, 2006; Melton, 1996; Smith & Emerson, 1998).

Because of this eschatological focus, contemporary Protestant fundamentalism is still marked by an emphasis on separatism from “modernized” churches and social institutions.
Because the world is destined for destruction, fundamentalists tend to concentrate on maintaining righteousness within the church as opposed to engaging with the outside world. As Beal (1994), Truesdale (1994), and Keller (1999) all hypothesize, these eschatological and separatist beliefs could have some bearing on fundamentalist Christians’ views on environmental issues such as climate change. These authors suggest that separatism, for instance, could impact fundamentalists’ perceptions of “modernized” entities such as the scientific community and government, which in turn could influence perceptions of scientific and governmental claims about climate change.

Evangelicalism emerged out of the fundamentalist movement in the middle decades of the 20th century in direct response to fundamentalism’s separatism. A group of young fundamentalists forsook separatist tendencies and developed what they referred to as “engaged orthodoxy” or engagement with modern social and political institutions with the express purpose of proselytizing and advancing Christian ideals while remaining theologically conservative. Some evangelicals also hold premillennial eschatological views, but they are more likely to hold postmillennial beliefs regarding Christ’s second coming (Smith, 1990). Postmillennialism similarly regards Jesus’ return to earth as imminent, however postmillennialists have a more optimistic view of the time period in between now and then. Evangelicals, according to religious researchers, tend to believe that the earth and society are currently in a regenerative phase because of Christ’s redemptive death. Therefore, while the earth is still plagued with sin, the answer to this problem is to trust in the redemption found in Jesus Christ (Marsden, 2006). These beliefs, while somewhat different than fundamentalist perspectives on the end times, could similarly affect evangelical views of environmental issues such as climate change. For example, an evangelical might believe that we are in a regenerative phase of history, meaning climate change is an intended part of God’s ultimate plan for the redemption of the earth.

These more sanguine eschatological views also direct evangelicals to be more socially engaged, with a heavy emphasis on proselytization. Indeed, sharing one’s faith and attempting to convert others is one overriding priority of contemporary evangelicalism (Smith, 1990). “Saving souls” is also important for fundamentalists, but less of a focal point than for evangelicals due to the emphasis on separatism. With regards to climate change, evangelicals may be less skeptical of government entities and/or the scientific community. Simultaneously
though, they may feel that “sharing the gospel” trumps the “worldly” concerns of such institutions.

In summary, conservative Christianity in America is a Protestant religious movement primarily identified by a set of conservative theological tenets shared across a number of different denominations and congregations. Two main sub-populations exist within conservative Christianity, fundamentalism and evangelicalism. These two groups are unified by adherence to the beliefs that define the overarching conservative movement, but differ in their views on eschatology and emphasis on religious conversion. Both the similarities and differences in these theological emphases could affect adherents’ perceptions of climate change.

Study Sample

The purpose of this study is to explore the relationship between conservative Christians’ religious beliefs and perceptions of climate change. Consequently, the eligible population for study includes Christians currently attending an evangelical or fundamentalist church in the study area discussed below. Unfortunately, there is no generally agreed upon way to operationally define who qualifies as a conservative Christian. Similarly, there is no single method for determining which churches should be considered evangelical or fundamentalist. Therefore, this section lays out the theoretical justification for the operational definitions that guide the sampling technique used for this project.

Denominational affiliation has been the most common method used to classify Christians for the past forty years of religious research (Alwin et al., 2006). In this approach, Christian denominations are classified into categories (typically ranging from conservative to liberal) based on criteria such as theology (e.g. belief that the bible is the literal word of God), or social views (e.g. stance on abortion). Individual study participants are then grouped based on their self-reported denominational affiliation and how that denomination falls into the predetermined classification scheme (e.g. a respondent who reports belonging to a United Methodist church would most likely be classified as a mainline protestant, regardless of their personal religious beliefs or personal socio-political views).

However, this classification scheme has come under fire in the past decade for several reasons. First, many large denominations now differ as much within themselves as they differ with other denominations in terms of religious beliefs and socio-political views. Also, denominational affiliation schemes have difficulty distinguishing between racially distinct
churches. For instance, a black southern Baptist and white southern Baptist could both be classified the same denominationally, when in fact their religious and socio-political views are extremely different (Hackett & Lindsay, 2008). Additionally, Melton (1996) catalogued over 900 Christian denominations in the U.S. alone. Many of these denominations have similar names, leading to confusion and misrepresentation on surveys with limited answer choices. Finally, the number of non-denominational churches is growing rapidly in the U.S. and these churches present definitional problems for denominationally based classification schemes.

A popular alternative to denominational affiliation for religious surveys is self-identification with particular religious movements, such as conservative, evangelical, or fundamentalist, among others. Smith and Emerson (1998) found that respondents to both in-depth interviews and telephone surveys readily identified with such religious movements, and often used religious movement labels to contrast their beliefs with other Christians’ beliefs and values. Follow up studies have found that religious movement identification is an accurate predictor of both religious behavior and socio-political values (Alwin et al., 2006; Lindsay & Hackett, 2008). However, these same studies also suggest that religious movement identification and denominational affiliation measure two different aspects of an individual’s religious identity, and are therefore most effective when used in tandem.

Both Alwin and colleagues (2006) and Hackett and Lindsay (2008) suggest that the best way to classify conservative Christians may be a combination of denominational affiliation and religious movement self-identification. In this combined method approach, respondents provide their denominational affiliation, but are also asked what that affiliation means to them. This study employs a similar combined method scheme for classifying conservative Christians. More specifically, this study utilizes denominational affiliation as an initial qualifier for participant inclusion while allowing respondents to explain what their denominational and/or religious movement affiliation signifies to them.

**Study Area**

The research for this study was conducted in the Dallas, Texas metroplex due to the relatively high concentration of conservative Christians in this area. Previous research on regional differences in American religion identifies Texas as one of the Southern Crossroads states along with Arkansas, Louisiana, Missouri, and Oklahoma. Silk (2005) states that fundamentalist and evangelical Christians are more socially and politically influential in this
region than anywhere else in the United States. According to Kosmin et al. (2001) fewer than 15% of adults in the these states claimed “no religion” on a religious identification survey, with Baptist identified as the most common denominational affiliation (over 40% in most of these states).

The Dallas-Forth Worth area was specifically chosen within this region because it embodies the evangelical and fundamentalist influence these researchers describe. Dallas is home to a number of prominent national and international conservative ministries, several well-known conservative seminaries, and by some accounts, the most churches per capita of any city in the United States (DTS, 2010). Silk (2008, p. 87), refers to the metroplex as “a religious broadcasting emporium” and Christianity Today (May 21, 2002 issue) named the Dallas area the “New Capital of Evangelicalism” because it contains, “more megachurches, megaseminaries, and mega-Christian activity than any other American city” (Neff, 2002). Furthermore, Dallas-Fort Worth constitutes the most populous metroplex within the Southern Crossroads region (USCB, 2009). Simply stated, this combination of population and conservative Christian influence means that there are a lot of churches and Christians to sample from within this area.

Sampling Goals
A target number of 30 interviews was decided upon in the research design stage in an attempt to gather enough data to provide significant insight into the research questions of interest (Patterson & Williams, 2002). Additionally, a breakdown of one clergy member and four lay members from six different churches was chosen to allow for comparison both within and across various churches, within and across the broader evangelical and fundamentalist categories, and between clergy and lay members. While a larger sample size could have potentially enhanced these comparisons, the number of interviews was limited to 35 so that the amount of data did not exceed the researcher’s ability to meaningfully identify and grasp patterns within and across interviews, as each interview contains a significant volume of information (Patterson & Williams, 2002).

Sampling Technique
Within the study area, a purposive sampling technique was employed to devise a list of potential churches. Within each individual church, a similar technique was then employed to determine potential interviewees. In this case, the intent of the sampling methodology was to “represent” the population of conservative Christians by capturing the range of diversity that
previous research indicated existed between fundamentalist and evangelical churches, and then to capture demographic diversity within each church as well. The sampling was not intended to represent any particular distribution within the population in a statistically generalizable sense. Rather, the sample tried to capture the range of views that exists within the designated population with regards to climate change by intentionally including diverse participants from various points along the theological conservatism spectrum.

As discussed above, previous research indicates that fundamentalism and evangelicalism can be thought of as the two endpoints along the continuum of conservative Christianity in America today. Therefore, by sampling from both ends of this range, and intentionally seeking diversity within the churches along the way, the data collected attempts to represent the variety of perspectives and experiences within conservative Christianity on the relationship between faith and climate change. The specific demographic characteristics of this sample will be described in greater detail in the Results and Discussion chapters that follow, however the sample for this study includes multiple generations of participants, both female and male participants, participants with varying education levels, and participants who are involved in various types of work both within and outside of the church. This diversity captures a variety of different life and faith experiences, which helps account for varying religious and non-religious factors that influence beliefs about climate change, such as political views, age, employment, faith background, etc.

To identify potential churches for this study, a list of traditionally conservative denominations was prepared based on Melton’s (1996) Encyclopedia of American Religions, which catalogues and classifies over 900 Christian denominations. Within this list, denominations were separated into either an evangelical or fundamentalist category, and then a list of individual churches falling into these two categories within the study area was compiled using two Dallas area phone books. From this list, ten churches were initially selected from each category (i.e. ten fundamentalist and ten evangelical churches).

Once individual churches were selected, those churches were contacted via phone with the intent of scheduling a meeting and interview with a pastor to explain the study and request the names and contact information of potential participants from within that pastor’s congregation. From the original list of twenty churches, eight pastors agreed to an initial meeting/interview, four pastors declined participation, four churches were unable to participate in the study (either pastors were traveling and unavailable or the church did not have a fulltime
clergy member), and four churches did not respond to multiple attempts at phone contact. Meetings/interviews were scheduled with six of the eight pastors who originally agreed to participate in the study. These six pastors were chosen because they represented three fundamentalist churches and three evangelical churches from six different denominations.

These sampling methods are a slightly modified version of Smith and Emerson’s (1998) sampling technique, in which 130+ individual in-depth interviews were conducted with evangelical Christians across the nation. Sampling in this manner also employed the desired operational definition of conservative Christian by ensuring that study participants were members of a traditionally defined conservative Protestant Christian church while allowing participants to define for themselves what membership in that church means to them, and what religious beliefs they subscribe to.

After an initial meeting and interview, all six pastors originally selected to participate in the study agreed to help identify and contact four additional individuals within their congregations for interviews. Four of the six pastors readily assisted in this process, providing the desired information almost immediately. In these four churches, I chose potential participants based on the purposive sampling principles described above (e.g. male/female balance, age diversity, etc.). I then contacted and interviewed selected individuals, resulting in a total of 20 interviews (four pastors and 16 church members) from these four churches. Unfortunately, the two remaining pastors were less helpful in the follow-up sampling process. Multiple attempts to receive contact information from these pastors resulted in two additional interviews at one church and none at the other. As a result, the interview count after exhausting the original six churches totaled 24 (six pastors and 18 church members).

In an attempt to reach the sampling goal of 30 interviews, the other two pastors who had originally agreed to meet, but had not been chosen, were re-contacted. Both generously agreed again to meet and conduct an interview. After this initial meeting, one pastor assisted the researcher in securing three other interviews from within his congregation, while the other pastor failed to do so despite numerous reminder phone calls and emails (it turned out that this individual was an interim head pastor, and to his credit, was extremely busy in his current role). The addition of these two churches brought the interview count to 29 (eight pastors and twenty-one church members).

In the midst of the data collection process, I became aware of an evangelical church within the study area that had publicly addressed environmental issues in a seminar type format for both
church members and the public. Because no other church in the sample had formally addressed the relationship between conservative faith and the environment, this church seemed to provide an interesting comparison point. Therefore, a meeting/interview was scheduled with a pastor at this church who readily assisted in setting up five additional interviews with church members, including the author of the church’s official environmental statement, who was a lay member of the congregation. This additional church brought the final interview count to 35, composed of nine pastors and 27 members from nine different churches (one interview consisted of a husband/wife couple who wanted to be interviewed simultaneously, therefore the total number of interviewees is actually 36). In the process of contacting individual participants, four potential participants, each from different churches, declined to participate in the study. Three other potential interviewees did not return multiple contact attempts via the phone number provided by their church’s pastor.

Sample Limitations

One limitation of this sample is the exclusion of Pentecostal/Holiness/Charismatic churches. The Pentecostal movement certainly falls under the theologically conservative umbrella within modern day American Protestantism (Marsden, 2006; Smith & Emerson, 1998). Charismatic churches share many of the same beliefs as fundamentalist and evangelical churches, but find distinctiveness in their emphasis on “gifts of the Holy Spirit” such as speaking in tongues and prophesying. Previous religious research has found that this emphasis does create enough distinction between charismatic and other conservative Christians with regards to the ways their faith influences socio-political views to classify them as distinct from evangelicals and fundamentalists (Hackett & Lindsay, 2008; Smith & Emerson, 1998).

Due to this distinctiveness, the difference between charismatic Christians and evangelical and fundamentalist Christians are not ignored in this study. However, because of the tension between having enough participants in each religious category for meaningful comparison while not overwhelming the researcher, there simply was not room in the sample for another distinct group of conservative Christians. One additional justification for choosing fundamentalists and evangelicals over Pentecostals is that these two categories represent ends of the theologically conservative spectrum, while charismatics fall somewhere in the middle (Smith & Emerson, 1998). Therefore, while not being completely representative of Pentecostal Christians, this sampling technique should capture a broader range within conservative
Christianity than would be possible if charismatics were substituted for either evangelicals or fundamentalists.

Race distinction in the sampling method is another unfortunate limitation of this study. Only predominately white churches were considered for inclusion. Many previous studies on the relationship between religious beliefs and environmental concern failed to differentiate between white, black, and Latino churches. However in studies that did differentiate between racially and ethnically distinct churches, most notably Wolkomir, et al. (1997a), African American Protestants were found to be a unique subset of the study sample in regards to both religious beliefs and environmental values. Similarly, Greeley and Hout (2006) and Smith-Carvos (2007) both indicated that African American Protestantism constitutes a unique religious identity and religious culture, and therefore should not be lumped together with white Protestants for research purposes.

Additionally, Kelly and Kelly (2005) found that evangelical Latinos vary significantly in their religious beliefs based on both country of origin and length of residence in the United States. Kelly and Kelly concluded that these variations in religious beliefs not only differentiate Latino evangelicals from white evangelicals, but also differentiate various ethnicities within the evangelical Latino population in terms of political affiliation and voting patterns.

Therefore, racial differences between churches are not ignored in this study either. Again though, because researchers suggest that race introduces an entirely new set of complex cultural variables, this study only focuses on one group, white conservative Christians. This is primarily a limitation of the researcher’s ability, in a project with a limited timeframe, limited resources, and therefore a limited sample size, to make sense of an additional complicated variable such as racial identity and the role it plays in influencing perceptions of climate change.

**Data Collection Technique**

In breaking with the dominant research approach evident in previous literature examining correlations between religion and environmental concern, this study employed in-depth interviews to gather qualitative data on the topics of interest. As previously mentioned, past studies have struggled to measure the complex concepts of religious identity, religious beliefs, and environmental concern. In fact there is still little agreement in the literature on the appropriate measures of these concepts for survey research (Alwin et al., 2006; Hackett & Lindsay, 2008; Steensland et al., 2000; Woodrum & Wolkomir, 1997). In-depth interviews, on
the other hand, provide the opportunity for a highly contextualized exploration of these complicated concepts, allowing interviewees to describe their religious beliefs in their own words, and explain what these beliefs mean to them (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). In-depth interviews also allow for the flexibility necessary in this exploratory study to follow up on unanticipated concepts that arise in the interview process itself.

I used a semi-structured interview format to collect the qualitative data. Two interview guides were developed, one for pastors and one for church members (a copy of these guides can be found in Appendices C & D). These interview guides were composed of open-ended questions with a number of probes and follow-up questions designed to encourage depth and detail in participant responses. These guides, combined with a semi-structured approach, ensured that all of the major themes of this study were covered in every interview, while allowing me to explore unique ideas and personal contexts that emerged during each individual interview. A semi-structured interview approach also allowed for a more conversational flow in the interview process, encouraging participants to open up about these personal and politically charged topics (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006; Rubin & Rubin, 2005).

Thirty-four of the 35 interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim for subsequent analysis. One participant asked that I not audio record our conversation, so I took copious notes that were later transcribed onto a copy of the interview guide, at which point the interview was analyzed in the same fashion as the other transcripts. Interviews lasted between 16 and 86 minutes in length. The median interview length was 39 minutes and the average length was 42 minutes.

Data Analysis

Idiographic Analysis

The interviews from this research were analyzed utilizing the hermeneutic circle approach to qualitative data analysis as described by Patterson & Williams (2002). This approach suggests that data analysis is a constant examination of the relationship between various parts of the data to the whole of the data:

In an hermeneutic analysis, the “text” representing an individual actor is “read” to gain an understanding of the data in its entirety. This global understanding is then used as the basis for a closer examination of the separate parts (Kvale, 1983; Thompson et al., 1989). In turn, “the closer determination of the meaning of the separate parts may come to change the originally anticipated meaning of the totality, and again this
influences the meaning of the separate parts” (Kvale, 1983:185). To the extent that the researcher is interested in the nature of the phenomenon beyond a specific actor’s individual experience, a similar part-whole phase of analysis is used to relate the idiographic level analyses with a more nomothetic analysis (Thompson et al., 1989). (Patterson and Williams, 2002, p. 27)

The first goal of analysis in this hermeneutic process was to understand each individual interview and the relationships therein between each individual’s faith and perceptions of climate change. Patterson and Williams (2002, p. 102) refer to this process as idiographic analysis or, “the analysis of individuals as opposed to an aggregate or across individuals analysis.” I began the idiographic analysis process by choosing a single interview that represented one end of the spectrum in terms of interviewee perceptions of climate change, this interviewee’s name happened to be Margery. I read through Margery’s transcript twice to gain a sense of the overall interview, or a feeling for “the data in its entirety,” before I attempted any analysis. After these initial read-throughs, some important themes became apparent, and provided a starting place for the actual analysis.

This initial “analysis” consisted of highlighting sections of text and writing in the margins of a paper copy of the transcript. I picked out significant quotes and ideas relating to aspects of this individual’s faith, her daily life, and her views on climate change, while trying to make connections between these themes and what I saw as the overarching message of the interview. Patterson and Williams (2002, p. 47) describe this particular process as “identifying meaning units,” which they define as “segments of the interview that are comprehensible on their own,” that “provide insight into the phenomenon being investigated.”

Essentially I was looking for a coherent story within Margery’s transcript, trying to read the interview in a way that would allow me to understand where this interviewee was coming from and why her views on climate change made sense in light of her faith and daily life. Patterson (2009) refers to this approach as a subversive reading/analysis of the interview, meaning that the analyst attempts to get inside the interviewee’s world and view the phenomenon of interest through their eyes, instead of imposing the researcher’s personal perspective on the interviewee’s thoughts and experiences.

Once I felt that I had good understanding of how Margery arrived at her views on climate change based on her faith and her life experiences, I wrote up a brief description of the

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3 All interviewee names and the names of their churches have been changed to maintain confidentiality.
connections between these various aspects of the interview, citing units of text from the interview that supported my interpretation. After completing the analysis of Margery’s interview, I strategically chose four other interviews that represented different points along a spectrum of participant perceptions of climate change. I also made sure that these individuals represented four different churches. I replicated the analysis process described above for each of these four interviews: reading each transcript for an overarching message, identifying meaning units and relating them to that larger message, and writing up a brief description of the connections I saw with references to the text.

During this early analysis phase, I was fortunate enough to work through several interview transcripts with a small group of students and professors interested in qualitative research at the University of Montana. After reading each interview, we discussed any themes or quotes that the group saw as significant, any questions that arose from reading the transcript, and finally, how one might make sense of the interview as a whole. This group-thinking process aided my initial analysis immensely as other readers would pick up on significant aspects of interviews that I missed. For instance, during one group session, two other readers with Catholic backgrounds pointed out several significant quotes in one interview where the interviewee described growing up in the Catholic Church. I had not picked up on the importance of these meaning units previously, but they helped to explain aspects of the interviewee’s current faith endeavors, which clearly influenced his opinions about climate change.

Similarly, the questions that other readers raised in this setting helped to clarify my thinking about what interviewees meant by certain phrases, or how they arrived at certain opinions based on their beliefs. As an example, one group member that was unfamiliar with conservative Christianity would often ask about theological terms that interviewees were using. In order to answer her questions I would have to think critically about what the interviewee meant by a given term, often recognizing that their interpretation of that phrase was different than my own, which helped me to understand their faith perspective in greater detail.

Finally, these group-think sessions provided an opportunity for other readers to either validate or critique my overall interpretation of a given interview. I received invaluable feedback from this group about my idiographic analyses, feedback that allowed me to move confidently into the next phase of analysis: devising an organizing system and coding the interviews.
The ultimate goal of a hermeneutic analysis is a better understanding of the phenomena of interest. “The goal is for the researcher to provide a better understanding of the nature and meaning of human experience in context, independent of the ability to wholly predict or control the outcome” (Patterson and Williams, 2002, p. 29). For this study in particular, the goal was to arrive at a better understanding of the ways in which conservative Christians’ religious beliefs relate to their perceptions of climate change. In order to arrive at that understanding, and to help effectively communicate that understanding to others, Patterson and Williams (2002) suggest that researchers employ “organizing systems.”

The purpose of an organizing system is to identify predominant themes through which narrative accounts (interviews) can be meaningfully organized, interpreted, and presented. The process of developing an organizing system is the "analysis," while the final organizing system is the product of the analysis (Patterson & Williams, 2002, p. 45, emphasis original).

The organizing system that emerges from the research can then be judged based on its persuasiveness, insightfulness, and practical utility. Persuasiveness in this context means that the reader is able to make a relatively independent judgment of the appropriateness or justification for the organizing system, and its conclusions about the phenomena being studied, based on the data presented. Insightfulness simply refers to the idea that the organizing system should provide readers with an increased understanding of the subject under study. Finally, practical utility refers to the usefulness of the organizing system for, “enhancing understanding, promoting communication, or resolving conflict” (Patterson & Williams, 2002, p. 35).

After analyzing and discussing several interviews with the qualitative research group, I developed and presented an analysis scheme, or organizing system, based on the important connections between faith and climate change that I saw emerging within the first five interviews. The group agreed that my representation of the data was accurate and useful for explaining the various patterns and themes therein. This idiographic organizing system will be presented in detail in the Idiographic Results Chapter that follows. However, methodologically, this organizing system was helpful because it was specific enough to provide direction for my idiographic analysis of the remaining 30 interviews and allowed me to begin the coding process. At the same time it was also generic and flexible enough to apply across interviews and meaningfully account for differences in interviewees’ faith, daily lives, and perceptions of climate change.
It was at this point, after analyzing five diverse interviews from within my sample, developing an idiographic organizing system, and having my analysis validated by other readers, that I began coding interviews using NVivo 7 software. The coding scheme I employed was largely based on my idiographic organizing system. I created codes that allowed me to easily store data according to the overarching themes that I saw across the interviews, as well as the more specific sub-themes that came out in individual transcripts. I went back and coded the first five interviews and then analyzed and coded an additional five interviews, adding codes in NVivo as necessary when new ideas or themes emerged.

Once I reached ten coded interviews, I revisited each individual code to clarify what I intended for it to capture, and whether or not the data was fulfilling this expectation. This examination allowed me to simplify the coding scheme by deleting several unnecessary codes, combining several repetitive codes, and ensuring that the codes actually contained the appropriate data for each interview. I developed a memo as a part of this code-cleaning process that explained what I was looking for in each code from that point in the analysis forward. This memo was valuable as questions arose in the analysis of the remaining 25 interviews about where a given quote belonged. I added only one additional code after this point, which indicates that after ten interviews I had a pretty good idea of the range of views within the data and how I wanted to represent that data using the coding software.

I proceeded to read, analyze, and code the remaining 25 interviews according to the same process I started with: reading each interview twice, conducting an initial analysis on a paper copy of the transcript with highlighter and pencil, coding each interview on NVivo and then preparing a memo for each interview that explained my analysis and cited specific sections of text to support my interpretation. This process resulted in a very rich and highly contextualized idiographic explanation of each interviewee’s views on climate change in relation to other significant aspects of their faith and life experiences. This idiographic analysis process simultaneously developed a shared coding scheme across interviews, which allowed for a smooth transition from idiographic analysis to a more nomothetic examination of the data.

**Nomothetic Analysis**

Patterson and Williams (2002, p. 103) define nomothetic analysis as, “an analysis that seeks to identify patterns across individuals.” These aggregate examinations are not necessarily the goal of a hermeneutic analysis process, and in fact should only be undertaken when the
idiographic analyses suggest that “relevant themes” exist across groups of individuals or the entire sample (Patterson and Williams, 2002, p. 49). As will be explained in detail in the results chapters that follow, relevant themes, particularly relevant “faith themes” became apparent across interviews during the idiographic analysis process, suggesting that a nomothetic analysis of these themes could provide a deeper understanding of the relationship between conservative Christian faith and perceptions of climate change within this sample.

The nomothetic analysis process in hermeneutics maintains the “part-whole” focus of the idiographic analyses described above, but the nature of the parts and wholes shifts. In this particular project the nomothetic analyses sought to understand parts of individual interviews in relation to parts of other interviews that addressed similar faith and climate change themes. The ‘wholes’ of interest became the codes I had developed in NVivo that captured all of the comments all of the participants had made about a given religious belief as it related to climate change. The part-whole analysis then shifted to an examination of how one individual’s comments on God’s sovereignty and climate change, for example, related to all of the comments other participants made on the same subject.

The actual nomothetic analysis process began with an examination of the data set for patterns within and across churches and religious identities because the sampling principles were designed to account for such patterns should they exist. Codes containing participant perceptions of climate change were compared along church lines, and no clear-cut patterns were identified. The same was true with religious identities. Not finding any meaningful patterns along these lines, I examined every code that contained data addressing either a religious belief or an opinion about climate change. From this initial survey it was evident that similarities and differences in particular religious beliefs helped to explain differing perceptions of climate change within the sample. From there, I was able to narrow my focus down to the codes containing the five religious beliefs that interviewees most often related to their perceptions of climate change. There were other beliefs that participants spoke of, but did not relate to climate change. Similarly, participants shared opinions about climate change that did not explicitly relate to their faith. Therefore, the five faith themes (that corresponded with five separate codes) that were chosen were those that interviewees most frequently, and most explicitly, related to their perceptions of climate change. In other words, these five faith themes were chosen because they clearly influence the ways that numerous interviewees make sense of climate change.
Within the five codes chosen, a whole-part examination similar to the idiographic analyses was reenacted, beginning with the faith theme of eschatology. The related code that had been constructed during the idiographic analyses was entitled Eschatology and Climate Change. This code contained all of the quotes from all of the interviewees that related their views on the end times to their thoughts on climate change. At first, all of the quotes from all of the interviewees in this code were examined to gain an overall sense of what the sample as a whole was saying about the relationship between this particular religious belief and climate change. It became evident in this process that participants were discussing the same faith theme at some fundamental level, but were also choosing to focus on different aspects of that theme and applying them in different ways to climate change.

As an example, some of the 36 participants that spoke about their eschatological views in relation to climate change emphasized a concern about a one-world government. Other participants chose to emphasize different eschatological beliefs and relate them to different opinions about climate change. Therefore, the quotes within the Eschatology and Climate Change code were separated into groupings wherein participants shared a particular emphasis on eschatology as it related to climate change. The quotes within these groups were then analyzed in relation to one another to develop a more nuanced understanding of the ways that the particular eschatological emphases related to different perceptions of climate change. In this way, eschatology was first examined as a coherent theme, but it soon became evident that parts existed within this theme that were more meaningfully understood as contrasting with one another as opposed to conveying a singular message about the relationship between eschatology and climate change.

An organizing system emerged out of this nomothetic process that reflected these observations, starting with a common, broad belief in the end times that then split into different interpretations of the eschatological theme and finally divided into the various applications of those eschatological emphases to climate change. This organizing system and analysis process were then applied to the remaining four faith themes. As I conducted these nomothetic analyses, overlap between the five faith themes with regards to climate change became apparent; for this reason, the final nomothetic organizing system actually combined all five faith themes into the same diagram. In contrast with the idiographic organizing system, the nomothetic organizing system did not fully emerge until near the end of the nomothetic analysis.
process. It was not used as an analysis tool in and of itself, but rather as a summation and expression of the understanding that I arrived at about the aggregate data set.
Chapter 4: Idiographic Results and Discussion

Chapter Introduction

This chapter is the first of two results chapters examining and discussing the data that was collected and analyzed for this research project using the methods described in the previous chapter. More specifically, this chapter examines the results of the idiographic analysis process. Recall from the previous chapter that Patterson and Williams (2002, p. 102) define idiographic analysis as the “analysis of individuals as opposed to an aggregate or across individuals analysis,” and that this focus on individual interviews is the first stage in a hermeneutic analysis of qualitative data. Therefore, this chapter examines five individual interviews in detail to illustrate the results of the idiographic analysis process, demonstrate how these analyses and results speak back to the research objectives, and explain how these results set the stage for the Nomothetic Analysis Chapter that follows.

The chapter begins with a brief examination of the demographic information for the 36 participants included in the study in order to explain how and why the five individual analyses for this chapter were chosen. The chapter then discusses the “organizing system” that both emerged out of the idiographic analyses and simultaneously informed them (the concept of the organizing system within hermeneutics was introduced in the previous Methods chapter). Five idiographic analyses are then presented and discussed and the chapter concludes with some thoughts on how these five analyses inform the rest of the project.

Demographic Information

As discussed above and in the Methods chapter previously, one key feature of hermeneutic analysis is an initial focus on individual interviews. After an idiographic analysis of several interviews, it became clear that understanding each interviewee’s personal experiences helped to explain the relationship between their religious beliefs and their perceptions of climate change. This individualized focus still seemed important even after all 35 interviews were analyzed separately. The variety in both participant perceptions of climate change, and how they arrived at those perceptions based on their religious beliefs, underscored the need to account for each individual’s personal context to fully understand the ways their faith and views on climate change interacted. Therefore, the rest of this chapter is intended to demonstrate the importance of individual context with regards to the relationship between faith and climate change using the idiographic analyses of five individual interviews. These individual interviews
were chosen because they represent diversity within the sample along several different spectrums. In order to better explain how these interviews are representative of the larger sample, it is necessary to first convey some general demographic information about the sample as a whole.

The 36 participants who constitute this sample came from nine different churches in the Dallas-Fort Worth Metroplex. Four of the churches were affiliated with larger conservative denominations, three of the churches were independent fundamentalist churches, and two were non-denominational bible churches. Nine of the respondents were pastors, one from each church, and the remaining 27 respondents were lay members (at two churches interviews were conducted only with pastors for reasons explained in the Methods chapter). One interview was conducted simultaneously with a husband and wife couple, which is why there are only 35 interviews, but 36 respondents. Table 4.1 displays the pseudonyms of each of the nine churches along with the pseudonyms of the respondents from within each church. Church denomination, size, and location are also indicated in this table.

Twenty-three of the respondents were male and 13 were female. This unfortunate gender bias was primarily the result of conservative Christian views on women’s roles in the church. None of the churches had women as head pastors and only two of the churches had women in prominent leadership positions within the church. A concerted but unsuccessful effort was made at both of these churches to interview a female in a pastoral role; the unfortunate result – all nine pastors in the sample are men. Among the 27 respondents who are not pastors, 14 are male and 13 are female, indicating that a greater balance was achieved in the sample where gender diversity was available.

The churches in the sample ranged in size from 100-200 member congregations up to multiple thousands of members including one church that regularly has 5,000+ adult attendees on Sundays at three different campuses in the Dallas area. Churches also varied in location. Three churches were located near downtown Dallas, in the heart of the city, three churches were located in rural areas up to an hour and a half outside the city limits, and the remaining three churches were located in various suburban areas around Dallas-Fort Worth. Participants ranged in age from 19 to 75 and were fairly evenly distributed across ten-year age segments (i.e. 18-29, 30-39, up through 60+) (Table 4.2). Educationally, all participants had high school diplomas, five also had either an associates or technical degree, 15 had bachelor’s degrees, six
of the nine pastors had seminary degrees, and seven participants had non-seminary advanced degrees.

Participants were overwhelmingly affiliated with the Republican Party and considered themselves to be politically conservative (Table 4.3). Twenty-seven participants identified themselves as Republican, seven as independents, and two as Democrats. Interestingly the numbers were exactly the same for political ideology, 27 conservatives, 7 moderates, and 2 liberals, despite the fact that there was some shuffling between categories. This political bias was anticipated, and reveals the problem with attempting to separate religion and political ideology into independent factors when it comes to environmental issues, as previous survey-based studies have attempted to do.

Tables 4.1-4.3 below are intended to provide the reader with a sense of the backgrounds of participants in the sample. The reader need not try to follow an individual across categories. However, the names were used in the tables so that readers can refer to individual participants if they so desire, particularly those five participants discussed in the idiographic analyses that follow.
### Table 4.1: Church Name, Size, Location, and Participant Name

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Church Name</th>
<th>Cornerstone Baptist Church</th>
<th>Crossroads Memorial Church</th>
<th>Downtown Presbyterian Church</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Denomination</td>
<td>Southern Baptist</td>
<td>Independent Fundamentalist</td>
<td>Presbyterian Church in America</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church Location</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Urban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church Size*</td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Large</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pastor Name</td>
<td>Pastor Preston</td>
<td>Pastor Jacob</td>
<td>Pastor Peter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lay Members</td>
<td>Sandy</td>
<td>Julie</td>
<td>Alice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Laura</td>
<td></td>
<td>Tyler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tyler</td>
<td></td>
<td>Reese</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hannah</td>
<td></td>
<td>Agnes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church Name</td>
<td>Easton Baptist</td>
<td>Faith Bible Fellowship Church</td>
<td>Lewisville Bible Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denomination</td>
<td>Independent Fundamentalist Baptist</td>
<td>Independent Fundamentalist</td>
<td>Non-Denominational Bible Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church Location</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>Suburban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church Size*</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Medium</td>
<td>Large</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pastor Name</td>
<td>Pastor Darin</td>
<td>Pastor Frank</td>
<td>Pastor Cecil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lay Members</td>
<td>Simon</td>
<td>Margery</td>
<td>Jeremiah</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Daniel</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Jamison</td>
<td></td>
<td>Shelly</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Drew &amp; Lily*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church Name</td>
<td>Mosaic</td>
<td>Redeemer Lutheran Church</td>
<td>Trinity Bible Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denomination</td>
<td>Loosely Southern Baptist</td>
<td>Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod</td>
<td>Non-denominational Bible Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church Location</td>
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<td>Urban</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Medium</td>
</tr>
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<td>Pastor Name</td>
<td>Pastor Jason</td>
<td>Pastor Barry</td>
<td>Pastor Randall</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lay Members</td>
<td>Max</td>
<td>Janica</td>
<td>Roger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Heather</td>
<td>Dana</td>
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*Church size is broken into three categories: small, medium, and large. Small indicates less than 500 members, Medium 500-1000 members, and Large 1000+ members. Member estimates are based on interviews with pastors at each church.

*Drew and Lily were the couple that conducted a simultaneous interview; they are treated separately in the demographic tables that follow.*
### Table 4.2: Participant Age and Education Level

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age</th>
<th>18-29 (17%)</th>
<th>30-39 (31%)</th>
<th>40-49 (19%)</th>
<th>50-59 (17%)</th>
<th>60+ (17%)</th>
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### Highest Level of Education Completed

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<tr>
<th>High School Diploma (8%)</th>
<th>Associates or Technical Degree (14%)</th>
<th>Bachelor's Degree (42%)</th>
<th>Seminary Degree (17%)</th>
<th>Non-Seminary Advanced Degree (19%)</th>
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<tr>
<td>Political Affiliation</td>
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<td>Conservative (75%)</td>
<td>Moderate (19%)</td>
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The Idiographic Organizing System

Before diving into the analyses, it will be helpful to explain the organizing system apart from interview data to help clarify the terminology used in the organizing system and its structure. The organizing system found in Figures 1a and 1b is the product of a dialogue between the interview data and a small body of literature from psychological and marketing research that examines consumer experiences of advertising using interpretive methods and qualitative data (Csikszentmihalyi & Beattie, 1979; Little, 1989; McCraken, 1987). Early idiographic analysis of interviews indicated that conservative Christians were drawing on shared religious beliefs, such as a belief in God’s sovereignty or views on the end times, to make sense of climate change in light of their faith. So similarities were emerging between interviews with regards to the faith tenets that participants were talking about, however they were interpreting and applying those beliefs in a variety of different ways to climate change, resulting in a variety of different views on climate change within the sample. It soon became apparent that individuals were applying these relatively similar religious beliefs in an assortment of different ways based on their past and present life and faith contexts. Therefore, in order to understand how individuals were arriving at their conclusions about climate change, it was necessary to take into account their faith and life histories and how those shaped not only their current faith but also their life endeavors.

This focus on individual context reminded me of a hermeneutic analysis exemplar described in Patterson and Williams (2002). In conducting the analysis of an interview with a vacationer, Patterson and Williams found that this individual’s experience on an island in the Great Barrier Reef only made sense when his “personal project” was identified, and the interview interpreted from within the context of that project. This emphasis on personal context and “personal projects” seemed applicable to what I was seeing in my data at that point, so I began to research these concepts in greater detail. The personal project concept has been discussed in a number of articles in psychology and marketing journals (i.e. Csikszentmihalyi & Beattie, 1979; Little, 1989; McCraken, 1987), however for the purposes of this discussion, the concept is nicely summarized by Mick and Buhl (1992).

Mick and Buhl contend that individuals attempt to maintain coherent life stories. In order to do so, we develop *life themes* that help us to make sense of the complex events that happen to and around us everyday.
Definitive life themes come to represent profound existential concerns that the individual addresses – consciously or not – in the course of daily events... Commonly, sociocultural background and transformational experiences give rise to life themes, for example, family financial conditions and interpersonal relations, early traumatic events, and schooling (Mick & Buhl, 1992, p. 318).

These life themes are relatively stable over time and we use them to establish hierarchical systems of meaning in our daily lives. In other words, when we encounter something new, our life themes, consciously or unconsciously, help us to determine how this new thing makes sense in the context of our life story. Therefore, when researchers attempt to understand why someone feels a certain way about an advertisement, it is critical from the life theme perspective to realize that a person’s reaction to an ad has just as much to do with their life themes as it does with the ad itself.

**Life (or personal) projects** on the other hand are sets of actions that individuals take based on their life themes. These actions, such as one’s job or hobbies are ultimately manifestations of one’s life themes. For instance one of the individuals studied by Csikszentmihalyi and Beattie (1979) had been hit by a car as a boy. He and his family, who were recent immigrants to the United States, had been taken advantage of by the wealthy doctor who was driving the car because they did not understand English. One of his life themes thereafter became minority justice, and one of his life projects that reflected this theme was becoming a lawyer who worked for minority rights, specifically regarding health care. Life projects are much more fluid than life themes and can change often. Mick and Buhl (1992) emphasize that while people have some choice in establishing both life themes and life projects, cultural context plays a big role in determining the options available for individuals to choose from.

These life theme and life project concepts form the theoretical basis (or forestructure of understanding – see section on *Hermeneutic Epistemology* in the previous Methods Chapter) for the organizing system found in Figures 4.1a and 4.1b. The individual’s personal history, including their faith background, education, and significant life events, lays a foundation for their current faith and life themes. These themes are conceptualized according to the definition from Mick and Buhl (1992) above; they are ways that the interviewees make sense of the world and how they answer the big existential questions in their lives. Faith themes include core faith tenets that individuals utilize to make sense of the big questions, while life themes vary by
individual but include concepts like political or economic ideology, or the importance of family. The separation between life and faith themes is a modification of the ideas found in Mick and Buhl (1992) specifically for this project. As will be seen in the data, this separation is somewhat exaggerated in Figure 4.1a because life and faith themes are often closely intertwined. However the separation is useful in this study because it emphasizes the contributions that religious beliefs make to these participants’ perceptions of climate change over and above the life themes that they may share with others who are not conservative Christians. Additionally, this separation of faith and life themes helps demonstrate the consistency of faith themes within the sample while highlighting the variety in life themes as well as variety in how shared faith themes get interpreted and applied to perceptions of climate change. As will be argued in the nomothetic chapter that follows, the conservative Christians in this sample have a fairly limited number of faith themes to choose from when making sense of climate change, however life themes can potentially vary within the sample as much as the participants’ personal backgrounds vary. Therefore, participant faith themes are relatively limited in this study and consistent at some level across interviews.

These faith and life themes then combine to influence an individual’s current faith and life projects. There are a variety of possibilities for these projects; like life themes, faith and life projects are less limited than faith themes in this context and include things like current religious involvement and/or current job. These projects are important because they often provide the setting in which people have encountered information and discourses regarding climate change. Therefore, these projects are not only manifestations of faith and life themes, but also contribute in and of themselves to individuals’ perceptions of climate change.

While faith and life themes and projects are important for understanding participant perceptions of climate change, these perceptions are also based on the existing discourses about climate change that individuals encounter. Climate change is a relatively specific environmental issue. Because of this specificity, participants have to base their opinions about climate change on a limited number of narratives about the phenomenon that exist in American culture today. In other words, the discourses on climate change constrain what participants hear and see about the topic. Furthermore, climate change is a difficult phenomenon to “experience” because climate is defined as “the long term statistical average of weather conditions” (Burroughs, 2007, p. 346). People can note changes in weather, but observing changes in long term, statistical averages is much more difficult. Therefore, the interviewees
are responding to available narratives and commentaries about climate change rather than the phenomenon itself. As a result, participants are largely limited to the available narratives on climate change to decide what this phenomena means to them. However, participants exercise freedom in the way that they either incorporate or disregard popular narratives about climate change within the context of their own lives. As a result, climate change discourses have been included in the organizing system.

The discussions of climate change discourses in the analyses that follow are not intended to serve as a discourse analyses. With only a few exceptions, participants did not discuss specific sources of information about climate change, but referred to generalized sources such as “the news,” “the internet,” or “the newspaper.” Additionally, the time frame in which participants encountered these sources was typically not specified. Essentially, because this project did not set out to conduct a discourse analysis, the data necessary to do so was not collected (with one clear exception, Dana, whose idiographic analysis is included in this chapter). Over the course of the interview analyses it became apparent though that participants had encountered, and were basing their opinions on, similar popular commentaries about climate change. Therefore, the idiographic analyses that follow attempt to acknowledge that climate change discourses play a role in shaping participant opinions about the topic, but they do not attempt to provide an in-depth analysis of those discourses apart from participant encounters with them.

These six elements, personal history, faith and life themes, faith and life projects, and climate change discourses, all come together to more effectively explain how an individual feels about climate change than any one element does alone. The perceptions of climate change category includes perceived causes of climate change, concern about climate change, perceived consequences of climate change, and participant reactions to climate change as a result of these perceptions.

While there are two figures presented below, they represent the same organizing system. Figure 4.1a is a linear presentation of the organizing system that allows for a cleaner presentation of individual analyses using text boxes. The lines connecting the boxes in Figure 4.1a are supposed to represent relationships between the various elements, but not necessarily causality. Figure 4.1b on the other hand is more reflective of the actual relationship I perceive between the six elements in the organizing system in that they all interact with one another to some extent. Personal histories lay the foundation for life and faith themes which together
influence life and faith projects; life and faith projects combine to influence encounters with and perceptions of climate change discourses, and ultimately conclusions about climate change itself; but all seven categories overlap and causality is not perfectly linear. One way to think about the two figures in relation to one another is almost as if they are architectural sketches of the same structure from two different perspectives. Figure 4.1a would be a cut-away of the structure lying on its side, while Figure 4.1b would be an overhead view of the structure stood up with personal history as the base and perceptions of climate change as the roof.
Figure 4.1a: Idiographic Organizing System (Linear Representation)

- **Faith Themes**
  - Theological Tenets of Conservative Christianity: i.e. Biblical Inerrancy, Eschatology, God’s Sovereignty, Evangelism

- **Life Themes**
  - Stable life emphases outside of conservative theology: i.e. Science (Roger), Health Issues (Sandy, Dana), Political Ideology (Max)

- **Faith Projects**
  - Current Church Involvement

- **Life Projects**
  - Current Job
  - Family

- **Climate Change Discourses**
  - Accessible Narratives about Climate Change

- **Perceptions of Climate Change**
  - Causes
  - Concern
  - Response

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Figure 4.1b: Idiographic Organizing System (Concentric Representation)
As previously mentioned, this organizing system arose out of a dialogue between literature on life themes and projects and the data itself. In other words, this organizing system is not a preconceived model that the interviews were attempting to test. I was not particularly familiar with the life theme and project literature prior to conducting these interviews, and did not ask participants questions with this organizing system in mind. Rather, the importance of life themes and projects became evident after all of the data was collected and during the analysis process. Therefore, the usefulness of the life theme and project concept in explaining participant perceptions of climate change emerged during the analysis of the interviews. The participants themselves chose to emphasize their life and faith themes and projects as they explained to me how they made sense of climate change. The participants themselves chose which themes or projects were important to them and their understanding of climate change. In reality then, the organizing system for these interviews actually emerged in reverse order of the way it is presented in Figure 4.1a. Participants would tell me about their faith and their perceptions of climate change, and over the course of that conversation, they would explain how their perceptions of climate change made sense to them in light of their faith and life themes and projects.

The interview data cited throughout both results chapters is presented in a tabled format in Appendix A with reference numbers directing the reader to pertinent quotes. For instance, Darin’s data table is T4.1 and his quotes are numbered in the order that they appear in the narrative analysis, not necessarily in the chronological order of the original interview. (T4.1-1) refers the reader to Chapter 4, Table 1, Quote 1, (T4.1-2) to Chapter 4, Table 1, Quote 2, etc. Each individual analysis is accompanied by its own quote table. This format has been chosen in order to provide the reader with greater access to the data in an attempt to increase the transparency of the analyses. The table format allows more data to be incorporated into the results section without disrupting the narrative flow of the analyses, but also provides the reader with enough raw data to make an independent judgment of the analyses. Quotes included in the tables in both results chapters play both an informative and justificatory role. Some quotes are simply intended to convey information about the individual (e.g. how long they have attended a certain church). In the justificatory cases though, quotes are presented as a basis for the analytical claims made about the respondent (e.g. Sally’s views on climate change result from her upbringing in an outdoorsy family). In all five idiographic analyses, extended quotations are used to provide the reader with as much context as possible to demonstrate that
the interpretations of quotes were warranted and to ensure that concepts are not reduced to labels stripped of their broader meaning.

Five idiographic analyses were chosen from the pool of 35 to show the importance of considering individual context when examining the relationship between conservative religious beliefs and perceptions of climate change. Darin, Roger, Sandy, Dana, and Max (in the order presented below) were chosen for several reasons. First, they represent diversity across a number of important categories found within the sample and presented in Tables 4.1-4.3. These five participants come from five different churches and four different denominations. They represent an age range of 28 to 63 years old, and they all have different educational backgrounds. Politically, they represent the sample with 4 out of 5 participants considering themselves conservatives and Republicans. And perhaps most importantly, they represent a wide range of views on various aspects of climate change: Darin is skeptical that climate change exists at all; Roger believes that climate change exists, but is an entirely natural process; Sandy believes that climate change exists and humans are driving these changes; Dana believes that climate change exists and humans have a limited impact; and Max believes that climate change exists and humans play some role, but he is unwilling to say how much impact humans have.

These individuals were also chosen because they each exemplify different interactions between the seven components of the organizing system. Darin, for instance, talked about climate change almost entirely within the context of his faith; therefore his analysis emphasizes the faith side of the organizing system, focusing on Darin’s faith themes and projects as they influence his interaction with contemporary discourses on climate change. Unlike Darin, Roger spoke about climate change primarily within the context of his scientific background, emphasizing an important life theme that influences his perceptions of climate change, while downplaying the ways in which his faith influences his views. Therefore, Roger’s analysis focuses on a tension between his faith themes and a science related life theme, and how he reconciles this tension to arrive at his conclusions about climate change. Side by side, Darin’s and Roger’s analyses also demonstrate how a belief in biblical inerrancy can influence perceptions of scientific issues like climate change despite these two participants having drastically different scientific training.

Sandy spoke frequently in her interview of the ways that her struggle with several chronic illnesses shapes her perspectives on the environment in general, and climate change in particular. Her analysis focuses heavily on the personal background aspect of the organizing
system, how that background informs her current life and faith themes, and how those themes make her receptive to climate change discourses that other interviewees reject. Dana actually shares some background with Sandy in terms of dealing with serious illness, and as a result emphasizes some of the same faith themes. However, Dana’s interpretation and application of those faith themes differs from Sandy’s, which leads Dana to interact with some different discourses about climate change than Sandy, and ultimately arrive at a different conclusion about the existence and causes of climate change. Side by side then, Sandy and Dana also illustrate some of the variation that exists within shared faith themes, and how faith themes and projects can predispose people to accept certain climate change discourses over others.

Max related his perceptions of climate change back to every other aspect of the idiographic organizing system very articulately. Max clearly explained to me how his past religious and life experiences had influenced his faith and life themes, how those themes led him to his current faith and life projects, how in the context of those projects he had encountered contemporary discourses on climate change, and based on those encounters, how he arrived at some unusual conclusions about climate change. In other words, I feel that Max fleshes out each of the seven parts of the organizing system and how they relate to one another. Max was also the most environmentally aware and concerned participant in the sample. Compared with the other idiographic analyses then, Max demonstrates the range of ways that conservative theological tenets were interpreted within this sample to arrive at widely different conclusions about general environmental awareness and concern, and the issue of climate change in particular.

These preliminary descriptions are intended to provide the reader with a roadmap, or some idea of what to expect and what to be looking for in the analyses themselves. The most helpful way I have found to read these analyses is to have a separate copy of each of the three parts of each analysis (the narrative, the organizing system, and the quote table) laid out side by side, so that fluid comparisons can be made between them for each interviewee.
Idiographic Analyses

Pastor Darin

The first idiographic analysis explores an interview conducted with Darin, a 47 year old pastor at a small, independent, fundamentalist Baptist church located in a rural area southwest of Dallas that was rapidly being swallowed up by a nearby suburb. The organizing system for Darin’s interview can be found below in Figure 4.2. I chose Darin’s interview because he places a heavy emphasis on the faith side of the organizing system, demonstrating clear connections between his life history, his two current faith themes, his current faith project, how his faith project influences his encounter with climate change discourses, and how all of these factors contribute to his views on climate change. I also chose Darin’s interview because of the conclusion that he arrives at about climate change; he essentially does not believe that climate change is happening, much less that humans are changing the climate. Three other interviewees in this study also felt that climate change was not happening. Including Darin, these four interviewees represent one end of the spectrum of perceptions about the existence and causes of climate change within the sample. Finally, I included Darin’s interview in this chapter because he is a pastor. His views in this interview do not represent the other pastors in the sample by any means, but the interviews chosen for this chapter were selected in part to represent the range in the various demographic variables explored in Tables 4.1-4.3 above. The ratio of pastors in the sample was 9:36, or 1:4, which is replicated by the one pastor and four church members examined in this chapter. The analysis of Darin’s interview presented below follows the path of the organizing system; it begins with an examination of Darin’s background, and then moves into Darin’s faith themes of reading the bible literally and finding truth for himself. The analysis then shows how his current faith project of being a pastor affects his encounters with climate change discourses, and how all of these factors combine to explain his perceptions of climate change.

The personal history that Darin discusses in this interview focuses almost exclusively on his faith. Darin has been a conservative Christian for almost his entire life, and similarly a pastor in conservative churches for most of his adult life (T4.1-1). Darin attended a conservative bible college, a conservative seminary, and was working on a master’s degree from a different conservative seminary at the time of the interview (T4.1-1, T4.1-2). In other words, Darin has been immersed in a Christian community that views the bible as inerrant and authoritative for
his entire life, including all of his post-secondary education. This perspective and emphasis on the bible has been a constant theme of his faith and education.

Based on this life history, Darin has adopted a very literalistic approach to reading the bible (T4.1-3, T4.1-4). In fact, he says that a belief in biblical inerrancy is the defining feature of his faith. Darin states that he considers himself a fundamentalist, which to him signifies that he interprets the bible literally. He contrasts this perspective on the bible with his understanding of the term evangelical, whereby people mean that the bible preserves the principles of the word of God, but not the literal words themselves. Darin goes on to state that while other people might classify him as an evangelical based on the worship style (meaning the worship style found in his services), he would more appropriately be classified as a fundamentalist because he believes that the bible literally contains the words of God. Therefore, a literal interpretation of the bible is the most important faith theme for Darin in this interview, and is the first faith theme listed in the organizing system below. Darin explains that his belief in the inerrancy of the bible means that he views the bible as completely accurate in describing historical and scientific matters, and for any other source of information to be deemed true, it must align with the biblical account (T4.1-4).

In quote T4.1-3, Darin also demonstrates some of the difficulty with religious labels utilized in previous survey research. He is hesitant to use any terms to describe his faith and does not feel that any label captures the fullness of his beliefs and worship practices. Darin ultimately uses four different terms to categorize himself; fundamentalist, which he feels most accurately reflects his theological tendencies, but carries negative connotations (which he does not elaborate); evangelical which he says most other people would classify him as due to the “contemporary” style of “praise and worship” at his church, but this term is not accurate theologically; conservative theologically which he uses to avoid the negative connotation of fundamentalist; and progressive which he uses to describe the worship style found in his church services. Darin’s interpretations of these terms do not necessarily have any influence on his perceptions of climate change in and of themselves, however this quote highlights the confusion surrounding religious classifications today. This confusion was a common theme, and is also explored in several of the idiographic analyses that follow as well as in the nomothetic results chapter.

While biblical inerrancy is the focal theme in Darin’s interview, he does describe another faith theme in the context of his personal history. As a young man, Darin remembers feeling as
Though God would help him discern truth in the world for himself, based on the bible alone, and not on the opinions of others (T4.1-5). I have labeled this faith theme Truth Seeking in Figure 4.2. Truth seeking for Darin is obviously closely related to his interpretation of the bible, because the bible is the starting point for determining what is true (T4.1-4, T4.1-5). However, truth seeking also contributes uniquely to Darin’s current faith projects and his views on climate change. To demonstrate how, I have included Darin’s story about a study he did for a sermon regarding a passage in the book of Joshua (T4.1-5, T4.1-6). In these two quotes, Darin relates the way that he makes sense of the universe as explained by science, but interpreted through his reading of the bible. Darin believes that the bible is the starting place for discerning all truth; from there we can make sense of the claims of science as they either line up or fail to line up with the bible. In other words, in making true statements about history and science, the bible tells us what evidence to search for regarding historical and scientific claims. Darin enjoys doing independent research about topics concerning science and the bible, and feels that as long as his views are grounded in faith, he will be able to determine the “facts” on any topic (T4.1-4, T4.1-5).

Darin’s primary faith project at the moment is pastoring Easton Baptist Church. One of his primary roles as the head pastor at Easton is, of course, preaching on Sundays. Darin’s faith themes become clearly manifest in this faith project. As just described, Darin not only feels comfortable preaching about the relationship between scientific and biblical explanations of the world (T4.1-6), he feels called to do so (T4.1-7). If there is a topic that Darin feels his parishioners are concerned or confused about, he believes that God wants him to speak on that topic. Interestingly, shortly before my interview with Darin, he felt called specifically to preach about biblical, versus political, versus scientific perspectives on global warming. He was the only pastor in the sample who had explicitly addressed climate change in a sermon. He did so because “the Lord laid on my heart this topic,” illustrating that Darin believes that God still actively engages with him and his faith community, providing direction for them as they seek truth. In preparation for this sermon, Darin did research on global warming, and it was in this context that he encountered the various discourses on climate change that help inform his overall perspective on the topic. Darin’s sermon preparation provides one specific example of how an individual’s faith themes led to a faith project that influenced encounters with the topic of climate change. Darin’s faith themes of seeking truth and biblical inerrancy even in the realm of science influenced his choice of sermon topic, and sermons are part of his faith project of
pastoring. This sermon, in turn, led him to conduct research on, and form opinions about, the topic of climate change.

In keeping with his faith theme of interpreting the bible literally, Darin’s encounters with climate change discourses begin and end with the bible (T4.1-7). He says he started researching climate change by investigating what the bible had to say about the topic, particularly in comparison to what he felt political figures were saying about climate change, and then ultimately what science was saying about climate change. Darin says that his reading of the bible indicated to him that various natural disasters, seasonal changes, and even dramatic climate changes have occurred naturally throughout history (T4.1-7). Darin primarily used the internet to conduct his research on the scientific side of global warming. He indicates that he found contradictory information about the amount of warming that scientists say has taken place, and that some areas of the world actually seem to be cooling (T4.1-8). Because of these inconsistencies in the science, Darin wanted to learn more about the accuracy of the thermometers used to measure global temperature (T4.1-8). He was unable to find this information, and this adds to his skepticism about the existence of global warming. Darin goes on in T4.1-8 to explain several theories of his own regarding potential causes of an observed rise in global temperatures. I attribute these personal theories to Darin’s truth seeking faith theme, and his belief that he can discern truth if he starts from a biblical perspective and works from there to make sense of science.

Darin’s encounters with climate change discourses on the internet (T4.1-8) lead him to question whether or not global warming exists at all (T4.1-9). The inconsistencies in the science that he came across make him skeptical of the reliability of those studies. Furthermore, he is inclined to question any science that is not biblically based because he thinks that scientists are not motivated first and foremost by a belief in scripture, but rather by job security and money. Most importantly though, scientific results simply are not trustworthy like the bible for Darin, because the bible contains infallible facts conveyed and preserved by God (T4.1-3, T4.1-4). Finally, Darin perceived at least some climate change discourses to be promoting a fear that humans will destroy themselves and the earth (T4.1-10, T4.1-11). He sees this popular fear being portrayed by Hollywood movies like I am Legend. It is this perceived discourse about climate change that Darin reacts the most strongly to, because he feels that these ideas of earthly destruction run counter to the biblical descriptions of the end times (that is, his eschatological beliefs) (T4.1-7 – T4.1-11).
Based on his reading of the book of 2 Peter, Darin believes that the end of the world will be much more violent than the predictions he has encountered describing the consequences of global warming (T4.1-10, T4.1-11). This means that global warming is not part of the prophetic accounts of the end times. Furthermore, God will be completely in control of the end times and has specified “there’s at least 1,007 years left,” so humans do not have to worry about the earth being destroyed “prematurely” by some human caused event like global warming. This is an important point of emphasis for Darin in his pastoral role; he wants to provide his congregants with peace of mind, and emphasize to them that being in a “relationship with God” is more important than anything else, because when the end times do come, faith in God will be the only hope of survival (T4.1-7, T4.1-10). The priority for any Christian, therefore, should be salvation. Once in a relationship with God, Christians need not worry about the end times, much less hysteria about humans causing the end of the earth through global warming (T4.1-11). The actual sermon that Darin preached regarding climate change focused on this contrast between the biblical account of the end times, and what Darin perceives as the popular contemporary fear about the end of the world.

Darin’s sermon ultimately reflects his overall perceptions of climate change, which result from the interaction of his faith themes and projects with the climate change discourses that he encountered while doing research for his sermon. Overall Darin is skeptical that climate change even exists. If it does exist, he believes that it is part of a natural process of change that the bible describes historically; humans may have some minor impacts, but they are not significant in the long run. Either way, Darin does not feel that climate change is anything to be concerned about because of his confidence that God is in control, and particularly in control of the end of the earth.

Darin’s emphases on God’s sovereignty, or God being in control, eschatology, or his views about the end times, and evangelism, or people coming to faith in God, could be classified as faith themes unto themselves, and are classified as such in some of the analyses that follow. However, I feel that in this interview, these ideas are so closely tied to Darin’s emphasis on biblical inerrancy that this one faith theme nicely summarizes the thrust of Darin’s beliefs with regards to his perceptions of climate change. It is worth noting that Darin mentions these faith themes though, because they come up frequently in other interviews.

In summary, Darin’s interview demonstrates that his personal history of growing up in a conservative Christian context provided the foundation for his faith themes of biblical
inerrancy and truth seeking. These two faith themes in turn influence his current faith project of pastoring, and within pastoring, preaching about issues like climate change. Darin encountered several climate change discourses through this faith project of preaching. Darin then applied his understanding of the bible to these discourses to arrive at his current perceptions of climate change. These perceptions essentially allow him to dismiss climate change as unimportant, particularly compared with other faith priorities like telling people about salvation in God. In some ways, Darin supports previous survey research on religion and environmentalism in that his emphasis on the bible leads to a lack of concern about environmental issues. However, the connections between his emphasis on the bible and his lack of concern are made more explicit here than in survey research. Additionally, Darin only represents one end of the spectrum of views on climate change in the sample. The significance of this will become more apparent after the analyses that follow establish some other viewpoints along this same spectrum, and show how a shared faith theme like biblical inerrancy can be interpreted and applied in different ways to make sense of climate change.

Compared with the other interviews examined in this chapter, Darin’s interview focused almost exclusively on the faith side of the organizing system. In some ways, this makes Darin’s interview the most straightforward for analysis. All of the interviewees that follow place more emphasis on the life theme and project side of the organizing system, and reveal that life and faith themes and projects often overlap and interact to influence perceptions of climate change. Unfortunately, because Darin never responded to my follow-up requests for names of church members, I was unable to interview anyone else at his church to learn about their thoughts on his sermon about climate change and how that sermon influenced their perceptions of climate change.
**Personal History**
- Raised in a theologically conservative Christian home
  - Lifelong Christian
  - All post-secondary education at conservative Christian schools
  - Remembers intense time of prayer where he felt that God would help him discern truth in the world

**Faith Themes**
- Biblical Inerrancy
- Truth Seeking

**Secondary Themes**
- God’s Sovereignty
- Eschatology
- Evangelism

**Faith Projects**
- Head Pastor at Easton Baptist Church
  - Preaches about “biblical” views on current societal and scientific issues

**Life Themes**
- In this interview, the significant themes are all found on the faith side

**Life Project**
- Again, Darin's projects are focused on the faith side in this interview

**Perceptions of Climate Change**
- Skeptical of whether or not climate change is even happening
  - Not concerned about it at all
  - Dubious of climate science
  - Has his own theories about potential causes
  - Actively preaches that people should not be concerned about climate change

**Climate Change Discourses**
- Warming is debatable
- Accuracy of measurement is questionable
- Political figures and scientists are unreliable
Roger

The second idiographic analysis examines an interview conducted with Roger, a 63 year old member of a medium sized, non-denominational bible church near downtown Dallas. I chose this interview in part because of Roger’s conclusions about climate change; he thinks that the climate may be changing, but if it is, it is the result of entirely natural processes. Roger shares this broad perspective on the existence and causes of climate change with 11 other interviewees in this study, or a little less than 1/3 of the sample. Additionally, Roger downplays the role that faith plays in his perceptions of climate change. However I believe that this interview contains evidence that his faith does influence his perceptions of climate change, even if he does not perceive this connection. Therefore, this analysis of Roger’s interview demonstrates how faith can play an important role in a conservative Christian’s perceptions of climate change, even if that role is largely denied or unrecognized.

I also chose this interview because Roger speaks frequently about science and the role that science plays in his conclusions about climate change. Simultaneously though, Roger emphasizes his belief in the inerrancy of the bible, and this faith theme plays a critical role in shaping his thoughts on climate change by influencing his perspective on science. Thirty-one of the 36 interviewees in this study talked about science as they saw it relating to their faith and their perceptions of climate change, even though none of the interview questions asked about this specifically. This indicates that the relationship between faith and science is a salient topic for participants in this study when it comes to making sense of climate change. Roger represents this science/faith discussion well because he has two degrees in physics and engineering, and worked as an engineer throughout his career. Therefore, Roger represents one extreme in this sample in terms of scientific training, and at the same time demonstrates how influential certain beliefs can be with regards to conservative Christian responses to scientific information. The interaction between faith and science across interviews is examined in greater detail in the nomothetic results chapter that follows. However, an immediate comparison can be made between Roger and Darin with regards to faith and science to show how influential shared faith themes can be regardless of vastly different scientific backgrounds. As with Darin’s analysis, this analysis follows the organizing system (Figure 4.3) from left to right, beginning with Roger’s life history.

Roger spent less time in his interview discussing his faith history (as one component of his personal history) than any of the other four respondents examined in this idiographic
chapter. The lone statement that he makes conveys that he essentially considers himself a life-long Christian, having grown up in a conservative, charismatic denomination and having been baptized in high school (T4.2-1). The significance of Roger’s faith background is primarily that he was raised in a faith community that more than likely considered the bible to be inerrant.

Compared to his faith history, Roger places much more emphasis in this interview on his non-faith background, particularly his education. Roger has both a bachelor’s and master’s degree in engineering, and spent most of his working career with a leading technology firm, making use of his engineering education (T4.2-2, T4.2-3). Six other interviewees in this sample had non-seminary advanced degrees, however only one other participant, Marcus, had an advanced science degree; the five other non-seminary advanced degrees were all business related. Marcus has an M.S. degree in environmental science, and did feel that his education impacted his perceptions of climate change; however he did not talk about his science background to the extent that Roger does. Therefore, Roger is one of the two most scientifically educated participants in this study, and certainly the more emphatic of the two about the affect that his scientific training has on his perceptions of climate change.

Roger’s personal history sets the stage for his faith and life themes. The primary faith theme that Roger discusses in this interview is his belief in the inerrancy of the bible. When asked to describe his faith, Roger classifies himself as both evangelical, meaning someone who tells others about Jesus, and biblical, meaning that he reads the bible literally and takes what he finds there on faith (T4.2-4, T4.2-5). This self-identification indicates that evangelism and biblical inerrancy are two key themes of Roger’s faith. These two themes were undoubtedly influenced by Roger’s upbringing in a conservative Church of Christ setting, but he makes these connections less explicit than other interviewees, like Darin, who stated that a literal interpretation of the bible has been a consistent theme of his faith since his youth. A third important faith theme for Roger in this interview is God’s sovereignty, or the idea that God is in control of the universe, which he discusses directly in relation to climate change (T4.2-6; I will return to this quote later in the analysis as it also relates to Roger’s perceptions of climate change)

As a result of Roger’s education and career in engineering (T4.2-2, T4.2-3), I have labeled one of Roger’s key life themes in this interview as scientific thinking (T4.2-7). This quote again jumps ahead to Roger’s perceptions of climate change, however it also reveals the importance of Roger’s education in this process. He refers to himself as a scientist, a nuclear engineer, who has based his judgment of climate change on scientific data. Another important life theme for
Roger in this interview is conservative ideology (T4.2-8). Roger states that he is “pretty conservative,” and, as revealed through excerpts presented below, this theme comes up again as he discusses the sources of information on climate change that he deems valid. However, before getting to those sources, a closer look at the intersection of these two life themes with Roger’s faith theme of biblical inerrancy provides some critical insights necessary for making sense of this interview as a whole.

With two engineering degrees focused on physics, Roger was undoubtedly instructed in scientific theories on the origins of the universe. However, several times in the interview, he insinuates that he believes literally in the creation story found in the book of Genesis (T4.2-9, T4.2-10, T4.2-11). Roger’s faith theme of reading the bible literally appears to trump his life theme of scientific knowledge when it comes to existential questions about how the universe came to be. This view of the relationship between faith and science is not unique within this sample. In fact, as previously mentioned, that is part of the reason that I chose to highlight Roger’s interview. Roger believes that the bible is true and without error, or, as he would say, you have to take on faith what is in the bible (T4.2-5). Therefore, other explanations of the world, particularly scientific explanations, must line up with the bible to be valid. The bible trumps science because the bible is a divine work, while scientific observations, hypotheses, and theories are human works and therefore prone to error and correction. This prioritizing of faith over science is interesting because when it comes to Roger’s views on climate change, he emphasizes his scientific background to justify his opinions even though it is clear that his faith also plays a critical role in his thought process. Before I jump to Roger’s perceptions of climate change though, it is important to take into consideration his current faith and life projects.

Two of Roger’s current faith and life projects center around the fact that he is retired and no longer a practicing professional engineer with IBM (T4.2-12, T4.2-3). He now works part time at the church as the business manager. Roger is also significantly involved with the church outside of his part time duties, participating in church groups and volunteering to fix computers when needed (T4.2-13). Therefore, I have assigned Roger two faith projects in the organizing system found in Figure 4.3: active membership at his church, and part time employment at the church. As a result of these two projects, Roger spends significant time and energy at the church. These faith projects show that the church plays an important role in Roger’s retirement; he spends a lot of time in his conservative faith community now, as opposed to being an active member of the engineering community. Much of his identity at this point in his life is wrapped
up in his involvement with the church. While Roger no longer appears to be an active member of the scientific community, within his role at the church, Roger is still viewed as a science and technology expert. He is consulted for computer problems, and as Randall, the pastor at his church says, people ask Roger about scientific issues like climate change and consider his opinion authoritative based on his education and work background (T4.2-14). It also appears from both Roger’s and Randall’s description of Roger’s role at the church that he enjoys being consulted about science and technology questions and does not hesitate to share his expertise.

On the life project side of the organizing system, Roger’s only scientific project in this interview seems to be reading engineering magazines (T4.2-15). Again, Roger no longer appears to be an active member of the scientific community, and reading “popular” engineering magazines seems to be the only way that Roger remains active in professional engineering at this point. Additionally, Roger states that he is an active member of the Republican Party, and therefore I have labeled one life project as Republican Identity (T4.2-16). This life project is a manifestation of Roger’s ideologically conservative life theme, and shows that this theme is important enough for him to act on. These faith and life projects help set the stage for Roger’s encounters with climate change discourses and his reactions to them, because they reveal that faith is a much larger part of his world now than engineering or scientific research, although his scientific education and work experience remains an important part of his identity and worldview.

When I asked Roger where he gathered information about climate change, he said most of his information came from newspaper articles and engineering alumni magazines (T4.2-15). He emphasizes the engineering magazine in particular, which reinforces the idea that scientific thinking is an important life theme, but one that manifests itself at this point only through reading on the periphery of the scientific and engineering world. He also discloses in this series of questions that he perceives there to be two competing climate change discourses available today. The “liberal press” supplies one of these discourses, and says that global warming is taking place and human caused. Roger perceives this discourse as primarily being espoused by popular media outlets. Roger feels that his alumni magazines present a second discourse and take a more conservative view on climate change. These sources are presumably more skeptical of global warming (because he does not explicitly state what these publications say about climate change), and link Roger’s conservative ideology with his receptiveness to various discourses about climate change. Roger clearly identifies more with the engineering magazine,
which aligns with both of his life themes of scientific thinking and conservative ideology. In other words, Roger more readily accepts the discourse that aligns better with his life themes and projects. He thinks of himself as scientific and conservative, and the engineering alumni magazine aligns with these self-perceptions, so he is more accepting of the information he finds there than the “liberal” and unscientific information contained in the newspapers.

With that said, it is not surprising that Roger puts on his scientist hat when discussing his perceptions of climate change. Roger uses his scientific and engineering ‘expertise’ to explain why he does not believe in anthropogenic climate change (T4.2-15, T4.2-17). He says that rising temperatures are nothing more than “round-off” error in climate measures. However, directly after stating that his opinions about rising temperatures are based on scientific data, he describes changing climates as natural events citing a television show about the Garden of Eden. Roger insinuates that based on this show, the Garden of Eden disappeared as a result of changes in climate. He then immediately reverts back, in the same train of thought, to his engineering background as having allowed him to look critically at the scientific evidence for climate change and dismiss it as measurement error (T4.2-15). In other words, Roger justifies his opinions about climate change scientifically, even though his thoughts about the topic are also influenced by his literal interpretation of the bible and belief in the existence of a historical Garden of Eden. This indicates that Roger actively utilizes both his life and faith themes to arrive at his opinions about climate change. Clearly, both his engineering background and his literal interpretation of the bible influence these views, even though he seems to want to emphasize his scientific knowledge.

Roger’s confident dismissal of climate change as the result of misinterpreting rounding errors also indicates that both faith and life themes play a role in his conclusions, even though he focuses on his scientific background. Essentially, Roger’s claim that he has examined the data does not line up with the sources of information he has consulted on the topic. Alumni association magazines and newspaper articles do not present much data with regards to climate change that would allow for an independent assessment of measurement accuracy and/or temperature calculations. I do not say this to accuse Roger of being disingenuous in stating that he had looked at data, but rather to emphasize that faith plays a bigger role in his conclusions about climate change than he realizes (or wants to admit) because the engineer in him suggests that decisions about scientific matters be made on scientific data. However, the interview excerpts suggest that Roger’s faith trumps his scientific training when the two do not line up.
This interpretation is supported by the fact that Roger admits later in the interview that his belief in God’s sovereignty also contributes to his perceptions of climate change (T4.2-18). Because God is in control, Roger does not think that humans can unintentionally alter the climate. He believes that God constantly intervenes in the world to prevent catastrophic human actions, and would do so in the case of climate change if necessary. In contrast with Roger’s view that humans cannot unintentionally alter the climate, he does believe that humans have the ability to intentionally do so via geoengineering (T4.2-15). This seeming contradiction further supports the idea that Roger feels little tension between his faith themes and his life themes, and that both contribute simultaneously to his perceptions of climate change. His combined faith and engineering perspectives allow him to believe that God prevents unintentional consequences of human actions, but via engineering, humans can impact a global system if they choose to do so. In other words, this apparent contraction seems to be resolved by the integration of Roger’s two faith themes of God’s sovereignty and biblical inerrancy with his life theme of scientific thinking. The first faith theme, biblical inerrancy leads to a reading of the creation story that describes humans as made in God’s image and given the world for our use (T4.2-10). The second faith theme, belief in a sovereign God who is in control, leads Roger to think that God will not allow humans to do irreparable damage to the planet (T4.2-18). These come together with Roger’s scientific background to make it plausible that humans cannot unintentionally alter the climate, but can do so intentionally.

Perhaps the most interesting comment that Roger made with regards to the relationship between his faith and engineering background as they inform his views on climate change was that he does not see climate change as a faith issue (T4.2-19). Roger did make a connection between his faith and climate change with regards to God’s sovereignty (T4.2-18), however, by and large, he does not view this as a faith issue because he does not think that it is happening. Rather, in his opinion, this is a scientific matter, and not an environmental problem so much as measurement error. The irony in Roger’s statement is that his faith clearly contributes to his opinion that climate change is not a faith issue. Roger’s worldview is dominated by his faith, his faith trumps his science background on a number of issues, and climate change is one of them. His faith tells him that humans cannot impact the climate unintentionally, and then the engineer in him justifies this belief logically. Roger has consciously or unconsciously reconciled a number of obvious tensions between his education and his faith, and his views on climate change.
demonstrate that when the two compete, faith wins out and science is brought into line with his faith to maintain a coherent story.

This reconciliation of faith and science is, again, a theme that arises in a number of interviews in this data set. Roger epitomizes this tension in many ways because he is one of the most scientifically educated and scientifically oriented individuals in the sample. However it is evident throughout this interview that his faith themes influence his scientific perspectives when the two come into conflict. This same dynamic was present in Darin’s interview as well, but some important differences exit between their approaches to science vis-à-vis faith. Darin starts with the bible as truth and then seeks out scientific information that validates his reading of the bible. Science is only meaningful for Darin when it directly supports the biblical narrative that he believes in. Roger on the other hand, seems to think about science and faith as two separate enterprises. Scientific thought and reasoning should be utilized to address scientific issues, while the bible should be used to address faith issues. However, when the two collide, the bible is true and science is fallible. At the same time, at least with respect to climate change, and aided by his political conservatism, Roger has been able to interpret scientific evidence and the bible in such a way that the two are not in conflict in his mind (the liberal papers are the ones who inaccurately portray the data and can be dismissed, while the conservative engineering magazines paint a more accurate picture).

In summary, Roger places less conscious emphasis on his faith background than the other participants examined in these idiographic analyses. However, Roger’s educational background proves critically important for understanding his life theme of scientific thinking. Contrasting this life theme with Roger’s preeminent faith theme of biblical inerrancy gets at the heart of this interview, or the aspects of Roger’s life story that must be accounted for in order to fully understand his perceptions of climate change. Roger has reconciled what many people outside the conservative Christian faith might consider two contradictory worldviews, a belief in a literal creation story and a formal education in physics. He utilizes both his faith and life themes to make sense of the climate change discourses that he has encountered. His faith leads him to believe that humans cannot negatively impact the global climate, and then he draws on his engineering background to justify this opinion scientifically.

In the larger context of this idiographic chapter, Roger’s analysis emphasizes the sometimes complex interaction between faith and life themes, and how faith can outshine competing worldviews based on the core theological tenets of conservative Christianity. Darin
only spoke about faith themes, so Roger’s interview helps to fill in the life theme and project side of the organizing system, and demonstrate how faith and life themes and projects interact in the context of one individual’s life. In the even larger context of the data set as a whole, Roger’s interview exemplifies the often confusing relationship between science and conservative Christian faith that interviewees negotiate to make sense of climate change.
Faith Projects
-Active member of an independent bible church
-Works part time for the church

Climate Change Discourses
-Liberal media: global warming is happening
-Conservative science and engineering sources: skeptical of climate change, but less so of geoengineering

Perceptions of Climate Change
-Thinks that climate change is attributable to rounding errors
-Believes that changes in climate are natural occurrences
-Does not think that humans can unintentionally affect climate
-Is not concerned about climate change because God is in control
-Does believe that humans can intentionally engineer the climate

Faith Themes
-Biblical Inerrancy
-Evangelism
-God’s Sovereignty

Life Themes
-Scientific Thinking
-Ideologically Conservative

Personal History
-Raised in conservative denomination
-Lifelong Christian
-Two engineering degrees

Life Projects
-Retired from engineering
-Subscribes to an engineering alumni association magazine
-Votes Republican
Sandy

The third idiographic analysis examines an interview conducted with Sandy, a 44 year old member of a small Southern Baptist Conference church in a very small town about an hour north of Dallas that I have renamed Springfield. Unlike Darin, Sandy believes that climate change definitely exists, and unlike Roger, she feels that humans are largely responsible for changes in the global climate. This perspective on the existence and causes of climate change represents the opposite end of the spectrum on perceptions of climate change found within this sample from Darin. Only one other participant in this study emphasized human responsibility for causing climate change as much as Sandy. Sandy is also concerned about climate change, which neither Darin nor Roger are. With regards to her concern about climate change, Sandy also exemplifies an interesting opinion found in this sample that being concerned about anthropogenic climate change is appropriate, but being afraid of it is not.

I also chose Sandy’s interview because she interprets some of the conservative Christian faith themes that are shared amongst participants in this study in a unique way. Sandy’s analysis demonstrates that personal history and life experiences play an important role in shaping her interpretation and application of common faith themes to her perceptions of climate change. Additionally, because of Sandy’s unique life background and current life themes and projects, she is more receptive to climate change discourses that other participants, such as Roger, reject. Overall, I feel that Sandy’s interview demonstrates the importance of accounting for personal experience in understanding conservative Christian perceptions of climate change.

Sandy, like Darin, was born and raised in the Baptist church. Her faith has been an important aspect of her personal life and family life from the time that she was young (T4.3-1). As she says, she grew up next door to the pastor and attended church with multiple generations of extended family. Her baptism story indicates that faith was almost a given in this setting; it was an important part of her social context that she naturally adopted and embraced. In addition to this religious context, Sandy explains that she also grew up in a small town in Oklahoma that was home to an oil refinery run by a large, international corporation (T4.3-2). Sandy goes on to state that the cancer rates in her hometown are high, and she attributes these health issues directly to the oil refinery. The refinery appeared to be improving the quality of life in the town through jobs and technology, she says, but at what cost? Sadly, the cost to Sandy has been even higher than the loss of friends and classmates; she too has struggled with chronic illness her entire life, and was diagnosed with a terminal illness about nine months
before our interview (T4.3-3, T4.3-4, T4.3-5). Sandy’s faith background combined with her powerful life experiences of watching others struggle with illnesses, and struggling with illnesses herself, have had a profound influence on both her faith and life themes.

When asked to describe her faith, Sandy referred to herself as a conservative Christian, which means that she takes the bible, or “the Lord’s word,” at face value (T4.3-6, T4.3-7). Similarly to Darin and Roger, biblical inerrancy is a key aspect of Sandy’s faith, and the first faith theme I have listed for her in Figure 4.4. Sandy says this faith theme is fairly straightforward; the bible is literally the word of God and therefore the truth by which to live one’s life. This idea is not very complicated in her opinion, if God says to do something in the bible, she tries to do it. This faith theme undoubtedly has roots in Sandy’s upbringing in a conservative church setting. Faith has always been a given for her, and it would appear that the inerrancy of the bible has been too. That is why Sandy says twice that her belief in the bible is straightforward and not that complicated. In fact, Sandy’s description of this faith theme is very similar to Roger’s statement that he simply takes on faith the things he reads in the bible. Both Sandy and Roger were raised in conservative churches, and appear to take the concept of biblical inerrancy for granted. Darin, of course, shares this faith theme, but as a pastor, I feel that he presents a more developed theological justification for his belief in biblical inerrancy. Sandy and Roger on the other hand simply state that they take the bible at face value, and that is really all there is to it; biblical inerrancy is an unproblematic, foundational faith assumption.

In addition to an emphasis on the bible that results from her faith history, Sandy describes two faith themes that relate directly to her previous life experiences dealing with illness. First, Sandy says that her faith has taken on new significance lately (T4.3-1), insinuating that this is the case because she has been diagnosed with a terminal illness within the past year (T4.3-5). More specifically, Sandy says that she places more emphasis now on her belief that God is in control (T4.3-8). Therefore, Sandy’s second faith theme in Figure 4.4 is God’s sovereignty. The importance of this faith theme will become clearer in the discussion of Sandy’s life and faith projects below.

A second faith theme related to Sandy’s illnesses (and the third overall faith theme in Figure 4.4) is her emphasis on human sinfulness (T4.3-9). Sandy explains that some Christians attribute health issues like cancer to sin in an individual’s life. Sandy agrees that human sinfulness has negative consequences for things like human health; however, because of her experiences with industrial pollution and illness, she takes a broader view on the topic of sin.
Rather than attributing illness to individual sin, Sandy believes that pollution is a sin perpetrated by all humans that creates dangerous toxins in the environment. These toxins then impact individuals regardless of whether they were personally responsible for creating them or not. Clearly, this interpretation of the faith theme of sin results from Sandy’s life experiences and her belief that she is personally suffering the consequences of the sinful pollution of the oil refinery in her hometown. This is perhaps the most obvious example presented thus far in the idiographic chapter of the ways that personal history and individual experiences influence interpretations and applications of shared faith themes like human sinfulness.

In addition to her faith themes, Sandy’s experiences with pollution and illness have led her to adopt two life themes, one that I have labeled Pollution Related Illness and the other as Never Give Up in Figure 4.4. The theme of illness in Sandy’s life has been discussed already, she has dealt with illness since she was a child and particularly at this point in her life, her illnesses influence the way she views the world around her. The Never Give Up theme comes from Sandy’s description of how, despite her faith that God is in control (T4.3-8), she constantly seeks new treatments and cures for her health problems (T4.3-4, T4.3-10). She does not view her illnesses as God telling her to give up, nor does she indicate that she expects God to miraculously heal her. Rather Sandy thinks of her health problems as a way that God is challenging her to grow in faith and improve herself. Clearly, these two life themes of illness and never giving up overlap with one another to a great extent. These life themes also overlap with Sandy’s faith themes of God’s sovereignty and human sinfulness, which is why I feel that Figure 4.1b provides a more accurate representation of the relationship between the various aspects of the organizing system than the Figure 4.1a and Figure 4.4 layout. Sandy’s story demonstrates that faith and life themes draw from the same personal history, and that these themes often overlap and cannot be neatly separated into one category or the other. In other words, faith and life themes should not be thought of as mutually exclusive categories, but rather intertwined and often mutually reinforcing. The additional importance of the Never Give Up life theme will become more apparent in the discussion of Sandy’s life projects that follows.

Sandy’s experiences growing up in a polluted environment have also laid the foundation for a second life theme labeled Local Environmental Concern in Figure 4.4. Several times in the interview Sandy talks about the importance of the nearby lake for her and the local community (T4.3-11, T4.3-12). She says that the lake is gorgeous, beautiful, and perhaps most importantly, clean; based on Sandy’s past, it is easy to understand why a clean local environment is
important to her. Sandy presents two additional life themes in this interview, the first of which is family. As discussed earlier in Sandy’s personal history, family was almost synonymous with faith and church when she was growing up (T4.3-1). The emphasis on family remains important to Sandy today, as she mentions her family 11 different times over the course of the interview (e.g. T4.3-13, T4.3-14). The fourth life theme Sandy discusses is being conservative. While this is a religious label that she applies to herself (T4.3-6, T4.3-7), it is also a label that she uses to describe her political and economic philosophy (T4.3-14, T4.3-15).

Sandy’s numerous faith and life themes contribute to numerous faith and life projects. Sandy’s first faith project is membership at Cornerstone Baptist Church (T4.3-16). Sandy is not only a member of the church, she also runs the church’s elementary school (T4.3-17). This faith project is worth mentioning because, as Sandy says, it exemplifies her belief in God’s sovereignty because she is allergic to antibiotics and elementary schools are germ factories (T4.3-18). Therefore, she is taking a risk of getting sick everyday that she goes to work, but she trusts that God will protect her in this endeavor. As with Sandy’s faith themes, this project is difficult to classify as either faith or life exclusively, again demonstrating that the boundaries between these faith and life categories are not clear cut for the participants in this study. The point of emphasis though is that Sandy’s belief that God is in control is very important in her daily life.

With regards to Sandy’s life theme of never giving up, one of her life projects involves actively pursuing cures for her illnesses even though they seem largely untreatable (T4.3-4, T4.3-10). This project is important because it reveals that Sandy believes strongly in not giving up, and learning from past mistakes, whether they are her own mistakes or someone else’s. As she says, she does not blame her childhood doctor for her antibiotic allergy, but it is important to her that people are learning not to abuse these drugs, hopefully preventing others from having to deal with her same health issues. She makes a similar statement about her school (T4.3-19); if they are not learning from their experiences as they go, then they cannot continue to improve.

Another important life project for Sandy that was alluded to in her life themes is living in a clean environment (T4.3-11, T4.3-12). In fact, Sandy and her husband decided to move to Springfield in large part for the natural environment itself (T4.3-20). Therefore, a clean local environment is not just an important idea for Sandy, but something that she and her family have actively pursued in deciding where to live. This life project of living in a beautiful and clean area
reinforces for Sandy the importance of caring for the environment because she feels connected to the natural amenities around her. Interestingly though, this life project also has some detrimental effects on Sandy's environmental behaviors. She perceives the local, rural culture to discourage certain environmental behaviors like driving more fuel efficient vehicles (T4.3-21). Thus her current life project of living in a small rural town for the natural amenities appears to have a positive effect on her environmental concern, but a negative effect on her environmental behaviors.

Sandy’s life theme of family manifests itself in several different ways that I am broadly labeling as a caregiving life project. First of all, Sandy is a mother (T4.3-13), and she indicates that this is an important part of her identity because she mentions her children frequently throughout the interview. She says in particular that her children provide motivation for her to keep looking for cures to her illnesses (T4.3-10). Sandy also takes care of her parents, who live with her as well (T4.3-15). Finally, Sandy’s caregiving project is seen in her job as a school director. She is clearly a caregiver who is seriously concerned about and invested in other people’s wellbeing, particularly the wellbeing of future generations. Sandy’s final life project reflects her conservative ideology life theme. She is an active Republican (T4.3-22, T4.3-14). This life project is important primarily because Sandy shares it with Roger and Darin, however she does not come to the same conclusions about climate change that Roger and Darin do, indicating that political affiliation and ideology alone do not adequately account for their perceptions of climate change.

Of the various elements of Sandy’s personal history, and her life and faith themes and projects, it appears that her experiences with pollution, serious illness, and her faith theme of human sinfulness influence her encounters with climate change discourses most directly. Sandy has experienced first hand very tangible consequences of pollution; these experiences have led her to believe that human sinfulness is responsible for environmental degradation, and that humans often suffer as the result of such degradation (T4.3-23). All in all, these experiences make her receptive to information from popular media outlets suggesting that humans are responsible for global climate change (T4.3-24, T4.3-25). More specifically, Sandy seems to accept information and commentary about the causes and consequences of climate change provided by television shows and CNN.com. Unlike Roger and Darin, Sandy does not appear to believe that competing discourses on climate change exist; she has not sought out “both sides of the story” as they had. She seems convinced by what she has seen, in what Roger would
probably call the “liberal media,” that humans are significant contributors to climate change despite the fact that she is politically conservative and an active Republican. Clearly, Sandy’s experiences with human pollution and its negative consequences in her life have predisposed her to believe that humans can negatively impact the environment. This makes her more receptive to the concept of human induced climate change than either Roger or Darin.

This receptivity to discourses that implicate humans in global climate change leads to Sandy’s overall perceptions of the phenomenon itself. Sandy agrees with what she sees on the news about climate change (T4.3-24, T4.3-5). First, she thinks that climate change is happening, and that it is primarily human induced. These discourses about climate change make sense to Sandy because they fit within her worldview; she can make sense of them in the context of her own experiences by applying her faith and life themes. As has already been discussed, Sandy believes that environmental harm results from collective human sinfulness (T4.3-23). Thus Sandy links climate change to her faith theme of human sinfulness. We, as humans, have been disobedient and not taken care of the earth that God has given us. As a result, our collective sin has caused environmental problems such as climate change, and future generations will reap the consequences of our harmful actions, just as Sandy has dealt with the consequences of pollution that she was not personally responsible for.

This idea that future generations will bear the consequences of climate change leads Sandy to be concerned about the issue (T4.3-26). This concern ties into her life theme of family and life project of being a caregiver. She is concerned about the world that we are passing on to her children and students. However, Sandy makes a clear distinction between being concerned about climate change, and being fearful of it (T4.3-27). Sandy believes that God is in control (God’s sovereignty faith theme), and so she does not get caught up in the hysteria she perceives others to fall into when it comes to issues like pandemics and climate change. This distinction between concern and fear is critical for other interviewees in this study too. Like Sandy, other participants perceived an element of fear in popular discourses about climate change. They said that they were concerned about certain aspects of climate change, but they were not fearful of it primarily because of their faith in God’s sovereignty. This is one concern that Darin was adamant about addressing in his sermon on climate change; Christians should not be fearful of climate change because God is ultimately in control. This idea will be explored in greater detail in the nomothetic chapter that follows, but Sandy provides a clear, contextualized introduction to the concept.
As has already been hinted at, Sandy has mixed reactions to climate change based on her life and faith themes and projects. First, Sandy does feel that humans need to address climate change because she believes that we are causing it (T4.3-23 – T4.3-25). Sandy’s belief that we need to address climate change also ties into her life theme of never giving up and her life project of seeking cures for her illnesses. Sandy believes strongly that people have to learn from their mistakes and from others’ mistakes as well (T4.3-28). Therefore, she feels that we need to learn from the mistakes that are causing global warming and correct our behavior because our mistakes are going to end up affecting future generations.

Interestingly, Sandy ties this same philosophy into her views on the end times (T4.3-29). Unlike Darin, Sandy does not focus much on the end times with regards to climate change; eschatology is simply not a focal faith theme for her. Rather she says that the bible tells us specifically that we do not know when the end times are and so between now and then all we can do is try our best, learn from our mistakes, and keep going. This really is the only point in the interview where Sandy refers to her faith theme of biblical inerrancy as relating to climate change. This limited reference to the bible contrasts particularly with Darin, but also with Roger, whose interviews both focus more on the influence that their literal interpretation of the bible has on their perceptions of climate change. This discrepancy between Sandy, and Darin and Roger indicates that shared beliefs are not always applied in the same way or with the same emphasis to climate change across the sample.

While Sandy does think that climate change is happening, human caused, and worth addressing, she also recognizes that her actions do not necessarily align with these views (T4.3-21). She realizes that her choice of vehicle is unnecessary for her living situation and contributes more greenhouse gas emissions than necessary in her daily commute. Sandy also recognizes that the local culture plays an important role in shaping her behaviors in this regard. This, of course, ties in with Sandy’s life project of living in a small rural community. Despite feeling that her behavior is sometimes inconsistent, Sandy does think that climate change is an important issue for Christians to consider and respond to (T4.3-30). In fact, she frames what she feels the Christian reaction to climate change should be in terms of her caregiver and living in a clean, rural environment life projects. Sandy twice states that people should be thinking about their environmental impacts at the family level, and that mothers are of course concerned about taking care of their children, which should also mean taking care of the environment around them. She says this awareness of the local environment should also manifest itself at the
church level, because church members share the same physical environment with one another. Her local environment is particularly important to both her and the rest of the community. Therefore Sandy feels that the church should recognize the importance of the local environment and actively promote its health. She concludes that this local focus, if done right, will have ripple effects outwards, eventually encouraging people to think and act the same way worldwide.

In summary, Sandy’s personal history plays a critical role in understanding her perceptions of climate change. Demographically, Sandy does not look like the type of person who would believe in, or be concerned about, climate change. She is a conservative Republican and a conservative Christian living in a rural town in eastern Texas. However, once you understand Sandy’s history, you can begin to understand how her experiences dealing with the consequences of pollution have shaped her life and faith themes and projects. These themes and projects then help to explain why Sandy breaks from statistical trends. As I stated at the beginning of Sandy’s analysis, this interview clearly illustrates importance of considering personal experience when attempting to understand the relationship between conservative Christian faith and perceptions of climate change. An individual’s life story can influence the ways in which their religious beliefs get applied to a given topic such as climate change. Darin, Roger, and Sandy may all share a similar belief in the inerrancy of the bible; however the significance of this faith theme with regards to their opinions about climate change is a product of their individual life stories.
Figure 4.4: Sandy Idiographic Organizing System

**Personal History**
- Raised in conservative Baptist environment
- Lifelong Christian
- Grew up in an industrial area where pollution negatively impacted human health
- Personally has several serious illnesses

**Faith Themes**
- Biblical Inerrancy
- God’s Sovereignty
- Humans are Sinful, and sins have tangible, earthly consequences

**Faith Projects**
- Member of small Southern Baptist Church
- Run’s church’s elementary school

**Life Themes**
- Pollution Related Illness
- Never Give Up
- Local Environmental Concern
- Family
- Conservative Ideology

**Life Projects**
- Actively seeking cures for her illnesses
- Lives in rural town in part for the clean, beautiful environment
- Caregiver
- Active Republican

**Climate Change Discourses**
- Climate Change is happening
- Humans significantly contribute to climate change
- Humans need to change their behavior to stop climate change

**Perceptions of Climate Change**
- Believes that climate change is happening
- Thinks that humans have significant impact on climate change
- Is concerned about climate change for future generations
- Is not afraid of climate change because God is in control
- Recognizes behavior is sometimes inconsistent with beliefs about climate change
- Thinks that climate change is an issue Christians and the church can and should address
Dana

The fourth idiographic analysis examines an interview conducted with Dana, a 48 year old member of a small Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) church in a suburban community northeast of Dallas. This interview was chosen because Dana represents a perspective on climate change that is shared by 13 other participants in the sample, but has not been discussed yet in the three previous analyses. Dana believes that humans do have some impact on global climate change, but is unsure about the extent of these impacts. I also chose Dana’s interview for this chapter because she sought out information about global warming from her church. Other participants in the study mentioned general environmental information that they had received from their church, or seeking out Christian commentaries on climate change, but Dana is the only participant in the study who said that she relied on information she found on her denomination’s website to inform her view on climate change. Dana also relied on secular sources of information to learn about climate change, and so Dana’s analysis highlights the discourse portion of the organizing system in a way that is unique to her interview. At the same time, it was not uncommon for participants to utilize multiple and sometimes contradictory discourses about climate change to arrive at their opinions. This idea was explored in Roger’s analysis, but Roger essentially chose between what he saw as two competing discourses. Dana, on the other hand, reconcile the different discourses that she encounters using her faith and life themes. As with the previous analyses, this exploration of Dana’s interview begins with an examination of her personal history and Figure 4.5 below presents the organizing system that accompanies Dana’s analysis.

Unlike Darin, Roger, and Sandy, who were raised in conservative Protestant settings, Dana was raised Catholic (T4.4-1). Dana explains that she considers herself to be a lifelong Christian, but that as an adult, faith was not always a priority in her life (T4.4-2). However, she found herself seeking a church home (alongside her parents) several years ago when she was diagnosed with cancer and her family became frustrated with some issues plaguing the broader Catholic Church (T4.4-1, T4.4-2). As with Sandy, Dana’s experience with a life-threatening illness revitalized her faith (T4.4-2, T4.4-3), but Dana’s experience was also different than Sandy’s, and Dana chooses to emphasize some different life and faith themes as a result.

During her bout with cancer, Dana realized she was not as in control of her own life as she once thought. As she says, she felt like she had been slapped in the face with her own mortality (T4.4-2), and this experience left her searching for answers to the big questions in life
and seeking some stability (T4.4-3). As a point of comparison, in the previous idiographic analysis of Sandy’s interview, Sandy attributes her health problems to specific causes, namely the pollution in her hometown. This allows Sandy to adopt a life theme of learning from past mistakes and moving forward. Dana, on the other hand, does not appear to attribute her illness to any specific cause. Rather, Dana indicates that at one point in time, she felt that she had control of her life. But her health problems made her feel as if she was not, and never actually had been in control (T4.4-3). Rather, she says, she learned that God was in control the entire time, and she just needed to trust Him. One theme that seems to have emerged as a result of this process is the idea that humans are not in control. This theme falls under both the faith and life headings, and has been included in both. In the life theme category it is labeled “humans are not in control” and on the faith side it is labeled as “God is in control (God’s sovereignty).” These two labels reflect the same idea, and the differing terminology helps to capture more of the fullness of Dana’s thoughts on the subject; not only are humans not in control, God is in control. As with the previous idiographic analyses, this shared faith and life theme indicates the overlap between these two aspects of the idiographic organizing system.

Ultimately, Dana and her parents came across a WELS church that provided what they were looking for in a church home (T4.4-1), and they have been part of WELS churches ever since. In fact, when Dana stopped going to her family’s lake house as often with her parents, and started staying at home more for her children’s activities, her family knew already that they were going to attend the WELS church near their home in the Dallas suburbs (T4.4-4). Now, they even look for WELS churches to visit when they travel. This indicates that Dana seems to have found what she was seeking in the WELS churches and feels a sense of loyalty to the denomination.

One other relevant aspect of Dana’s personal history is her educational and professional background. Dana studied computer science in college, and has been working for a leading software company for the past twelve years (T4.4-5). This background leads to a second life theme for Dana that I have labeled as “technically inclined.” Above and beyond these limited quotes about her technology related background, Dana and I discussed software programs before and after the interview. Additionally, during the interview itself, she kept her laptop with her, pulling up and/or referencing specific websites at two different times in our conversation (T4.4-6, T4.4-7). This theme relates directly to the sources of information that Dana consulted with regards to climate change that will be discussed later in this analysis.
Dana’s personal background lays the foundation for understanding two additional faith themes that she discusses in this interview. The first, similar to all three of the previous interviewees, is biblical inerrancy. Dana describes herself as ‘bible-based’ above all else (T4.4-8). She believes that, “the bible is the true, inerrant word of God,” and this belief is the foundation of her faith. This belief is interesting in the context of Dana’s interview for two reasons. First, in my opinion, part of the reason that Dana was attracted to WELS churches during the ‘searching’ period in her life (T4.4-1, T4.4-3) is the denominational emphasis on biblical inerrancy. If the bible is true and infallible then Dana may feel that it provides consistent truths and stability in an uncertain world. Second, biblical inerrancy is a primary faith theme for Dana just as it was for Darin, Roger, and Sandy, despite the fact that Dana was not raised in a conservative Christian church or home (T4.4-1). Dana’s adoption of this belief indicates the centrality of biblical inerrancy in contemporary conservative Christianity. Dana embraced the idea that the bible was inerrant as an adult; it was not simply a belief that she was raised with and therefore could be viewed as a culturally indoctrinated belief. I do think that Darin, Roger, and Sandy all actively embrace the concept of biblical inerrancy in their current faith, and I argued so in their analyses, but I also argued that this belief in the bible has been part of their faith culture their entire lives. Therefore, Dana’s interview provides an example of how one participant came to believe in biblical inerrancy outside of being raised in a conservative Christian environment.

Dana also describes WELS churches in quote T4.4-8 as reformed. I do not necessarily view this as one of Dana’s faith themes because she attributes the term to the church, not to herself specifically. However, the term reformed was used by eight participants in this study to describe either their personal faith or their church. I have yet to see any religious surveys provide ‘reformed’ as an answer choice in questions about religious identity. This issue will be discussed further in the nomothetic analyses in the next chapter; however Dana provides one contextualized example of the use of this term here.

The second faith theme of emphasis for Dana in this interview is salvation, or her belief that the only true hope for individuals and society as a whole is God. In Dana’s life experiences, the world is a broken (or sinful) place, and God provides the only real fix for this brokenness (T4.4-9). This concept is directly tied to her belief in the inerrancy of the bible; as she says, the bible is the source of truth that can teach people about God. She goes on to say that people can get caught up in trying to fix a lot of different problems in the world today, but ultimately faith in God is the only real solution for these problems (T4.4-9). Dana believes that God will ease the
world’s problems the more people look to the bible and have faith in Him. Therefore the best thing that people can do is read the bible in order to have faith in God and Jesus.

Both Dana and Sandy link their faith to the concept of stewardship. Sandy, in the previous analysis, focused on the consequences of sin at a broad level – connecting her illness to the consequences of poor environmental stewardship resulting from sin. She believes that we have to learn from our sinful mistakes with regards to the environment and move on as better stewards. Dana on the other hand, feels that we should simply focus on God, trusting that God will ease the problems of the world if people put their faith in Him, and knowing that ultimately God is the only solution to the world’s problems anyway (T4.4-9). I do not believe that Sandy and Dana would disagree with one another, but I do think that their differing emphases reflect their differing perceptions of their health problems. Sandy felt that she understood why she was sick, and that her illnesses were preventable had people known better and behaved differently. Dana does not attribute her illnesses to any single cause, and feels that humans do not have as much control over their own lives as they think (T4.4-2, T4.4-3). However, she does feel that God uses bad things for good purposes; Dana says that her illness was “a blessing” because it ultimately strengthened her faith (T4.4-2). She believes that the more people turn to God in faith, “the more we start to try to be better stewards of the gifts God has given us” (T4.4-9). Therefore, for both Sandy and Dana, their illnesses led them to emphasize the idea of stewardship. I would not classify stewardship as a faith theme unto itself for either Sandy or Dana, but rather a concept that accompanies more prominent faith themes such as human sinfulness for Sandy and salvation for Dana. Twenty-seven of the 36 participants in this study used the term stewardship in the course of their interview. This concept is examined in greater detail in the nomothetic chapter that follows, but Dana provides an example of the use of the term here.

Additionally, Dana feels that faith in God and the bible provide stability and hope in the midst of uncertainty; the bible is truth, and God can be counted on to fulfill God’s promises in the bible (T4.4-9). Therefore, Dana again feels that faith in God is of the utmost importance, faith is the only real answer to any and all of the world’s problems (T4.4-9). This emphasis on salvation is clearly tied to other faith themes such as sin and eschatology. Dana feels that the world is a sinful place and God will ultimately make all things right. However, these themes combine into a focus on salvation, which nicely sums up the importance of faith for Dana particularly as it relates to climate change. With Dana’s faith themes in mind, the analysis can
shift to her life and faith projects, and how they come to bear on her encounters with climate change discourses.

Dana’s current life projects include working full time as a sales associate for a software company and being a mom (T4.4-5 and T4.4-4 respectively). The first life project is tied to Dana’s life theme of being technically inclined; Dana has worked for Microsoft for 12 years and was the only participant to utilize a computer during an interview (T4.4-7). As with Roger, Dana’s education and work experience influenced the sources of information that she interacted with to learn about climate change. She mentions getting information about climate change off the internet three different times in the interview (T4.4-6, T4.4-7, T4.4-10). Working for Microsoft does not directly affect Dana’s perceptions of climate change so much as this life project influences how she seeks and acquires information about topics like climate change. The specific information Dana found on the internet about climate change and her reactions to that information are examined in greater detail below.

With regards to motherhood, Dana says that this project imposes some practical considerations on her ability to engage in environmentally friendly behaviors. Dana says that she had to get rid of a hybrid car and replace it with an SUV to accommodate her growing family (T4.4-11). This life project and its consequences for Dana’s environmental behavior represent comments made by three other mothers in this sample. Shelly, Lily, and Melissa all spoke independently about the constraints that they felt being a mom placed on their ability to engage in environmentally friendly behaviors. They viewed environmentally friendly products as more expensive and less convenient, which were major concerns for them. As a result, they all said that they were less likely to purchase and use such products. This life project does not directly relate to the discourses about climate change that Dana discusses, however it does set the stage for some of her reactions to those discourses as examined below.

Dana’s primary faith project is her involvement with her local WELS church (T4.4-12). Since leaving the Catholic Church and being diagnosed with cancer, WELS churches have come to play a prominent role in Dana’s life. She and her family are now extremely involved at their local church and with regional and national WELS initiatives (T4.4-12). The amount of time and energy that Dana invests in WELS activities reinforces the idea that she feels loyal and committed to the larger denomination and her church in particular. This loyalty also influences Dana’s receptivity to the climate change discourses that she discusses as examined below.
These life and faith projects then set the stage for how Dana encounters climate change discourses, which discourses she encounters, and how she reacts to them.

Similar to Roger and Darin, Dana describes multiple discourses that she has encountered regarding climate change. Roger classified the discourses he encountered as liberal and unscientific versus conservative and scientific. Dana, on the other hand, describes the discourses that she has encountered as either faith based or non-faith based. Within the faith based category, Dana feels that two sub-categories exist, a biblically based and appropriate discourse on climate change, and a non-biblically based, alarmist and inappropriate discourse. The non-faith based discourse I have labeled popular media in the organizing system, as Dana says this information comes primarily from local news channels and the internet (T4.4-13). Dana perceives these sources of information to primarily be saying that climate change is happening and human carbon emissions are contributing (T4.4-13, T4.4-14).

Dana encountered what she felt was a biblically based and appropriate faith discourse on climate change both at church, and on the WELS website. Dana says that climate change has probably been discussed some at her local church in a bible study setting (T4.4-15), but she has primarily consulted the WELS website for church commentary on the subject (T4.4-16). This is one example of how Dana’s life theme of being technically inclined ties into her encounters with climate change discourses – she was the only participant from her church to tell me about the website, much less that she perceived WELS to have an official position on climate change based on what she found there. In fact, Dana was the only participant in the entire study who specifically looked to either their church’s or denomination’s website for information regarding climate change. Dana is certainly not the only participant in this study who feels comfortable utilizing the internet, however Dana seems particularly inclined to use the internet among the participants in this study, which I attribute to her personal theme of being technically inclined and her personal project of working at a software company. Therefore, the internet is where she encountered all three of the discourses that have influenced her perceptions of climate change.

At the WELS website, Dana found two posts in the Question and Answer section about global warming, which she says were very helpful (T4.4-16). I have included both questions and responses in a special table: T4.5-1 and T4.5-2. The question in the first post asks whether the bible addresses global warming, and conflates global warming with ozone layer depletion (T4.5-1). The response focuses on two verses from the bible. The first, Genesis 1:28, is interpreted as
saying that God grants humans dominion over the earth before the fall into sin in the Garden of Eden. Dominion was supposed to entail caring for the earth, but sin has altered this relationship and now humans do not take care of nature as God intended. The second verse is Genesis 8:22, which is literally interpreted to mean that God will not allow any disruption in the seasonal cycles of the earth until the end of time (T4.5-1). The author of this post is also critical of climate change science, saying that it appears to be motivated by personal agendas and lacking in evidence. This individual goes on to suggest that climate change is a natural process.

The second post (T4.5-2) starts off with a question insinuating that people should not be worried about global warming because the bible specifies how the earth will be destroyed. The questioner wants to know how the WELS church feels about this “liberal issue.” The author of the response states that humans are to be good stewards of the earth despite a correct belief on the questioner’s part that God will destroy the earth someday. The respondent also essentially states that the bible does not discuss global warming, so the church does not (and apparently cannot) have an official position on the matter. I recently went back to this website to see if there had been any more posts on climate change, and found that the website Dana referred to had been revamped; it no longer provides any information regarding climate change.

While conducting internet research on faith and climate change, Dana also encountered a faith based discourse on climate change that she felt was alarmist and inappropriate. Dana came across a website run by Red Sky Ministries in the process of conducting a web search on “bible and global warming” (T4.4-17). She says that this website links global warming to apocalyptic prophecies, and she feels that the site is misleading and misrepresented of Christians because their testimony about global warming is not biblically based (as indicated by the WELS website response in T4.5-2 which states that the church cannot have a biblically based response to climate change because it is not a topic covered in the bible). Dana is concerned about this discourse insomuch as it is “messing around with people’s faith and souls” and may influence people’s perceptions of Christianity or the bible. As a Christian of strong faith and informed about the content of the bible relative to this issue, Dana dismisses the information on this site about climate change.

These discourses that Dana has encountered on the internet and television provide the informational basis for Dana’s perceptions of climate change. Dana perceives the popular media sources to be saying that climate change is happening and is exacerbated by human carbon emissions (T4.4-13, T4.4-14), while the WELS website at best presents a critical view of climate
change science and at worst dismisses the entire conversation as unbiblical (T4.5-1, T4.5-2). Dana does not seem to feel that these sources of information contradict one another. Rather she pieces these discourses together, using her life and faith themes, to arrive at her conclusions about climate change. Dana does believe that climate change is happening and that humans are playing some role via carbon emissions (T4.4-18). This view on the existence and causes of climate change results in part from a combination of Dana’s encounter with popular media discourses about climate change and her faith theme of salvation.

Dana received the information that climate change is happening and exacerbated by human emissions primarily from popular media outlets (T4.4-13). This information fits into Dana’s worldview based on her faith theme of salvation, and the belief that the world is a broken and sinful place. This faith theme opens her up to the idea that humans could negatively impact the environment (T4.4-18), similarly to Sandy’s experiences with pollution making her more receptive to the idea that humans were impacting the global climate. While Dana does not commit as definitively to human responsibility for global warming, she does believe that human emissions are part of the problem because we are sinful, and not being good stewards of the earth which is a gift from God. Furthermore, this lack of concern for the earth that God has given us bothers Dana, and she had taken some steps towards reducing her emissions before her family grew to its current size (T4.4-19). However, her life project of motherhood constrains her environmentally friendly behaviors as discussed above, and because God is ultimately in control, these trade-offs are acceptable.

Dana also perceives “secular” information sources to be alarmist. She hears them describing climate change as the end of the world (T4.4-18) (as does the questioner in T4.5-2, and other participants in this study. This common perception is examined in greater detail in the following nomothetic chapter). Her faith, and the WELS website, on the other hand, dismiss the idea that humans could destroy the planet (T4.4-18). Therefore, Dana cannot accept what she perceives popular media sources to be describing as the consequences of climate change. Dana’s belief in the inerrancy of the bible predisposes her to view the answers on the WELS website as authoritative because she feels that they are biblically grounded (T4.4-16). In fact, both posts mention the bible explicitly in their answers (T4.5-1, T4.5-2), and she agrees that a literal interpretation of Genesis 8:22 indicates that the seasons will continue until Jesus comes back, so people should not be afraid of global warming destroying the earth (T4.4-16). In this sense, Dana reiterates Sandy’s distinction between concern-over versus fear-of climate change.
Ultimately, Dana says that while she is somewhat concerned about climate change, it is only one of a number of problems resulting from moral decay in the world today (T4.4-9, T4.4-20). Churches and individuals should address this moral decay, but do not need to panic or be alarmist about these problems. The only definitive answer to these problems is faith in God. Therefore, churches should focus on the bible, and teaching people from the bible about God, over focusing on climate change in particular (T4.4-20, T4.4-21).

Dana accuses the Red Sky Ministry website of this same alarmism that bothered her with the “secular” news sources (T4.4-17). She felt that organization was not teaching people from the bible. They take the focus off eternal salvation through faith and put it on temporary, worldly problems like climate change. Again, Dana emphasizes the importance of the bible and salvation in her judgment of this website.

In summary, Dana’s interview illustrates how one participant in this study used her faith themes to coalesce two discourses on climate change and reject a third. This process of making sense of competing climate change discourses is not unique to Dana; Roger and Darin also felt as though they had to navigate disparate commentaries on climate change to arrive at their opinions on the topic. Additionally, Dana represents an overall perception of climate change that was shared by 14 participants in this study, many of whom arrived at their conclusions about climate change in a similar fashion; they used their faith themes to decipher which parts of the various climate change discourses made sense to them. Dana’s interview also explores the importance of biblical inerrancy in conservative Christianity across varying personal histories, and shows how faith and life projects influence the climate change commentaries that participants in this study encounter. Finally, the fact that Dana was the only participant in the study to discuss what she described as her denomination’s “official position” on the topic of global warming is an interesting finding. Some of the churches in the sample were not part of a larger denomination, but three churches were part of formal denominational structures and two other churches were part of larger church associations. None of the pastors or participants from these churches that I interviewed were aware of “official statements” on climate change from the larger organizations that they were a part of. This indicates that if statements or positions on climate change exist at higher levels within these church organizations, they are not effectively reaching pastors or church members at a local level.
Figure 4.5: Dana Idiographic Organizing System

Perceptions of Climate Change
- Thinks that climate change is happening, and that humans have some impacts, but most changes are natural
- Thinks that climate change is a serious issue, but there are lots of serious issues in the world and faith in God is the only real solution to any of these problems
- Churches should focus on telling people about salvation, because as more people believe in God the world will become a better place

Faith Themes
- Biblical Inerrancy
- Salvation
- God is in Control (God’s Sovereignty)

Life Themes
- Humans are not in control
- Technologically Inclined

Faith Projects
- Active member of a small WELS church

Life Projects
- Works for a software company
- Mother

Climate Change Discourses
- Non-faith based: climate change happening and human emissions contribute
- WELS: endorses stewardship, but skeptical or dismissive of climate change
- Red Sky Ministry: links climate change and apocalypse

Personal History
- Raised in Catholic Church
- Joined WELS church as an adult
- Cancer diagnosis radically changed worldview
- Undergraduate degree in computer science

Faith Proje...
Max

The fifth and final idiographic analysis examines an interview with Max, a 28-year-old member at a huge church that has three campuses in the Dallas metroplex, with approximately 5,000 adults attending services every weekend. I chose Max’s interview first and foremost because Max is the most environmentally concerned and active participant in the sample. Therefore, he represents one end of the spectrum of environmental concern and behavior in this study. When contrasted with someone like Darin, Max shows the incredible variation that exists within conservative Christianity on environmental issues. Along with being the most environmentally active participant in the study, Max is also very religiously active. Max is extremely involved with his church and genuinely attempts to apply his faith to every aspect of his life, in fact he says that his faith is critical to his understanding of and engagement with environmental issues. Additionally, I chose Max’s interview because he is a climate change skeptic, despite being extremely environmentally concerned. His skepticism stems directly from his personal experiences with climate change activists and the discourses that he sees them employing. As a result, I think this interview is instructive for those who are interested in more effectively engaging faith communities on the topic of climate change. Max’s church also represents a growing phenomenon within conservative Christianity – large, young churches that are essentially non-denominational, but sometimes loosely affiliated larger Christian organizations. In this interview, Max articulates the difficulty these churches present for classification schemes within religious research. Finally, I feel that Max’s interview highlights the interactions between the various aspects of the organizing system particularly well. Max is self-reflective and makes a lot of the connections between the various aspects of the organizing system explicit in his answers to the interview questions. As with the other idiographic analyses, this examination of Max’s interview begins with his personal history and an organizing system for Max is presented below in Figure 4.6.

Max was raised in what would probably be considered a “mainline” protestant church, meaning that this faith community emphasized social activism over converting non-Christians to faith (T4.6-1). Max says that this church was very generous, but did not emphasize the motivation for their generosity. However, as a teenager, Max attended an evangelical summer camp, and heard “the gospel” for the first time (T4.6-1), which was a life-changing event. During his week at camp, Max felt God working in him and through others to help him understand God’s purpose for his life, resulting in a conversion moment where Max says that his faith
journey really began. Max's description of this conversion experience shows that he views God as very active in the world, which I have designated as his first faith theme. Another important aspect of this conversion experience was, as Max says, “the veil being lifted to a different reality” (T4.6-1). In other words, Max's entire worldview began to be changed by what he understood as the “gospel” after his time at camp. He defines the gospel, which is Max’s second faith theme, as the recognition that he is a sinner in need of a savior, that Jesus is that savior, that Jesus continues to actively work in this world to redeem it from sin, and that Christians are called to apply this message to their entire lives (T4.6-1). This view of the gospel is incredibly important to Max, both in his current faith and life projects, but in order to understand this importance it helps to look more closely at Max's non-faith background.

Max says he was raised in the Houston suburbs in a very conservative (meaning socially and politically in this instance) environment (T4.6-2). He feels that his concern about the environment and other socially progressive issues therefore is a direct result of God working in his life. He believes that it took faith, and more specifically a radically changed worldview brought about by God's promptings, to get him to care about issues like environmental sustainability. Max feels that the Holy Spirit has actively worked in his life to change the way that he views the world. Part of this transformation for Max was a realization of the interconnectedness of the world, and how his actions affect people and places far from his home (T4.6-2). Again, this indicates Max's belief that God is active in the world and in his life. If it were not for God's active intervention in his life, Max says there would be no reason for these issues to be of any personal concern for him. Based on his personal experiences, Max believes that genuine change with regards to environmental and social issues requires a “transformed perspective on the world” (T4.6-2). Max says that transformed perspectives start with an understanding of the gospel and God's activity in an individual’s life. Max believes that the gospel message combined with God’s activity can open people’s eyes to a new reality that provides real and lasting motivation for environmentally friendly behaviors (T4.6-2), unlike “going green lists.” Max feels that his two faith themes drive one of his main life themes, environmental concern. As Max says, one of his passions is trying to get people to understand their interconnectedness with other people and with the earth (T4.6-2), but he would not have this passion apart from his faith.

Another one of Max’s life themes originates in his educational and previous work history as part of his larger personal history. Max has a degree in marketing and after college was
working for a large financial consulting firm (T4.6-3, T4.6-4). While at that job, Max had the opportunity to do some pro-bono consulting for non-profits (T4.6-4). As he says, this opened his eyes to the opportunities available in the private sector to do “the work of God.” Additionally, Max found this work in the private sector to be effective, and have an impact on the local community. In contrast with this experience, Max feels that government is extremely ineffective (T4.6-5). This perspective, combined with the cultural influences of growing up in a socially and politically conservative environment (T4.6-3), leads Max to be “philosophically conservative” (T4.6-5), which he defines as believing that less government is good. This conservative ideology is one of Max’s life themes, and while he does say that he considers himself a moderate, and tends to line up with Democrats on a lot of issues, he also feels that work in the private sector is a more effective use of his time and energy. In this way, Max’s personal history contributes to his two faith themes, the gospel and God’s activity in the world, and his two life themes, environmental concern and conservative ideology; all four of these themes then come together to influence his current faith and life projects.

Max’s first faith project is his involvement with Mosaic Church. Max and his wife are extremely involved at their current church, which, as previously mentioned, is a huge and rapidly growing church with three locations in the Dallas area. They have assumed a number of leadership roles within the church over the course of their four years at Mosaic (T4.6-6). As Max says, they love the church and try to be as involved as possible, in fact he says he “could not speak higher praises of a church.” Max says that this particular church is so great in his opinion because they preach the gospel and focus on community (T4.6-4). Max specifically contrasts his church in this regard with his views on the role of government, combining his faith theme of focusing on the gospel with his life theme of ideological conservatism (in order to illustrate this point I have included two quotes which jump ahead in the interview to discussion of climate change, so I will come back to these later in the analysis, but they are informative here as well: T4.6-7, T4.6-8). Max sees people looking to the American government for hope and salvation when the only true source of hope and salvation is the gospel and faith in God. In this sense, Max views government intervention on any issue like climate change as competing with the role of churches in spreading the gospel. People should not be turning the government in Max’s opinion, but rather to faith and faith communities for the sustained hope and motivation needed to address contemporary environmental and social problems. In fact, Max seems to feel as though we would hardly need government at all if the Christian church actually lived up to
the call of the gospel at the community level. This explains why church is so important to Max; church provides real hope and salvation, and if churches focus first and foremost on living out the gospel in community, then many environmental and social issues could be more effectively addressed without government interference. In his opinion, “legislated change” is a sad alternative to the faith-based, heartfelt change he feels is possible when both individuals and communities understand the gospel.

This faith project of Max’s involvement with Mosaic also illustrates one of the problems facing religious researchers today with regards to classifying the burgeoning non-denominational Christian population. Max describes himself, and his church, as Presba-Bapti-Costal and reformed (T4.6-9). As discussed in Dana’s analysis, reformed is not commonly used on religious surveys as a self-identification category, much less Presba-Bapti-Costal. Obviously, Max and his pastor use this term jokingly, but the humor gets at the very heart of the problem in religious classification schemes, the prevalence of non- and inter-denominational churches today makes religious identities confusing for both researchers and research participants. This identity does not appear to play a critical role in Max’s views on climate change apart from his faith themes, however this quote provides a nice illustration of the complexity and confusion that accompanies religious labels these days.

Max’s current life project also reflects his faith and life themes. Max works in the social and environmental sustainability division of an international food company (T4.6-2, T4.6-10). He says this work relates directly to his faith. First, Max believes that God actively called him into this line of work and then made this ideal opportunity available to him (T4.6-11). Second, Max feels that his work is an expression of his belief in the importance of the gospel (T4.6-12). As mentioned previously, Max is one of the most religiously active individuals in the sample that is not a pastor. His description of how he thinks about his work reiterates the centrality of faith to Max’s life, and specifically the idea that Max attempts to apply his faith theme of the gospel to every aspect of his life. Max’s life project also reflects his life themes. He works directly in the field of environmental sustainability, reflecting his life theme of environmental concern, and he works in the private sector reflecting his theme of ideological conservatism. In other words, Max says that he works in environmental sustainability in the private sector because he feels that it is more efficacious than government work.

Max’s second faith project draws upon his other faith project and his life project as well as his faith and life themes. Some of Max’s involvement with Mosaic has been focused
specifically on environmental issues, tying in his life theme of environmental concern. As previously mentioned, Max feels that God has specifically worked in his life to develop an environmental awareness and concern (T4.6-2). Furthermore, because Max feels that the church is the best institution for addressing the problems in the world (T4.6-7, T4.6-8), he has devoted a significant amount of time and energy to working with Mosaic to develop an environmental statement (T4.6-13). He was asked to author this statement in part because of his life project of working in environmental sustainability. In the process of researching and writing this church document, Max says that he became even more convinced of the importance of environmental concern from a conservative Christian perspective because he began to see everyday occurrences in nature as God intentionally manifesting the gospel message in creation. Eventually, Max not only produced an official “Theology of Creation Care” document for Mosaic, he also helped organize and lead a seminar at one of the church campuses entitled Is God Green? (T4.6-13, T4.6-14, I have included a copy of Max’s “Theology of Creation Care” in Appendix A as an example of how conservative Christian theology can be successfully applied to environmental issues. Additionally, I was able to listen to a podcast version of the seminar before speaking with Max.) This work on environmental theology and sustainability in the church then is one of Max’s faith projects in this interview.

In both the seminar and the “Theology of Creation Care” document, Max applies his understanding of the gospel message, his belief that God is active in the world, and other conservative Christian faith themes to his understanding of the environment and the environmental problems the world faces today. Specifically in the “Theology of Creation Care” document, Max cites a number of bible verses as justification for his statements about the environment and how God calls humans to interact with that environment. This use of the bible is significant because it reveals that the bible is an important part not only of Max’s faith, but also of his environmental concern. I mention this because Max is the only participant in the idiographic analysis chapter who does not have biblical inerrancy as a faith theme. This does not mean that the bible is unimportant to Max (as the “Theology of Creation Care” document demonstrates and Max describes in T4.6-14), but rather that he simply places more emphasis on his belief that God is active in the world and on the gospel than biblical inerrancy in this interview. I see Max’s overall interview, but particularly his second faith project of church environmental sustainability as a testament to the idea that faith can not only play an important role in an individual’s environmental concern and behavior, but be the primary driving force for
such thought and practice. Environmental stewardship, for Max, stems from his desire to obey and glorify God rather than from a “worldly” desire to simply be culturally relevant. Interestingly though, Max does not feel the same about global climate change as he does about other environmental sustainability issues because of his encounters with climate change discourses.

As with the other four interviewees in this idiographic chapter, Max’s encounters with climate change discourses have come primarily in the context of his current life project. However, Max’s life project has brought him into more direct contact with climate change discourses than any other participant in the sample. Based on Max’s position within the company he works for, he has had the opportunity to work directly with some climate change advocacy organizations (T4.6-15). Max’s encounters with these organizations have led him to believe that they are more concerned about mass persuasion and the potential money that could be tied up in climate change legislation than about the actual environmental impacts of carbon emissions (T4.6-15, T4.6-16, T4.6-8).

Max concludes from these experiences first and foremost that climate change is a distraction from larger and more important environmental sustainability conversations (T4.6-16). He feels that climate change has unfortunately become shorthand for environmental sustainability and that this causes people to focus on the politicized aspects of climate change and lose sight of the impacts that human consumption is having on the environment regardless of whether or not climate change is happening. Max feels that environmental sustainability conversations are more effective when they start on more neutral ground that simply acknowledges negative human impacts on the environment.

In terms of Max’s opinions about the phenomenon of climate change itself, he says that he has a hard time arguing with the evidence he has seen suggesting that the earth is warming. Further, he is a supporter of science, which he views as a form of worship since science is the practice of studying and thereby glorifying God’s creation. However he is not comfortable asserting causality for that warming (T4.6-17). Again, he sees attributing causality as highly politicized, and feels that scientific debate still exists on the matter. Additionally, Max believes that information related to the causes of climate change is being politically controlled to serve socio-political interests rather than being used to serve the creation and glorify God. For the church to be drawn into this politicized discussion is to fall prey to the tyranny of the majority; that is, subjecting the church’s religious values by joining a political group on a particular issue
for the purpose of acquiring political power (the power of the majority). Therefore, focusing on climate change, a topic that is debatable, distracts from similar issues that Max feels are less debatable, and more effective at mobilizing a response, particularly within the conservative faith community. The best approach for addressing global warming, in Max’s view, is to not focus on it directly, but rather get at the “root” issue of consumption in America and our detachment from our environmental impacts (T4.6-16, T4.6-17). Because of this perspective, Max does not feel that churches should address climate change directly. Rather they should start with examples of more obvious negative effects of human consumption on the environment, and ultimately focus on the gospel with the idea of allowing God to change individuals’ hearts towards their environmental impacts (T4.6-16, T4.6-17). This, and only this, approach will lead to lasting change because the gospel is the only motivation for real change in sinful people’s lives (T4.6-2, T4.6-12, T4.6-17).

All in all, Max’s interview may be the most illustrative of the full organizing system of the analyses presented in this chapter. Max’s life history clearly influences his faith themes of focusing on the gospel and viewing God as active in the world. These two faith themes have contributed to Max’s life theme of environmental concern. His educational and work histories, on the other hand, contribute to his life theme of political conservatism. His faith and life projects stem directly from these themes, with faith dictating the amount of time he commits to the church and his political ideology encouraging him to focus his life project efforts in the private sector. He says that his belief in the gospel directs both his faith and life project focus on environmental issues. These faith and life projects in turn have a significant affect on his encounters with climate change discourses. His life project of working in corporate environmental sustainability has brought him into direct contact with climate change advocates whose motives he questions, and his faith project has shown him that focusing too much on climate change detracts from larger goals of environmental sustainability, religious obedience, and glorification of God by bringing them into the suspect realm of worldly culture and political agendas.

Overall, Max’s interview is instructive in two key ways with regards to this project. First, Max demonstrates that it is possible for environmental concern to be a priority for conservative Christians based on their faith. In fact, Max feels that his concern for the environment stems entirely from his faith. In turn, Max describes spending significant amounts of time thinking about environmental issues in light of his faith, including developing a “Theology of Creation
Care” document for his church. This document (included as Appendix A) could serve as a starting point for more effectively engaging conservative faith communities in dialog about environmental issues; it demonstrates how environmental concern can be conceived of within the theological frameworks that conservative Christians already embrace. With that said, Max’s interview is also instructive regarding this particular project on climate change because it simultaneously demonstrates how climate change discourses have failed to connect with one of the most environmentally concerned participants in this study, and how, in Max’s opinion, these discourses could more effectively engage a conservative audience.

More specifically, Max believes that real change regarding environmental issues must result from “transformed perspectives on the world.” In Max’s experience, understanding the gospel provides this transformed perspective and the lasting hope and motivation necessary to address today’s environmental problems. By way of contrast, Max sees climate change advocates turning to the federal government instead of faith and faith communities for hope and salvation when it comes to global warming. As a consequence, Max says that he is skeptical of attempts to address climate change legislatively. Rather, he says, we need to be addressing the core issues driving all environmental problems in the world today, including climate change, which are consumption and disconnection from the natural world. In Max’s opinion, these problems ultimately result from not understanding the gospel and the ways that God has manifested the gospel in the natural world.

Interestingly, this leads Max to suggest that the best way to address climate change in conservative faith communities is by not directly addressing it at all. Rather, discussions with and within faith communities should focus on the environment as a manifestation of the gospel and how human consumption negatively impacts that environment in clear and uncontroversial ways. Max feels that this approach will provide the transformed perspective and motivation necessary to address all of our contemporary environmental issues including climate change. Additionally, Max feels that this approach will ensure that environmental sustainability remains a focus of faith communities regardless of ever changing popular opinions about such issues. Based on Max’s personal experiences and the amount of time and thought that he has put into these issues, his suggestions deserve serious consideration when it comes to encouraging more effective dialog about climate change with theologically conservative Christians.
Figure 4.6: Max Idiographic Organizing System

**Personal History**
- Raised in mainline Protestant church
- Heard gospel at evangelical sports camp
- Has a business degree and worked as financial consultant after college, first exposure to social justice efforts in private sector

**Faith Project**
- Extremely active in faith community
- Views environmental concern as a direct manifestation of God’s activity in his life
- Attempts to apply gospel to all he does
- Wrote church’s environmental statement and led a seminar entitled *Is God Green?*

**Faith Themes**
- God is active in the world
- Understanding and applying the gospel

**Life Themes**
- Ideologically Conservative
- Environmental Concern

**Current Life Project**
- Works as an environmental and social sustainability consultant
- Has had direct contact with climate change advocacy organizations

**Climate Change Discourses**
- Direct contact with climate change advocacy groups through work
- Concerned about advocacy groups focusing on mass persuasion
- Believes scientific debate exists about causality of climate change

**Perceptions of Climate Change**
- Thinks that climate change is happening, and that humans have some impacts, but not sure what level of impact
- Thinks that climate change is a tragic distraction from environmental sustainability movement as a whole
- Feels that climate change can most effectively be addressed by not focusing on it directly, but rather shifting focus to American consumerism
Chapter Summary and Conclusion

This idiographic results chapter started off with an overview of some of the demographic characteristics of both the churches and individual respondents that participated in this study. This information was intended to convey some of the diversity within the sample in terms of church size and location as well as participant age, education, political ideology, and political affiliation. In addition to providing an overview of the composition of the sample, this information was consulted in selecting the individual interview analyses that were presented later in the chapter. These interviews were chosen in part because they represent the diversity within the sample with respect to these demographic characteristics.

This chapter then introduced the idiographic organizing system and the literature that aided in its conception and development. This section explained the various parts of the organizing system and presented two diagrammatic representations of it. These visuals demonstrate the factors within each interview that come together to best explain each individual’s perceptions of climate change. The specific analyses presented in this chapter were also chosen because they highlight different aspects of this organizing system, and interactions between these various aspects of the organizing system.

The chapter then examined the results of five idiographic analyses, starting with Pastor Darin. Darin placed heavy emphasis on his belief that the bible is inerrant and how his reading of the bible, particularly his reading of eschatological prophecies, prevented Darin from being concerned about climate change. Roger, unlike Darin, downplayed the role that his faith played in his views on climate change, choosing instead to focus on his engineering background. However it was evident that Roger’s faith did have some bearing on both his perspective on science and his views on climate change in turn. Roger emphasized a belief in God’s sovereignty and stated that God would not allow humans to negatively impact the global climate. Therefore, Roger said he was not concerned about climate change. Sandy, unlike Roger and Darin, was concerned about climate change largely because of her personal experiences with pollution related illnesses. These experiences opened Sandy up to the idea that humans could negatively impact the environment, and that these negative impacts need to be taken seriously because they have real consequences. Sandy emphasized the faith theme of human sinfulness in arriving at her opinion that humans were causing global climate change and needed to address the issue. Dana, like Sandy, said that she could see climate change resulting from human sinfulness; however she lumped climate change in with other manifestations of human
sinfulness and emphasized that only God could solve for these problems. Max stated that he was extremely involved with the environmental sustainability movement because of his faith. Along these lines, Max suggested a number of ways that conservative religious beliefs could be thought of as supporting environmental concern and behavior. However, because of Max’s personal experiences with climate change advocates, he questioned the motivations behind action on climate change.

This brief synopsis of the five analyses presented above demonstrates first and foremost that faith is an important factor to consider when trying to understanding these individuals’ perceptions of climate change. All five interviewees related their faith to their views on climate change in one way or another. The influence that faith has on these five respondents’ perceptions of climate change speaks back to the original research question, and indicates that religious beliefs perhaps deserve more attention in perceptions of climate change research than they have received up to this point. Interestingly though, none of the five interviewees discussed in this chapter related their faith to climate change in the exact same way. Roger, on one end of the spectrum, claimed that he did not see climate change as a faith issue, however I argued that in fact his faith plays a critical role in his perceptions of climate change by shaping his perceptions of the amount of impact that humans can or cannot have on the climate. Darin, Sandy, Dana, and Max on the other hand, all acknowledged that their faith contributed to their perceptions of climate change, despite the fact that they came to different conclusions about the issue. Darin said that his literal interpretation of biblical prophecies about the end times prevented him from being concerned about climate change, while Sandy’s emphasis on human sinfulness and its impacts on the environment affected her belief that human induced climate change was a reality and a legitimate issue to be concerned about. Dana was not sure exactly how humans impacted the climate, but no matter what the impact in her opinion, the only solution to problems like climate change was faith in God. Max said he was similarly unsure about the level of human contribution to global climate change but was extremely concerned about and engaged with environmental sustainability in general because of his faith.

This difference between participants indicates that in addition to considering faith in perceptions of climate change research, it is also important to consider personal context when attempting to understand how conservative Christians relate their faith to their perceptions of climate change. All five participants came from different personal backgrounds; these different backgrounds led to different faith and life themes, which in turn manifested themselves in
different faith and life projects. These different faith and life projects then influenced the
climate change discourses that participants encountered, and all of these factors came together
in different ways to influence each participant’s overall perceptions of climate change. These
analyses indicate that there is no single way that faith relates to conservative Christians’
thoughts on climate change, rather the interpretation and application of various beliefs is an
individualized process and one that is largely dependent on personal experiences and
circumstances. Therefore, any attempt to engage any of these individuals in dialog about
climate change would benefit from an understanding of each their personal backgrounds, their
current circumstances, their beliefs, and how all of these factors relate to their views on climate
change. Ultimately this indicates that effectively engaging individuals in dialog about climate
change may very well require individual conversations that account for these factors.

While personal context is critical to understanding the interviews presented in this
chapter, the interviewees also discussed some similarities in faith themes. Despite the fact that
they all came from different denominations and churches, biblical inerrancy, God’s sovereignty,
eschatology, and evangelism were all faith themes embraced by two or more of the five
respondents in this chapter. These faith themes were not interpreted or applied in the same
way in any two interviews; but there were some foundational principles of these faith themes
that these participants shared across the interviews. These similarities set the stage for the
nomothetic analyses that follow. The interviews examined in this chapter also exposed some of
the problems with religious classification schemes widely used in contemporary survey research.
Darin, Dana, and Max all exposed pitfalls within religious classifications and terminology, an
issue that will also be explored in greater depth in the chapter that follows.

Finally, these five interviews demonstrated the flexibility and broad applicability of the
idiographic organizing system used to analyze and explain all 35 of the interviews collected for
this study. Each of the interviewees emphasized a different part, or interaction between parts,
of the organizing system. For instance, Darin’s analysis focused exclusively on the faith side of
the system, while Sandy’s analysis placed heavy emphasis on her life themes and projects.
Roger’s analysis focused on the interaction between life and faith themes, while Dana’s placed
more emphasis on the discourse part of the organizing system. Max’s interview weighted each
part of the organizing system more equally than the other four participants, and demonstrated
how all of the parts overlap and interact with one another. The use of the organizing system to
classify these six interviews should allow the reader to evaluate the persuasiveness,
insightfulness, and practical utility (the goals of an organizing system as discussed in the examination of the normative commitments of hermeneutics in the Methods Chapter) of the results of the idiographic analysis process used in this project. In addition to facilitating the idiographic analysis of all 35 individual interviews, this organizing system also laid the foundation for the nomothetic analysis process and nomothetic organizing system found in the next chapter. The idiographic organizing system is the cornerstone of the results and conclusions presented in this study, and therefore critical to understanding how the results were produced, how they relate back to the actual data, and as a consequence, how valid the conclusions drawn from the results are; much of this project’s worth hangs in the validity and usefulness of the idiographic organizing system.
Chapter 5: Nomothetic Results and Discussion

Chapter Introduction

This chapter examines the results of the nomothetic analysis process. Recall from the Methods chapter that Patterson and Williams (2002, p. 103), define nomothetic analysis as, “an analysis that seeks to identify patterns across individuals,” and that this focus on data at the aggregate level occurs only when an idiographic analysis indicates that it is appropriate and useful. This chapter examines all 35 interviews, illustrating key similarities and differences between them, and discussing how the insights gleaned from this aggregate analysis speak back to the research objectives.

The chapter begins with a brief examination of the hermeneutic principle of situated freedom in order to justify the transition from an idiographic to a nomothetic analysis. The chapter then examines some baseline information regarding the similarities and differences in participant perceptions of climate change in order to set the stage for the analytical approach used to make sense of apparent patterns in the data. Next, the chapter turns to an analysis of participants’ religious identities, as this also helps lay the foundation for the bulk of the analysis found in this chapter. Then an introduction is provided to the organizing system utilized for the nomothetic analysis and how this organizing system relates to the idiographic organizing system presented in the previous chapter. Finally, the analysis and discussion turn to five faith themes the participants in this sample shared, and how those faith themes help to explain their perceptions of climate change. The chapter concludes with some thoughts on how these five faith themes inform the research goals of this project as well as past and future research.

Transitioning from Idiographic to Nomothetic Analysis: Situated Freedom

The previous chapter focused on the importance of personal context in explaining the relationship between conservative Christian religion and climate change. The stories of five individuals were presented to demonstrate how personal history, life and faith themes, and life and faith projects all come together to influence a person’s encounters with and reactions to various climate change discourses, and how these discourses combined with an individual’s personal story help to explain their perceptions of climate change. This chapter is intended to build off of that idiographic focus, but emphasizes similarities shared by interviewees across the sample regarding religious beliefs and climate change. At first, this shift to a nomothetic analysis of the interviews may appear to contradict some of the arguments of the previous
chapter; if the interviewees share commonalities with regards to faith and climate change, why spend an entire chapter trying to establish the importance of understanding individual context and personal experiences as key to understanding the relationship between religious beliefs and views on climate change? In order to answer this question, it is helpful to step back for a moment and re-examine a key ontological commitment that the hermeneutic paradigm embraces, namely the concept of situated freedom.

Recall from the discussion of the normative commitments of hermeneutics in the Methods chapter that this paradigm assumes individuals “co-constitute” meaning as they interact with the social and physical environments around them. This means that individuals have the ability to make choices and exercise a degree of personal freedom in the meanings that they assign to various experiences. At the same time, hermeneutics recognizes that real physical and social environments do exist, and impose limits on individuals’ experiences and meaning making processes. This idea of co-constitution is closely tied with the concept of situated freedom. Patterson and Williams (2002, p. 105) define situated freedom in the following way:

In hermeneutics, situated freedom refers to the belief that human experience is not completely determined by the environment, nor is it characterized by complete personal freedom (Valle et al., 1989). The social and physical environment presents situations that constrain how a person may act (Thompson et al., 1989; Valle et al., 1989). However, one’s practical interests make perception interpretive and human control manifests itself through the ability to act in the world in a purposeful manner and the ability to orient attention to different aspects of the environment (Thompson et al., 1989; Valle et al., 1989).

The five interviews presented in the previous chapter demonstrate the concept of situated freedom insomuch as the individuals utilized different aspects of their personal histories, faith and life themes, and faith and life projects to make sense of climate change. As a result, these five individuals came to different conclusions about climate change and how it related to their faith. The freedom aspect of the broader situated freedom concept then is useful for explaining how individuals from a relatively small geographical area with relatively similar religious beliefs can arrive at different conclusions about climate change.

Situated freedom functions simultaneously as a useful concept for explaining how similarities can exist alongside an emphasis on individual context by considering the
situatedness of individuals. Because individuals are constrained in part by their social and physical environments, hermeneutic ontology suggests that similarities in individual experiences and meanings are not only possible, but probable (Patterson & Williams, 2002). In other words, a researcher should expect to find commonalities across cases in which individuals share physical and/or social environments, and in fact the idiographic analyses presented in the previous chapter did reveal some similarities. The most notable similarities amongst participants were the faith themes that they chose to discuss in relation to climate change.

The interviewees in this sample all attended churches that hold to conservative theological tenets, those discussed in the Methods chapter, which differentiate conservative Christianity from mainline and liberal Christianity in the United States today. This shared theology across the churches in this sample may constitute a constraint on the faith themes available to the participants in this study. If this shared theology creates a constraint on respondents’ faith themes, then it would be reasonable, from a hermeneutic perspective, to expect similarities in respondent faith themes. However, it would also be reasonable to expect that participants exercise some freedom in interpreting and applying these shared faith themes to their perspectives on a topic like climate change.

The concept of situated freedom provides the impetus for the bulk of the nomothetic analyses that follow. Situated freedom suggests that a transition from an idiographic to nomothetic focus is appropriate and useful if meaningful similarities and/or differences appear across a data set that help deepen the researcher’s understanding of the phenomenon of interest. In turn, this chapter attempts to account for the similarities and differences in participant perceptions of climate change by examining similarities and differences in their religious beliefs. The analyses that follow propose that the most meaningful explanation of the relationship between conservative faith and perceptions of climate change is one that accounts for shared faith themes and their various interpretations and applications to the topic of climate change. This explanation of similarities and relationships within the data is then useful insofar as it enables a better understanding of the relationship between conservative Christian faith and its adherents’ perceptions of climate change.

Shared theology is not the only potential constraint on participants’ religious experiences in this study though. The sampling methodology utilized to collect the interview data for this project was explicitly designed to account for other potential similarities and differences in participant perceptions of climate change based on shared religious factors. More
specifically, the sampling principles were designed to account for similarities and differences within and across churches and within and across faith identities. Before diving into shared faith themes then, it is important to explore any patterns in participant perceptions of climate change that may relate to other religious factors such as religious affiliation (or the church one attends) and religious identity. In order to do so though, it is first necessary to examine some of the similarities and differences between participant perceptions of climate change so that the influence of religious affiliation and identity can be assessed.

**Perceptions of Climate Change**

The nomothetic analysis of the similarities and differences between interviews in this chapter begins with an examination of the perceptions that participants held regarding two broad aspects of climate change, first the existence and causes of climate change and second concern about climate change. These two aspects of participant perceptions of climate change were chosen for this section first because they have been the focus of previous research, second because they reveal the range of views on climate change held by participants in this sample, and third because they allow for a comparison of perceptions within and across churches.

In a review of social science studies on climate change, Lorenzoni and Pidgeon (2006) found that surveys commonly regard perceptions of the existence and causes of climate change and concern about climate change to be the baseline measures of overall opinions about the topic. Previous studies on perceptions of climate change have largely been quantitative in nature and relied on survey questionnaires to gather data about people’s views on these aspects of climate change. Due to the nature of survey research, participants in these studies are asked to describe their views on the causes of climate change and their concern about climate change using pre-defined and mutually exclusive answer choices. While this study did not employ a survey approach to data collection, interviewees were asked to describe their views on these two aspects of climate change. More specifically, all 36 respondents were asked whether or not they thought climate change was occurring, and if so what they thought was causing it. Additionally, all 36 respondents were asked whether or not they were concerned about climate change. Rather than using pre-determined answer choices though, the semi-structured interview format encouraged participants to answer these questions using their own words. Interviewee responses revealed a range of opinions within the sample about whether or not climate change was happening, the causes of climate change, and concern about climate
change. The discussion that follows briefly examines these responses in order to set the stage for the remainder of the chapter which explores how respondents related their religious beliefs to their perceptions of climate change.

**Perceived Causes of Climate Change**

Pew surveys on climate change ask participants the following questions regarding the existence and causes of climate change: “Is there solid evidence the earth is warming?” with the possible answer choices of yes, no, or mixed/don’t know; participants who answer yes are then asked “Is there solid evidence the earth is warming because of human activity or because of natural patterns?” (Pew 2007, 2009b). Gallup polls use the following variation on the same question: “From what you have heard or read, do you believe increases in the Earth’s temperature over the last century are due more to the effects of pollution from human activities (or) natural changes in the environment that are not due to human activities?” with three possible answer choices of “human activities, natural causes, and no opinion” (Newport, 2008, 2010). The semi-structured interview format employed for this study allowed participants to express more nuanced opinions about the existence of climate change and its causes. Using their own words, respondents described a range of views about the causes of climate change that appear to exist along a spectrum as opposed to within mutually exclusive, discrete categories. The spectrum of opinions that participants expressed concerning the causes of climate change varied from skepticism that climate change was occurring at all, regardless of cause, to a belief that climate change was definitely happening and humans are completely responsible for it. These opinions are examined below, starting with skepticism about the very existence of climate change.

Four participants in the sample said that they were doubtful climate change was occurring at all. Margery (T5.1-1, T5.1-2) was the most unequivocal on this perspective, stating that she does not think climate change is happening and that most of the science she has read or heard about on the topic supports this opinion, although she recognizes there is some disagreement and inconsistency amongst scientists. Pastor Darin (T5.1-3, T5.1-4, T3-5) also states explicitly that he is skeptical that climate change exists at all. However, as was examined in the idiographic analysis of Darin’s interview in the previous chapter, he does feel that historic changes in the world’s climate are described in the bible. Therefore, he is open to the idea that the global climate could change, but he is skeptical that the one degree changes he hears about
today are actually taking place and suspects those scientists who say climate change is occurring are motivated by a desire to gain research funds and job security. Pastor Jacob (T5.1-6) stated that he considered himself to be in the 10% of the population that is skeptical of climate change; however he emphasized time and again that this skepticism did not prevent him from taking steps to reduce his greenhouse gas emissions. Julie (T5.1-7, T5.1-8) does not think that climate change is occurring, and she has not personally noticed any changes in the Texas climate. She is aware of the evidence climate change scientists and advocates point to that indicate climates are changing elsewhere in the world, but she remains skeptical of the existence of the phenomenon on the whole. Darin, Jacob, and Julie reveal how confining a simple yes or no answer can be with regards to the existence of climate change. While these three individuals were skeptical of climate change, none of them said that they flat out did not believe in it, and both Julie and Pastor Jacob wanted to be sure that their skepticism about the existence of climate change was not mischaracterized as a lack of concern about the environment in general. This point jumps ahead somewhat to participant concern about climate change, but is worth noting here as two of the four most skeptical individuals regarding the existence climate change embrace general environmental concern in the same answer that they dismiss the specific issue of climate change. Rather than existing in a discrete category then, Darin, Jacob, and Julie represent a range in between Margery and the next group of participants who were more confident about the existence of climate change.

Twelve interviewees expressed some variation of the opinion that cycles in the earth’s climate do exist, are completely natural, and are not impacted by humans. Agnes (T5.1-9) and Jeremiah (T5.1-10) represent this perspective, stating that climate change is a natural process that has occurred from time immemorial and that current climatic trends are part of natural cycles that humans do not control. While these twelve participants shared the perspective that climate change is a natural process, they also expressed some differences of opinion about the factors that drove these natural processes. For instance, Agnes (T5.1-9) says that she feels these cycles are controlled directly by God, a belief that other participants discussed as well, and one that will be explored in greater detail later in this chapter. Other participants attributed natural changes in the climate to different natural factors, including the sun (as Jeremiah does in T5.1-7), ocean currents, and volcanic eruptions.

Four participants in the study were undecided, stating that they were unsure if climate change was happening and if so whether or not humans were playing any role. Interestingly,
three of these four individuals were pastors: Pastor Peter, Pastor Barry, and Pastor Preston. Peter (T5.1-11), Barry (T5.1-12), and Hannah (T5.1-13, the only non-pastor in this category) genuinely do not seem to know who or what to believe about climate change. Peter and Barry both state that they have heard arguments both for and against human induced climate change, and they cannot decide who to trust or where they fall on the issue. Barry expressly notes that the bible provides no guidance on what to believe about global warming, but also says the bible does require him to care for the environment, an opinion similar to those expressed by Julie and Pastor Jacob, and explored in more depth later in the chapter. Hannah simply feels that she has not heard enough about the issue to have an opinion about it one way or another. She does not feel that she has personally experienced any changes in the weather noting that Texas has always been hot, but in terms of global climate change, she just does not have an opinion. The uncertainty about climate change that pastor Preston (T5.1-14) describes may be more an artifact of the question I asked rather than his true opinion on the matter. Preston states that he is definitely skeptical of climate change science (and also states that his faith calls him to care for the earth anyway as seen with Barry). Unfortunately, the follow up question I asked leaves room for doubt about whether he is really unsure about the existence and causes of global warming or simply chooses not to contest my framing of the question. In the context of his interview, I believe that Preston is intentionally non-committal. He may or may not have a definitive opinion about the existence and causes of climate change, but I think he capitalizes on the poor phrasing to avoid the question because he feels that he is representing his church and does not want to express an opinion that may be rendered official.

Fourteen participants said that climate change is most likely happening, and humans most likely have some impacts, but the exact relationship is unclear. These participants, including Dana (T5.1-15) and Melissa (T5.1-16), said that they did think climate change exists and human are involved somehow, but they are uncertain about the extent of climate change and/or human involvement in that change. A comparison between Dana’s and Melissa’s quotes captures some of the similarities and differences between interviewees who shared this broad opinion. For instance, Dana talks about carbon dioxide emissions specifically, while Melissa uses less precise language, describing smoke from cars and smokestacks as contributing to climate change. Additionally, Dana says her opinion is largely based on what she has read and heard (and is able to understand) about the science of climate change while Melissa says her views are largely based on personal experience of changes in the weather over the years. Additionally,
Melissa questions whether or not climate change is linked to the end times, a perspective that is also examined in further detail later in this chapter. As these two participants demonstrate, there was variation within this grouping in terms of how and to what extent interviewees thought humans were contributing to climate change. However, they broadly shared a belief that climate change is happening to some extent and humans are contributing in some way or another.

Finally, Sandy (T5.1-17, T5.1-18) and Trent (T5.1-19) composed the opposite end of the spectrum from the climate change skeptics. They both felt certain that climate change was happening and that humans were completely responsible for the phenomenon. Unlike other participants who felt climate change was happening and humans were playing some role, these two did not mention natural climate cycles at all. Rather, they attributed climate change solely to human actions; they both felt that humans were unequivocally responsible for global climate changes.

Overall, these results indicate that the participants in this sample think about the existence and causes of climate change in much more complex terms than surveys often account for. In fact, for simplicity’s sake, I attempted to answer the Pew survey questions for each participant based on their interview responses, and was unable to confidently do so for about two-fifths of the sample. I am not sure how the fourteen respondents who stated that they felt humans had some role with regards to climate change would have answered the question about global warming resulting from human actions or natural cycles. These individuals compose a large segment of this sample and demonstrate that some level of uncertainty was the most prominent view on the existence and causes of climate change, whereas in the latest Pew poll on climate change, only 10% of all adults answered that they did not know if the earth was warming or thought that this warming could be due to mixed natural and human factors. Only 7% of the self-identified white evangelicals in this Pew survey indicated uncertainty about the existence and causes of climate change (Pew, 2009b). This comparison indicates that previous surveys may over-represent certain views about the existence and causality of climate change by limiting answer choices.

It appears from my interview data that many of the participants in this study are largely unsure about the role humans are playing in global climate change. In fact, of the 36 interviewees, 15 stated explicitly in their interviews that they felt they did not or could not understand the science behind climate change (see, for example, T5.1-4, T5.1-15, T5.1-16). And
participants frequently did in fact misunderstand climate change science. As an example, 12 respondents like Camden (T5.1-20), conflated climate change with human impacts on the ozone layer. The quotes in this section also indicate that religious beliefs do factor into respondent opinions about whether or not climate change exists and if so what is causing it. They are certainly not the only factor, participants also describe their political ideology, personal experiences, and understanding of science as affecting their opinions about the causes of climate change, however religious beliefs are a salient part of the mix. As described in the previous idiographic chapter, all of these factors overlap and interact and their exact relationship is best understood through an in-depth examination of individual cases. However it is apparent that religious beliefs do factor into respondent perceptions of the existence and causes of climate change.

**Participant Concern about Climate Change**

In addition to asking respondents about their views on the existence of climate change, survey research often tries to assess American concern about climate change. Pew opinion polls do so by asking respondents whether they feel global warming is a very, somewhat, or not too serious problem, or not a problem at all (Pew 2007, 2009b). Gallup polls ask whether Americans think that, “global warming will pose a serious threat to you or your way of life in your lifetime” with yes or no provided as potential responses (Newport 2008, 2010). I asked participants in this study simply whether or not they were “concerned about climate change.”

As with the discussion of the existence and causes of climate change above, this open-ended question drew a range of responses. These responses varied from very concerned about climate change to not at all concerned. Within this range, 23 respondents, or approximately two thirds of the participants, stated that they were not at all concerned to not very concerned about climate change. Margery (T5.2-1) represents the not at all concerned end of the spectrum while Pastor Frank (T5.2-2) represents the not very concerned range of responses. Eleven respondents, about one-third of the interviewees, stated that they were somewhere in between somewhat concerned about climate change and very concerned about climate change. Dana (T5.2-3) represents the somewhat concerned responses while Trent (T5.2-4) represents the very concerned viewpoint and the opposite end of the concern spectrum from Margery. Two respondents, Pastor Peter (T5.1-11, T5.2-5) and Pastor Barry (T5.1-12, T5.2-6), who were both unsure about climate change said that they would be concerned about it if they thought it
was happening. They do not know if climate change is occurring though, and so they do not know whether they should be concerned about it or not.

Within this range, participants discussed several nuances about their level of concern that are not evident in past survey research. Despite the fact that two-thirds of the respondents stated that they were either not very or not at all concerned about climate change, all 36 stated that they felt some responsibility to care for the earth based on their faith (this widely held perspective is examined in detail in the Stewardship subsection found later this chapter).

Brandon (T5.2-7) was one participant who differentiated a general environmental concern from concern about climate change, stating that pollution and litter do bother him, but climate change is not an issue that he cares about because he does not think it has been proven to exist yet. Closely related to Brandon’s comments, four participants stated that they were not concerned about environmental aspects of climate change, but they were concerned about the potential political and/or economic ramifications of climate change legislation. Pastor Cecil (T5.2-8), for instance, says he is only concerned about climate change insofar as he sees the issue being used to support political agendas that he opposes.

The latest Pew survey on climate change found that 64% of Americans thought global warming was a very or somewhat serious problem, while only 34% of survey respondents considered it a not too serious problem or not a problem at all. Comparatively, 50% of self-identified white evangelicals in the same study thought global warming was a very serious or somewhat serious problem, while 49% of the respondents said global warming was not too serious a problem or not a problem at all (Pew 2009b). While this comparison between the interview data collected for this study and Pew survey data is inexact at best, it does indicate that theologically conservative Christians are less concerned about climate change than the general public, and that the participants in this study may be even less concerned than would be expected among religious conservatives in a nationally representative sample. The latest Gallup poll on climate change (Newport, 2010) did find that 67% of Americans did not think that global warming threatened them or their way of life, while only 32% of Americans felt that global warming did threaten them or their way of life. These numbers align closely with the findings of this study; however the questions are different enough to raise concerns that two different aspects of concern about climate change are being measured. For instance, Trent (T5.2-4, T5.2-9) is very concerned about climate change, but he does not feel that it is affecting him personally. Therefore, the relationship between the results from this study and the latest Gallup
poll, while looking similar numerically, may not actually represent equivalent levels of concern about climate change.

In summary, there was a wide range of levels of concern about climate change found within this sample. In some ways, this range is relatively straightforward; participants stated how concerned they were about climate change, and these levels of concern fall somewhere between very concerned and not at all concerned. Because participants were able to discuss their concern in their own words though, nuances became apparent that are not present in survey research. First, participants frequently stated that they considered concern about climate change and environmental concern in general to be two different concepts (see, for example T5.1-7, T5.2-7). These participants clearly want to express some level of environmental concern while simultaneously justifying a different level of concern about climate. This idea of faith based environmental concern is examined in greater depth in the “Stewardship” section of this chapter. Participants in this sample also expressed concerns about climate change politics and differentiated this concept from concern about environmental aspects of climate change.

Additionally, and despite the fact that participant concern about climate change is presented as existing along a single continuum, participants highlighted multiple dimensions of concern about climate change in their interviews. For instance, Margery (T5.1-1, T5.1-2, T5.2-1) and Darin (T5.1-3, T5.1-4, T5.1-5) both stated that they were skeptical of the existence of climate change, and both went on to say that they were not concerned about climate change. However, Margery seems to dismiss climate change wholeheartedly; she has not paid it much attention and she does not care to. Darin, on the other hand, felt prompted by his faith to investigate the topic and preach about it based on his findings. While neither of these two participants are concerned about climate change as an environmental phenomenon, they certainly display varying levels of concern about trying to understand climate change and its relevance to their faith. In other words, this section examines one particular dimension of climate change concern, that which is commonly measured in previous survey studies, but simultaneously recognizes that concern can be measured along other dimensions such as engagement with the topic.

Finally, participants also described their concern or lack thereof being driven in part by their faith. As with perceptions of the causes of climate change, religious beliefs were not the only factors driving concern as examined in this section, but religious beliefs were mentioned by multiple participants. This indicates that religious beliefs do have some bearing on participant
concern about climate change, a relationship, once again, that the remainder of this chapter is dedicated to exploring.

**Patterns within Perceptions of Climate Change**

One of the primary purposes of the sampling technique used for this study was to examine similarities and differences that existed within and across churches. Table 5.1 presents a breakdown of participants by church compared with participants’ perceptions of whether or not climate change was happening, and if so what was causing it. The five headings for participant perceptions are as follows: a belief that climate change is not happening at all; a belief that climate change is occurring but is an entirely natural process; unsure about existence or causes; a belief that climate change was occurring and that humans had some impacts; and finally a belief that climate change was occurring and that humans were the primary contributors. As discussed in the previous sections, these headings are not meant to represent discrete categories as in survey research. Rather I have argued that participant perceptions of the existence and causes of climate change exist along a spectrum. The headings then should be thought of as breaks along the spectrum where beliefs noticeably shift, and in-between which participants appear to share a broad perspective on a particular aspect of climate change such as causality, but also differ in their exact perceptions of that cause.

Overall, this comparison of church attended to perceptions about the existence and causes of climate change is intended to demonstrate the variety of perspectives found within churches. For all seven churches in which multiple individuals were interviewed respondents can be found at various points along the existence and causality continuum. Downtown Presbyterian Church and Redeemer Lutheran, for instance, have at least one participant under four of the five perceptions of climate change headings in Table 5.1. Note also the stark differences between Brandon’s (T5.3-1) opinion that climate change is possibly happening, but definitely not human caused, and Trent’s (T5.3-2) sense that climate change is definitely happening and primarily human caused. Both of these gentlemen attend Redeemer Lutheran, a small church, and are active on several of the same committees together within that church.

Mosaic, on the other hand, does have five of their six interviewees in the “Some Human Impacts” range. However, these five individuals should not be thought of as sharing identical views on the existence and causes of climate change. Heather (T5.3-3) is a nursing student who states that she has not thought much about climate change. She thinks climate change is
probably happening because summers seem hotter and it takes longer to cool off in the fall. She is also unsure about the role that humans are playing, but thinks that people probably contribute some to warming temperatures via vehicle emissions. Pastor Jason (T5.3-4), on the other hand, definitively thinks that the world’s climate is changing. He is aware that the polar ice caps are melting, oceans are warming, and droughts are intensifying. While he is also unsure about what is causing these changes, he does think that human carbon emissions should be cut regardless. He goes on to explain how he thinks carbon emissions can be reduced while avoiding “alienating” political positions on the issue. These quotes indicate that Jason has put some thought into his position on climate change while Heather says that she has not. Jason utilizes outside sources of information to support his position while Heather simply refers to her own experiences. These quotes, coming from two respondents within the same church, demonstrate the diversity in the perceptions of the causes of climate change found under each heading. This reiterates the case that a range exists even within each heading; they are not discrete points representing identical answers. Overall, this comparison indicates that diversity on this one aspect of climate change exists both within and across churches.

Table 5.2 represents participant levels of concern about climate change. Again the five headings that participants have been labeled under should be thought of along a continuum from not at all concerned to very concerned. As with previous survey research, this table displays concern about environmental aspects of climate change, not other concerns about climate change such as the political ramifications that Pastor Cecil described in T5.2-8. For the purposes of Table 5.2, concern was broken into five categories: not at all concerned about climate change; not very concerned about climate change; unsure; somewhat concerned about climate change; and very concerned about climate change.

This comparison of church attended to concern about climate change indicates first of all that the large majority of participants in this study (23 of 36) are not at all or not very concerned about climate change as discussed in the previous section. However, individuals under the various concern headings came from different churches. For instance respondents from seven different churches expressed some concern about climate change. Again, this indicates that there was diversity within and across churches with regards to concern about climate change. Additionally, a comparison between Table 5.1 and Table 5.2 indicates that some variation exists between participant perceptions of the existence and causes of climate change and the concern participants expressed about climate change. While there is some
overlap between thinking that climate change is happening and human caused with being concerned about climate change and vice versa, there are also respondents who thought climate change was happening and human caused who are not concerned about the issue and other participants who did not necessarily think climate change was happening or human caused who are concerned about it (most notably Pastor Jacob).
Table 5.1: Church Attended and Perceived Cause of Climate Change

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Churches</th>
<th>Faith Bible Fellowship Church</th>
<th>Easton Baptist</th>
<th>Crossroads Memorial Church</th>
<th>Redeemer Lutheran Church</th>
<th>Lewisville Bible Church</th>
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<td>Pastor</td>
<td>Frank</td>
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<th>Primarily Human Impacts</th>
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### Table 5.2: Church Attended and Concern about Climate Change

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<th>Churches</th>
<th>Faith Bible Fellowship Church</th>
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Summary and Implications

The previous two sections on participant perceptions of climate change are intended to demonstrate the diverse views on climate change that exist within the sample. Respondents expressed a range of views on the existence and causes of climate change as well as their levels of concern about climate change. Additionally, some interviewees explicitly linked these perceptions to their faith. Tables 5.1 and 5.2 present a simplified view of the varying perceptions of climate change that existed within churches. Based on these tables, I conclude that there are no clear patterns within or across churches regarding participant perceptions of climate change. The analysis of the interviews indicates that the church respondents attended did not appear to affect their views on climate change as much as other factors such as the individual’s life story, including the faith themes that emerged from that life story. One of the original questions the sampling method set out to examine was whether or not patterns existed within or across churches regarding perceptions of climate change, and the answer appears to be no. Therefore, the nomothetic analysis process did not focus on churches as a unit of interest. In addition to being concerned with similarities within and across churches, the sampling technique was also interested in representing a diversity of religious identities within the sample, primarily along the lines of evangelical versus fundamentalist self-identifications (as discussed in the Methods chapter). These identities are the focus of the next section. Finally, the remainder of the chapter does refer back to the perceptions of climate change presented in this section, but also includes other perceptions of climate change. In other words, participant perceptions of the existence and causes of climate change and participant concern about climate change are not the only two aspects of respondents’ views on climate change that are discussed in this chapter.

Religious Identity

One of the study objectives for this project was to gain an accurate understanding of participants’ religious identities. This objective was included to ensure that interviewees were being represented properly in terms of their religious beliefs and affiliations prior to examining how those beliefs and affiliations were related to participant perceptions of climate change. In order to meet this objective, respondents were asked about their current religious involvement and how they would indentify themselves religiously (see Appendices 2 and 3 for copies of interview guides with specific question phrasing). The responses to the religious identity questions were unexpected and became critical to the approach used for the nomothetic analysis of the interviews. The section that follows first
examines how the participants in this study classified themselves religiously and then discusses how these classifications inform the structure of the remaining sections in this chapter.

**Fundamentalism**

Recall from the Methods chapter that the population for this study consisted of theologically conservative Christians. Within this population, there were two sub-populations of interest, evangelicals and fundamentalists. The Methods chapter describes how individual churches were selected in the study area in an attempt to balance the number of fundamentalist and evangelical respondents within the sample. However, when individual participants from these predetermined “fundamentalist” and “evangelical” churches were actually interviewed, they did not identify themselves with these two terms as expected. First, only four interviewees considered themselves to be fundamentalists: Pastor Darin (T5.4-1), Pastor Frank (T5.4-2), and Drew and Lily (T5.4-3). This lack of participant identification with the fundamentalist label was surprising as the study site of Dallas, Texas was chosen specifically because the metroplex lies in the heart of what Silk and Walsh (2005) describe as the Southern Crossroads Region, where they feel that fundamentalist Christianity is more politically and socially influential than in anywhere else in the United States.

In addition to so few participants embracing the fundamentalist label, these four respondents came from three different churches, and no other respondents from either Pastor Frank’s or Drew and Lily’s churches identified themselves as fundamentalists (Pastor Darin was the only interviewee from his church). In other words, the self-identified fundamentalists in this sample did not all attend one church, nor did their fellow church members identify themselves the same way. Additionally, all four participants used other terms to describe their faith, including evangelical, reformed, and conservative. Pastor Darin and Pastor Frank both say that terms like fundamentalist and evangelical have become problematic because they get used today in a variety of contexts that may not reflect their original or traditional meaning within Christianity. Note also that all four participants refer to specific beliefs to define these labels. Pastor Darin (T5.4-1) says that the difference between fundamentalist and evangelical has to do with one’s belief about the bible. Pastor Frank (T5.4-2) says that reformed refers to someone who believes in grace and the bible. Drew and Lily (T5.4-3) similarly refer to a literal reading of the bible as the belief underlying both the term fundamentalist and conservative. These participants are effectively using labels like fundamentalist as shorthand for representing certain beliefs. However, they simultaneously indicate that these labels are associated with different beliefs for different people.
Evangelicalism

More participants identified with the term evangelical than fundamentalist; 16 interviewees in all applied this term to their faith. However, these 16 participants present a problem for the anticipated classification scheme of fundamentalist versus evangelical churches as well; they came from all nine churches in the sample (T5.5-1 – T5.5-3 provide examples of three different participants from three different churches). In other words, as with the term fundamentalist, the evangelical label was used in such a way that it did not meaningfully differentiate participants across churches. Some participants were also wary of classifying themselves as evangelicals because the term gets used in so many different contexts today, not all of which they want to be associated with (see T5.4-2, T5.5-3, T5.5-4, T5.5-5).

These results indicate that the participants in this study do not identify with the terms evangelical or fundamentalist in the ways that they are used by religious academics in sources such as the *Encyclopedia of American Religions* (Melton, 1996) that were consulted for sampling purposes. This does not mean that these sources have mislabeled churches, but rather that the actual pastors and members of those churches do not appear to use the same terminology in the same ways. Melton (1996) uses the terms fundamentalist and evangelical within an academic understanding of how certain denominations fit into historical church movements, whereas the participants in this study use these terms based off of their personal understanding of what the terms mean within their personal socio-religious context.

Furthermore, participants used a number of terms besides evangelical and fundamentalist to identify themselves. The most popular label after evangelical was ‘conservative,’ with 15 participants describing themselves as such (T5.4-1, T5.4-2, T5.4-3, T5.5-2). The third most popular label was reformed (T5.4-2, T5.5-1, T5.5-5), a label that has not been used in any of the previous research on religious classification schemes that I have been able to locate. Ten participants refused to apply any labels to themselves at all, preferring to be classified simply as Christian (T5.5-6, T5.5-7). Three participants referred to themselves as ‘biblical’ (T5.5-3) and one participant described himself and his church as ‘dispensational’ (T5.5-8). All told, over half of the participants used more than one label to describe themselves, further confusing the distinction between terminologies (T5.4-1 – T5.4-3, T5.5-1 – T5.5-3). As with fundamentalism, note that all of these labels are used by participants to represent certain beliefs, for instance Reese (T5.5-5) says that reformed, in his experience, represents beliefs about God’s sovereignty, the bible, and salvation through faith.
Summary and Implications

No clear patterns are evident in the ways that participants used religious labels to identify themselves; interviewees appear to assign individualized meaning to the terms that they use so that fundamentalist and evangelical do not necessarily mean the same thing across participants. What is clear though is that these terms represent certain beliefs as opposed to representing an easily described, shared religious identity. Instead of providing useful classification patterns across participants then, asking interviewees to identify themselves religiously ended up providing information about the beliefs that were important to them. Dana (T5.5-9), as an example, states that she goes to a specific Lutheran denomination, that she places in the reformed tradition (interestingly, she was the only interviewee from her church to label it reformed, including her pastor). However, her belief in biblical inerrancy is more important to her than either the denominational or reformed label.

Because the participants appeared to define their faith according to beliefs more so than associations or particular labels, the idiographic analysis of each interview focused more on the particular beliefs that individuals chose to emphasize, how those beliefs came to be a point of emphasis in their faith, and how they applied those beliefs to their current life and faith projects and their perceptions of climate change. It became evident during the idiographic analysis process that participants were focusing on similar beliefs across interviews, regardless of the labels that they used to classify those beliefs. In other words, even though Dana (T5.5-9) used the term reformed to describe her beliefs, while Pastor Darin (T5.4-1) used the term fundamentalist, both stated that they believed the bible to be inerrant, and this belief was a core tenet of their faith. The shared beliefs that participants emphasized across interviews in relation to climate change were biblical inerrancy, human sinfulness, God’s sovereignty, eschatology, and evangelism.

Participant emphasis on these beliefs aligns well with previous research on conservative Christianity. In fact, biblical inerrancy, sinfulness, eschatology, and evangelism are widely recognized as theological tenets that separate conservative Christianity from mainline and liberal Christianity in American today (Greeley and Hout, 2006; Silk and Walsh, 2008; Smith & Emerson, 1998). God’s sovereignty is not necessarily one of these distinguishing beliefs according to these sources. The reasons for its importance in this research as opposed to previous research are explored in greater detail in the section on God’s sovereignty found below. Along with emphasizing similar religious beliefs, participants also tended to apply these beliefs to their perceptions of climate change in similar ways.
Therefore, the nomothetic analysis that follows focuses on the faith tenets of conservative Christianity that participants across the sample shared, and how participants applied these faith tenets to their perceptions of climate change rather than patterns that existed within or across particular churches or faith identities. Before examining these faith tenets in detail though, it is necessary to explain the nomothetic organizing system that was developed to organize and represent the findings of the nomothetic analysis.

**Nomothetic Organizing System**

As with the idiographic analyses, an organizing system was developed for the nomothetic analysis in order to meaningfully organize, interpret, and present the results (Patterson and Williams, 2002). The actual process of the nomothetic analysis has been detailed in the Methods chapter, however some reiteration here will help to explain the materialization of the nomothetic organizing system and what it intends to communicate. As mentioned in the Idiographic Results chapter and previously in this chapter, similarities and differences between interviews emerged during the individual analyses that suggested a nomothetic examination of the data would be appropriate and useful for providing a deeper understanding of the data set as a whole. The similarities that were most striking across interviews were the shared faith themes that individuals discussed frequently despite coming from different personal backgrounds and different churches. Similarities also began to emerge in the ways that participants interpreted and applied their shared faith themes to the issue of climate change. Having determined that neither the church participants attended nor their religious identities provided a meaningful explanation of the similarities and differences across interviews in terms of perceptions of climate change, the nomothetic analysis turned exclusively to shared faith themes and the ways that they contributed to participants’ views on climate change. Figures 5.1a, 5.1b, 5.2, 5.4, and 5.5 visually represent this shift from the idiographic organizing system to the focus on shared faith themes at the nomothetic level.

Five faith themes in particular stood out as the most frequently related to participant perceptions of climate change: biblical inerrancy, God’s sovereignty, human sinfulness, eschatology, and evangelism. As Figure 5.2 indicates, these beliefs do not exist in isolation from one another in the ways they influence participant perceptions of climate change. Rather, as will be demonstrated below, participants frequently interpret and apply aspects of two or more of these beliefs simultaneously to their perceptions of climate change. The fact that these faith themes overlap is not surprising as
previous studies on conservative Christianity indicate that these beliefs combine and mutually reinforce one another to form more of a gestalt religious worldview than a set of isolatable and distinct theological tenets (Greeley & Hout, 2006; Marsden, 2006; Smith, 1990).

While these beliefs are most appropriately thought of as overlapping, as Figure 5.2 indicates, their relationship with participant perceptions of climate change is more easily displayed in a tabulated fashion as seen in Figure 5.3. The relationship between Figure 5.2 and Figure 5.3 is similar to that of the idiographic organizing systems represented in Figures 5.1a and 5.2b; they represent the same idea with a linear format allowing for a cleaner representation of the concepts and an overlapping circular format more accurately reflecting the perceived relationship between the parts. The dashed line in between eschatology and evangelism represents the organization of the discussion that follows. Biblical inerrancy, God’s sovereignty, human sinfulness, and eschatology overlap with one another to a greater extent than they do with evangelism in terms of how participants related them to their perceptions of climate change. Therefore, the discussion of these four faith themes overlaps to a great extent while evangelism, though certainly tied to these other four beliefs, is examined as a unit unto itself.

In relation to the rest of Figure 5.3, the shared faith themes that participants discussed represent the foundation for their shared perceptions of climate change. As mentioned previously, the shared perceptions of climate change examined in the discussion that follows extend beyond the two aspects described in the preceding Perceptions of Climate Change section. In between these shared faith themes and shared perceptions of climate change are the various interpretations of faith themes that participants expressed that contributed to the variation and similarities found in participant perceptions of climate change based on the shared faith themes. Figures 5.4 and 5.5 present the perceived relationship between the idiographic organizing system as a whole and the nomothetic organizing system. The remainder of this chapter examines the faith themes that participants shared and how they were interpreted and applied to climate change. The upper layers of the nomothetic organizing system (see figures 5.3-5.5) will be filled in for each specific faith theme; a completed organizing system with all five themes, their interpretations, and the applications to climate change is presented in Figure 5.15 and discussed alongside the chapter conclusions.
Figure 5.1a: Idiographic Organizing System (Linear Representation)

**Faith Themes**
- Theological Tenets of Conservative Christianity: i.e. Biblical Inerrancy, Eschatology, God’s Sovereignty, Evangelism

**Life Themes**
- Stable life emphases outside of conservative theology: i.e. Science (Roger), Health Issues (Sandy, Dana), Political Ideology (Max)

**Faith Projects**
- Current Church Involvement

**Climate Change Discourses**
- Accessible Narratives about Climate Change

**Life Projects**
- Current Job
- Family

**Perceptions of Climate Change**
- Causes
- Concern
- Response

---

Figure 5.1b: Idiographic Organizing System (Concentric Representation)
Figure 5.2: Shift from Idiographic Organizing System to Nomothetic Organizing System

Shared Faith Themes Related to Climate Change

- Biblical Inerrancy
- God's Sovereignty
- Eschatology
- Evangelism
- Human Sinfulness
Figure 5.3: Linear Representation of Nomothetic Organizing System

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceptions of Climate Change Resulting from Application of Faith Theme</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interpretation of Shared Faith Theme Regarding Climate Change</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared Faith Themes</td>
<td>Biblical Inerrancy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 5.4: Idiographic to Nomothetic Organizing System (Concentric Representation)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceptions of Climate Change</th>
<th>Interpretation of Shared Faith Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Shared Faith Themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Biblical Inerrancy  God’s Sovereignty  Human Sinfulness  Eschatology  Evangelism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 5.5: Idiographic to Nomothetic Organizing System (Linear Representation)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceptions of Climate Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interpretation of Shared Faith Themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared Faith Themes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Biblical Inerrancy
- God’s Sovereignty
- Human Sinfulness
- Eschatology
- Evangelism
Biblical Inerrancy

The most frequently discussed faith theme across the sample was an emphasis on the bible as an authoritative source of knowledge. All 36 interviewees referenced the bible at least once in their interview, with the average participant mentioning the bible four times. Furthermore, 35 of the 36 interviewees explicitly mentioned believing the bible to be inerrant. The first two quotes in Quote Table 5.6 come from Pastor Barry (T5.6-1, T5.6-2), and represent a common view amongst interviewees that because the bible comes from God, it contains absolute truth. As one quote from Ralph (T5.6-3) demonstrates, believing that the bible is true is one of the foundational assumptions of conservative Christianity; the bible literally contains God’s words, and therefore must be completely true and accurate. The Christians in this sample start from the perspective that the bible is completely without error and to be read literally, and in order for them to accept non-biblical ideas about how the world functions, they must be able to reconcile those ideas with their understanding of the bible as Truth. This means that the bible serves as a starting point for judging other narratives about the world such as scientific and historical accounts of the origins of the universe or human life, as described by Pastor Darin (T5.6-4). From Darin’s perspective, if scientific and historical information is true it will support the biblical narrative. In his personal experience, scientific facts do support the bible, whereas scientific theories tend to stray from biblical truth. Trent, who emphasized his engineering and scientific background in his interview, expressed a similar opinion that when science and the bible do not line up, science is at fault and the biblical account should be accepted as fact (T5.6-5). In Trent’s opinion, when science says something in the bible cannot be true, then science reveals itself to be limited by flawed human thinking and believing what the bible says in such instances is actually more scientifically correct because the bible is fact. Because the bible is considered to be factual with regards to scientific matters, some participants discussed attempts to learn about climate change directly from the bible itself.

Climate Change in the Bible

Consistent with the perspective that the bible is an inerrant source of knowledge and particularly scientific information about the world, eight participants in this study said that they looked directly to the bible for information regarding climate change, and roughly came to two different conclusions about what they found there. Three participants, including Pastor Darin whose belief in biblical inerrancy was examined in greater detail in the section above and in the Idiographic Results Chapter, described looking to the bible for information about climate change
and felt that there were scriptural references to some form of climate change, but not the anthropogenic phenomenon that is of interest in the scientific community today. Darin (T5.7-1), Julie (T5.7-2), Camden (T5.7-3), and Jamison (who asked to not be recorded) all said that the bible does describe changes in the earth’s climate. All four felt that the bible chronicled historical changes in climate, one example being the great flood in the story of Noah, which they all mentioned. Darin (T5.7-4, T5.7-5), in addition to thinking that the bible describes historical changes in climate also feels that the bible describes climate changes that will come with the end times; however these differ greatly from what scientists are describing today as anthropogenic climate change.

The other four participants who explicitly stated that they looked to the bible for information about climate change, including Pastor Barry whose thoughts about biblical inerrancy were included above (T5.6-1, T5.6-2), felt that the bible did not say anything at all about climate change. Barry (T5.7-6) says that the bible does not address global warming so he has to look to other sources for that information and to form his opinion on the matter. Furthermore, since climate change is not a biblical issue, Pastor Barry (T5.7-7) says his denomination does not have an official position on the matter. The denomination will address moral issues, particularly those that the bible comments on, but climate change is not such an issue. Dana, one of Pastor Barry’s congregants, affirmed his statement by referring me to the denominational website where two people had asked questions about global warming in a Q&A format. The “official” responses to these questions were, in fact, that the bible does not specifically address global warming, and therefore the denomination does not have an official position on the matter (please refer to Dana’s idiographic analysis and particularly Idiographic Quote Table T4.5 in the previous chapter for a more in-depth examination of these questions and responses). Pastor Preston (T5.7-8) and Simon (T5.7-9) also state that the bible does not address climate change specifically, so their opinions on the matter are informed by secular sources.

While there are some differences of opinion between these eight participants on what the bible has to say about climatic changes, none of them felt that the bible explicitly addressed human induced climate change. Therefore, none of them felt that the bible directed them to be concerned about this issue in particular. In fact, Pastors Barry, Preston, and Darin all indicate that the fact that climate change is either absent from the bible, or described much differently, leads them to feel that it is not an issue necessitating a faith-based response. Julie states that
her belief in the great flood story in the bible, a clear example of climate change in the past in her opinion, precludes her from believing in scientific predictions about the consequences of climate change today because God promises in Genesis 9:11-15 not to flood the earth again (T5.7-2). Camden indicated that he was somewhat concerned about climate change, Pastor Barry that he was unsure, and the rest were not at all or not very concerned (see Table 5.2). Overall then, it appears that the absence of biblical passages describing anthropogenic climate change lessens these participants concerns about the issue. Figure 5.6 presents the representation of this faith theme and its interpretations and applications to climate change within the nomothetic organizing system layout.
Figure 5.6: Climate Change in the Bible

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceptions of Climate Change Resulting from Application of Faith Theme</th>
<th>Because anthropogenic climate change is not in the bible, it does not necessitate a faith based response Contributing to a lessened concern</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Interpretation of Shared Faith Theme Regarding Climate Change</td>
<td>Either way, anthropogenic climate change not in the bible Historical or future climate change described in bible Climate change not in the bible Literally look to bible for info on climate Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared Faith Theme</td>
<td>Biblical Inerrancy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**The Creation Story**

While none of the interviewees felt that the bible addressed human induced climate change explicitly (the four respondents above who found references to climate change in the bible attributed these climate changes to God), a belief in biblical inerrancy did indirectly affect participant perceptions of climate change by providing some foundational notions about how humans are supposed to relate to the world around them. Thirty-four of the interviewees referred to the bible as contributing to their views about the human-nature relationship and 26 of these individuals spoke specifically about the creation stories in Genesis chapters 1 and 2. The Genesis creation stories then seem to be informing interviewee thoughts on climate change by providing foundational concepts about how humans interact with the natural world. However, interviewees chose to emphasize different aspect of the Genesis creation accounts which contribute to different perceptions of the human-nature relationship. Some of these different interpretations are examined in this sub-section.

Pastor Cecil (T5.8-1) explicitly states that he does indeed read the Genesis story literally, and this story provides the foundation for his understanding of both how the world came to be, and how he feels humans are supposed to relate to the world today. He believes in a historical Garden of Eden, Adam, and Eve, and that the Genesis stories lay the foundation for how humans are called to interact with nature, balancing use of God’s creation with stewardship of God’s creation. Alice (T5.8-2) refers to the same stories, however she emphasizes a slightly different aspect of the Genesis accounts, indicating that she traces the environmental problems we have today back to the Garden of Eden, and Adam and Eve’s disobedience of God. Drew and Lily (T5.8-3) combine their reading of the Genesis story with a passage from the book of Romans to conclude that the physical earth itself longs for Jesus to come again and restore the paradise of Eden. These quotes reveal that the Genesis stories are salient narratives about the human-nature relationship for participants in this study. These stories provide a basis of understanding for how humans are supposed to relate to nature and how we relate to nature in actuality.

These quotes serve as examples of the situated freedom found within the core belief of biblical inerrancy that is so prominent in conservative Christianity today. The interviewees quoted above all base their understanding of the world around them largely on their interpretation of the bible. This emphasis on the bible acts as a constraint on what narratives about the world are legitimate, and yet within this belief, there is room to emphasize and interpret passages in different ways to arrive at different conclusions about the relationship
between humans and nature. Thus, despite Pastor Barry’s (T5.6-2) assertion that you cannot read and interpret the bible in a plurality of different ways, the responses from other interviewees in this sample indicate that even when read as historic and scientific fact, popular biblical stories like the Genesis creation account are interpreted differently in terms of how they inform people’s perceptions of their relationship to the world around them. Biblical inerrancy was not the only faith theme that participants referenced in discussing their views on the human-nature relationship though.

**God’s Sovereignty**

Another faith theme that numerous participants drew upon as a basis for their views on the human-nature relationship and climate change was God’s sovereignty. For the purposes of this study, the term sovereign follows the dictionary definition of “one that exercises supreme authority” (Merriam-Webster, 2005). A synonymous term would be omnipotence, which is similarly defined as, “having virtually unlimited authority or influence” (Merriam-Webster, 2005). As will be demonstrated by the quotes that follow, many participants in this study simply refer to this concept by saying that, “God is in control.” This faith theme is admittedly not one of the six defining beliefs of conservative Christianity that previous researchers have laid out (see discussion of sampling in the *Methods Chapter*). Considering the prominence of this theme in the interviews it is unclear to me at this time why past research has not focused much on God’s sovereignty as a key faith theme for conservative Christians. One possibility is that this belief is also common in mainline and/or liberal Christianity, meaning that sovereignty is a faith theme that is not distinctive to conservative Christians. However, Smith and Emerson (1998) indicate that mainline and liberal Christians do not appear to embrace this theological tenet as readily as conservatives. Another possibility is that God’s sovereignty is assumed as part of other conservative faith tenets such as Jesus Christ’s divinity and hence his miraculous powers. Whatever the case may be, the frequency with which participants in this study referred to God’s sovereignty as a unique faith theme indicates that this belief deserves attention, at least with regards to environmental issues, and climate change in particular.

The faith theme of God’s sovereignty came up in 28 of the 35 interviews, and 26 of those 28 interviewees explicitly related the concept to their perceptions of climate change. All 28 of the participants who spoke about sovereignty stated that the core element of this belief is that God is ultimately in control. In fact, for Laura (T5.9-1) this faith theme was the overarching
idea that she wanted to convey in the interview; when I asked if she had any further thoughts on our discussion she reiterated that the bottom line for her was that God is in control. Pastor Preston (T5.9-2) felt similarly, stating that his faith in God’s control of the universe gives him great peace, even if the world were to end tomorrow. This belief in God’s sovereignty came together with participants’ literal reading of the creation story in Genesis to add another layer to their understanding of the human-nature relationship.

The Created Hierarchy

Thirty-three interviewees thought that the bible described a created hierarchy that placed God at the top, humans in the middle, and nature at the bottom of the cosmic pecking order. As Camden says (T5.9-3), God is the sovereign creator, the one who made everything, and therefore has power over everything that was created.Humans are part of that creation, but a special part of the creation (as described in the book of Genesis), tasked by God with a certain role. Along with Camden, all 32 of the other participants who spoke about the created hierarchy conveyed two key messages about the human-nature relationship; first, humans are a special part of the creation, and second that humans are to use their special status to care for the earth. Janica (T5.9-4) points to a passage in the book of Matthew where she feels that Jesus says humans are special. When asked what this means in terms of interacting with nature, she immediately responds that humans are to respect and take care of it. Pastor Peter (T5.9-5) describes this idea as the “cultural mandate,” and explains the concept very similarly to Pastor Cecil (T5.8-1): humans are unique within the creation because the bible says they were created in the image of God. Therefore humans have the ability, and the permission from God, to use the creation for their wellbeing over and above the wellbeing of other parts of the creation. However, humans simultaneously are supposed to recognize that the creation was a gift from God and use the earth in a responsible way. Pastor Jacob (T5.9-6) places an even greater significance on the distinctiveness of humans, and states that to misunderstand that uniqueness is actually to deny the authority of God (God’s sovereignty) by denying the order of God’s creation. The insinuation in this comment by Jacob is that proper respect for the environment requires acknowledgement of the created order. This idea of acknowledging and respecting the created order had serious implications for interviewee perceptions of both climate change science and advocates.
Perceptions of Climate Change Science

The faith themes of biblical inerrancy and God’s sovereignty as discussed above came together to influence respondent perceptions of climate change in several ways, including their perceptions of climate change science and scientists. Twenty-six of the interviewees in this sample said that they were skeptical of climate change science. This skepticism varied from concerns about scientific methodology, such as those that Daniel (T5.10-1) expressed, where he referenced evidence that climate change measures and data were being manipulated, to concerns like Pastor Frank’s (T5.10-2) that climate change dissenters were being stifled. Admittedly, not all of this skepticism about climate change science was related to participant beliefs about the human-nature relationship as defined by their faith. In fact, a number of interviewees, like Darin (T5.10-3), stated that they questioned the funding sources for climate change studies, particularly government funding. These reservations about climate change science funding likely draw political ideologies into the mix. Twenty-seven of the interviewees identified themselves as politically conservative and it would be reasonable to expect that these individuals tend to be skeptical of government spending and government funded science. As was demonstrated in the idiographic results chapter, religious beliefs do not shape participant perceptions of climate change in isolation. However, 15 participants in this study did explicitly link their faith to concerns they had about climate change science, indicating that their beliefs in biblical inerrancy and God’s sovereignty contribute to their opinions about climate change science.

One concern that participants expressed was a general distrust of science because science is fallible and subject to change. Pastor Preston (T5.10-4) captures this sentiment nicely when he states that science says one thing, but science can be wrong; the bible, on the other hand, is infallible. Therefore, in Pastor Preston’s opinion, people should not be afraid of climate change even though science may suggest it is a problem because the bible says we should not worry. This belief about the fallibility of science appears to diminish Pastor Preston’s concern about climate change because, as he says, he has supreme confidence that God is in control (T5.10-4).

Along these same lines, participants described questioning climate change science because they felt that the scientists conducting this research do not believe in the bible. Brandon (T5.10-5, T5.10-6) described this concern in detail, stating that he has a hard time believing what climate change scientists say because they believe in the big bang theory and
evolution, not the biblical creation story. For him, this means that these scientists are starting with fundamentally flawed assumptions about the world, how it came to be, and how it functions today. Therefore, he does not put much stock in their claims that human emissions are causing climate change. In fact, he says this disconnect between his beliefs about the creation of the world and what he perceives scientists to believe is the number one factor that shapes his overall perceptions of the topic of climate change. In summary, Brandon and Pastor Preston, along with the thirteen other interviewees who the quotes from Brandon and Preston represent on this matter, expressed a general distrust of non-biblically based science that served to undermine their receptivity of scientific information regarding anthropogenic climate change.
**Figure 5.7: Perceptions of Climate Change Science**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceptions of Climate Change Resulting from Application of Faith Theme</th>
<th>Distrustful of climate change science</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scientists starting from flawed assumptions because they do not believe in the biblical creation story</td>
<td>Scientists are telling us to worry about climate change, but scientists can be wrong, whereas the inerrant bible says not to worry because God is in control</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interpretation of Shared Faith Theme Regarding Climate Change</th>
<th>Distrust of non-biblical narratives about the world (including scientific narratives)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literal reading of Genesis creation stories</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Shared Faith Theme | Biblical Inerrancy | God’s Sovereignty |
Perceptions of Climate Change Advocates

The faith themes of God’s sovereignty and biblical inerrancy influenced participant perceptions of climate change advocates as well. Of the 26 participants who expressed their opinions about climate change advocates during their interview, 22 stated that their faith had an effect on these views. All 22 of these individuals felt that some environmentalists and climate change advocates misunderstand the created order and hence the proper relationship between God, humans, and nature. In describing this concern, Pastor Peter (T5.11-1, see also T5.9-5) reiterates the belief that God instituted a hierarchy in the created order wherein humans were given a special role. Because they were created in the divine image, humans are given permission to use the environment for their benefit. Humans are simultaneously to respect and not abuse the environment, but when push comes to shove, humans take priority over other living things.

Some environmentalists, Pastor Peter (T5.11-1) says, worship the earth as a deity unto itself because they do not recognize God as the creator and center of the universe nor humanity’s special status in the creation. He feels that this amounts to an “unqualified respect for the environment,” which is problematic because it could potentially result in a higher valuation of other living things over human life and livelihood. Lily (T5.11-2) describes a similar sentiment in less theological language; based on her personal experiences and those of friends, she feels that some people tend to idolize environmental causes, allowing environmental issues to become the things that give their lives meaning and purpose, thus separating themselves from God. She feels that these individuals miss the point that God created the earth for humans and human use. Reese (T5.11-3) applies this concept directly to his perceptions of climate change advocates, stating that people get so caught up in concern about global warming that the cause becomes an idol. Climate change becomes the ultimate concern distracting people from what should be ultimate, God. Shelly (T5.11-4) similarly feels that climate change is a concern of the secular world, hyped by politicians and celebrities. She says that she does not trust the people who seem to be the most concerned about climate change because she does not trust their priorities. Therefore, she tends to dismiss climate change because she sees it as an issue that is only important for people who are focused on this world and not on God. The conservative Christians leaders, on the other hand, whom she respects, and whose priorities are rightly focused on God, do not seem concerned about climate change at all.
Jamison goes the furthest of any respondent in perceiving and defining nefarious motives climate change advocates. Jamison asked that his interview not be recorded, so instead of citing direct quotations, the following descriptions of Jamison’s views on this point rely primarily on notes taken during our conversation (quotation marks do indicate direct quotes recorded in my notes). Jamison mentioned several times in his interview that he was concerned about the “fanatical” viewpoint that the environment should take priority over humans. He felt that some people go to ridiculous lengths to protect the environment because the earth is the only heaven for those who are not religious. The environmental movement, consequently, is a product of “irreligion.” He applied this language to climate change advocates in particular, stating that the “green-movement’s” primary goals were power, money, and the ability control people and their lives. For instance he felt that a carbon cap and trade program would control what people did in their homes based on California standards which is foolish because not everyone lives in a Californian climate. Jamison said that all in all, the people who believe in global warming influence his views on the topic more than anything else because they are “anti-human,” have a liberal agenda, and stand against Christian viewpoints. His overall impression was that, “people who support global warming aren’t good people.”

The above discussion demonstrates a range in opinions about climate change advocates that was evident in the larger sample. Pastor Peter, Lily, Reese, and Shelly all indicate that some level of environmental concern is appropriate though they believe some environmentalists mistakenly view the creation as their ultimate concern when in fact the creator God should be that concern. This is regarded as a misunderstanding of the created order, which ultimately leads to mixed up priorities. Jamison, on the other hand, views environmentalists in a far more negative light. He felt very strongly that people associated with the “green” movement, including any climate change advocates, were anti-religious and specifically anti-Christian. Furthermore, he sees these environmentalists as purporting a political agenda aimed at controlling people.

While the differences in perceptions of climate change advocates that study participants display are considerable, they are ultimately differences in degree and not type. All of the participants in this sample who spoke about climate change advocates in light of their faith were concerned about the potential for environmental concern to misdirect people’s attention away from what should be their ultimate concern. In a sense, these respondents viewed climate change advocacy, and environmentalism in general, as competing with the conservative
Christian message that God should be the focus of every individual’s life. This led participants to be skeptical of the importance of climate change because in their opinion, climate change advocates appear to embrace values that contradict their biblically-based beliefs about the created hierarchy and the appropriate human-nature relationship. This skepticism ultimately affected what participants in this study felt were appropriate responses to climate change, which will be examined in further detail later in this chapter.

As with climate change science, interviewee perceptions of climate change advocates also demonstrate how religious beliefs interact with other life themes and/or life projects to blur the lines of causality. The most commonly mentioned climate change advocate in this sample was Al Gore (see, for example, Pastor Peter (T5.11-1) and Shelly (T5.11-4)). Nineteen participants linked Al Gore to the issue of climate change, and all 19 felt as though his connections with the topic heightened their skepticism about the legitimacy of climate change science and/or advocacy. Twenty-seven of the interviewees in this sample identified themselves as politically conservative and/or as a registered Republican. The political tendencies in this sample undoubtedly have some bearing on participant perceptions of a former Democratic vice president, and in fact some participants stated this explicitly. Jeremiah (T5.11-5), for instance, says that he does not trust Al Gore and other “left-leaning political thinkers” with regards to climate change because he, like Jamison, feels that the issue is being used to gain political power. However, it is also evident in Jeremiah’s quote that his faith affects his political views; he feels that the United States is a Christian country and therefore he is concerned about political initiatives he feels will inhibit America’s unique Christian existence.

Randall (T5.11-6) describes the difficulty of separating politics and faith, stating that people often do not realize how interrelated their political and religious views are. He recognizes that conservative Christian perspectives on environmental issues are affected by both religious and political factors. This overlap problematizes efforts to isolate “independent” variables and demonstrate causal relationships between religious beliefs, political beliefs, and perceptions of climate change. Rather, it appears that political and religious views are more accurately thought of as a gestalt, combining to influence environmental thought and practice in ways that neither political ideology nor religious beliefs would independently of one another.
| Perceptions of Climate Change Resulting from Application of Faith Theme | Lessened concern about environmental aspects of climate change because distrustful of advocates  
Climate change concern perceived to be a dialog competing with focus on God  
Severe distrust: “green” = irreligion  
Climate change advocates seeking political power  
Skepticism of climate change advocates  
Misplaced priorities  
Distrustful of climate change advocates |
|---|---|
| Interpretation of Shared Faith Theme Regarding Climate Change | Concern about mistaking the creation for the Creator  
Belief in a Created Hierarchy  
Literal reading of Genesis creation stories |
| Shared Faith Theme | Biblical Inerrancy  
God’s Sovereignty |
The preceding discussions about interviewee perspectives on the created order and climate change advocates primarily indicate that participants think some environmentalists take their environmental concern too far, in essence worshiping the creation rather than the Creator. However, participant comments on these matters also indicate that they feel there is a place for environmental concern within their faith. Pastor Peter (T5.11-1) states that Christians need to approach their use of the creation with “great care and concern” and that a “qualified respect” for the creation is totally appropriate. In fact, many of the same participants who expressed frustrations with climate change advocates used these same beliefs about the human-nature relationship and God’s sovereignty that they used to criticize “idolatrous” environmental concern on the part of others to justify a “faith-based” environmental ethic of their own.

All 36 participants in this sample stated in one way or another that based on their religious beliefs they felt they were supposed to take care of the earth. This responsibility was most commonly referred to as “stewardship.” Twenty-seven participants used this particular term to describe what they thought “biblically-based” environmental concern should look like. Alice (T5.12-1) provides one definition of this term and how it relates to her faith. First she draws an analogy to money; a steward of money is entrusted to use money that is not their own in a responsible way. She says that Christians are called to think about the earth as something entrusted to them by God, and as such, to be cared for in a way that honors God to whom it really belongs. Camden (T5.12-2) defines stewardship in a similar way, and says that his stewardship belief unequivocally drives his concern about environmental issues, and climate change in particular. For both of these interviewees, this stewardship ethic emerges from their belief about the created order and how the bible tells humans to relate to their environment. The key to stewardship for both Alice and Camden is that their environmental concern is focused on God and therefore appropriate rather than religiously suspect. They care about the earth because God created it, not simply because the earth exists. Good stewardship is a reflection of respect for God.

As has been expressed previously though, this sense of stewardship co-exists with a sense of dominion, or an emphasis on the special status of humans within the created order (see for example T5.9-3 – T5.9-6). Therefore, one of the keys to understanding stewardship is recognizing that humans have a special place in the creation. In Max’s (T5.12-3) opinion, dominion and stewardship should be thought of as one and the same. In his interpretation of
the bible, dominion equates to service, meaning that God gave humans power over the rest of creation so that humans could properly serve and protect that creation. Therefore, properly understanding dominion, in Max’s opinion, leads directly to proper stewardship, or service and protection of the creation.

Overall though, participants chose to emphasize dominion and stewardship differently, revealing a spectrum ranging from a heavy emphasis on dominion to a heavy emphasis on stewardship, and all points in between; but every single participant emphasized some level of faith-motivated environmental concern. Even Jamison, who was adamantly anti-environmentalist (see previous section on Perceptions of Advocates), spoke about the concept of stewardship and said that environmental concern was appropriate so long as it recognized the created order and properly prioritized humans over other parts of the creation. Very few participants related the idea of stewardship directly to concern about climate change; however the concept provides a biblical basis for at least a general level of environmental awareness for all 36 interviewees. Stewardship was one of two primary faith based ideas that opened participants up to environmental concern, the other faith theme, sin, is explored next.
Figure 5.8: Stewardship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceptions of Climate Change Resulting from Application of Faith Theme</th>
<th>Faith motivated concern about climate change linked to stewardship ethic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Potential for faith motivated environmental concern</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interpretation of Shared Faith Theme Regarding Climate Change</th>
<th>Humans called to care for creation out of respect for God and other humans</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Special status of humans within creation = dominion</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Special status of humans within creation = stewardship</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Belief in a Created Hierarchy</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Literal reading of Genesis creation stories</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Shared Faith Theme</th>
<th>Biblical Inerrancy</th>
<th>God’s Sovereignty</th>
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Sin and the Environment

Religious researchers have classified an emphasis on human sinfulness as another one of the distinguishing theological foci of conservative Christianity (Greeley & Hout, 2006; Smith & Emerson, 1998). Thirty-two participants in this study talked about sinfulness over the course of their interview, with 26 of those individuals relating the faith theme of sin to their views on the human-nature relationship in some way. The other six participants who talked about sin did not explicitly relate the idea to the environment. Despite sin being something of a separate faith theme than biblical inerrancy and God’s sovereignty in previous research, I have included it in this section for two reasons. First, the interviewees in this study linked sinfulness directly to their perceptions of the God-human-nature relationship. Second, participants often described the connection they perceived between sin and environment in terms of a literal reading of the Garden of Eden story in Genesis chapters 2 and 3. Additionally, as previous researchers have also found (most notably Smith, 1990), the lines between beliefs like biblical inerrancy and sinfulness are somewhat blurry and arbitrary because they often inform and reinforce one another as a part of a gestalt of beliefs that forms an overall religious worldview and identity.

The following exploration of sinfulness first demonstrates how this faith theme fit into participants’ larger ideas about the human-nature relationship, then explores some important caveats that participants brought up regarding the connection between sin and the environment.

Reese (T5.13-1) provides a definition of sin that is helpful in communicating how the interviewees conceived of it within the context of this study. Interviewees understood sin as rebellion against God, or the idea that humans choose to disobey God, and consequently suffer broken relationships first with God, then with other people, and finally with the natural world as well. Ralph (T5.13-2, T5.13-3) was one of 19 interviewees who thought environmental degradation was a manifestation of human sinfulness. He feels that selfishness and laziness cause people to take God’s creation for granted, resulting in litter, environmentally unsound business practices, and pollution. These 19 participants referenced the biblical story of the Fall of humans in the Garden of Eden as the scriptural foundation for their views on how sin affects the human-nature relationship in particular, sometimes in a way that reflected interesting environmental themes that stretched the literal biblical narrative as reflected by Shelly’s comments (T5.13-4). Though not all commentaries on sinfulness and Eden incorporated Shelly’s creativity, the overwhelming majority (17 of 19) of the participants who spoke about sinfulness
in this biblical context felt that environmental degradation could be thought of as a manifestation of human sinfulness. Thus the “literal” interpretation of the creation accounts in Genesis predisposes almost half of the 36 study participants to a belief that humans negatively impact the environment. The other two participants (of the 19 referring to the Fall from Eden) related the Fall of humans in the Garden of Eden to a tension that they perceived to exist between humans and nature (see, for example, Melissa T5.13-5).

Laura (T5.13-6) thought that the negative impacts that humans have on the environment are sinful, and in this way, she could see global warming as a potential consequence of human disregard for the environment. However, only four interviewees made statements that specifically linked human sinfulness and climate change. Sandy (T5.13-7) was the most emphatic about human sinfulness causing environmental degradation, though this was strongly influenced by her life experiences with pollution related illnesses which, as examined in the previous chapter, was also deeply immersed in an ultimately religious question about the relationship between sinfulness and human suffering. She feels that poor stewardship, which is sinful behavior in her opinion, is absolutely to blame for global warming. It appears then that the concept of human sinfulness contributes to these respondents’ receptivity of the idea that humans can negatively impact the environment, and also to narratives about human induced climate change.

As with the distinction between religiously sound environmental concern and religiously suspect earth worship, participants wanted to be very careful about how they framed the relationships between sinfulness, the environment, and God. For example, in discussing this issue Pastor Cecil (T5.13-8) wanted to be clear that humans can sin against God, but not nature itself. People can only sin against other people, including God, but people cannot sin against nature because Cecil does not think of nature as a person, as environmentalists do. Jamison, who adamantly found climate change advocates to be politically and morally suspect, expressed an interpretation of the sin faith theme very similar to Pastor Cecil’s; people can sin against one another in their treatment of the environment, but not against the environment itself. This again is a reflection of the belief in a created hierarchy with sin occurring only between God and humans. Nature may be the arena in which humans sin against one another and/or God, but nature cannot be sinned against in and of itself because it holds a lower status than personhood. For participants who emphasized this distinction, the framing of the “problem” of environmental issues like climate change becomes critical. For participants such as Cecil and
Jamison to be receptive to the idea that humans are acting in sinful ways with regards to the environment, the deleterious impacts of “sinful actions” need to be shown to be affecting other humans, not just “nature.”

The concept of sin appears to provide fertile ground amongst many of the conservative Christians in this sample for a conversation about human impacts on the environment. Interviewees seem open to the idea that humans have negative impacts on the environment, these impacts are morally wrong, and they have negative consequences for both humans and the environment itself. However, the extent to which participants in this sample thought humans could negatively impact the environment varied, as seen in the ways that participants brought the concept of sinfulness together with the idea of God’s sovereignty as examined below.
**Figure 5.9: Sin and the Environment**

| Perceptions of Climate Change Resulting from Application of Faith Theme | Climate change specifically viewed as consequence of human sinfulness  
| | Opens participants up to the idea that humans negatively impact the environment |
| Interpretation of Shared Faith Theme Regarding Climate Change | Environmental degradation a result of human sinfulness  
| | Literal reading of Genesis creation stories  
| | Fall of humans in Garden of Eden |
| Shared Faith Theme | Biblical Inerrancy  
| | Human Sinfulness |
**God is in Control, Period.**

The most straightforward and most popular interpretation of the faith theme of God’s sovereignty with regards to climate change was that God is in control – period. The twelve participants who embraced this viewpoint stated that regardless of what happens in the world, and despite human sinfulness, God is fully in control of things and actively involved in the events of the natural world, the political sphere, and individual lives. For instance, both Julie (T5.14-1) and Jeremiah (T5.14-2) emphasized that God was in control even when “bad” things happen, like natural disasters or disappointing election outcomes. As both Julie and Jeremiah indicate, this perspective makes it difficult to explain why undesirable things happen in the world; but they accept that God is in control on faith and trust that God is active even when God appears to be absent. Tyler (T5.14-3) states that because this is the case God can and will supernaturally act within any or all of these three spheres to prevent climate change if God so desires.

Twelve interviewees, including Julie, Jeremiah, and Tyler, related the interpretation of the God’s sovereignty faith theme (that God is always in control, no matter what) to their opinions about climate change. As might be expected, the conclusion for all of these individuals was that God is in control of the global climate and its changes, or lack thereof. Agnes (T5.14-4) felt that climate change was occurring, but it was just part of the natural cycles that have occurred since the beginning of time. God has always been in control of these cycles, God is in control of the current warming, and there is not much that humans can do about it. Heather (T5.14-5) is less opinionated about whether or not climate change is occurring, but she knows that God is in control regardless. As with Agnes and Heather, participants who held this interpretation of God’s sovereignty were divided on whether or not they felt climate change was happening, but they all felt the same about the fact that this did not really matter; whether climate change is occurring or not, God is in control and humans cannot do much about it either way. Because these 12 participants felt that there was nothing that they could do about climate change, they were not terribly concerned about it. Laura (T5.14-6) says that she does not even think about climate change that much because she trusts that God is in control of the climate; whatever happens, God will be in control. Margery (T5.14-7) goes even further to say that worrying about climate change is a waste of time because God is “so sovereign” over that. She feels that God wants her to worry about the things that she can affect and not waste her time worrying about things like climate that are out of her control but completely in God’s control.
Tyler (T5.14-3) feels that if God wants him to be concerned about climate change, then he will know about it.

**People Cannot Control the Climate**

As indicated in Margery’s quote, a theme evident in some of the interviews is not just that God is in control, but that climate change is beyond human ability to control. Four of the 12 participants who felt that God was in control of climate change, whether it was occurring or not, also perceived climate change scientists and/or advocates to be saying that humans could control the climate. Pastor Barry (T5.14-8) interpreted what he had heard about a resolution to limit temperature rise due to climate change as people saying that they could control the global temperature. Brandon (T5.14-9) also felt that climate change scientists were claiming to be able to control the earth’s climate. He feels that a number of natural factors have a much greater impact on the climate than human emissions do, and that we do not even understand, much less control these factors. All four of these participants related these ideas about control of the climate back to their views on God’s sovereignty, saying that humans were arrogant and trying to play God. Whether or not these are accurate reflections of the claims made by climate change scientists and/or advocates, these perceptions indicate how certain information about climate change mitigation has been received by some members of conservative faith communities based on their beliefs in God’s sovereignty.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceptions of Climate Change Resulting from Application of Faith Theme</th>
<th>Severeay diminished concern about climate change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Climate change scientists and advocates claim to be able to control the global climate</td>
<td>Either way God is in control of climate change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate change is happening</td>
<td>Climate change is not happening</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interpretation of Shared Faith Theme Regarding Climate Change</th>
<th>People cannot affect the global climate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>God is actively in control of the world, always</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shared Faith Theme</th>
<th>God’s Sovereignty</th>
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</table>
God is in Control, But...

In contrast with the above perspective, seven participants in this study felt that a belief in God’s sovereignty did not preclude the possibility of human induced climate change. Pastors Jason (T5.15-1, T5.15-2) and Peter (T5.15-3) explain a slightly different interpretation of the concepts of sovereignty, sin, and human impacts on the environment. These participants emphasize God’s control, while also highlighting the freedom that God grants humans to act within the world, positively or negatively. Human freedom, both pastors say, does not limit God’s power, because at the end of the day, God is still in control. Furthermore, God knows what is going to happen, so human actions do not surprise God or throw God’s ultimate plan out of whack. However, humans are sinful and therefore can impact the world around them in ways that are detrimental to our own health and the health of the planet. Camden (T5.15-4) applies this interpretation of God’s sovereignty and human sinfulness directly to his perceptions of climate change, stating that God essentially allows humans to bear the consequences of their sinful decisions and behaviors. With regards to the environment, people have, since the Garden of Eden, chosen to make poor decisions that are out of line with how God created things to be, and are therefore sinful. God allows humans to deal with the consequences of sin, which in the environmental context means things like pollution and climate change. Sandy (T5.15-5) says that we not only hurt ourselves through these sinful behaviors, but our collective actions hurt others, including future generations. This interpretation and application of God’s sovereignty in relation to climate change allowed for these seven participants to conceive of climate change as human caused. Because these individuals felt that climate change could be human caused, they were more concerned about the potential impacts that humans were having on the environment, and more concerned about climate change in particular. Camden (T5.15-6), for instance, talks specifically about carbon emissions and says that he has taken steps to reduce his carbon footprint.

Camden (T5.15-6) is careful to differentiate concern about climate change from fear though. This differentiation between fear and concern is an important concept for the seven participants who interpreted God’s sovereignty as allowing humans to reap the consequences of their own actions; while they all feel that humans can have a significant impact on the environment, to the point of altering the earth’s climate, they still feel that at the end of the day, God is in control. Trent (T5.15-7, T5.15-8) spoke several times about this tension. God is allowing climate change to take place, in his opinion, to teach humans to be better stewards of
the environment, and potentially to teach humans a hard lesson about consumption. However, God will not allow climate change to be catastrophic. God will ultimately intervene, if need be, to prevent humans from altering the climate too drastically. This tension between human freedom to impact the environment and God’s ultimate plan for the earth becomes even more evident in the discussion of eschatological faith themes that follows, however the point here is that some participants did believe that humans could alter the climate to a point. None of these participants who felt humans could cause climate change, though, felt that human induced climate change would have cataclysmic or life-ending consequences.
Figure 5.11: God is in Control, But...

| Perceptions of Climate Change Resulting from Application of Faith Theme | People should be concerned about climate change and their impacts  
But *not afraid* of climate change  
Humans cannot alter God’s ultimate plan for the earth  
Humans can negatively impact the environment to the point of altering climate |
|---|---|
| Interpretation of Shared Faith Theme Regarding Climate Change | God is ultimately in control of the world  
But God allows people to make bad choices and reap the consequences |
| Shared Faith Theme | God’s Sovereignty  
Human Sinfulness |
Eschatology

Eschatology refers to religious beliefs about the end times and is a particularly prominent focus among many conservative Christian denominations. Believing in the second coming of Christ as a culminating event marking the end times is one of the six distinguishing beliefs of conservative Christianity according to past research (Marsden, 2006; Smith & Emerson, 1998), and a faith theme that participants in this study frequently applied to their perceptions of climate change. All 36 interviewees spoke about their views on the end times and whether or not they saw these beliefs relating to their views on climate change. Their interpretation and application of this faith theme varied widely. Before diving into the ways that participants’ eschatological views related to their beliefs in the bible, God’s sovereignty, and climate change though, it is worth pointing out that participant eschatologies did not follow the hypothesized pattern of fundamentalists differing from evangelicals. Recall from the Methods Chapter that previous literature suggested that one of the primary differences between fundamentalist and evangelical Christians today was their end times theology. I expected fundamentalists to embrace a premillenial-dispensationalist eschatology, with a more pessimistic view of the future, and evangelicals to embrace a more optimistic view of the future involving progressive redemption of the world. As discussed above, the fundamentalist/evangelical distinction turned out to be problematic in this sample because participants did not identify strongly with the fundamentalist label and applied meanings to the evangelical label different from the definitions found in the literature review.

Along the same lines, only two participants, Pastor Frank (T5.16-1) and Pastor Jacob (T5.16-2), explicitly used the terms premillennial and/or dispensational, and as can be seen in their descriptions of the terminology below, they define these concepts differently. Pastor Frank discusses the term premillennial, but not dispensational while Pastor Jacob defines dispensational without relating it to the end times at all. There were other participants in the study who stated beliefs in various elements of premillenial dispensationalist eschatology, such as the rapture (i.e. Dana, T5.16-3 and Marcus, T5.16-4), but these participants did not go to Pastor Frank’s or Pastor Jacob’s churches. Additionally, the other interviewees from Pastor Frank’s church (I was unable to interview anyone else at Pastor Jacob’s church) did not refer to their views on the end times as premillenial-dispensationalist. Therefore, as with fundamentalist faith identities, there does not appear to be a particularly strong belief in
premillenial dispensational eschatology in this sample, nor does there appear to be a relationship between the church participants attended and a belief in this particular eschatological system. However there were some eschatological ideas that participants held in common that did have some bearing on their perceptions of climate change.

**God is in Charge of the End Times**

The most widely shared eschatological thought that participants in this sample related to climate change was the idea that regardless of what happens in the end times, God will be in control. Twenty-one participants relayed this sentiment in some form or another, combining their eschatological views with their belief in God’s sovereignty. To paraphrase Lily (T5.17-1), God will decide what happens, how, and when with regards to the end of the earth; it will not be a human decision or the result of human actions. Margery (T5.17-2) reiterates this sentiment almost exactly, and demonstrates in the process that this eschatological view is closely tied to her faith themes regarding the inerrancy of the bible and God’s sovereignty. God says in the bible that one day He will destroy the world, and so she takes that on faith believing that He will do it His way in His timing. Trent (T5.17-3) provides a third example of this idea stating that not only will the end be completely in God’s control, but that eschatological events will clearly demonstrate how much more powerful God is than humans by making any human actions or events seem meaningless at that time.

The most popular application of this belief to climate change was that humans do not have the power to destroy the earth. Ten participants stated that they did not think that climate change and global warming would be a cataclysmic, world ending event because God is in control of the end times, and compared with God, humans have relatively little power. Pastor Frank felt particularly strongly about this, stating that humans could not destroy the planet even if we tried (T5.17-4). Therefore, regardless of whether humans are causing climate change or not, it will not be a cataclysmic event. More commonly though, participants expressed a belief that God would not allow humans to catastrophically impact the earth, or as Lily (who believes that human actions have an impact on the environment and is supportive of good stewardship (T5.17-5)), says humans do not need to worry they will “accidentally cause the earth to be destroyed” (T5.17-1). Essentially, these participants are saying that God will not allow humans to destroy the earth by any means, particularly in this case, by global warming. Conversely, another six participants felt that climate change could be a cataclysmic event, but if so, then
God is causing global warming and there is nothing that humans can do to stop it. Tyler, for example (T5.17-6), feels that global warming is either God’s will, which He will use to destroy the earth, or if climate change is human induced and has the potential to cause serious problems, then God will intervene and help humans solve these problems by placing the right people in government or some similar means, so that the end times are all God’s doing. Trent (T5.17-7) shares this viewpoint. He does believe that climate change is happening and is largely human induced, however he also believes that God will help us solve for this problem before it becomes too severe because God reserves the destruction of the earth for Himself. In both Trent’s and Tyler’s statements, the overarching sentiment underlying this eschatological belief is that God is in control of the end times, and no human actions can alter God’s plan.

This eschatological belief that God is in control was salient for participants with regards to climate change primarily because they felt that certain climate change discourses portrayed climate change as a human caused pathway leading to the end of the world, in a way, presenting a secular rather than religiously grounded eschatology (T5.17-8 – T5.17-13). Alice (T5.17-8), Drew (T5.17-9), and Julie (T5.17-10) all describe certain claims they have heard about the potential consequences of climate change as alarmist. This type of sensational secular eschatology led these participants to be dismissive of some claims about the consequences of climate change, and skeptical of what they viewed as doomsday climate change discourses. This was true even for participants, like Camden (T5.17-11), who believed that some action to address human causes of climate change was warranted. He also feels that a pervasive fear about climate change exists today, whereas his faith instructs him not to fear the end of the world because God is in control of that. Both Pastor Randall and Pastor Darin share a similar sentiment, and refer specifically to movies such as The Day After Tomorrow or I am Legend (T5.17-12, T6-13, respectively) to describe how they feel climate change discourses promote fear and hysteria. While climate change researchers or mitigation advocates may contest the idea that Hollywood productions are legitimate “climate change discourses,” Randall and Darin both indicate that some conservative Christians perceive them to be part of the cultural discussion about the nature and consequences of climate change. Thus, just as some scientists are tempted to dismiss conservative Christian dialog as ridiculously sensational when driven by religious doctrine, conservative Christians may be dismissive of climate change discourses if they perceive them as imbued with alarmist secular eschatology that contradicts biblically based eschatology. In this context, discourses about climate change are in danger of being perceived
as competing with religion (as Pastor Darin (T5.17-13) says “a comparative [study] of, this is what God says, this is what man is saying”). To the extent that this happens, and climate change concern is perceived as a challenge to religious beliefs, barriers to productive climate change dialogs can become more deeply entrenched.

Interviewees who perceived climate change discourses to be alarmist based on their eschatological views reacted to these discourses in a range of ways. Some participants stated that they were concerned about climate change, but they were not afraid of it, as well represented by Camden’s comments (T5.17-11). These interviewees felt that concern about the impacts that humans are having on the environment via climate change were worth consideration and even action, however people should not be scared by what they perceived to be popular images of climate change as catastrophic. As Sandy says (T5.17-14), she is not afraid of climate change or other catastrophes that she perceives others to fear, because deep down, she believes that she and her family will always be okay since God is in control. Other participants though, like Pastor Darin (T5.17-15), stated that their eschatological views led them to be almost entirely unconcerned about climate change as a whole, and completely dismissive of fears about climate change being cataclysmic.
Figure 5.12: God is in Charge of the End Times

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceptions of Climate Change Resulting from Application of Faith Theme</th>
<th>Dismissive of Perceived secular eschatology claiming that Climate change will be catastrophic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People can be concerned about climate change But should not be afraid of climate change</td>
<td>Diminished concern about climate change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If humans are causing climate change God will intervene before it becomes catastrophic</td>
<td>God is either causing or not causing global climate change, either way humans cannot affect God’s plan</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interpretation of Shared Faith Theme Regarding Climate Change</th>
<th>God is in control of the end times God will not allow humans to destroy the earth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>God’s Sovereignty</td>
<td>Eschatology</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
<th>Shared Faith Theme</th>
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The Politics of Eschatology

A second eschatologically derived perspective that some participants in this study related to climate change links political prophecies in the Book of Revelation regarding the rise of a one-world government to climate change legislation. Seven interviewees stated that they were concerned about climate change not from an environmental standpoint, but because of the political ramifications that climate change regulation could have (T5.18-1 – T5.18-4). Individuals like Simon (T5.18-1, T5.18-2), Laura (T5.18-3), and Pastor Cecil (T5.18-4) all felt that international issues like climate change could be used as vehicles for establishing the one-world government described in Revelation, and they were therefore concerned about the international focus on climate change and climate change regulation. Needless to say, these individuals were skeptical of climate change discourses promoting international cooperative action on climate change, and internationally imposed regulations on greenhouse gas emissions (T5.18-2). In other words, climate change was seen not merely as a competing eschatology, but an intentional mechanism that could lead to the fulfillment an important eschatological prophecy in the bible. To the extent that this perspective is held, it represents another difficult obstacle to surmount in producing effective climate change dialog because “advocates” are potentially seen as political agents of evil.

The Timing of Eschatology

These two eschatological principles, God being in control of the destruction of the world and the rise of a one-world government, were the primary end times beliefs that participants related to their perceptions of climate change. However, the most striking comments about eschatology and climate change in this sample may have come from Marcus (T5.18-5, T5.18-6) who felt that present political events aligned with certain biblical prophecies and indicated that the world would be ending in the next 10-15 years. Therefore, despite having a master’s degree in riparian ecology and believing that human induced climate change was a reality, Marcus did not feel that he needed to worry about climate change because the world would end before any dramatic climate changes took place.

At least one previous (non-empirical) journal article on faith and climate change suggested that this kind of eschatologically driven perspective on climate change was potentially widespread amongst conservative Christians (Truesdale, 1994). This theoretical piece predicted that certain conservative belief systems would dismiss environmental issues with long term impacts because of a belief in the imminent return of Jesus. Perhaps the most striking aspect of
Marcus’ comment then is that he was the only participant in this study to subscribe to this perspective. No other participants explicitly stated that they felt they did not need to worry about climate change because the earth would end before climate change mattered, while other respondents thought concern was warranted for stewardship reasons. This suggests that the perspective Truesdale (1994) was concerned about does exist, but it was not common in this sample. Another theoretical article along these same lines (Keller, 1999) suggested that theologically conservative Christians could potentially interpret climate change predictions as aligning with apocalyptic biblical prophecies that describe the natural events occurring in the end times. This author’s fear was that conservative Christians would embrace climate change as an indicator that Jesus was returning soon, encouraging such believers to promote warming instead of working to mitigate it. None of the participants in this study indicated any such belief. In fact, some expressed concern that “alarmist” portrayals of climate change might contribute to a one-world government and therefore had a negative view of media efforts that seemed to promote climate change as apocalyptic. Dana (T5.18-7) did encounter one conservative Christian website that she felt portrayed climate change as the end of the world according to Revelation, however she roundly dismissed this site as an inaccurate and inappropriate application of end times thinking. Again, this indicates that such perspectives may exist, however they were not prevalent in this sample.
Figure 5.13: The Politics and Timing of Eschatology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceptions of Climate Change Resulting from Application of Faith Theme</th>
<th>Skeptical of motivations of climate change advocates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not concerned about environmental ramifications of climate change, but very concerned about political ramifications of climate change legislation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>International climate change agreements potentially part of creating one-world government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Diminished concern about climate change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The end times will come before impacts of climate change get too serious</td>
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</tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interpretation of Shared Faith Theme Regarding Climate Change</th>
<th>End times signaled by rise of one-world government</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Current political circumstances indicate end times within the next 10-15 years</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shared Faith Theme</th>
<th>Biblical Inerrancy</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Eschatology</td>
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Evangelism

Evangelism, or the idea that Christians need to share their faith with non-Christians so that they too can be “saved,” is the final faith theme that participants across the sample consistently related to their perceptions of climate change. Evangelism is also one of the distinguishing emphases of conservative Christian theology, perhaps the second most distinctive faith tenet behind biblical inerrancy. The faith theme of evangelism tended to influence how participants felt Christian churches in general, and specifically their home churches, should respond to the issue of climate change. Twenty interviewees said that in their opinions, churches have other foci that are more important than climate change.

Julie (T5.19-1) and Margery (T5.19-2), for example, feel that environmental issues, and global warming in particular, have no place in the church at all. Julie says she would “shudder” if her church ever publicized an environmental position because that would take the focus off of Jesus. In the long run, she says, environmental issues are temporary, but faith in Christ offers eternal salvation, therefore salvation should be the one and only emphasis of the church. Hannah (T5.19-3) shares the sentiment that the church is meant to equip people to be evangelists, to prepare church members to tell others about God and Jesus. But, in her opinion, if a church wants to address environmental issues because the leadership or members of that church feel it is important, then that is acceptable. Marcus (T5.19-4) takes Hannah’s openness to churches addressing environmental issues a step further. He says that the church and environmental groups have fundamentally different priorities, but stewardship should have a place in church conversations. In fact, his church previously hosted a seminar-type event about faith and the environment that he wishes he had attended. In his opinion, this is an appropriate format for the church to address environmental issues. These four respondents all stated that environmental issues should not be the focus of the church, but they also present a range of opinions about whether or not the church should discuss them at all. Of the twenty participants who explicitly stated that the church has other priorities than climate change, ten tended to express concern that attention to the topic of climate change would detract from the true mission of the church, while the other ten felt that churches could address environmental issues as long as they did not replace the focus on teaching the bible and evangelism.

Of the ten interviewees who felt the church could address environmental issues in a proper context, eight participants said that they would actually like to hear more about climate change in the church setting. Marcus (T5.19-4) expressed regret for missing his church’s
environmental seminar. Heather (T5.19-5) said she would love for her church to talk about climate change, educate her about the issue, and explain how she could help out. Ironically, Heather attended the same church as Marcus and was apparently unaware that she had also missed the “culture and theology night” devoted to faith and environmentalism. This “culture and theology” talk is the same Is God Green seminar that Max described speaking at in the idiographic chapter. Shelly (T5.19-6) also says that she wants to learn more about climate change from the Christian perspective. She has a number of questions that she thinks pastors and Christian scientists should be answering for people like her that do not really understand the issue or what the proper response should be from a biblical perspective. Along these same lines, Pastor Cecil (T5.19-7), said that more and more congregants were asking him for information about the topic of global warming from a faith perspective. His current pastoral role (as a clergy member at a very large church) was to prepare official statements on social and political issues and to teach classes about the biblical perspective on those issues. However, he felt that climate change was such a complex scientific and political issue, that he was simply not knowledgeable enough to teach on the topic. Pastor Cecil seems to indicate here that he too, as a pastor, would appreciate more resources on climate change from a faith perspective. These ten participants describe a certain level of receptivity to dialog about climate change that exists within the conservative churches in this sample. More specifically, these individuals appear to be seeking faith based guidance on what to think about climate change and how to respond.

In response to this demand for religious guidance on climate change, Pastor Cecil (T5.19-7) felt that for the time being, he could most effectively enable his congregants to deal with social and political issues of all types, and climate change in particular, by teaching them out of the bible. Simon (T5.19-8) also iterates this idea; in his opinion, focusing on the bible leads naturally to good stewardship, because people learn from the bible what the proper relationship is between God, humans, and nature, and then they apply that knowledge to their lives. In this way, a focus on the bible is actually the most effective way to promote good stewardship in Simon’s estimation.

Finally, two participants, Camden (T5.19-9) and Pastor Jason (T5.19-10) actually thought that an environmental focus in the church correlated nicely with the goal of evangelism. In Camden’s brother’s church, public statements about environmental issues had opened up doors for people within the church to share their faith. Pastor Jason similarly saw church engagement with environmental issues as a way to connect with non-Christians through a shared interest.
Neither of these individuals suggested that environmental concern eclipse evangelism as a primary emphasis within the church. Instead, they felt that evangelism and environmentalism had the potential to go hand-in-hand as opposed to being mutually exclusive efforts.

In summary, the theme of evangelism was linked to climate change explicitly in 20 of the interviews. Broadly speaking, these twenty interviewees fell into three different groups. The first group, consisting of 10 interviewees, expressed concerns that a focus on climate change would detract from the church’s evangelical mission. Here, as with the faith themes of God’s sovereignty, participants were concerned that climate change competed with the main message of the church. Therefore, focusing on climate change would distract people’s attention from faith in God, which should always be the ultimate concern both of individuals and churches. A second group comprised of eight individuals were actually seeking faith-based guidance from the church on the topic of climate change. These respondents were more receptive to discussing climate change in church, particularly because they wanted to learn about the subject from an authority figure that they trusted, someone who shared their same faith-based priorities. Finally, the third group, composed of two interviewees, saw addressing climate change as a platform for evangelism. These two respondents were open to the idea of the church engaging with this issue in order to facilitate conversations with non-Christians about faith.
### Figure 5.14: Evangelism and Climate Change

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perceptions of Climate Change Resulting from Application of Faith Theme</th>
<th>Would like to see climate change addressed from conservative Christian perspective</th>
<th>Would like to see churches address climate change in spirit of evangelism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>People looking for guidance on climate change from the church</td>
<td>Addressing climate change presents opportunities for evangelism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Climate change has no place in the church</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interpretation of Shared Faith Theme Regarding Climate Change</th>
<th>Environmentalism presents a competing message that inherently detracts from church mission of evangelism</th>
<th>Environmentalism should not be the church’s focus but it does not inherently detract from church mission</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Evangelism should be the focus of the church</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shared Faith Theme</th>
<th>Evangelism</th>
</tr>
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Chapter Summary and Conclusion

This Nomothetic Results chapter began with an examination of the concept of situated freedom from within the hermeneutic paradigm. This concept laid the foundation for the relationship between the idiographic and nomothetic analyses utilized in this study. Situated freedom suggests that while individual experiences and contexts may be important for understanding the relationship between conservative Christian faith and climate change (as the idiographic chapter suggested they were), meaningful similarities may also exist between individuals as they are constrained by shared social and physical environments. Therefore, based on the similarities that cropped up between participants in the idiographic analysis phase, namely that participants shared conservative religious beliefs that contributed to overlapping perceptions of climate change, this chapter began with the assumption that an aggregate data analysis could provide a deeper understanding of the relationship between the respondents’ faith and their perceptions of climate change.

While the idiographic analyses suggested shared religious beliefs as a basis for overlapping perceptions of climate change, the sampling principles used in this study also allowed me to account for some other potential sources of similarities. First, I wanted to examine similarities and differences within and across churches, and second, within and across religious identities (particularly fundamentalist and evangelical identities). To examine relationships between these aspects of respondents’ religion and their perceptions of climate change, I utilized two common measures of climate change perceptions from previous studies: first participant perceptions of the existence and causes of climate change and second the levels of participant concern about climate change. Analyzing these two aspects of participant perceptions of climate change revealed that a range of views existed within the sample on both aspects. Participants held a variety of views on whether or not climate change existed and if so what was causing it, as well as a varying levels of concern about climate change. When these two aspects of climate change perceptions were compared with the churches that respondents attended, it became evident that variation also existed within churches. In other words, the church that participants attended did not appear to be meaningfully related to their views on the existence or causes of climate change, or their concern about climate change.

Since participant religious affiliation did not appear to be a significant factor in shaping perceptions of climate change, I turned to participants’ religious identities. However, the identities that participants in this study discussed did not provide a useful basis for examining
the similarities and differences in their perceptions of climate change. First, participants did not identify with religious labels as hypothesized; therefore, the desired comparison point between evangelicals and fundamentalists was practically non-existent. Second, and more importantly, rather than identifying strongly with particular religious labels, interviewees indicated that the labels they chose reflected particular beliefs that were important to them. In other words, religious labels were used as shorthand for the beliefs that participants actually used to define their faith. This finding reinforced my initial impressions from the idiographic analyses that shared faith themes provided a good entry point for examining the similarities and differences between participants’ views on climate change.

Based on these initial findings, the chapter then turned to the five faith themes that participants most frequently related to their perceptions of climate change. I examined these five beliefs using the nomothetic organizing system presented in Figure 5.2. This diagram depicts the faith themes of biblical inerrancy, God’s sovereignty, human sinfulness, eschatology, and evangelism as the foundational principles that respondents then interpreted and applied in different ways to arrive at a range of faith-based perspectives on climate change.

Biblical inerrancy was the first faith theme discussed. A belief in the inerrancy of the bible directly affected some participants’ perceptions of climate change as they literally looked to the bible itself for information regarding the topic. All eight participants who did this stated that the bible did not address anthropogenic climate change explicitly and generally interpreted this to mean that climate change did not warrant a faith-based response. Participants also stated that the bible informed their perspectives on the human-nature relationship through their literal reading of the creation stories in the book of Genesis. Participants said that the bible described a created hierarchy that placed God at the top, humans in the middle, and the rest of nature at the bottom of the cosmic order.

This belief in the created order also incorporated the second principle faith theme examined in this chapter, which was God’s sovereignty. Participants frequently emphasized their belief that God was in control of the universe and that having a relationship with God should be the primary focus of any individual’s life. These perspectives on the bible and the created order combined to make some participants skeptical of climate change science and advocates. Respondents were wary of climate change researchers and advocates because they felt that these individuals do not hold biblically based perspectives on the creation and the human role therein. They deemed science based on evolutionary and big bang principles
instead of the Genesis creation story unreliable, and characterized climate change advocates as mistaking the created order and engaging in idolatrous worship of the creation over the Creator.

While the concept of the created hierarchy did bias participants against climate change science and advocates, it also led to a stewardship concern for all 36 of the respondents. Interviewees interpreted the idea of stewardship differently, contrasting varying levels of concern for the earth with concern for people and God; overall though, the concept of stewardship laid a foundation for a faith based environmental concern among participants. For some interviewees, the concept of stewardship even provided a basis for concern about climate change as a specific environmental problem.

Human sinfulness was the third key faith theme examined in this chapter, and it too laid a foundation for environmental concern within the sample. Participants believed that environmental degradation was a consequence of human sinfulness, which opened them up to the idea that humans could negatively impact the environment, and that such impacts were morally wrong. As with stewardship, some participants went so far as to say that climate change was a manifestation of human sinfulness.

In addition to contributing to participant beliefs about the “created order,” the faith theme of God’s sovereignty was applied more directly to the concept of climate change. Twelve participants stated that God is in control of the climate no matter what, so human actions cannot alter the climate. Because these individuals perceived God to be in control, they were not concerned about climate change, whether or not they thought that it existed. In contrast with this perspective, seven other participants stated that while God is ultimately in control, God does allow humans freedom to make their own decisions and deal with the consequences of those decisions. These respondents were more open to the idea that humans could be negatively contributing to climate change and could bear negative consequences as a result.

This concept of the “end result” draws in the fourth faith theme of eschatology. Participants in this sample frequently related their views on the end times to their perceptions of climate change. All 36 respondents shared the perspective that God was ultimately in control of the end times. For some participants, this meant that no matter what humans do, they cannot affect the end times. Therefore, if climate change is happening and is part of the end times, there is nothing that humans can do to affect it. Other participants felt that humans could be causing climate change and that God was allowing this to happen for a time, but that God would ultimately intervene to prevent catastrophic human impacts via climate change.
because God alone is in control of the ends of the earth. While there is an important distinction between these two perspectives on the end times, participants who spoke about eschatology in relation to climate change all said that they were skeptical of apocalyptic sounding climate change predictions.

Participants also combined their belief in biblical inerrancy with their eschatological views to comment on specific prophecies about the end times as they saw them relating to climate change. Seven participants said that the end of the world would be prefaced by the rise of a one-world government. These individuals went on to state that international climate change agreements could serve as vehicles for enabling this one-world government. Not surprisingly, these interviewees were opposed to international negotiations on climate change and were not as concerned about the environmental ramifications of warming temperatures as the political ramifications of climate change legislation. One participant stated that based on his reading of the eschatological prophecies in the bible, the world was going to end much sooner than climate change could have any serious effects on the world.

The final faith theme, which stood somewhat independently from the other four, was evangelism. All of the participants in this study thought that the primary focus of the church was evangelism. However, participants varied on how they saw climate change relating to the church’s mission. Some participants felt that any talk of climate change was detrimental to the church’s evangelical objectives and therefore should have no place in the church. Other participants felt that climate change could be discussed in church, as long as it was not a distraction from the main focus on evangelism. The majority of these individuals stated that they would actually like to see the church educate Christians on a proper faith based response to climate change. Two other participants thought that the church could simultaneously engage the issue of climate change and evangelize. In fact, these two individuals thought that environmentalism and evangelism could go hand-in-hand by engaging non-Christians in conversations about issues like climate change. All of the various interpretations of these five faith themes and their contributions to participant perceptions of climate change have been incorporated into Figure 5.15. This final representation of the nomothetic organizing system abbreviates and simplifies the particular interpretations in order to fit them all on the same figure, but serves as a nice summary and synthesis of the findings of the nomothetic analysis presented in this chapter. Unfortunately there is not room to display the various relationships between the faith themes and their interpretations in this figure. However, the wording in the
diagram has attempted to capture some of the overlap that was made more evident in previous figures.
**Figure 5.15: Summary Nomothetic Organizing System**

| Perceptions of Climate Change Resulting from Application of Faith Theme | A. Does not warrant a faith based response | B. Distrust of science | C. Scientists promoting unnecessary concern | D. Distrust of advocates | E. Potential faith based response | F. God in control of climate | G. God will prevent catastrophic impacts | H. Openness to idea that humans negatively impact climate system | I. Humans should be concerned but not afraid | J. People can be concerned, but should not be afraid | K. Dismissive of perceived catastrophic predictions | L. Opposed to international legislation | M. End times will come before real impacts | N. Nothing should replace church’s mission | O. Church should avoid the topic | P. Church should teach on the topic | Q. Church should engage the topic |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Interpretation of Shared Faith Theme Regarding Climate Change | A. Anthropogenic climate change is not in the bible | B. Literal reading of Genesis & distrust of science | C. Created hierarchy | D. Concern about confusing Creator with creation | E. Stewardship ethic | F. God actively in control of the world | G. Humans cannot alter God’s ultimate plan | H. Environmental degradation a result of sin | I. God in control but allows humans to reap consequences of sinful actions | J. God is in control of the end times | K. God will not allow humans to destroy the earth | L. End times signaled by one-world government | M. End times signaled by current situation | N. Evangelism should be the church’s focus | O. No room for environmental dialog | P. Room for dialog | Q. Environmental concern = evangelism |
| Shared Faith Themes | Biblical Inerrancy | God’s Sovereignty | Human Sinfulness | Eschatology | Evangelism |
Taken altogether, these nomothetic results have several implications. As with the idiographic analyses, they suggest first and foremost that religious beliefs do have some bearing on participant perceptions of climate change. These results indicate that religious beliefs should be considered for inclusion in perceptions of climate change research as they are salient for every single participant in this study. Furthermore, the results discussed in this chapter highlight five particular beliefs that participants related to their perceptions of climate change and describe how participants felt these particular beliefs contributed to their perceptions of climate change, going above and beyond previous survey results that simply report statistical correlations.

The five faith themes discussed in this chapter do primarily serve to lessen respondent concern about and engagement with climate change. However, the results presented in this chapter also indicate that a range of interpretations of the five faith themes exist. Some of these interpretations appear to be irreconcilable with concern over climate change. However, these results also highlight ways that respondents interpret their religious beliefs to encourage environmental concern. These results indicate ways that dialog could be improved between climate change scientists, advocates, and conservative Christians. These results indicate framings of the different causes and consequences of climate change that participants are particularly receptive or unreceptive to, and indicate how some of the examined beliefs can be reframed or reinterpreted to encourage better responses to climate change dialogs.

Finally, these results indicate that religious beliefs are more salient than religious affiliation or identity with regard to participant perceptions of climate change. Past survey research has focused heavily on these two aspects of religion in relation to environmental issues, and these results suggest that perhaps specific religious beliefs are worth consideration either alongside or in place of other measures of religion.

Before closing the chapter, two important caveats need to be addressed with regards to the findings presented above. First, the results of this study are not statistically representative of any larger populations. These results were collected in a particular region of the country, specifically for its religious uniqueness, and theologically conservative Christians in other areas of the United States may apply these same faith themes, or others, to their perceptions of climate change in different ways. Additionally, I recognize that these five faith themes are only one source of similarities and differences among participant perceptions of climate change. I do not claim that religious beliefs are the only, or even the primary factors shaping these
individuals’ perceptions of climate change, only that they are one factor that appears to do so. One other important factor that could contribute to shared perceptions of climate change that was part of the idiographic analysis process was climate change discourses. Participants in this study undoubtedly draw from similar popular commentaries on climate change and these commentaries also constrain and influence their perceptions of the issue in ways that probably lead to meaningful similarities and differences. However, this project did not collect the data necessary to meaningfully compare the discourses that participants were drawing on, nor was that the intended focus of the study. I merely wish to acknowledge that there are other factors at play shaping similarities and differences within the data that are beyond the scope of this project and this particular analysis.
Chapter 6: Conclusion

Chapter Introduction

This research project set out to determine whether or not theologically conservative Christians relate their religious beliefs to their perceptions of climate change, and if so, how. The justification for this project, the literature that informed it, the methods utilized to execute it, and the results it produced have all been examined up to this point. The purpose of this chapter then is to point the way forward – to discuss what this project means in relation to past research, to provide advice for how to approach conservative Christians with respect to the topic of climate change, and to suggest how future research might build upon the findings presented here. In order to do so, this chapter contains a brief recap of the findings of both the idiographic and nomothetic analyses, an examination of how this project speaks back to previous research, and suggestions for how interested researchers and/or climate change advocates might proceed based on this research.

Idiographic Results

All 35 of the in-depth interviews conducted for this project were analyzed as separate units in order to gain an intimate appreciation for the relationship between each participant’s religious beliefs and their perceptions of climate change. Due to space limitations, only five of those 35 idiographic analyses were presented in this document. The five individuals who were chosen represent a variety of different demographic variables, religious emphases, perceptions of climate change, and interactions between these various factors. Perhaps the most important message that these in-depth analyses convey is that religious beliefs do appear to contribute to participant perceptions of climate change. Despite their differences, all five interviewees related specific religious beliefs to their views on climate change. In this respect, they were representative of the larger sample, as all 36 interviewees described their religious beliefs influencing their perceptions of climate change in some capacity. The five individual analyses presented documented the fact that conservative Christians’ beliefs can and often do have a salient effect on their opinions about environmental issues in general and climate change in particular.

These individuals simultaneously demonstrated that other factors beyond religious beliefs affect perceptions of climate change as well; factors such as personal health, political ideology, and education among others. In fact, rather than clearly separating into distinct,
isolatable factors, participants’ religious beliefs combined with non-faith influences to form gestalt views on global climate change. For instance, Sandy’s faith theme of human sinfulness was inseparable from her personal history of pollution related illnesses, both of which combined to influence her opinion that climate change was happening and human caused. Considering any one of these factors in isolation detracts from a more holistic understanding of how Sandy ultimately arrives at her environmental views and values. In this way, the idiographic analyses presented in Chapter 4 indicate not only that religious beliefs have some bearing on participant perceptions of climate change, but provided some highly contextualized examples of the ways in which they do so. This study indicated that participants’ perceptions of climate change were complex matters, influenced certainly by their faith, but also by a number of other factors including personal history and life themes that combined in ways not easily understood apart from one another.

This study also recognizes that larger socio-political, material, and geographic dynamics beyond the individual factors highlighted in the idiographic analyses may contribute to respondent perceptions of climate change. For instance, the idiographic organizing system (see Figures 4.1a & 4.1b) suggests that popular discourses about climate change contribute to participant views on the topic. However, the analyses do not go into great depth regarding these discourses apart from examining participant opinions about them. As explained in the idiographic chapter, this is largely a limitation of the data collected for this project; an in-depth discourse analysis simply was not possible via the interview transcripts. However, in closing it is important to acknowledge that the respondents in this study are reacting to larger socio-political factors (like popular climate change discourses), material factors (such as economic status), and geographic influences (such as living in Texas) and that participant opinions about climate change are not formed in isolation from these broader influences. Unfortunately, as with climate change discourses, these factors can only be hinted at in this project because the ability to assess their influence lies beyond the scope of the interview data collected. This recognition of larger factors indicates interesting possibilities for future research; building off of the findings presented here, which focus primarily on respondent opinions of their own experiences and beliefs. Future research could examine these broader external factors, providing an even more complete and holistic explanation of how individuals arrive at their perceptions of climate change.
Nomothetic Results

In addition to discussing the importance of individual experiences and opinions within these separate interviews, some similarities also emerged across the transcripts, primarily in the form of shared faith themes. While these five individuals interpreted and applied shared faith themes such as biblical inerrancy to the subject of climate change differently based on the unique personal factors they brought to the issue, all five were drawing on similar theological concepts at some level. These similarities served as the impetus for examining the data set at the aggregate level.

The results from the idiographic analyses combined with the religious affiliation and identities data discussed early in the nomothetic results chapter heavily influenced the structure of the aggregate data analysis. In addition to detecting shared faith themes across individual interviews, the churches participants attended and the ways that they identified themselves religiously did not appear to influence their perceptions of climate change. This shifted the analytical focus at the aggregate level off of religious identities and affiliations and onto shared faith themes, or shared beliefs. Ultimately, the most interesting and meaningful differences and similarities between participants with regards to climate change turned out to be their interpretations and applications of various faith themes or beliefs. Therefore, the nomothetic analyses across interviews focused on five faith themes that participants frequently applied to their views on climate change: biblical inerrancy, sin, God’s sovereignty, eschatology, and evangelism.

All but one of the participants in the sample stated that they believed the bible to be inerrant, and 33 went on to describe how this belief shaped their concept of the relationship between humans and nature. These interviewees primarily applied their ‘biblical views’ on the relationship between humans and nature to their perceptions of climate change in two seemingly paradoxical ways. Twenty-six participants stated that their understanding of the human-nature relationship made them skeptical of climate change science and advocates. However, all of these same participants stated that stewardship of the environment was an important human responsibility based on their faith. These seemingly contradictory applications of the same belief stem from a concern that environmentally engaged scientists and activists tend to mistake the creator God for the created earth, which several participants described as “idolatrous” or “earth-worship.” The interviewees in this sample do tend to express environmental concern, but those who are outside of this community that desire to tap into this
Concern must be careful to approach and phrase outreach in ways that are not interpreted by conservative Christians as competing with their core religious beliefs.

The majority of the participants in this sample (32 interviewees) also spoke about sin, and 26 of them related this faith theme to their views on the human-nature relationship. Seventeen of these individuals felt that human sinfulness translates into human caused environmental degradation. This belief opened interviewees up to the possibility that humans could, through irresponsible behavior, negatively impact the climate. As with stewardship though, several participants wanted to be careful about how they phrased and applied the idea of sin to the environment. These individuals wanted to be sure that sin was understood to be something that impacts relationships between people (including God), not between people and nature.

God’s sovereignty was perhaps the most unexpected faith theme that participants regularly related to climate change. No previous studies had examined the bearing that a belief in God’s sovereignty might have on environmental thought and practice. However, participants stated time and again in this study that God is in control. This faith theme was applied to climate change in two distinct ways. Twelve interviewees said that God is in control, period. Therefore humans cannot impact the climate; climate is something that only God can affect. Seven other participants felt that God’s sovereignty did not preclude human freedom to negatively impact a global system like climate. In fact, these seven participants felt that God, as a sovereign being, allows humans to deal with the outcomes of their sinful actions. Climate change, in fact, may be just such an instance where God is allowing humans to reap the consequences of environmentally irresponsible behavior.

All 36 participants talked about their eschatological views in relation to climate change. The most popular viewpoint (stated by some 10 interviewees) was that humans cannot destroy the earth because God is in control of the end times. Participants who held this view felt that climate change scientists and advocates were apocalyptic in their predictions. These interviewees tended to be dismissive of such claims because they contradicted their biblically based eschatological views. The second relationship that participants discussed between eschatology and climate change actually had very little to do with the environment, and much more to do with the potential political ramifications of climate change. Seven participants who focused on eschatology were concerned that a one-world government could arise out of international climate change legislation, which would be a clear sign of the end times.
With regards to evangelism, twenty participants essentially asserted that no church should focus on climate change over and above the bible and Jesus. But, there was also a popular view that the church should address climate change in some capacity, preferably teaching their members how to respond from a faith perspective (eight participants expressed this opinion). There was an additional minority view, limited to two individuals, who suggested environmentalism and evangelism might not be antithetical and may in fact be complimentary, providing opportunities for churches to reach out to environmentally concerned individuals.

As was stated in the Nomothetic Results chapter, it is crucial to remember that these five beliefs were not the only beliefs that interviewees applied to climate change. Nor are these beliefs the only factors shaping participant perceptions of climate change. The nomothetic results are only meaningful in light of the idiographic results, which suggest that conservative Christian perceptions of climate change appear to be a highly personalized matter. While participants did refer to shared faith themes, the variation with which they applied these faith themes to their perceptions of climate change indicates that it would be difficult to assess the particular relationship between a given belief and a perspective on climate change without asking a respondent to explain the connection they see in their own words. In this way, both results chapters meaningfully contribute to both previous and future research. The nomothetic chapter does suggest some similarities that exist across the sample, but is only useful in combination with the idiographic results that suggest a meaningful dialog with a given respondent about climate change might only be successful if that particular individual’s larger life story is understood.

**Speaking Back: Research on Religion and Environmentalism**

Recall from the Literature Review that this project was largely inspired by over 25 years of research and 25 plus articles on the relationship between religion and environmental thought and practice. All of the articles in this substantial body of literature trace their origins back to Lynn White’s (1969) assertions about the relationship between western society’s Christian heritage and the ecological crises of the 20th and 21st centuries. Similarly, these studies all utilize a quantitative, survey based approach to examine whether or not White’s hypothesis is correct at a broad level – either in American society as a whole or even internationally. While these articles all share a broad theoretical inspiration and methodological platform, this is where their similarities end. Researchers used different measures of religion, environmentalism, or both in
every single study. Furthermore, no two studies come to the exact same conclusion about the relationship between religion and environmentalism. The most common finding among the studies was some correlation between conservative Christianity and diminished environmental concern or behavior. As a whole though, this body of research has been deemed “inconclusive” and “inconsistent” with regards to rendering empirical evidence for or against the Lynn White Hypothesis (Hayes & Marangudakis, 2001; Larsen, 2001).

In breaking from these previous studies, this research project took a different approach to examining the relationship between religion and a specific environmental issue, global climate change, by using qualitative data and a hermeneutic analysis process. The goal was to gain a depth of understanding about the relationship between conservative Christianity and the specific issue of climate change not available in past survey studies, recognizing that such depth came at the cost of statistically generalizable claims about a broader population. The results from this research uncovered five specific religious beliefs that appear to influence theologically conservative Christians’ perceptions of climate change. Three of these beliefs, God’s sovereignty, human sinfulness, and evangelism have not been examined in any previous empirical research on the relationship between Christian faith and environmentalism. Biblical inerrancy and eschatological beliefs have been included in previous research, but only as indicators of affiliation with theologically conservative religious groups, not as beliefs that contribute to or detract from environmental concern in and of themselves. Therefore, this research suggests some particular religious beliefs that deserve more attention with regards to the intersection between conservative Christianity and environmental thought and practice.

Additionally, the large majority of the previous studies in this body of research focused on the relationship between particular religious affiliations and environmentalism. Researchers hypothesized, and sometimes found, that the more conservative Christians were theologically, the more likely they would be to hold the dominion ethic that White indicted as ecologically unsound. Therefore, survey measures of religion in these studies attempt to ascertain religious affiliation along some variation of a conservatism scale. Admittedly, the study at hand was only interested in conservative Christians, and therefore was not trying to make comparisons across as broad a theological spectrum; however, the results of this study indicate that religious beliefs are more salient than religious affiliations with regards to climate change. In other words, participants spoke more frequently about how specific beliefs affected their perceptions of climate change than about how their affiliation with a particular church, denomination, or
religious label (such as evangelical) contributed to these views. In fact, participants from across various churches, denominations, and religious identities often had more in common than participants within the same category when it came to their views on climate change. These similarities resulted from the interpretation and application of shared beliefs, not affiliations. Therefore, in addition to suggesting five particular beliefs that deserve attention, the results from this study also suggest that religious beliefs are more closely related to perceptions of climate change than religious affiliations.

In addition to pointing to several specific beliefs, this study provides a nuanced understanding of how those beliefs relate to participant perceptions of climate change. The interviews conducted for this project indicate that participants interpret and apply very similar religious beliefs in very different ways when it comes to climate change. In fact, the ways that interviewees interpret and apply shared beliefs to climate change is highly dependent upon their prior experiences and current situation. Faith themes do not exist in isolation from other faith themes, personal history, life themes, and/or faith and life projects. Rather, all of these factors came together to form gestalt views on climate change, indicating that attempts to isolate single factors and determine causal relationships may be difficult.

In fact, one could argue that the results from this study essentially support the Lynn White Hypothesis. Participants in this study tended to relate their religious beliefs to a lessened belief in and/or concern about climate change. This evidence could be used to say that Lynn White was right, and implicate specific beliefs such as God’s sovereignty along with dominion in the case against Christianity’s negative impacts on the environment. However, such an interpretation of the results of this research would overlook critical aspects of both Lynn White’s original argument, and the data presented in this study. White did argue that latent Christian beliefs and values were implicated in the world’s ecological crises. However, White went on to suggest that these deep rooted values could and will only be replaced by other religious values; “Since the roots of our trouble are so largely religious, the remedy must also be essentially religious, whether we call it that or not” (White, 1969, p. 1207). In fact, White suggested adopting the environmental ethic of St. Francis of Assissi, from within the Christian tradition itself, as a starting point for a religious rethinking of the human-nature relationship.

The results from this study do indicate that some participants dismiss climate change from a faith perspective; participants in this study did negatively relate their faith themes to concern about the environment in general and climate change in particular. However, these
results also indicate that some participants actively engage with environmental issues because of their faith. For each faith theme participants negatively related to environmental concern, an example was also found in which participants interpreted that same faith theme differently to exhort what might be referred to as a pro-environmental value. These pro-environmental applications of traditional conservative Christian faith themes were often a minority view; in fact, in survey research these cases may have been considered outliers or dismissed as error variance. However, the in-depth interview approach utilized in this study revealed that these cases are not merely important to consider; they are critical because they reveal the range of views found within the churches in this study. This range signifies room for creativity and dialogue within conservative faith communities on the topic of climate change. Such opportunities could have been missed in a survey treatment of these same individuals and churches. In terms of future research then, this project suggests that social scientists continue to use qualitative methods for attaining an in-depth understanding of the relationship between religion and environmentalism. Survey research would benefit from a continued exploration of the relationships between faith and environmental issues at the individual level before such methods can be effectively used to examine broader populations. It appears that past research in this area has lost the trees for the forest, to invert the adage, and could benefit from some ground level investigations. These results also move beyond the White Hypothesis and into the “White Proposal,” suggesting that in fact there is room, even within conservative Christian communities, to re-imagine, re-interpret, and re-apply theological tenets to encourage engagement on environmental issues, and climate change in particular.

Speaking Back: Research on American Perceptions of Climate Change

This last conclusion transitions into the second body of research that influenced the study at hand. Researchers have studied American perceptions of climate change from a number of different perspectives, ranging from opinion polling to in-depth investigations of scientific knowledge about greenhouse gas emissions. Within this research, various interests seem to exist with regards to why American perceptions of climate change are worth consideration. Opinion polls are primarily concerned with national averages, and put relatively little effort into explaining the reasons behind their facts and figures. However, the more substantial sector of this body of literature appears to want to understand American perceptions of climate change in order to more effectively engage various populations on this
particular environmental issue. To this body of literature, the research presented here suggests first that religious beliefs deserve consideration when it comes to a large segment of the American population’s views on climate change. No previous studies have looked explicitly at religious beliefs in relation to climate change; however this study suggests that they are salient, at least for the 36 of the participants in this sample.

With regard to the perceptions of climate change research then, this project seems to suggest several important foci for future research. First, valuable studies could be conducted on how particular information about climate change is received within various faith communities. This research could employ rhetorical and social science methods to examine how conservative Christians, for instance, respond to various sources and framings of information. As an example, do conservative communities respond well to information that comes from Christian sources? Or, what mediums appear to be the most effective for communicating such information?

Beyond these suggestions for future research, this project indicates some specific ways that dialog about climate change could be improved with conservative faith communities. Previous research and opinion polls suggest that conservative Christians are skeptical of climate change and the results of this study tend to agree. In fact, there are some respondents for whom there seems to be little or no room for dialog about climate change based almost entirely on their religious beliefs. Marcus’ eschatological views, for example, lead him to believe that the earth will end in the next 10-15 years, while Jamison thought that climate change advocates were “bad people” because of their idolatrous nature worship and hidden political agenda. For these individuals, productive dialog about climate change may not be possible.

However, there were also respondents in this sample who did think that climate change was happening, was human induced, and who were personally concerned about the issue. Some of these individuals even stated that their concern about climate change stemmed from their faith. Camden and Max both said that their faith called them to be good stewards of God’s creation; this belief led both of them to think about their environmental impacts and attempt to reduce their carbon footprints. Even some of the climate change skeptics explicitly stated that their views on this particular issue did not diminish their concern about the environment in general. These respondents drew upon the faith themes of stewardship and human sinfulness to describe why they did care about God’s creation and why they felt a need as Christians to respect and protect it. These participants indicate the existence of theologically grounded environmental awareness, concern, and engagement within conservative Christianity. In other
words, room exists for dialogue with some conservative Christians regarding environmental issues in general and climate change in particular.

It is important to note that faith was not the only thing driving environmental concerns (positively or negatively) within the sample though. Respondents’ life themes and projects often contributed significantly to their environmental views. Sandy’s personal experiences with pollution related health problems and Max’s personal encounters with climate change advocacy organizations powerfully influenced the ways that they thought about environmental issues. The range of views on climate change in this sample, along with the personalized interpretations and applications of religious beliefs, and the diversity in respondent backgrounds all serve as warnings against stereotyping conservative Christians based on opinion poll data. There were no clear cut religious indicators that cleanly segmented participants in this sample according to their views on climate change. Rather, conclusions about climate change were often unique to the individual. The diversity within this sample reveals the importance of engaging individuals and small groups in dialog to fully understand and appreciate the complex views conservative Christians hold regarding climate change.

With the importance of individuals in mind, there were some similarities amongst participants that suggest more productive ways to approach climate change dialog across the board. First, any climate change discourses that were perceived as “competing” with the central tenets or missions of the Christian faith were roundly dismissed. The first example of this in the study was the perception that environmentalists endorse worshipping the creation instead of the Creator, idolatrously confusing the earth for God. For the individuals in this sample, environmental concern had to be framed in the context of caring for God’s earth because that is what God calls Christians to do. This framing was most commonly referred to as stewardship. Along these same lines, participants dismissed any notion of environmentalism taking the place of evangelism as the focus of the church. Environmental concern may have a place within the church, but the church’s mission is to evangelize; any focus that interferes with this is problematic.

Conservative Christians in this sample also took issue with what they perceived to be secular eschatological predictions about climate change. Respondents felt that climate change scientists and advocates were claiming that warming temperatures would be catastrophic. Respondents viewed these claims as contradicting the biblical description of the end times. Therefore, participants dismissed catastrophic sounding predictions about climate change and
those who espoused them. Even respondents who were open to discussion about environmental issues and climate change reacted negatively to these messages. Climate change researchers and advocates wishing to more effectively engage this population in the future should be aware of these common hang-ups with contemporary climate change discourses and avoid this problematic language.

While participants were dismissive of some climate change discourses, about a fourth of them were also interested in learning more about climate change from religious leadership. Some of the Christians in this sample are looking to the church to help them make sense of this issue. This suggests that engaging with pastors and helping them to understand and address climate change could be an effective way to engage the broader population.

In summary, this research offers up some practical lessons for individuals or organizations interested in more effectively engaging theologically conservative individuals or faith communities on climate change. First, this research suggests that it is important to recognize that a diversity of opinions about climate change exist among conservative Christians. Due to this diversity, dialog about climate change is probably most effective in small group or individualized settings that create space for Christians to express their personal views on climate change and how they arrived at those views based on their faith and other factors such as their educational background. Such conversations will most likely reveal both space for faith based engagement with climate change as well as faith based hang-ups with climate change. This research suggests five beliefs in particular that conservative Christians may relate to their views on climate change and suggests that while any of these beliefs can be used prevent concern and/or engagement, these beliefs can also be interpreted to encourage engagement. Small group settings will potentially allow for individuals sharing the same beliefs to confer with one another and suggest alternative understandings and applications of shared beliefs that encourage environmental engagement.

This research does suggest that not everyone will be open to dialog about climate change, in fact some participants in this study were hardly even interested in expressing their opinions about the topic they were so dismissive of it. However, all 36 of the participants expressed some faith based environmental concern, most often described as a stewardship ethic. This stewardship ethic provides perhaps the most fertile ground for faith based discussions about environmental issues in general, and as Max suggests, perhaps even room to get conservative Christians thinking about issues like decreasing consumption that will lessen
carbon footprints without directly addressing the issue of climate change at all. And while there were some individuals who seemed almost completely unwilling to talk about climate change, the majority of the participants in this sample were not only open to talking about climate change but personally interested in the topic, even to the point of wanting to hear more from their churches on this issue. Engaging small groups can help to uncover individuals like these that may not only be interested in discussing climate change, but already actively engaged on environmental issues within their churches. These individuals may already be, or could potentially serve as, leaders within their faith communities in pursuing faith-based responses to environmental issues in general and climate change in particular. Even with these engaged individuals though, one should be cautious when discussing aspects of climate change that can be viewed as competing with core conservative beliefs. These “competing dialogs,” discussed above, have the potential to turn away even the most environmentally interested and active individuals within this sample.

This research also suggests that people are looking to their pastors and church leadership for information and guidance on climate change. Therefore, engaging church leaders in small group discussions may be an effective way to reach a larger audience because these leaders can then return to their faith communities and share their thoughts with those who are looking to them for direction on this issue. One practical example of an attempt to engage church leadership in dialog about climate change was organized as a side project to this research. In the Fall of 2009, a roundtable discussion was held at the University of Montana that included pastors from the Missoula community and faculty members from the university that research various aspects of climate change. This discussion provided a forum for both pastors and professors to learn more about one another and how the issue of climate change related to faith. This conversation simultaneously allowed the scientists and pastors to clear up misunderstandings and address stereotypes. This format allowed participants to put faces with vague terms like “climate change science” or “conservative faith communities” and in so doing encouraged participants not to stereotype, but recognize that those terms represent real people who are also willing and interested to sit down and talk about both faith and climate change. Towards the end of the discussion, the participants started to think critically about how the Missoula faith communities could better engage with this issue. While this roundtable session was only a one-time meeting, many of the participants expressed a desire to engage in this type of conversation again in the future. This meeting provides one example of a successful attempt
to facilitate more meaningful dialog about climate change with faith communities, and one that could be easily replicated elsewhere.

Additionally, those interested in engaging conservative Christians on climate change should recognize that efforts from within conservative faith communities are also emerging to address this issue. For instance the Evangelical Climate Initiative and Evangelical Environmental Network, in addition to independent authors such as Hayhoe and Farley (2009), have all proposed ways to think about global climate change from a conservative faith perspective. This research project could provide some empirical evidence for critically examining how the frames used by those within conservative Christianity compare with respondent perceptions of other popular climate change discourses, and how these alternative framings may be received as a result. If they seem to resolve the hang-ups particular individuals seem to have with climate change, these could serve as excellent resources for engaging both church leadership and membership by using language and worldviews that are already familiar to them.

Final Thoughts

According to researchers from a number of different disciplines, climate change is rapidly shaping up to be one of the most complex ecological and social problems facing the world in the twenty-first century. Adequately addressing this issue both now and into the future will require effective communication between people who hold a variety of different worldviews, which means that people must come to understand one another better. The research presented in this project was conducted with the hope accurately conveying the ways that conservative Christians, a socially and politically influential group, think about climate change. Conservative Christians do not hold a monolithic view of climate change and the results presented above indicate significant room for improved dialog about climate change with faith communities. To borrow a term from Hayhoe and Farley (2009), “a climate for change” does exist within contemporary conservative Christianity on this issue. However, that climate, as with the global climate, needs to be well understood and approached with a great deal of respect in order to prevent undesirable changes.
Appendix A: Quotation Tables

Idiographic Quote Tables

Idiographic Quote Table 1 (T4.1): Darin

T4.1-1
R: I was born and raised really in a Baptist church in [name of hometown], Florida. I came to know the Lord as just a little boy, 7 years old, and actually surrendered to preach, felt like that was the direction I was supposed to go in when I was only 16. And so I went off to Bible College after that.
I: And have you been in the ministry then ever since?
R: I have, yeah, ever since. I’ve done other jobs off and on, but was a youth pastor first, beginning in 1982. So I began my fulltime ministry in 1982. Was a youth pastor for almost 3 years, then began pastoring in ’84, and I’ve been [a] senior pastor since.

T4.1-2
My bachelor’s is in theology from Trinity College of the Bible Theological Seminary in [name of town], Indiana. My master’s, I’m working on a master’s through Louisiana Baptist University. I’m about ten credits short of my master’s right now, and four of those is my thesis.

T4.1-3
[Responding to a question about what terms he would use to describe his faith]
R: You know, I’ve been real hesitant to use terms because people associate - they think they know the names, or what those terms mean, but in fact they do tend to change, even regionally. Fundamentalist, for instance, can bring about some real negative connotations, but yet, if you interpret the bible literally, and hold to some conservative views theologically, you would be considered to believe in the fundamentals. Now that’s true with me. On the other hand, evangelical describes more of a progressive, contemporary approach to ministry, which we also have. But few people realize that the term evangelical actually does also mean that you only believe in the preservation of the principles of the word of God, not the very words of God, which separates you from the fundamental view. Most people would probably call me an evangelical even though my doctrinal views are more fundamental. So I usually describe myself as conservative theologically and progressive when it comes to worship style, praise and worship, not real contemporary, but a blend of hymns and contemporary praise and worship. So I don’t know if that defines me for you or not.

T4.1-4
[Responding to a question about how he would define “conservative theologically”]
R: Yeah, well I think everything hinges on that. When you’re conservative theologically it hinges on your view of the bible itself and its preservation, its original inspiration, and then of course
God preserving it through the years. And then it becomes authoritative. So everything from that point on - for instance, conservative theologically I would have to define as the bible, although it is not a history book, when it speaks historically it is considered accurate. Although it is not a science book, when it has anything to say about science, it is accurate. And with that in mind, views such as some of the archeological finds or scientific views have to, if they are correct, they would have to line up with the Word [the bible]. What I have found is, where science and history have facts, they do line up with the Word, but where there is theory, that’s when they tend to part, part ways. So conservative theologically I think would be based on the inerrancy of the scripture, that it is authoritative.

T4.1-5
When I was, and I remember this pretty distinctly, when I was 17 I was in college and I remember going to the Lord in a time of prayer and questioning everything, so that, I mean it’s hard to define other than I did not want to believe because someone else told me to believe it. I wanted to understand it, and I felt like I could. And having said that, that has been a pattern throughout my ministry, that I don’t flip the bible open and then look for somebody’s view on something and say this is my view. But rather, what does the word of God teach, what does this mean, what does it say, and then external reading on that, is there any proof on this. A good example of that is [in Joshua 10 – see T4.1-6] the illustration I used earlier about the solar system. I came across a statement about ... a miracle such as the elongated day; [it] needs no explanation [because it is in the bible] and cannot have an explanation [other than] by way of it being a miracle. But it might have left some evidence, and evidence is interesting. So what evidence is there? And that’s what brought me to the ancient calendars, the change in the number of days in our year. It brought me to other studies that involved the solstice, and from Egyptian records going forward, Joshua’s day fell on a Tuesday. From current records going back, Joshua’s day fell on a Wednesday, there’s a missing day. There are some things out there that have to be dismissed and thrown out, that are on as facts that you find out are not facts. And I say all that to say this, there seems to be a combination of, let me understand what God says about it, let me see what evidence exists, and where the evidence is fact, there has been, and remains to be, an alignment with the faith. And then that strengthens my faith, is what that does.

T4.1-6
Matter of fact I just did a study recently, I spoke on Joshua, chapter 10, where Joshua prays for the sun to stand still, and we know that in essence what he was praying for was an extended day for the battle. And I came across something that was very interesting, and that is the elliptical movements of the planets and why they move, or why they orbit in an elliptical fashion as opposed to a circular motion. And the fact that some ancient calendars apparently place our days at 360 days, but with the elliptical motion, the year has become 365, and it takes 5 extra days to rotate around the sun, and what may have caused that? One of the studies that I came across, and just intrigued me so, was that one of the ways that God may have produced this long day, and there are historical records of even long nights in New Zealand and Mexico, but there
are records, other records than the bible, about this extended day by the Babylonians and by
the Chinese. But one of the ways He could have done this is simply to have taken the sun and
slid it over in relation to the rotation of the earth, which would not have disrupted the earth on
its axis and which would have caused all sorts of cataclysmic activity on the earth. But instead
He would have prolonged the day, but in doing so, it would have disrupted the spheres, or the
circles, in which all of the planets orbited. And the further out He went, the more elliptical the
movement would be. So I said all of that to say this, that when you talk about the omnipotence
of God and the sovereignty of God, if God wanted to reach over and move the sun slightly to
produce 11 more hours of daylight … and in so doing actually change all of the solar system,
planets, and their orbits, but not disrupting the earth, then God could do that sort of thing; it’s
up to God.

T4.1-7
Okay, one of the things the Lord has done in my ministry, is He’s laid on my heart to speak
concerning the concerns of man. When global warming was such a hot topic, during the
election, and some of the political push, is when I felt like the Lord laid on my heart this topic.
What does the Bible say that’s important for us to know? This is what Al Gore says, this is what
Obama says; okay, what does the Bible say? Now let’s throw into this what science is showing.
Now, how accurate are these thermometers? What does the 1% indicate; is it larger than that?
Why is there a cooling in some places? Okay this is what the bible says. So as a believer, you
can leave a service[that addresses a topic in this manner], and I think have a great confidence in
God, and assurance that you do not have to go home today and think that somehow a meteorite
is going to come crashing down and destroy the whole earth. Now do meteorites crash? Yeah.
Will there be fires in various parts of the world, tornados, and monsoons, or, or tidal waves?
Yes, that’s all part of the natural course, and has always been, since the day of, at least, the fall
of man, and Noah’s flood after that, the seasonal changes, climatic changes.

T4.1-8
I would have to say that my personal research, which is very limited, and who knows what you
can believe that’s printed on the internet, but that’s where a lot of my research has been done.
In my personal opinion, it is questionable that global warming actually exists. Some of what I
have studied has indicated that in parts of the world there has been really no more than 1
degree of warming over the last 100 years. Some material that I actually looked for, and was
unable to find, was accuracy of temperature taking, or thermometers, in years past. So I’m not
sure what they’re even basing the 1% on and what the accuracy of those thermometers were
100, 500, 1,000 years ago … I have not been able to discover anything on that. In parts of the
world, they’re saying now that there is actually global cooling. And I guess what I’m saying is,
I’m not entirely certain that we’re not just in a normal cycle, that man has been observing for a
brief period of time, and come up with this and said, “Well this must be…we’re experiencing a
global warming because we’ve increased by 1 degree overall.” Now, having said that,
realistically, is it possible that as the world populates, and we do away with soil and replace it
with asphalt and steel, that we are keeping the earth from cooling in its natural form somehow,
and we might increase temperature? And I would have to say that could very well be possible and probable. In addition to that, what amazes me is, and again this is just in studies that I've looked at, and I have questions on that I can't get answered, 100 years ago, 200 years ago, 1,000 years ago, whatever time frame you want to go back to, the population on the earth was much, much less than it is today. So if you consider even the average body temperature of man, and the number of bodies that have been added to the earth, you would have to say, I mean if you have 200 people in a room, it's going to get warm in that room, you would have to say a 1% increase in relation to the population increase would probably have to be a cooling off instead of a warming up. That the population is able to increase by such drastic numbers and thereby increasing the temperature just by bodies alone, and yet the temperature apparently has not increased more than 1 degree. And so I have to question it.

T4.1-9
R: I seriously question at this point, and honestly I think a lot of people are questioning whether or not there is even is such an animal out there, so to speak, as global warming.
I: So you're not sure if it's actually warming, and if so, if it's a result of human activity or not?
R: Yeah, yeah, there's still a question there about that. I've not seen any data that convinces me otherwise, and a lot of the data I have seen is even contradicting one another, depending on who you're reading. And I think there again I've got to question and be somewhat suspect as to the background of those studies. Are we dealing with government funding? Are we dealing with jobs that are trying to be protected? Are we dealing with people that just want more research money, and by promoting this they're able to get that? Obviously they're learning numerous things, but is there really a warming that's taking place?
I: So based on that view, would you say it's something, a topic that you're concerned about, or not?
R: I am not really concerned about it, but it's not so much based on that view. It actually comes back to, and this may be ahead in your questions, but it actually comes back to the way that the bible talks about the earth, and what's going to happen to earth, and what's going to happen to the people on the earth before it happens to the earth.

T4.1-10
I spoke on the subject of global warming actually from this text of 2 Peter chapter 3, and I entitled the message, 'Countdown to Meltdown,' and when you understand the way the Bible unfolds, and when you understand what could be called the chronology of eschatology or the doctrine of the last days, when you put all that together, when you understand that, then I would say global warming is not a big deal, because there's no fear, there's no panic.

T4.1-11
[My sermon 'Countdown to Meltdown'] just basically focused on how to handle - the subtitle was, 'How to Handle Global Warming, Three Steps we can Take.' And the first step was, remember the Lord's word, His prophecy and His promise. And then the second thing you can do is recognize the Lord's will, His preservation and His patience. People say, “Well the bible
says this is going to happen, why hasn’t it happened already?” Well because He’s patient, the Bible says He’s not slack concerning His promise, but He’s long-suffering in an attempt to bring people to Him. And then the third thing you can do is regard the Lord’s warning, that is the warning to His people, and His provisions; He’s made a way to escape it. What the Bible describes as global warming is not what people are describing as global warming today. It’s not a gradual heating up of the earth, it is a chaotic, cataclysmic event in which the earth is consumed, and God gives warnings about it, and how to avoid that … event, and the way to avoid it is to be in a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, so that when that time comes, you won’t even be here. I believe very strongly that not only will there be a rapturing out of those who are saved or born-again, but there will also be a time after the millennial reign, and that’s an interesting thing too, in the sense that, if you understand the chronology of the events, the earth that we are now living on will last at least another 1,007 years. Now how can I say that emphatically? Because the Bible describes a 7 year tribulation time, and after that, a 1,000 year reign of Jesus Christ on the earth known as the millennial reign. And then it is after that, that the earth is destroyed, and all the inhabitants of the earth are then with God at what is known as the great white-throne judgment. That judgment is actually a judgment on the lost, so all the lost are present. But the saved are present there, not to be judged, we’ve already been judged at the judgment seat of Christ. And so what you have during that judgment, is when the earth is actually consumed in fire. So there’s at least 1,007 years of the earth left. So anyway, that’s basically the outline of the message and where we went.

I: And that was addressing more the warming as described in the Bible as opposed to the warming that’s being currently described by -

R: A comparative, it was actually a comparative study, based on, for instance, remember the Lord’s word and His prophecy. We spoke earlier about, what is the fear today? The fear today is that we are going to burn ourselves up, the fear today is that we’re going to do something that is going to result in the earth being consumed, and we have no place to live. Years ago it was the Omega Man movie, and I think recently Legend; the whole idea of this concept of one man being left because we’ve destroyed our civilization, and that’s the fear that’s out there. Well does this fear have any merit? And so it was a comparative of, this is what God says, this is what man is saying, this is what the fear is based on, now is there any need for that fear? That’s basically the way the message went. Recognize the Lord’s will, it is His will to destroy the earth by fire, but His timing is also important.
Idiographic Quote Table 2 (T4.2): Roger

T4.2-1
[Responding to a question about his religious background]
R: Well, I actually grew up in the Church of Christ and so I was baptized when I was in high school. So I’ve been a Christian pretty much my whole life.

T4.2-2
I: You mentioned that you went to Georgia Tech?
R: And Texas Tech and the University of Arizona and ... I went to a bunch of different schools. I have a bachelor’s degree from Texas Tech, a master’s degree from Georgia Tech.
I: And are both of those in computer science?
R: No. Actually the Texas Tech is called engineering physics. And my Georgia Tech is nuclear engineering.

T4.2-3
R: Oh, I did all kinds of things with IBM. Yeah, I worked in the engineering scientific part of IBM. Then I worked in sales. I worked in marketing. I was in management. I did an assignment for two and a half years in South Africa.

T4.2-4
I: How would you identify yourself as a Christian now? And that’s kind of a strange question, but there’s some labels that get used pretty commonly ... things like denominational labels, which you all are a nondenominational [church]?
R: Nondenominational.
I: Right. But terms like evangelical, liberal, Pentecostal, reformed, moderate? Any of those?
R: Probably evangelical.
I: Evangelical?
R: Uh-huh.
I: And how would you define that term?
R: Believes in the bible and feels like you need to help to spread the word, the gospel to people so that they can understand who Jesus is.

T4.2-5
I: And what do you mean by bible believing specifically?
R: Well, to believe that the bible is the word of God and what’s in there is in there. You should take on faith what’s said in there.

T4.2-6
I: Do you think that your faith has any impact on your view on global warming?
R: Oh, probably. It actually probably does, because I feel like that God being in control, He’s not going to put us in a place where we can’t function, so.
T4.2-7
R: Actually I don’t think there’s any global warming. I think that it’s in the round off error of the cycles of the climate over the years ... But I think in looking at the data and I’m an engineer, a nuclear engineer, so the data to me says that there is no global warming.

T4.2-8
I: Would you describe yourself as politically liberal, moderate, conservative?
R: Pretty conservative.

T4.2-9
You know, there was a really interesting show on TV not too long ago about how 6,000 years ago was ... the end of the last ice age when all the water melted. So there’s this interesting program about the Garden of Eden and where they hypothesize that the Garden of Eden actually was. So it’s really, it was just real interesting.

T4.2-10
R: Well, we are made in the image of God. And so I would say we’re the boss of the world. So whatever we want to do is what we’re empowered to do. So I guess we’re in charge would be the way I would look at it. And everything else is for our use.

T4.2-11
I: Do you think that nature is fallen, that nature fell with humans in the Garden [of Eden]?
R: Oh, I never really thought about that. It’s odd. My view of nature is more that that’s God’s demonstration of His perfection and His power. And not that it’s necessarily fallen, although I will say that you have thorns and various analogies like that in the bible. And clearly there are parts of nature that are bad. So, the storms obviously, lightning, tornados, hurricanes, and all of that, that’s a bad thing. But it is part of nature, so I guess you could think of it, that there’s the good and the bad in nature.

T4.2-12
[Responding to a question about how long he has attended his current church]
R: We started going there in 1976. So we’ve been going there for a long time.
I: Oh, wow. And are you on staff full time there?
R: No, part time.
I: Part time?
R: Yeah, I’m part time. I’m the business manager, so I take care of all the financial and facilities management and all of that jazz.
I: How long have you been in that role?
R: I’ve been doing that for about four years now. Started doing that after I retired from IBM.
T4.2-13
I: How else are you involved with the church at this time, Bible studies, things like that?
R: Yeah, I go to a small group, of course, and go to the services and then I’m up there most days doing my thing around there. So I end up meeting most of the people and knowing a whole lot of the people that go to the church. So I have a lot of communication with lots of different ones. And then I help a lot of them. I help them with their computer problems when their home computers mess up. I go fix them and stuff like that. So I have what I call a computer ministry at the church [laughing].

T4.2-14
[Excerpt from Pastor Randall’s interview about Roger]
In this church, we have a nuclear engineer, but he works here at the church, he's retired [referring to Roger]. Smart guy, he literally is a rocket scientist, okay, but he doesn’t believe in global warming, and he’s done the research on it.
(Pastor Randall)

T4.2-15
I: Where else [besides the TV program mentioned in T4.2-9] would you say that you tend to get information about global warming?
R: Oh, I try to read the paper and then various magazines that I get. Yeah.
I: What do those publications seem to be saying?
R: Well, some are - they try to present both sides. Like my Georgia Tech Alumni Association magazine has a lot of stuff in there about climate and engineering and impacts that we have on society and all that stuff. So there’s a lot of articles in there about that. And there’s that discussion that goes on all the time between, do we actually, can we actually impact the climate or not. And then the also interesting thing about research with how people could actually modify the climate. There’s a lot of work going on now about that. Like, they go in and spray things over clouds to make them more reflective which causes it to be cooler. And then there’s all sorts of weather modifications. So we could easily do that. The problem is if we did that, it would pull the trigger somewhere else, and we don’t know what that would cause. So, kind of fun. But we do have the technology and I think the ability to alter the climate if we so choose.
I: But you don’t see human emissions -
R: But I don’t see normal human living doing that.
I: And you feel like those sources are giving a pretty balanced view, both sides of -
R: Yeah. Well, and I try to look at both sides. So I don’t just try to focus on one side or the other. Obviously the newspapers give you the - it’s going to be global warming stuff primarily, because I see that as a liberal press. And then typically the engineering schools are more conservative, so they have a conservative view. But yeah, I’ve seen both sides. And I don’t really buy a lot of the arguments that the paper and those people like that use where they say oh, the climate has gone up one degree in the last 50 years or whatever the number is that they quote. And to me that’s in the round off error of the cycles of the climate.
I: Are you officially affiliated with a political party?
R: I consider myself a republican. I register in the republican primary and all that.

[Part of this answer is also found in T4.2-7 and T4.2-9]
R: Actually I don’t think there’s any global warming. I think that it’s in the round off error of the cycles of the climate over the years. You know, there was a really interesting show on TV not too long ago about how 6,000 years ago was … the end of the last ice age when all the water melted. So there’s this interesting program about the Garden of Eden and where they hypothesize that the Garden of Eden actually was. So it was just real interesting. But I think in looking at the data, and I’m an engineer, a nuclear engineer, so the data to me says that there is no global warming. It’s just a cycle. It’s going to be warmer, and then it’s going to be colder and warmer and colder. So we’ll actually probably have an ice age before we’ll actually get too hot to have issues with the climate in my opinion.

[Part of this answer also found in T4.2-6]
I: Do you think that your faith has any impact on your view on global warming?
R: Oh, probably. It actually probably does, because I feel like that God being in control, He’s not going to put us in a place where we can’t function, so.
I: Could you talk a little bit more about that?
R: Well, I don’t know. I guess. I mean, I just, let’s see. How would you say that? [Long pause.] Well, people do things all the time which are not smart, and somehow they come through it. I feel like there’s a lot of divine intervention on things like that. So the fact that we do a lot of things that aren’t smart with regard to our environment is, I don’t think that God would allow, since He created everything, I don’t think He’s going to allow us to get to a point where we would wipe ourselves out or whatever you want to call it.

I: Do you think Christians have a role on the issue of climate change?
R: I don’t know what it would be. I don’t see it as a religious issue.
**Idiographic Quote Table 3 (T4.3): Sandy**

**T4.3-1**

**I:** How long have you personally been a Christian?

**R:** I was eight years old. That means I have to tell you how old I am. So I’m 44. A long time.

**I:** How did you become a Christian at that time?

**R:** For me it was easy. We lived next door to the big Baptist church and the home that the pastor lived in. So that’s who our neighbor was. And my parents attended church, grandparents, great grandparents, cousins. So you couldn’t walk out in the yard without having the pastor digging holes and talking to you. So there really wasn’t any big - I was baptized in a lake in Oklahoma one evening when I just felt like it was time. I was baptized that night.

**I:** Has faith always played a pretty central role in your life?

**R:** Always. Yeah. Always, especially now.

**T4.3-2**

I grew up in [Hometown], Oklahoma. [Hometown], Oklahoma, is the heart of [large oil company]. Well, 11 of my graduating class have either died from lymphoma or leukemia or are dealing with it in some way. I was widowed at a young age from my high school boyfriend, who died from that.

**I:** Wow.

**R:** So did they, were they a great billion dollar company, and doing well, and making our oil, and doing all that? Were they killing us at the same time? Probably. They thought they had put a corner market on changing the course of the world through oil - at the same time, what were they doing to us?

**T4.3-3**

I’m sick ... One of the illnesses that I have is because I’m anaphylactic to all antibiotics, all crosses of antibiotics. So I have no treatment. I get strep throat, I have nothing.

**T4.3-4**

People have learned to stop misusing antibiotics. But, you know, I’m 2% of the entire world. I’ve been to the Cleveland Clinic, I’ve been to the Mayo [clinic], I’ve been out of the country looking for treatment, and there’s not one. But there’s still 2% of us who have this. So do I blame my doctor when I was a kid? No. He didn’t know. And I was sick all the time. It’s just one of those things, but you can learn from [it]. And a lot of people are taking notice that germs and things are resistant [now].

**T4.3-5**

[I] was actually diagnosed with a terminal illness in January.
T4.3-6
[Responding to a question about how she would classify herself religiously]
R: Very conservative. Conservative in my beliefs, and doctrine-wise what I believe is just very basic. I don’t think there’s any big frills that come with the faith that I have or the Lord that I worship. I think it is just exactly as He says it is. I believe His word is His word. So that doesn’t leave a lot of room to stray for me.

T4.3-7
[Responding to a question asking her to contrast conservative with other religious labels]
Some places to me are, when I say more liberal, probably in being more tolerant of things that I don’t think are biblically really based or sound. That’s what I think of as a liberal church, [one] that just accepts everything … I think that the bible is the bible, and it is His word. And I just think that it’s not so complicated. So I think I’m conservative in that way I guess.

T4.3-8
I have a real peace; not an ignorant peace, because I know - I know I’m sick. I understand all that, but I have a real peace that it never was in my hands anyway, and completely believe that it just wasn’t. So there can’t be any better place than in His [God’s hands], so I don’t have that worry.

T4.3-9
Not to preach or anything, [but] when you look at a situation like, for example, I’m sick. So when someone says okay … illness … people will say, is there sin in your life or unresolved sin or other things like that? Now our church isn’t one of those places. But there are well meaning people who … can’t help [it], and if you have cancer or whatever, they got to try to find out why. And sometimes it just is … and so my thought on that is, what we’ve done to our ecology, what we’ve done to our environment, is sin, because we haven’t taken care of what God’s given us to be stewards of. And as a result there’s toxins. There’s all these environmental issues that are killing us every day, making us, our bodies intolerant to antibiotics, making all these things happen … And so when people say, well if you’re sick, you know, maybe there’s this or that. Yeah. I agree. It maybe wasn’t me specifically. We all contribute every day to our environment in harming it, in harming our children in the future of what we’re doing, our actions. So if they want to say that maybe people are sick because of sin or whatever, I would agree completely, but I’m thinking in the bigger picture, not just my 100 years on this earth or 40 years on this earth. Yeah, I completely think there’s a major connection between our actions and, again, not being stewards of what He’s given us … There’s just a big connection in my mind. I don’t have any background other than just thinking in those terms always.

T4.3-10
I went to Cleveland Clinic, I went to Mayo [clinic], I go to UT [University of Texas Hospital] all the time. I don’t give up. I don’t quit looking for another way. [I don’t think] that it’s just, if I live, I
live; if I don’t, I don’t. I don’t feel like that. I want to live for my kids. I think we definitely can change the course of taking care of ourselves. You can always improve. He [God] doesn’t want you to not improve and grow.

T4.3-11
R: I don’t know if you’ve been to our lake?
I: No, I haven’t.
R: You’re one minute from it, from one of the most gorgeous lakes you can go [to, it] is right there. So we all live for this lake right here. As a matter of fact, when you leave my door, there’s a little gas station. You just pass it, go about a mile. See a big bronze buffalo. Turn in there and go in the lobby and you see the most beautiful lake if you go through the lobby.

T4.3-12
R: It’s important where we live. We didn’t come, I don’t think anybody landed in Springfield just to - you come out here because once you see what’s out there, it’s gorgeous, you know. So if that weren’t here and we destroyed that, or we didn’t take care of it - and that’s one of the cleanest lakes in north Texas. It’s clear.

T4.3-13
R: We have four children.
I: How old are they?
R: I have a 21 year old, a junior at [college], 15-year-old daughter that’s starting high school, 7 year old, and a 5 year old.
I: Wow, that’s a pretty big age spread.
R: Three of the four are adopted, and they’re all from different places.

T4.3-14
I: Would you describe yourself as politically liberal, moderate, conservative?
R: Conservative and real active. And I don’t know if a lot of that’s spite against the rest of them, that are democratic in our family [laughing].
I: You mean your immediate family or your extended family?
R: No, my immediate [laughing].

T4.3-15
[Part of response to what it means for her to be conservative religiously, also found in T4.3-6]
R: I think as far as being a steward of what God’s given you is really big in our life. We have four kids. We take care of my parents as well. We are 100% supportive financially for my parents as well. We have a nice home; we don’t have debt; we don’t have bills; we pay cash. Because I was taught many, many years ago that these are the gifts that God gives you. And what you do with them is how you’ll be blessed in life. And I believe at 44 and all these kids later that [what] we’re able to do on a coach’s salary and my salary [is] from being faithful all those years. And I
really believe that you tithed and you’re blessed. So conservative as far as giving, giving Him what’s His, taking care of those responsibilities.

T4.3-16
R: I’ve been a member [at Cornerstone Baptist] about two years, [ever since] I moved from Denton to Springfield.

T4.3-17
I: What are your responsibilities as the school director here?
R: We have 150 students. And I was a schoolteacher as well. So our background here is that we are an academy rather than just a daycare. But our kids are from the age of 6 weeks all the way to age 13 years old. We are certified, and we have certified teachers on staff. Just offer a Christian spin, I guess, to your everyday ABCs and math and stuff.

T4.3-18
[Parts of this answer also found in T4.3-3]
One of the illnesses that I have is because I’m anaphylactic to all antibiotics, all crosses of antibiotics. So I have no treatment. I get strep throat, I have nothing. So being at the school is a real step of faith, because you think you would hide in a bubble.

T4.3-19
So we learn as we go. [I] always say … even with this school, if we don’t know where we’ve been, and we do not know where we are, then we have no idea where we’re going. So we can’t keep being the best we can be, we can’t stay full, we can’t pay all of our bills, if we don’t take care of and know where we’ve been. Same thing in everything.

T4.3-20
I: What brought you all up here?
R: The lake actually. Yeah, we would come to Lake Tanner, just to the lodge, just to get away. And one afternoon we were sitting in traffic and decided why [are we sitting in this traffic]? My husband’s a high school football coach in Frisco. So we were driving every day, sitting in traffic, and decided to quit.

T4.3-21
We drive a F-150. Everybody in Springfield has a truck. He [Sandy’s husband] did go get a small work car to drive to Frisco instead of another truck … I live four blocks from here; there’s really no reason that I need an F-150 truck. There’s no reason my three best friends over here have the Hummers, the yellow one, the red one, and the black one in town. There’s really no reason, because we haven’t had any big - we don’t have to go down to the lake bottom. We just go to this little grocery store. So yeah, we’re not doing a real good job.
T4.3-22
I: Are you officially affiliated with a political party?
R: Republican. Everybody else is a democrat in my family.

T4.3-23
[Responding to a question about her overall perceptions of climate change, portions of this quote also found in T4.3-9 and T4.3-18]
R: Okay. I actually do have an opinion on this. I think that, not to preach or anything, [but] when you look at a situation like, for example, I’m sick. So when someone says okay … illness … people will say, is there sin in your life or unresolved sin or other things like that? Now our church isn’t one of those places. But there are well meaning people who … can’t help [it], and if you have cancer or whatever, they got to try to find out why. And sometimes it just is.

I have a bigger step than that. One of the illnesses that I have is because I’m anaphylactic to all antibiotics, all crosses of antibiotics. So I have no treatment. I get strep throat, I have nothing. So being at the school is a real step of faith, because you think you would hide in a bubble. And so my thought on that is what we’ve done to our ecology, what we’ve done to our environment is sin, because we haven’t taken care of what God’s given us to be stewards of. And, as a result, there’s toxins. There’s all these environmental issues that are killing us every day, making our bodies intolerant to antibiotics, making all these things happen. So there has to be a faith connection to our responsibilities to global warming. Have we created this? Do I think it’s going on? Absolutely. As simple as the sin of from the beginning we’ve not taken care of what we were given. And so when people say, well if you’re sick, you know, maybe there’s this or that. Yeah. I agree. It maybe wasn’t me specifically. We all contribute every day to our environment in harming it, in harming our children in the future of what we’re doing, our actions.

T4.3-24
R: I’m a CNN addict. I usually have my computer rolling all the time. I like to know what’s going on.
I: And what do you think CNN is primarily saying about global warming?
R: One, that it’s happening. Two, we’ve all contributed to it, you know. And what are we going to do about it? Same thing I feel. We know we did it. Now what are we going to do?

T4.3-25
R: Doesn’t take an Einstein to see the glaciers melting. I [can] watch Sunday TV to see that happening, so something’s happening.

T4.3-26
I: Would you say that global warming is something that you’re concerned about?
R: Yeah, just because I’m a mom with four kids.
T4.3-27

I: Do you see your faith impacting your view on global warming in any particular way? Do you think that it does?

R: Yeah, because probably the difference of me versus maybe someone who doesn’t have a real strong faith or belief system, when they say get your mask, load up on your mask for the swine flu, or stock your cellar with your food, or whatever ... I’m fine. I’m going to be fine always. Always I’m going to be okay. The kids are always going to be okay. I just, I have a real peace. Not an ignorant peace, because I know. I know I’m sick. I know, I understand all that. But I have a real peace that it never was in my hands anyway, and completely believe that it just wasn’t. So there can’t be any better place than in His, so I don’t have that worry.

T4.3-28

[Parts of this quote also found in T4.3-4 and T4.3-18]

If someone tells you you’re causing harm, to keep doing it, shame on you I guess you’d say. Everyone else will pay the price. Our role is to pay attention, and if you learn something new and we quit using - I forget what it was, AF whatever in that hairspray, and they quit making that. Well, good, you’ve got to learn from those things. Like antibiotics. People have learned to stop misusing antibiotics. But I’m 2% of the entire world. I’ve been to the Cleveland Clinic, I’ve been to the Mayo [clinic], I’ve been out of the country looking for treatment, and there’s not one. But there’s still 2% of us who have this. So do I blame my doctor when I was a kid? No. He didn’t know, and I was sick all the time. It’s just one of those things, but you can learn from [it]. And a lot of people are taking notice that germs and things are resistant [now]. So if we learn as we go - [I] always say you can’t - even with this school, if we don’t know where we’ve been and we do not know where we are, then we have no idea where we’re going. So we can’t keep being the best we can be, we can’t stay full, we can’t pay all of our bills, if we don’t take care of and know where we’ve been. Same thing in everything.

T4.3-29

[Responding to a question about whether or not climate change relates to the end times]

R: I just don’t see [that], if it were that simple, and if the scripture was that clear, then I would say okay. But it’s not. He [God] says we don’t know, so I really believe that means we don’t know. And so on that note, just like being sick and not having a cure, you just keep going forward. You keep trying your best. You keep trying to improve, because it’s not for me to know. So if you really take His word, it doesn’t tell us. There are people that spend their whole entire lives and careers just trying to read something into it [the end times] to see, and it’s not there. It just simply says no one’s going to know. Thief in the night, you’re not going to know. So why? What are you doing? You should do something else with the rest of your life it seems to me. Kind of simple minded what I think sometimes [laughing].

T4.3-30

I: Do you think that Christians should play a role in addressing global warming at all?
R: Yeah. I mean, I’m sure it exists, something’s going on … So obviously it goes back to our world and are we impacting it in a good way, [or] a bad way? You can do that as a family. Are you contributing to being a good neighbor? A good member of the church? An example to people around you? Are you a hateful person that’s putting hatefulness in the world? So same thing with global warming.

I: Right, right. Just kind of an individual, sitting down, thinking through it -

R: Yeah. Yeah, I think we definitely have a responsibility to do it, because I believe it exists completely.

I: Do you think it’s an issue that churches should be addressing?

R: I don’t see why not. I think you could - same thing, if you take care of your family with all your heart like you do - mothers are just like big bears taking care of our kids. Why wouldn’t you expand that out to does your family take care of the area around you? Does the community of the church take care of the area that we live [in]? This is where we live. And then you’re just like a pebble on water. You keep going out, to finally encompass the world.
Idiographic Quote Table 4 (T4.4): Dana

T4.4-1

[Responding to a question about how long she had been a member at her current church]
R: At Redeemer specifically, probably two years. We joined the Lutheran Church - WELS is a worldwide thing - so we joined a sister church of theirs [Redeemer’s] out in East Texas originally. That was probably about five years ago. I was raised Catholic. And my mom and dad and I were just kind of struggling. Mom was frustrated with several things and some of the priests and the molestation and all that. So we were really struggling to find a church home. And anyway, we found a little teeny church out there by our lake house, and joined, and have loved it ever since.

T4.4-2

I: How long have you personally been a Christian? You mentioned growing up Catholic, was there a point in your life though when faith became a more central part of your life?
R: I would say two things. I would answer that really from baptism on. So, I think the Holy Spirit gave me the gift of faith at baptism. I probably, not probably, I strayed, or let’s just say my priorities were not always that way as an adult, and that’s also during that timeframe when mom and dad and I were all struggling with what church to go to and stuff. I’ll say my faith was significantly strengthened when I got breast cancer in 2004, early 2004. And, you know, there’s just something about a stubborn human being being slapped in the face with their own mortality that is a wake-up call, and that’s a blessing. So that’s my story.

T4.4-3

R: So I’ll go back to how I thought of things in my 20s versus how I think of things now. Like I said, I grew up as a child in the church and hearing the gospel all the time. But then somewhere in my 20s I think I knew a lot more and was capable of controlling a lot more. Thus all people were capable of knowing and controlling so much more than we really are. And so from that perspective, and I don’t know if it’s age or exactly what it is. But somewhere along the way, at least to me, and maybe it was at the cancer timeframe or whatever, you realize that you really do just need to trust in God. And that sometimes the meddling that you do, or trying to, what I call, take the reins back from Him, and, “No, I want it to go this way!” and try and force it, just really doesn’t accomplish anything. And oftentimes it hurts things.

T4.4-4

I: So did you all move to this area and find a WELS church and go from there?
R: Yeah. And actually my husband and I had lived here anyway. But I had, before he and I married, I had co-owned a lake house down in East Texas with my mom and dad. So we [my parents and I] were still here working during the week. But since we were out there most weekends, that’s where we went to church.
I: Sure, that makes sense.
R: But as the kids get older, they get involved in more stuff and so now more weekends here than out there.
I: And so when you were spending more weekends here, did you find Redeemer Lutheran? Or were you looking for a WELS church in town?
R: We knew where we were going to transfer before we ever decided to transfer. Even when we travel and go on vacation and stuff, we've been to [WELS] churches all across the U.S., in Kansas, and Seattle, and Florida, and Louisiana, and Oklahoma, and different places.

T4.4-5
R: I'm a sales manager with Microsoft.
I: How long have you been doing that?
R: Since ’97, so whenever that is, 12 something years.
I: Have you done any post-secondary schoolwork, college, university?
R: Degree in computer science and a couple of minors. Started graduate school, didn't finish.

T4.4-6
R: I just did a search on global warming and bible; I just did a BING search on it, and I think it was called Red Sky Ministries. I’ll have to see if I can find it here [picks up laptop and begins searching the internet].

T4.4-7
R: If you go to www.wels.net, there’s a Q&A section. People enter questions from all over the place on lots of different angles ...
I: Is that website something that you’ve gone to for previous-
R: I go to it a lot. Yeah, a lot. Absolutely.

T4.4-8
[Responding to a question about how should would describe her faith]
R: So I would say, I mean, WELS, it’s a reformed church. I would say more than anything though, whether or not WELS existed or not, I believe that the bible is the true inerrant word of God. And so that’s really sort of the basis, regardless of what Lutheran churches happen to do. I mean, you go back to the bible, and you let the bible - you interpret the bible. So I’d say bible based I guess more than anything.

T4.4-9
R: I think in this sinful old world of ours, we have lots of problems. And I think, not that we’re ever going to solve all of our problems here on this earth, but I think when you look at all of them, the more that we can try and point people to the word of God as the real and only source of truth, then the more hopefully that will bring people closer to God and to Jesus as their savior. And the more that happens, then the more we start to try and be better stewards of the gifts God has given us. And then some of those problems will, not that they’ll completely take care of themselves, but ... I mean, you can get all hung up about tons of stuff. Whether it be the war, crime, violence, the financial situation. People can get all balled up in that. But you just have to remember that the word of God is there and it’s firm and it’s true and we can count on
it and we can count on God’s promises. And whether it’s the abortionist down the road or the whatever, if we can get people, and get our country, and get more of our communities, and everybody really back to that, then He’ll help us take better care of our world.

I: So looking to the bible for informing our opinions about these things and our responses to them?
R: Uh-huh. And we forget sometimes, way too often we all try and fix it ourselves or think that we can fix it ourselves. And we certainly can take right and appropriate actions. But I don’t think there’s a silver bullet; the only real one of those is God, and Jesus, and the bible.

T4.4-10
I: Where would you say you tend to get information on the topic of global warming or climate change?
R: News and the internet.

T4.4-11
I don’t anymore, because we have too many kids to haul around, but I had a Prius back a few years ago before Jack and I married. And so yeah, I don’t see any sense in wasting any more of that, or putting out more emissions than you have to.

T4.4-12
I: How are you all involved at Redeemer? Sunday services, bible studies, classes, things like that?
R: Yes, yes, [and] yes. So yeah, definitely church regularly, Sunday school every Sunday morning. Our kids go to Sunday school and stuff too. We do ladies’ bible study and men’s bible studies that pastor has on a regular basis too. We both substitute Sunday school teach. I used to teach full time, but I’m just doing substitute now. Pioneers, girl and boy Pioneers which is like Girl Scouts and Boy Scouts, but it’s through our church. We focus on keeping kids loyal to Christ, and so yeah, pretty involved.
I: Yeah, it sounds like it. And then are you all involved with any other ministries or parachurch organizations outside of Redeemer?
R: Oh, I would just say things relative to our synod. So there’s a women’s ministry thing that’s nationwide that’s just getting started, and I’m a little bit involved in that. Camp [name deleted], which is a Lutheran retreat thing that our church has out at Lake [name deleted]. A lot of the area churches use it for retreats and so we help and volunteer with stuff going on there. But it’s all pretty much WELS oriented.

T4.4-13
[Part of this quote also found in T4.4-10]
I: Where would you say you tend to get information on the topic of global warming or climate change?
R: News and the Internet.
I: Are there any sites in particular, any news programs in particular that you look to for that or just whatever comes you way?
R: No. I would say just whatever’s on the local news channels.
I: What would you say those sources are saying about global warming? Would you say they think that it’s happening, that they don’t really know, that there’s two sides of the story?
R: I think people mostly now think that it’s happening. So yeah, I think people mostly now do.

T4.4-14
I: So do you think that global warming or climate change, whichever term you prefer, is taking place? Or you’re not really sure?
R: I’m not going to say I’m not sure. I’m just going to say I am convinced that there are things that we should be doing to take better care of this earth, and carbon emissions is one of those. And I think most people think that that’s certainly a cause of global warming.

T4.4-15
I: Is global warming a topic that’s ever discussed at Redeemer Lutheran, either officially or in casual conversation?
R: Oh, I would say not in a big way. Questions may come up in Sunday school. Questions come up about a lot of different things, so that would be one of those things, like anything else.

T4.4-16
[Part of this quote also found in T4.4-7]
R: Well, the thing I was going to tell you is, I just went just to see officially what our church’s stance was on it [meaning climate change]. And this website was meant to answer questions about faith and the bible and stuff, and so they don’t try to get into stuff that they’re not experts on. But they definitely point to [or point out that] we need to care for the earth and [that] our ability to do all that being affected by sin. But anyway, I printed out just a couple things here for you if you want to take those.
I: Oh, fantastic.
R: And one of the points that it says here is that [reading from printout, T4.5-1], “A practical point to remember is that much of the global warming talk one hears today seems to be motivated more by personal agendas than by pure science. And that weather patterns go in cycles and we have to wonder whether we have all the records to know for sure or not whether it’s happening” [stops reading]. But, again, they point to that we need to be good stewards, but that also God promises that the earth with its cycle of seasons is going to remain until the end of time.
I: So that’s the official position of the WELS church?
R: Yeah.
I: Okay, that’s very interesting.
R: And if you go out to www.wels.net, there’s a Q&A section. People enter questions from all over the place on lots of different angles ...
I: Is that website something that you’ve gone to for previous questions?
R: I go to it a lot. Yeah, a lot. Absolutely.
I: And they usually have good answers to things that you’re looking for?
R: Biblically based answers, yes. Yeah.

T4.4-17
I read a couple things on the web. And it seemed like some churches were painting pictures that had to do with Revelation and apocalyptic scenarios that were just like what? Get out of here. And if too many people are listening to that that haven’t been exposed and don’t have a strong Christian foundation underneath them to begin with, then shame on those churches for doing that, because then you’re teaching and preaching things that aren’t biblical. And you’re doing it to souls that don’t know any better, don’t have a strong enough biblical foundation. So you’re messing with people’s faith and how weak or strong it is. So I do not think that churches have any business doing that sort of a thing. That would be, that’s my concern.
I: Sure, sure. That makes sense. And were those churches painting that picture specifically in relation to global warming?
R: Yeah. There was one that I saw, Red Sky Ministries or something.
I: Okay. I’m not familiar with that.
R: I just did a search on global warming and bible; I just did a BING search on it, and I think it was called Red Sky Ministries. I’ll have to see if I can find it here.
I: Interesting.
R: And I didn’t read a whole lot of it. But it seemed like this guy was claiming to have been, to have had visions while he was awake, and spoken to from God. And it’s like, whew, this is - hopefully that stuff doesn’t lead people astray. But if he’s claiming to be a Christian, then it’s scary if people would think that he’s speaking for all Christians there.

T4.4-18
[Parts of this quote also found in T4.4-14]
I: Do you mind if I just ask your opinion on global warming, whether or not you think it’s happening?
R: Sure. So I can’t speak to historical evidence. I mean, I’m not a personal expert like we had talked about before. But I definitely think that there are things that we’re doing with CO2 emissions and stuff that we’re not being responsible stewards of God’s gifts to us here on earth. Again, I’m not a scientist, so I don’t understand all that stuff. But I certainly think that that definitely can be having an affect. I guess I do kind of worry a little bit that sometimes, and maybe this was prior, not so much now, but some of the alarmism and stuff, that people could really be thinking that the earth is going to be destroyed. Whereas the bible tells us God’s going to keep that safe until Jesus’ coming. And so I don’t think we have to worry about bursting into flames. So I don’t know if that makes sense or not.
I: So do you think that global warming or climate change, whichever term you prefer, is taking place? Or you’re not really sure?
R: I’m not going to say I’m not sure. I’m just going to say I am convinced that there are things that we should be doing to take better care of this earth, and carbon emissions is one of those. And I think most people think that that’s certainly a cause of global warming.

T4.4-19
[Parts of this quote also found in T4.4-11]
I: And so would you say that it’s [climate change is] something that you’re concerned about?
R: Yes, yes. I’m probably not as nutty-crunchy as some of the folks in the northwest are, but I care about our earth. And so when I see things like littering and people just not taking care of stuff and wasting water and, you know, waste, that’s bothersome. So yeah, I care about it.
I: And you mentioned carbon emissions in particular. Is that something that’s a concern?
R: Yeah. I don’t anymore, because we have too many kids to haul around. But I had a Prius back a few years ago before Jack and I married. And so yeah, I don’t see any sense in wasting any more of that, or putting out more emissions than you have to.

T4.4-20
I think global warming is important. But I wouldn’t say it’s any more important or should be more important to anybody else than a lot of the other issues and challenges that we have, moral decay that we have in the world. And that all of those things could improve significantly if we would all be basing our everyday decisions from the point that we wake up in the morning and start to brush our teeth until we go to bed at night, whether it’s in the home or in the workplace or on the road driving or in the grocery store.

T4.4-21
I: And so maybe to clarify, you are talking about the church having a place addressing these issues but not above and beyond expressing the gospel?
R: Correct, absolutely. Yes, yes.
I: Okay, that makes sense. That’s something that’s been a concern of some other people too, is sure, this is important, this is something that should be talked about, but it should never replace the mission of the church which is to preach the gospel.
R: Right, right, and much more succinct. Thank you.
T4.5-1
Q: Is there anything in the Bible that relates to the depletion of the ozone layer and its effects on global warming?
A: Two sections of Scripture come to mind. The first is Genesis 1:28 where the Lord tells mankind to “rule over the earth and subdue it.” This indicates that we are to manage the earth wisely. While this gives us the authority to care for the world, one has to remember it was given prior to the fall into sin. Now our ability to care for the world is affected by sin which leads to everything from litter along the highway to selfish management of natural resources.

The other section is Genesis 8:22* where God promises that the earth, with its cycle of seasons, will remain until the end of time. This assures us that ultimately God is in control and we don’t have to fear another universal flood or other worldwide destruction.

A practical point to remember is that much of the “global warming” talk one hears today seems to be motivated more by personal agendas than by pure science. Weather patterns seem to go in cycles and we have to wonder whether we have the records to know if this is a major trend or simply a cycle in the weather patterns.

T4.5-2
Q: The bible clearly identifies how the earth will be destroyed. I don’t believe there is any reason to worry about global warming. What is WELS stance on this liberal issue? Thank you.
A: The fact that the world will be destroyed some day, Judgment Day, does not mean we should be indifferent about nuclear war, famine, deforestation, or pollution in the meantime. We do not have any church stance on the issue of global warming since it is not a issue resolved in the Bible. We should be concerned to be good stewards of the earth and should be informed and working to make good use of the earth for ourselves and future generations.

* Genesis 8:22: As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night will never cease.
(New International Version)
R: I have been a Christian for probably 16 years, something like that. I think that’s right. Yeah, it’s been an awesome process because I’m a very curious guy. I love asking questions and for me, well very quick summary of the process of becoming a Christian, or, I guess the whole salvation process, including sanctification, all of those things. I grew up in a church that is one of the most generous places that I’ve ever known about. They had a program called “Dollar for Dollar” that would give away a dollar to the community for every dollar that they spent on themselves, and that level of giving is just unheard of. A huge, huge commitment to giving, very generous, and I saw a lot of that, I still see a lot of that in our family ... But I never really understood how that came about because most of my experience with church was very religious ... you went to church, you were a consumer of church ... you went to hear good sermons and good music there, and all that stuff that I think is plaguing the church now is very much something that I just sort of assumed to be the way church ran as a kid.

I went to [edited out camp name], which is Christian sports camp in [edited out town], Texas, and man it was there that God just completely rocked my world. I went there to go play sports for a week, I mean what better thing could you do for a camp in the summer then go to a sports camp where that’s all you did. But in that place, I had an awesome counselor who just really broke down the gospel and helped me understand what it meant to be a sinner in need of a savior, and what it meant for Christ to have come and died, and the call that the gospel has on your life to go through this process of sanctification, and living that out in your life is the daily demands of the gospel on you, all this kind of stuff. I mean, as much as you can make that clear to a 7th grader. The Spirit certainly worked through him and definitely rocked my world ... I think it was the Wednesday or the Thursday of that week, just surrendering in that moment [to God], but that absolutely being the beginning of the process [of my faith]. And just asking tons of questions and trying to learn more about this new reality. The veil had been lifted in some senses, or it was slowly being lifted to a different reality, and to me that’s been one of the most exciting things about the last couple of years.

Because I grew up in the Houston suburbs, very upper, or middle-class, I’d say upper middle-class - you start looking across the world, you’re rich. I had absolutely no basis in my upbringing for what true reality is, the way the world operates. It was a very conservative environment as well. So for me to start caring about the earth, it was weird. It’s nothing that many of my friends really think much about, and what reason would we have? We don’t suffer any consequences for not caring for the earth. I can idle my car and all I have to do is just pay a couple extra bucks for a few more gallons of gas. But I don’t really understand the impact of pollution or depletion of fossil fuels or any of that. And I can run my hose, and accidentally leave it on over night, and I get stuck with a high water bill, but I don’t really understand what it’s like to be dependent on the rain for my water. That was the thing that really started to grab a hold of my heart, in fact I think that was one of the first things is, I was studying the idea of
savings, and in so many ways how that is this impediment to trusting God because I’ve got this thing that I can hold onto and I can go access whenever I want, so I’m not dependent day to day on God’s provision. Then I was looking at money management, stuff like that, and I started thinking about all of the systems that we have in our modern society … I’ve got a refrigerator where I store food, and I can go in there at any time and get stuff, and if I don’t have it there I can drive to the big refrigerator down the street and go get it from Wal-Mart. I can go get anything I want anytime I want, any fresh water I want any time I want it, and I started realizing how disconnected I was from nature, and how much of a warped view of the world I had as a result of that. I think it was a lot through that, and God just slowly opening my eyes at different moments in time.

Another big one - a lot of this for me was around water. A big one was, one day I was out watering my front yard, and I still water my yard, but I was watering it and realized I’ve been using fresh water, drinking-grade water to make sure that my lawn isn’t brown. In parts of the world children are literally dying for lack of this thing that I’m using so casually. So to me that was the motivation I needed start collecting rainwater and using that to water my garden. And it’s not about, to me, saying, “Oh, I’m never going to water my lawn again,” but it’s the way that the Holy Spirit has transformed the way I view the world.

I despise the “top ten ways to go green” lists. Those things drive me insane because I don’t think anybody is ever going to quote, unquote “go green” by doing it through a to-do list. It’s got to be, I believe, through the Holy Spirit, or certainly through some sort of a transformation in perspective on the world … If I thought to harvest rain water on a to-do list, I’m way too lazy to actually take the initiative to do that. But because the Holy Spirit had impressed on my heart the reality of an interconnected world that was consuming water faster than it could be replenished and the fact that had an impact on peoples’ lives, and that reality that was supposed to help teach my soul, whisper to my soul, is what sparked the motivation in me to actually do something about it. So that’s my story man. I can tell you a hundred examples of that, but that’s the way it’s worked, is just slowly opening my eyes to more and more reality of how our world is so interconnected despite our best efforts to build all these boundaries and walls to enable us to have an individualized lifestyle in the United States where all of my needs are taken care of by myself. I’ve got my own water-spigot … I’ve got curbside trash collection. I’ve got my own car with my own gas tank that I can fill up on my schedule, and grocery stores, and all these things that we’ve built up. Man, that’s my passion now. I work for, this is the kind of thing that I shouldn’t say, but I work for a huge food company with the purpose of trying to break it down into a smaller place that understands its impacts on the earth. And that’s my passion, is to get into the middle of the business world and try to figure out how to deconstruct this crazy system that we’ve built that disconnects us from the earth.

T4.6-3
I: Is your academic background in business?
R: Yep, I did business at the University of Texas; I was a marketing major in the program they call Business Honors program there.
R: You know, I was in consulting for about 5 years or so, and in consulting we started doing some pro bono consulting where we would, rather than sending out a bunch of highly skilled consultants to paint a fence, we’d send out a bunch of highly skilled consultants to consult with non-profits, and that was something that started opening my eyes to … the impact that you could have on a day-to-day basis investing passion - bringing the business world together with the social needs in our community. And [I was] saying as a Christian, this is something I’m passionate about for those very clear reasons of trying to do the work of God in this place. But this is actually really great for this business [too], because the people who are involved with this are much more motivated to do their work. [Edited out former employer] was the company I was working for, is getting some great PR from this, so this is a really great benefit to [former employer] as a company. I thought, man I could use that, the fact that this actually is beneficial for business to do more of this type of work in God’s name, if He opens those doors for that to happen.

I would say within the current understanding of political parties in this country, I’m a moderate, but in terms of what I think the philosophies are intending to be I’m a conservative. I believe in less government. I think there are few things that are less effective than the government. So I deeply believe that less government is good. But in whatever way that the people who support less government suddenly cared only about two issues, and don’t care about the poor, about the earth, about anything else, I don’t understand how a party has created a platform like that, and would never want to associate myself as a conservative in that sense, as a hyper-capitalist that thinks that people who just haven’t had opportunities, it’s their fault, and all these types of things that I think you could criticize conservatism for. At the same time, [while] I expect the concerns that I have may line up on a causal side with the Democratic Party, I don’t believe that government is the answer to those problems. So that’s why I put myself in an awkward position to classify. If I had to pick one, I’d say moderate, but my hope would be for a more conservative philosophy though, less government being ultimately what I’d want it to be about.

R: My wife and I have been going there for … I think it’s about four years. We’ve been in Dallas for about six, so that’s about right. The worship pastor, the worship leader at the Flower Mound campus is a buddy of mine, Michael. When we first moved up here we were living in different parts of town, and he kept telling me I’ve got to get out there, and we just [said] it was too far, it’s too far, it’s too far, and then we found ourselves going out there on Saturdays and somewhere else on Sundays, and we were like, “Look this isn’t church,” and committed to Mosaic, and it’s been awesome. I couldn’t speak higher praises of a church than of Mosaic. It’s been an amazing, amazing place.
I: What all does involvement look like for you guys right now? Sunday services, bible studies, things like that?

R: Yep, we go on Sundays now. We are going to the new Dallas campus ... We just opened a third - so we've got the Coppell campus, the Flower Mound campus, and now one down in Dallas. So we’re going to the Dallas Campus. We’re part of a soft launch for that, so some of the ministry leaders and folks from Mosaic Church are going and we’re merging, if you will, with the existing church down at this Eastway Baptist Church; creating a new campus there. So we’re doing that. And then my wife and I were home group leaders for a couple of years, and now we are home group coaches, is the official term. So officially we are, if you will, home group leaders for home group leaders. We have a group of home group leaders that we’ll get together with once a month and talk with them about how their groups are going and try to disciple them, and then help address any concerns, issues, anything that may be going on in their groups, and then they are the home group leaders for different groups. And then we are in one of the home groups of one of our home group leaders. So that’s a process. But yeah, we are home group coaches, we’re formerly home group leaders, and we’re just about to start teaching 3-year-olds at the Northway Campus, which I can’t wait for that.

I: Wow, that’s pretty involved.

R: Hey, it’s a fun place man, we try to get in as much as we can.

T4.6-7

[Responding to a question about what the church’s role should be regarding climate change]

R: Gosh, if we’re talking global warming particularly, I've never really thought about that issue alone, but I think my answer would be, I’d rather the church not get involved in that. I think a big part of that culturally is the feeling that government is our savior, and I think that’s, obviously an incredibly damaging belief, I mean incredibly polluting belief to the message of the gospel. I think a great example of that, I voted for Barack Obama, but a great example of it is a man who promises hope as part of a campaign, through the government. I don’t know how we could possibly believe that true hope can come through the government. If we understand what hope truly is, it’s something that can only be given to us through the gospel, in Christ. So I worry about the church getting involved with the government in that sense. I think in our culture in particular today, in the way that we view government, I would much rather the church encourage conservation and care for the earth, as well as a holistically accurate out-living, outpouring of good theology on a day-to-day basis, in community. And then allowing that to motivate our decisions on something like global warming. But I feel like we’re almost forcing somewhat of a false choice where we’ve done such a poor job of caring for the earth that we’re in a position where we have to legislate change. If we actually live in community in such a powerful, effective way [and] obedient way that we created communities where we weren’t so separated that we had to drive cars, and we actually thought about the way that we treated the earth, then we would never be in the position that we’re in. I feel like in so many ways it’s our disobedience as a church that’s created this situation, that we then try to solve it through government means. It may be necessary at this point in time, but to try and solve it through government seems like trying to solve the problem without addressing the root issue.
[Potential climate change legislation is] why this is such a critical time in history, and why so many of my coworkers and colleagues are so wrapped around the acts we’ll bring this period in time right now, is because this is so unique, that we are in this time where we have a proposed climate legislation bill that could make it through the Senate, and if that happens, then all these things. I just don’t put my hope there. I think there’s way too many other competing interests in that, that as a Christian I try to hold myself to the standard of wanting to do things for the motivation of the glory of God and not for anything else.

[Responding to a question about his religious identity]
R: Yeah, that is another awkward one isn’t it? I am in a, as Matt [the head pastor] calls it a Pente-Bapti-Costal church, or no Presba, sorry Presba-Bapti-Costal church. So we are reformed theology, believe in the gifts of the Holy Spirit, believe a lot of the Baptist theology, especially on baptism and things like that. So I don’t know how to classify that. I guess reformed might be the best one of those things that you mentioned. I definitely don’t feel comfortable with evangelical with all the other people that would be in that category. I don’t know man. Honestly, gosh, I hate labels in general, I don’t like having to be designated as a political party or as a particular type of Christian, because I believe there was one truth that was communicated and intended for unity. That there’s different types of classifications of Christians, that’s because we’ve failed to discern and live by the truth that was revealed, or intended to be revealed through scripture, through Christ, through the Holy Spirit. I don’t know, I don’t know what that gives you in terms of which bubble you would fill in for me.

I: What’s your official title at work?
R: Social and environmental sustainability.
I: That’s a really cool title.
R: Yeah, it is pretty cool.

[This quote picks up directly at the end of quote T4.6-4 about doing pro-bono consulting]
So I started looking around for opportunities to do sustainability, corporate social responsibility, and I wanted to get off the road because I was traveling a bunch, and I wanted to be home and eat dinner with my wife every night. So I wanted to look for something in Dallas, and lo and behold one of the most cutting edge companies, and I’m more convinced of this today then when I started, in environmental sustainability is [current employer], a [food production] company is doing just incredible things in the world of environmental sustainability. So I’ve been doing that for a couple of years now, and it’s completely rooted in my feeling that God is calling me to consider the work of my hands on a day to day basis and then specifically that I
feel like I was called to this place at this time to do this work. So it’s been awesome and I’ve loved getting to do it.

T4.6-12
You know, for whatever reason God has impressed on me from an early age that things can be different, and has given me these dreams and hopes that it could be different. I’ve been pretty discouraged with what I’ve seen in the business [world]; even, well especially from Christian men. I’ve had conversations with Christian men about what it means to be a Christ follower in the workplace, and I get the answer, “Be a good example.” I’m sorry, I generally tune out when I start to hear a Christian man talk like that. To me that is just not appreciating … the breadth and the depth of the call of the gospel in our lives … So for me to boil down my responsibility in the work world - if it’s just to be a good example, I just think that’s patently irresponsible. We must, must think about the work of our hands and the call of the gospel on our day-to-day work. To me, that’s what [my work] is all about.

T4.6-13
The quick story I was going to tell you is, so now after I got to [edited out current employer’s name] and really started working in this world [of environmental and social sustainability] and doing these kinds of things, probably a year or so ago, maybe a little bit more than that, Josh up at Mosaic said, “Hey, we’re thinking about putting recycle bins at some of our campuses, but we just have a general philosophy here that we don’t do things until we’ve laid out the theology of it, and then what the philosophy of ministry is as a result of the theology. We don’t have a theology of creation care, would you mind putting something like that together?” And I was like, “Yes, that would be awesome.” That was a really incredible process for me to go through and systematically to start laying that out, and studying all the information about the resources that already exist, and communicate it way better than I’m sure I did.

But … two things just jumped out at me more than anything that I think are so beautiful and mysterious, and one is the way that God communicates His gospel on a day-to-day basis through creation. The example that I gave in the Is God Green? podcast was the sun, and day after day the sun rising and penetrating the darkness with that light that enables us to see, and then the fact that the light was that first thing that was created, and in Revelation it saying there will be no need for the sun, for we’ll have the glory of God. The beauty of that, again, to me, I go back before creation and think, did God just create the sun and then when Christ is here and he’s trying to figure out how to teach, or with different passages and prophets or whatever it might be, trying to teach and say, “How can I explain this concept about God’s character? Oh I know, I’ll compare it to the sun.” Was it coincidence or was it something that God has wired into the way the creation operates? To me that’s, I believe that God is a very intentional God, that has wired all of these little gospel stories into the way that the world works. It operates in a certain way, it follows certain laws, and there’s something incredibly beautiful about the gospel story in that.
I: I’m curious, what was the impetus for the “Is God Green?” seminar? Was that something that you came up with? Were you approached by the church to do that?

R: It kind of happened both ways. I set up some time with John and another guy Jason, [and] said, “Hey guys, I’d love to talk to you guys about this. The more that I’m studying this, the more that I’m seeing just a huge gap in teaching on this in church.” At the same time, in Coppell, at John’s campus up there, they’ve got a very, call it liberal community, it’s a college town and they have a lot of folks who are very concerned with these types of topics, and they had been talking about wanting to do something like it in general to talk to those concerns of their specific congregation, and so said hey, these are coming together nicely, let’s figure out how to do this in a good way. One thing that I’ll reiterate is, I said this during the podcast, I think one thing that’s real dangerous as Christians, that we get tempted by, is the desire to pick up the torch of something like environmental stewardship because it is culturally relevant. Again that is something that I feel like is such a failure by the church, is our call as a church is to create culture. It is out of obedience to the truth of scripture to do what we believe scripture is calling us to do, and as a result of that create culture instead of trying to respond to culture, trying to prove some kind of relevance some kind of way. So I hope that if this becomes an issue that is not relevant at some point for whatever reason, that the church would never diminish its emphasis on this because it’s out of obedience, not of relevance.

T4.6-15

We at [place of employment] have also worked directly with [prominent climate change advocacy group], so I’ve got a lot of knowledge of the inner workings of that place from personal experience. But it’s kind of on the different sides of it.

I: Would you say that personal experience has also informed your view on that organization and their goals?

R: My personal experience has done nothing - I try to approach things objectively, so I don’t know that I’ve ever had a super strong opinion on this [meaning climate change], my opinion being strong has come because of this experience [with climate change advocacy groups]. The first people that this organization hired were lobbyists [edited out text with specific names], and it is 100% a political organization. It is geared towards mass persuasion, and it puts me in an awkward position at work because it’s something I think is highly irresponsible for an organization to be investing its time in. Again if you start talking about the gospel, the gospel is powerful in community. I mean, the gospel is powerful period, but it is designed to be worked out in community, in conversations you have together with other people, living that out. I think in those kinds of conversations, in that kind of community, it couldn’t be a more stark difference to the mass media, mass persuasion world that we’re talking about with this. That to me is what starts getting me nervous about the way that a lot of folks have sort of handled the corporate global warming issue.
I: Global warming, climate change, is something that you guys specifically avoided in that podcast, why was that?

R: Several reasons. One of them is a personal view from my side. The main reason though, is we didn’t feel like, well actually I think my personal view and the church’s view are inline on this, in that we didn’t believe that it was necessary to talk about global warming in order to communicate the call of the gospel on our lives to be stewards of the earth, God’s creation. Global warming has become shorthand for environmental sustainability, but I believe that’s a huge mistake, because it leaves out a huge portion of caring for creation. The other side of that is all the controversy that is then wrapped up in global warming. I have no interest in getting into a political debate with somebody over whether to care for the earth. If we’re going to run out of water, we’re going to run out of water, or if we’re going to create a patch of garbage in the Pacific Ocean that is twice the size of Texas, I don’t know a Christian that would tell me that is responsible stewardship. You can have a different conversation with people when you start on a mutual ground, or on a ground of mutual understanding or agreed upon irresponsibility, but when you start talking about global warming, it’s so infused with political ideology, all these other types of things, specifically for that event, we avoided it.

I: So you feel like it’s a distraction from the real issue almost?

R: I personally, absolutely think it’s a distraction. I think global warming is terrible for the environmental sustainability debate. There is way too much wrapped up in the pursuit of controlling the energy economy, of carbon taxes, of all kinds of different motivations, and the way that would set up a power structure within the US government or within the global government. I mean there’s all these other motivations wrapped up in that, that I think again, as a Christian my concern shouldn’t be solely, I’m not saying we shouldn’t be involved in government, but it shouldn’t be solely that the government is my savior and I need for Congress to pass climate legislation.

I: I’m interested in your opinion on whether or not you do think it’s [climate change] happening, whether or not you think it’s man caused, that sort of thing.

R: Um, gosh, you know what, I’ll be really honest with you and tell you I don’t know. And I’m really fine with that. Here’s what I do know. I do know that the evidence that somebody like the IPCC gathers seems to indicate the earth is warming, and to me, I have a hard time arguing when I see an image like a glacier melting or sea levels rising, all these types of things. The problem that I start to have is attributing cause to a number of different effects, I don’t see the direct cause to global warming as something that is absolutely clear to me. What I do see as absolutely clear is we are not good stewards of the earth, and the consequences of that are all around us. So why would I spend my time trying to figure out if this other thing that scientists who have spent, I mean thousands of scientists believe strongly on both sides of that argument, and gosh that’s just something that’s still up for debate and so I think it’s just like, alright, well I’ll respect these men and women who are studying creation and studying science to understand
what is real, and I’m going to try and focus my efforts on these things that are clearly impacted by poor stewardship, our poor stewardship collectively as humans. Is that making sense?

I: Yeah, absolutely. And so your concern would lie more with things that are clear examples of poor stewardship as opposed to things that are still up for scientific debate.

R: Yeah, right. I mean, I believe science, I said this in the podcast right, I believe science, and I don’t think I understood this really until starting to study creation, but it [science] is worship in itself, it is studying God’s creation and trying to think God’s thoughts after Him. So I am a huge, huge supporter of science. But one thing that really worries me, I’ve been reading a little bit of Alexis de Tocqueville’s *Democracy in America*, a book that he wrote when he came to the US in the 1830’s. One of the things that he talks about in there is the tyranny of the majority. So he talks about how Americans have traded tyranny of the few over the many for tyranny of the many over the few. He said that there is no place that he’s observed in the world that has less intellectual debate than in America. This was in the 1830’s and I think it’s just more true now than ever. So he talks about how there is no place that has less intellectual debate than in America because the way that we set up our democracy. The only way that I have power as an individual in a democracy is if I’m willing subjugate my individual opinion to that of the closest opinion of the majority so that I get together with that majority and have power. Otherwise I have no power. And so, what starts happening in an environment like that is whoever controls the information can start to sway the direction of what that public opinion is, and democracy has been shaped by the way that people choose to latch onto whatever that prevailing public opinion might be.

For me, I don’t know that I’ve ever seen in the course a history a better example of that than what’s happening with global warming right now. That doesn’t mean that it’s not happening. It very well could be completely real. But the way that information is controlled, opposition is suppressed, organizations like [the one he worked with], they have invested hundreds of millions of dollars, and on their website one of the first thing it says it’s objectives are is mass persuasion. So it’s not something people are even ashamed of, it’s very clear and out in the open, and it really worries me as a Christian to understand the forces of this culture that are all around us that we sometimes don’t pay attention to because it’s just the world that we live in, and we don’t really see those forces working against us.

Again that stuff to me, it’s like gosh I just, in a situation like that, I’ve got to just press pause and step back and say what does seem clear from scripture and from God’s call. I can see using less energy is good. We are depleting, there’s no argument that we are depleting our fossil fuel reserves faster, well they’re fossil fuels, they can’t be replenished, that we are going to run out of them in our lifetime. I think debating the impact of that consumption instead of just taking the consumption itself is a total distraction. It gets us off onto, is it true, is it not, is Al Gore for real, is he in it for money, and all these other things that don’t have any bearing on the debate, in my opinion as a Christian. As a Christian, I’m like, well if we’re going to deplete the reserves, we should stop consuming this stuff, it doesn’t matter what happens when you burn it. I mean it matters, but if I don’t consume the fossil fuel in the first place, then whatever. If I’m using clean energy, then I’m affecting global warming and I’ve reduced my consumption, or if I walk to work or I take my bike, or all these things from an energy conservation perspective, or
sorry from a global warming perspective somebody would encourage is just as relevant or more relevant from a pure energy conservation perspective. Does that make sense? To me it’s recentering it not on the impacts of that consumption but on the consumption itself. There’s all kinds of things on that side where its how much of that consumption itself is an attempt to satisfy holes in our hearts where we’re trying to consume this or consume that, where again a lot of it to me is such a spiritual issue.
Nomothetic Quote Tables

Nomothetic Quote Table 1 (T5.1): Perceived Causes of Climate Change

T5.1-1
I: I’d like to learn more about your opinions on global warming ... Do you think that it’s happening? Do you think that it’s human caused?
R: No. I haven’t read a whole lot about it. You hear it on the news. I don’t think it’s happening. From what little I’ve read, most of the scientists are leaning against that.
(Margery)

T5.1-2
[Responding to a question about how she arrived at her opinions about climate change]
R: I’m not sure except the fact that what I have read or what I have heard, the facts don’t line up, even the scientists. Most of the scientists that I have [heard], say there’s no such thing [as global warming] against those who say there is. So I’m just looking at that, but I don’t waste my time on it.
(Margery)

T5.1-3
R: I seriously question at this point, and honestly I think a lot of people are questioning whether or not there is even is such an animal out there, so to speak, as global warming.
I: So you’re not sure if it’s actually warming, and if so, if it’s a result of human activity or not?
R: Yeah, yeah, there’s still a question there about that. I’ve not seen any data that convinces me otherwise, and a lot of the data I have seen is even contradicting one another, depending on who you’re reading. And I think there again I’ve got to question and be somewhat suspect as to the background of those studies. Are we dealing with government funding? Are we dealing with jobs that are trying to be protected? Are we dealing with people that just want more research money, and by promoting this they’re able to get that? Obviously they’re learning numerous things, but is there really a warming that’s taking place?
(Pastor Darin)

T5.1-4
R: I would have to say that my personal research which is very limited, okay, and who knows what you can believe that’s printed on the internet, but that’s where a lot of my research has been done. In my personal opinion, it is questionable that global warming actually exists. Some of what I have studied has indicated that in parts of the world, there has been really no more than 1 degree of warming over the last 100 years. Some material that I actually looked for, and was unable to find was accuracy of temperature taking, or thermometers, in years past. So I’m not sure what they’re even basing the 1% on, and what the accuracy of those thermometers were 100, 500, 1,000 years ago ... and I have not been able to discover anything on that. In parts
of the world, they’re saying now that there is actually global cooling. And I guess what I’m saying is, I’m not entirely certain that we’re not just in a normal cycle, that man has been observing for a brief period of time, and come up with this and said, “Well this must be ... we’re experiencing a global warming because we’ve increased by 1 degree overall.” Now, having said that, realistically, is it possible that as the world populates, and we do away with soil and replace it with asphalt and steel, that we are keeping the earth from cooling in its natural form somehow, and we might increase temperature. And I would have to say that, you know, that could very well be possible and probable. In addition to that, what amazes me is, and again this is just in studies that I’ve looked at, and I have questions on that I can’t get answered, 100 years ago, 200 years ago, 1,000 years ago, whatever time frame you want to go back to, the population on the earth was much, much less than it is today. So if you consider even the average body temperature of man, and the number of bodies that have been added to the earth, you would have to say, I mean if you have 200 people in a room, it’s going to get warm in that room, you would have to say a 1% increase in relation to the population increase would probably have to be a cooling off instead of a warming up. That the population is able to increase by such drastic numbers and thereby increasing the temperature just by bodies alone, and yet the temperature apparently has not increased more than 1 degree. And so I have to question it.

(Pastor Darin)

T5.1-5

When global warming was such a hot topic, during the election, and some of the political push, is when I felt like the Lord laid on my heart this topic. What does the bible say, that’s important for us to know? This is what Al Gore says, this is what Obama says; okay, what does the bible say? Now let’s throw into this what science is showing. Now, how accurate are these thermometers, what does the 1% indicate, is it larger than that, why is there a cooling in some places? Okay this is what the bible says. So as a believer, you can leave a service[that addresses a topic in this manner], and I think have a great confidence in God, and assurance that you do not have to go home today and think that somehow a meteorite is going to come crashing down and destroy the whole earth. Now do meteorites crash? Yeah. Will there be fires in various parts of the world, tornados, and monsoons, or, or tidal waves, and yes, that’s all part of the natural course, and has always been, since the day of, at least, the fall of man, and Noah’s flood after that, the seasonal changes, climatic changes.

(Pastor Darin)

T5.1-6

R: In my understanding of what’s happening in the scientific community, you probably have a 90 percentile who are saying this global warming is coming around, and it’s impacted by humans. And then you have this 10%, I believe, that’s saying we’re not convinced. That’s where I fall. So I’m kind of in the 10% that says I’m not convinced. I will tell you, if you tell me to make a stand, I’ll stand there with them ... So let’s just get it out there and say I’m not convinced. But that is not going to lead you down the road to say that I’m not a person who wants to take action. No.
I’m not there. I’m there taking action in real steps, in ways that truly impact the environment and I’m taking steps for two reasons. One, I believe it’s the right thing to do. And two, economics ... I get frustrated, because all too often people who want to be in the 90 percentile and want to tell me about all of the environmental issues, and then I have reports on National Public Radio that tell me if every automobile in the United States stopped driving today, it would have about a 2% impact on global warming. There’s a lot of cars in the United States. But when you’ve got China, every ten days bringing on new coal-fired power plant, and they talk at the table one thing and their economy and everything else is driving another thing - what are we really doing here folks? So I can get frustrated as a Christian, as hopefully a person of some intelligence, I can get frustrated and think about global things. Or I can do the right thing at the level I’m at. And those right things at the level I’m at are driving efficient automobiles, saving the church hundreds of thousands of dollars over the next few years, doing those things that really impact the environment where I sit now. That really drives the bigger picture. Not talking it; walking it.

I: So you’re skeptical of whether or not it’s happening. But that’s less of an issue to you as just doing what you can do where you are.
R: Correct.
(Pastor Jacob)

T5.1-7
I: Do mind if I ask your opinion on global warming?
R: Sure, sure [laughing]. I care about our planet, I care about the place we’re living right now and where my kids and grandkids will grow up, and I care about doing everything I can and need to do to preserve the planet. We recycle, we try to conserve energy wherever possible. But I don’t - I can’t say for certain that I believe in global warming. I know there’s evidence and I’ve been watching this evidence on the news, but I can’t say for certain that I believe that the world is going to end that way. And I guess this is where that link happens right, between faith and the global warming issue ... we know that the world’s going to end by fire the next time around. We’ve already done the global warming by water thing, right? The ice caps have already all melted and submerged the earth, and that’s already happened. I’m not saying that couldn’t happen for certain regions of the earth, but I know from scripture that it isn’t going to happen a second time, that God said, “I’ll never flood the earth again, and here’s the rainbow.” So in that regard, I cannot believe in global warming as something that is going to affect the entire planet. It may change things in various areas, and so the animals, the life that lives in that area is going to either have to adapt or move. But I don’t think it’s going to affect the whole planet at large, and in the same way that it did with the flood.
I: In your opinion, do you think things are getting warmer?
R: I live in Texas, and it’s almost August, so that’s an unfair question [laughing]. I don’t.
I: You don’t?
R: I don’t. I guess I’ve been watching the odd summers we’ve been having here, sometimes it’s really hot, sometimes it’s delightfully cool. I have not gotten out the almanac and looked ... so I
can’t say factually, if in fact we are getting warmer or cooler. I guess just from within my lifetime I don’t feel like we are.

(Julie)

T5.1-8

I: You mentioned seeing stuff on the news, is that where you’d say you’ve heard the most about global warming? Is that the source that you look to for information on the topic?

R: Yeah, and I really don’t look further. That’s what I was saying, I’ve never really checked out the almanac to see what the temperatures have been in the last 100 years or so. So sometimes the news will tell me, “Well ten years ago, this was the temperature in Dallas.” I guess I recently saw something, and I want to say it was on 60 Minutes, about global warming and they were either in, I want to say they might have been in Greenland, or Antarctica, or -

I: A cold place [laughing].

R: Yeah, yeah. And there was something about the climate change there that was affecting the animals and the runoff, and anyway it was - I guess global warming was clear from that standpoint there, that some climate change was happening there that was very real.

(Julie)

T5.1-9

R: I think that we’ve had warming and cooling, and we’re going to do whatever God wants, and I don’t think that human beings are going to make a big difference. I do think that we must be conservative of the earth, and we can’t just run roughshod, but I don’t think as far as the emissions of the gasses, we’re not going to change the climate. I wish we could, and I think that if they want to put umbrellas between us and the sun, it would be about as much use as what they’re doing. But that’s my opinion.

I: Sure, so maybe, maybe not warming?

R: Oh, we’re warm, yeah.

I: But it’s not human caused.

R: No, and it’s also part of the cycles that the earth has gone through since the beginning

(Agnes)

T5.1-10

R: Climate change has taken place, colder [and] warmer cycles, since man has been on this earth actually. Man doesn’t control it. The carbon, the outside emissions that we make even when we breathe do nothing but help plant life grow, and from plant life it produces oxygen, which we breathe and need to live. So carbon dioxide is a necessity for human life. I lived in northern Wisconsin in my early life and I can remember one summer when we had hundred degree days twelve miles from Lake Superior and that’s not unusual. But ... I also remember in the 60’s, 70’s, probably in the 70’s, we had extremely cold weather in central Wisconsin. We had sixty below zero temperatures, and we had winds of up to fifty miles an hour with wind-chill factors of one hundred and ten degrees [below zero]. You couldn’t go out with bare skin and
I: Do mind if I just kind of your opinion on global warming?
P: Sure, I confess, I don’t know who to believe. I’ve certainly heard reputable, or ostensibly reputable sources on both sides of that debate. And I hear some people come forward saying, “this is a slam dunk case for that humans have intervened in nature to such an extent that it’s creating, having a world-wide effect.” I’ve heard others that have said, you know, the atmosphere of our earth goes through different cyclical changes, and though sometimes it may seem as if there is an increased temperature of the oceans; at other times that decreases … So anyway, I don’t know who to believe … Is the world warming? Maybe? Are we contributing to it? Possibly?
(Pastor Peter)

T5.1-12

From a personal standpoint, even biblical standpoint, I would say for whatever reason, if it’s greed or if it’s just simply progress, society has polluted this world into something other than what it was when God created it. Whether that has caused global warming, I don’t have a clue. The experts say, today, “drinking coffee or caffeine is not good for you.” Tomorrow, the experts will say, “caffeine is good for you.” I don’t know. Wylie, who can we trust? … So when it comes to things of that sort that the experts have to tell us, I don’t know what’s true. I wouldn’t trust Al Gore, who claimed initially he invented the internet, and now he’s flying around in his airplane and he wants to sell all of these tax credits or something, whatever it is, when he lives in a home that abuses the very thing that he’s promoting. So he has no credibility as far as I’m concerned. And you hear and read about some oceanographers, meteorologists who say, “You know what, whatever it is that’s polluting in the air actually lowers the temperature and not raises it.” So that’s what those experts say. What I’m saying is, I see no biblical correlation because the bible doesn’t tell me anything about global warming. It tells me to take care of the earth, but it doesn’t tell me anything about what global warming is, so I don’t know what to believe. The people who are promoting it, I don’t trust, so my tendency is not to believe them. On the other side, I’m afraid that there may be those who just don’t want to believe the Al Gores, and they’ll say anything from their standpoint to try and diminish how serious it is. I’m not sure that I can believe them either. I can’t say that I have an absolute opinion, because I don’t know that I’m being given all the facts, from either side.
(Pastor Barry)
R: Well honestly, I’ve lived in Texas all my life, so really 100-degree weather is normal. I don’t know, I guess I’m, I don’t follow the news very much, but I know that’s a big thing. I don’t know, I guess I don’t necessarily see it too much, living here in Texas where it’s a hundred degrees every summer. So really global warming, if it’s warming up our nation or if it’s really taking an effect to us, I don’t see it quite yet.

I: So you don’t really think that it is happening, not really sure?

R: I guess I’m not really sure, I’d hate to give my opinion when honestly I’m not very informed. And maybe that’s the college background in me, don’t give out your opinion unless you’re fully informed of it. So I don’t know.

(Hannah)

T5.1-14

I: So what do you think about it, do you think that a warming is taking place currently?

R: Well, in my own opinion, I know that scientific research says it is, but they can be wrong. So I don’t think it’s something that we should be extremely scared and nervous and fearful about, since we believe the bible says that we should not worry and fear. But [we need] to do what we can to take care of our earth so that we can help generations following.

I: Sure, sure. So you’re not really sure if things are warming up or not?

R: Right. I guess I would say unsure.

(Pastor Preston)

T5.1-15

I: Do you mind if I just ask your opinion on global warming, whether or not you think it’s happening?

R: Sure. So I can’t speak to historical evidence. I mean, and I’m not a personal expert like we had talked about before. But I definitely think that there are things that we’re doing with CO2 emissions and stuff that we’re not being responsible stewards of God’s gifts to us here on earth. Again, I’m not a scientist, so I don’t understand all that stuff. But I certainly think that that definitely can be having an affect...

I: So do you think that global warming ... is taking place? Or you’re not really sure?

R: I’m not going to say I’m not sure. I’m just going to say I am convinced that there are things that we should be doing to take better care of this earth. And carbon emissions is one of those. And I think most people think that that’s certainly a cause of global warming.

(Dana)

T5.1-16

I: Do you think global warming or climate change is taking place? Do you think that it is human caused?

R: I do think it’s, I mean, I don’t see how you can think it’s not taking place. Just from year to year some of the changes, looking back at things, memories of when you were younger and how summers and winters and things like that went. It doesn’t seem to be like that anymore, and I’m not that old. So I can think back, 30 years ago I was five, and I just remembering what life
was like then compared to now as far as, I remember snow more ... It’s obviously, the climate in
general seems to be moving somewhere. As far as human caused, we do put a lot of junk out
that, it’s obviously got to go somewhere; things don’t just disappear. But I also wonder, when
you think of [the] end times, some bad stuff’s going to go down. So is it really all us, or is it just
the course of how things are prescribed?
I: So you’re not really sure what relationship human activity has to the changes that we’re
seeing right now?
R: Yeah. I mean, there are things that just seem like it does. Smoke coming out of cars and I’m
not so sure my hairspray caused the hole in the ozone. But the modernization of the world
obviously has something to do with it. It is interesting, though, to think of how much of the
world is not modern. I don’t know the proportions, but most of continents don’t have
smokestacks and stuff going up. So could the developed world, whatever proportion of the
globe it is, be causing all of that?
(Melissa)

T5.1-17
[Responding to a question about her opinion about the existence and causes of climate change]
Have we created this [global warming]? Do I think it’s going on? Absolutely. As simple as the
sin of from the beginning we’ve not taken care of what we were given. And so when people say,
well if you’re sick, you know, maybe there’s this or that. Yeah. I agree. It maybe wasn’t me
specifically. We all contribute every day to our environment in harming it, in harming our
children in the future of what we’re doing [by] our actions. So if they want to say that maybe
people are sick because of sin or whatever, I would agree completely. But I’m thinking in the
bigger picture, not just my 100 years on this earth or 40 years on this earth. Yeah, I completely
think there’s a major connection between our actions and, again, not being stewards of what
He’s given us.
(Sandy)

T5.1-18
[Sandy had just described CNN as her main source of information about climate change]
I: And what do you think CNN is primarily saying about global warming?
R: That one, that it’s happening. Two, we’ve all contributed to it, you know. And what are we
going to do about it? Same thing I feel. We know we did it. Now what are we going to do
[about it]?
(Sandy)

T5.1-19
I: Do you mind if I just ask your opinion on whether or not you think [global warming is]
occurring?
R: No, I don’t mind at all ... I do think there is something happening, and I believe that we are
causing it, man is causing it. And I believe that because of the technical advances, and our
continued reliance on fossil fuels, and our inability to be able to cope with, what seems to be a
very gluttonous, consumption of energy, we’ve lost our feel for conserving our resources ... and it’s starting to manifest itself in a climate change that is measurable by temperature over time, which tracks along with population growth and energy consumption.

(Trent)

T5.1-20

I: I’m interested in your views on global warming ... and whether or not you think it’s happening, whether or not you think humans have anything to do with it, that sort of thing.

R: Yeah, I’ll be the first to admit, I know there are tons of studies out there, I’ve not read a ton. Do I think it’s happening? I think it is to a certain level ... From my perspective, I think it’s unavoidable to say with where we’ve come from, just as an industrialized nation, to say that we’ve had [an] impact on it. If you look at 50 years ago the number of automobiles that were on the planet to now, the number of factories, that’s going to have some kind of effect on the environment, it’s going to have some kind of effect on an ozone layer. That being said, I also think a lot of it is cyclical and trends come, trends go. But I do think there is a human element that is exacerbating those trends to certain extent, and it’s having some sort of impact. Can we scientifically prove the level of impact? I don’t think we can with a whole lot of certainty. But I think it’s, I think it’s a real issue that we, especially we as Christians, from an environmental standpoint, should be cognizant of, and should work to be better stewards of our environment.

(Camden)
Nomothetic Quote Table 2 (T5.2): Participant Concern about Climate Change

T5.2-1

I: So it’s not something that you’re concerned about.
R: No, no. They can try to fix it; they can’t do that. God is so sovereign over all that. Nope, I not concerned about it at all.
(Margery)

T5.2-2

R: I’m not concerned about global warming from a technological, modern society perspective. That doesn’t mean that I think we ought to be dumping sludge in the rivers, who’s in favor of that? I think it’s very reasonable to implement smog reduction, that sort of thing, that’s a good thing. But as far as, are we killing our planet, I don’t think so.
I: What do you mean by societal, technological perspective in terms of being concerned about climate change or not?
R: Well, it’s only been in the last hundred years that we’ve been burning fossil fuels I guess, roughly, something like that; the industrial revolution is when we stared having smokestacks, and all that sort of thing.
I: So in terms of it being such a short time period that we would have been able to contribute to this?
R: Well, I don’t think we’ve had enough data to really predict it. You’d have to have centuries worth of data to be able to accurately analyze - and even then, are these changes natural or are they man-made, or some combination of both. I think there’s a lot of scientists that are real concerned about global warming and then there are some that tend to be stifled, that they’re saying that it’s silly, we’re not doing anything. And maybe there’s something in the middle somewhere, I don’t know. But I think that the planet is not nearly as fragile as some of the real environmental zealots [say] … I don’t think we’re going to kill the planet, or kill off life. The planet is much more robust and able to support life then what we can do to try and kill it, other than all out nuclear holocaust of course, which is a different story.
I: So maybe, maybe not getting warmer, maybe, maybe not human activity?
R: Yeah.
I: And you’re not terribly concerned about it?
R: [Shakes head no]
(Pastor Frank)

T5.2-3

I: Would you say that [climate change is] something that you’re concerned about?
R: Um, yes. I’m probably not as nutty-crunchy as some of the folks in the northwest are, but I care about our earth. So when I see things like littering and people just not taking care of stuff and wasting water … that’s bothersome. So yeah, I care about it.
I: And you had mentioned carbon emissions in particular. Is that something that’s a concern?
R: Yeah. I don’t anymore, because we have too many kids to haul around, but I had a Prius back a few years ago before Jack and I married. So yeah, I don’t see any sense in wasting any more of that or putting out more emissions than you have to.

(Dana)

T5.2-4

I: Would you say that you’re personally concerned about global warming or climate change?
R: Yes. Yes, I am. I hate seeing the loss of rainforests, and I hate seeing icebergs being where they’re not supposed to be, and then a true reduction in the polar caps, and the extinction of certain animals. They were all put here by God for us to enjoy and use, not to abuse and destroy.

(Trent)

T5.2-5

I: So with not being sure whether or not to believe that global warming is taking place, and the human implications, is it something you would say you’re concerned about personally?
P: Concerned about? Do I think about it? Sure. Am I taking steps to take responsibility for it? I guess I’m recycling more than I have, maybe two years ago, maybe because our city has made recycling now very feasible for us ... Whether that is helping stave off global warming, I have not idea, but we do it. Has it filtered down into the choices I make in terms of the cars I buy? Probably not. I need vehicles, and I hope that they’ve got good gas mileage, but do I think about their carbon footprint, no I don’t. Does it change the way I use my air conditioner? Probably not. What motivates how I use my air conditioner is how much it’s going to cost at the end of August ... If global warming is a fact, then that makes me concerned, but how does that filter down into actual life, I don’t know that it has an appreciable difference.

(Pastor Peter)

T5.2-6

I: Would you say that global warming is something that you’re concerned about, in your personal, everyday life?
R: If that’s going on, absolutely, for my grandchildren, and great-grandchildren, and however long this world will stand, I’m truly concerned about the world that we’re giving them, not limited to global warming. I have greater concerns [though]. As you read through or hear some of the things about the health plan that is being promoted and the government stepping in and wanting to decide on the kind of health that’s given, and on the basis of age and history, I would not at all be surprised that euthanasia is not far, that concerns me. Abortion, the total disregard for life, the stronger influence of the whole gay community ... I have a greater concern about those things and the impact that they will have on peoples’ spiritual life. I don’t discount this other thing [global warming], but I would say by comparison, there are other things that are going on in our society that give me greater cause for concern, but that’s one of them.

(Pastor Barry)
T5.2-7

I: Would you say that [global warming is] something that you’re concerned about?

R: You know, I would say global warming is not something I’m concerned about. Pollution in general, [yes]. I think we should be good stewards of what God’s given us here, and take care of it, and not do stupid things. So I think being environmentally aware and taking care of the environment, and being conservationists, and not being wasteful, I think that’s common sense. But I would contrast that with doing everything in radical ways because of something that hasn’t been fully proven in scientific fact, in scientific research. I don’t think that should cloud our judgment or make us rush to do something that is not founded in scientific fact.

(Brandon)

T5.2-8

I: Is [climate change] an issue that you’re concerned about?

R: Is it an issue that I’m concerned about? I’m not concerned about global warming as an issue that is something to worry about. Is it an issue, per se, because it’s been made an issue by many in the political arena? Absolutely. Even when you talk about the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, overwhelmingly these are bureaucrats. These are representatives of nations, not necessarily scientists, who are developing these policy statements. And so they have made this an extraordinary issue; but I think it’s been illegitimate. I think that there’s something else going on than simply a concern for the environment. And it may sound crazy and harebrained, but I think it’s the President of either the Czech Republic or one of the formerly Eastern Block countries who happens to be a scientist [and he says] his concern about what the United Nations seems to be doing is that this is more about sovereignty than it is about the environment. That this is an issue that can significantly expand the control of the United Nations over issues and decisions that formerly were a nation’s concerns. It’s a way of controlling [nations] politically, that it really is not primarily about the environment.

(Pastor Cecil)

T5.2-9

I: Would you say that you’re personally concerned about global warming or climate change? Whichever term is fine.

R: Yes. Yes, I am. Yeah, I hate seeing the loss of rainforests, and I hate seeing icebergs being where they’re not supposed to be, and then a true reduction in the polar caps, and the extinction of certain animals. Those, they were all put here by God for us to enjoy and use, not to abuse and destroy.

I: Are you concerned about it at a local environmental level would you say?

R: Hmm. Maybe not so much. I think climate in Texas has a big swing anyway by its own geography. I know that because we’re in a dense population group that recycling is critical. I’m all about energy conservation, alternative energies. I carry some investments in water and wind technology. So from a local, personal, what I do about it, that’s about it.

(Trent)
Nomothetic Quote Table 3 (T5.3): Church and Perceptions of Climate Change

T5.3-1
I: So now to really switch gears on you. Obviously global warming has been a hot topic lately, do mind if I just ask you opinion, do you think that it’s taking place?
R: In the short term it seems to be, it could be. Actually I guess in the shorter term, most recently I guess they’re saying it’s reversing itself right. It’s hard to say, if you look at things that happen in the planet and the different fluctuations, levels of solar radiation and volcanic stuff and everything like that, I just think we should expect the temperature to fluctuate over time, and if it’s in a warming trend, so be it. But it sounds like we’re in a cooling trend, and all the people that are the global warming proponents are having to back-pedal and call it climate change now right? So I kind of take the view that I would expect some small degree of fluctuation over time ... And your next question is going to delve into, is man causing it? I don’t think we can cause it if we tried, just because of the solar stuff, and the amount of energy it takes to change temperature of water, and how all the currents sort of balance things out and move heat from one place to another and that sort of thing, I don’t know that we could change, that we could do it if we tried.
(Brandon)

T5.3-2
I do think there is something happening, and I believe that we are causing it, man is causing it. And I believe that because of the technical advances, and our continued reliance on fossil fuels, and our inability to be able to cope with, what seems to be a very gluttonous, consumption of energy, we’ve lost our feel for conserving our resources ... And it’s starting to manifest itself in a climate change that is measurable by temperature over time, which tracks along with population growth and energy consumption.
(Trent)

T5.3-3
I: Do you mind if I just ask your opinion, do you think global warming is happening? Do you think it’s human caused?
R: Umm, well I don’t know. I think it is happening just because this summer has been the hottest summer I’ve ever dealt with, and ... it always seems like it takes longer for it to cool off in the Fall, so I’m like, “Come on!” But I haven’t given it much research about how human pollution has caused it, so I don’t really know how to answer that. So, I’m not an expert at it, I’m sorry.
I: No, no, no, no expertise required. So you do think things are warming up around here?
R: Yeah.
I: And just from your own experience, just seeing things get hotter?
R: Yeah, yeah, definitely.
I: But you’re not really sure what role humans are playing?
R: Yeah.
I: Do you think we’re playing some role? Not really?
R: I think we could be playing some role, yeah, just with how we treat our air and everything with the oxygen, just with pollution, and how we’re - I mean we are coming around and making hybrid cars and stuff like that, so that’s a good thing. But there’s still those gas guzzlers out there that burn oil like crazy and pollute the air like crazy, so I think we do have some involvement in it.
(Heather)

T5.3-4

I: Do you mind if I just ask your opinion on whether or not you think [global warming is] happening, whether or not you think it’s human caused, that sort of thing?
R: I think my opinion on it has always been - I feel like it is happening. I feel like you can watch anything on the Discovery Channel, and I feel like some of that is not really a neutral position that they’re presenting, I think they’re kind of skewed, but with melting of polar ice caps, the warming of the oceans, and droughts and things like that. I think the climate is changing, I think it absolutely is. But the cause of it ... I don’t think you can causally determine it. What I’ve always said is, I don’t know why it’s happening or how it’s happening, but I know that spilling carbon into the atmosphere is probably not a good idea. So I think we should do whatever we can to limit the amount of carbon emissions we have. And I think that’s a much more helpful position than, people are causing climate change; because the implication of that is progress is bad, people are bad, industrialization is bad, cars are bad, on and on and on, instead of just saying, “Hey, this is not a good thing. Spewing all this carbon into the atmosphere is not a good thing. Let’s try to do what we can to pull back on those things.” Instead of taking a political stance on it because I feel like that alienates people.

I: Because it’s become such a politicized issue?
R: Yeah, yeah, and so just avoid it. To me it’s like, let’s just avoid that and talk about, “Okay the planet’s getting warmer, can we do anything to help?” Maybe, and maybe we shouldn’t drive hummers, I don’t know, maybe that’s a good idea.
(Pastor Jason)
Nomothetic Quote Table 4 (T5.4): Religious Identity – Fundamentalism

T5.4-1
I: How would you identify yourself as a Christian ... terms like evangelical, Pentecostal, reformed, moderate, fundamentalist, conservative, liberal, any of those terms that you would say describe you well?
R: You know, I've been real hesitant to use terms because people associate -they think they know what those terms mean, but in fact they do tend to change, even regionally. Fundamentalist, for instance, can bring about some real negative connotations. But yet, if you interpret the bible literally, and hold to some conservative views theologically, you would be considered to believe in the fundamentals. Now that’s true with me. On the other hand, evangelical describes more of a progressive, contemporary approach to ministry, which we also have. But, few people realize that the term evangelical actually does also mean that you only believe in the preservation of the principles of the word of God, not the very words of God, which separates you from the fundamental view. But most people would probably call me an evangelical even though my doctrinal views are more fundamental. So I usually describe myself as conservative theologically and progressive when it comes to worship style, praise and worship, not real contemporary, but a blend of hymns and contemporary praise and worship. So I don’t know if that defines me for you or not.
(Pastor Darin)

T5.4-2
I: Is Faith Bible Fellowship part of any larger denomination or church organizations?
R: We are not a member of a denomination. We are a member of a reformed Baptist church network called FIRE, Fellowship of Independent Reformed Evangelicals. So it’s just a voluntary fellowship of churches ...
I: You used a couple of terms when you were describing the FIRE, Independent –
R: Fellowship of Independent Reformed Evangelicals, yes.
I: Uh-huh, could you talk a little bit about what reformed, evangelical, those terms mean.
R: Yeah. Reformed being doctrines rediscovered, if you will, at the Reformation. Generally the term reformed means people who believe in the doctrines of grace, a lot of people will call it Calvinism or the five points of Calvinism, or some number of points that are generally Calvinistic, or whatever. But the Presbyterian, our bible believing Presbyterian friends like the PCA and the OP, Orthodox Presbyterians, they’re the classic reformed churches. There’s reformed Baptists like what we are in various flavors, but we’re Calvinistic, although we don’t necessarily like that term. I think Calvin wouldn’t particularly appreciate that term either, but you know, believing in what he wrote. So reformed is that.

Oh, evangelical, now there’s a term that’s been stretched in recent years. And you know generally, an evangelical is somebody who believes the bible and believes that you must have Christ in your life to be saved, and there’s all sorts of flavors of that.
I: Right, right, but that’s kind of how you would define it for you and your all’s church?
R: Yeah.
I: Yeah, like you said, it’s been used in so many different ways, it’s helpful to have people say what it means in their circumstance. Are there any other terms/labels that you would use to describe yourself as a Christian? Conservative, mainline, fundamentalist, Pentecostal, any of those?
R: Conservative, yes. Fundamentalist is a term that carries a lot of baggage as well, when originally fundamentalist meant somebody that was - I forget who wrote it, but about 100 years ago somebody wrote The Fundamentals, which is really just a set of conservative, evangelical doctrines. Course it’s come to mean a lot of different things, but generally means kind of radical nowadays. But we believe in the fundamentals of the faith, in the core, central, doctrines of historic evangelical Christianity. So in that sense, fundamentalist, yes, in the sense of where it means somebody that has all sorts of rules and regulations and all that sort of thing, no, not really, but still being conservative.
(Pastor Frank)

T5.4-3
I: How would you all identify yourselves as Christians? And that’s kind of a funny question. But there are lots of labels that get used just in everyday conversation but also in religious research, that people use to describe their faith. Obviously denominational labels. But Lewisville Bible is an independent bible church, right?
R1: Right.
I: It’s not affiliated with any larger denomination. But terms like evangelical, Pentecostal, liberal, reformed, moderate, fundamentalist, conservative, mainline. Would you guys use any of those terms to describe yourself, faith?
R2: Evangelical, fundamental.
R1: And conservative. Yeah, I would say. I would say those three.
I: Do you all mind just saying what those terms mean for you all?
R2: Fundamental, I would say just means straight from the bible. Evangelical, I haven’t thought about that in a long time. What does that mean, Drew? I just know that’s what our church describes itself as.
R1: I would say evangelical meaning that our purpose in life is to know God and make Him known.
R2: That sounds good. And conservative, do you mean like politically conservative?
R1: No. I mean, I mean in over –
R2: Conservative, like interpretation of the bible conservative?
R1: Yeah, in general. You know, you live a relatively conservative life in order to honor the Lord ... Does that make sense?
R2: And I think we would consider ourselves conservative based on like if you’re literal translation of the bible. I think people, that might be where we get the term conservative too.
R1: Oh, yeah. I would say very literal on what it says.
R2: It’s funny when you haven’t thought about what those words mean in a long time.
(R1: Drew, R2: Lily)
Nomothetic Quote Table 5 (T5.5): Religious Identities – Evangelical and Other

T5.5-1: Downtown Bible Church (Presbyterian)

I: How would you identify yourself as a Christian, and I guess maybe the follow up then is how would you identify this church...?

R: I guess our church is both evangelical and reformed. It’s reformed in its confessional convictions. It seeks to be evangelical, recognizing that every opportunity is an opportunity to display Christ’s worth. So while we are involved in a variety of things that some people might term ‘social gospel,’ all of them are with the intention and the hope that through that work or mercy or kindness that we might be able to explain the basis of our motivation for doing those kinds of things. Some are more weighted towards the more immediate needs, and some are more weighted towards being more evangelistic in our effort. But I guess both reformed and evangelical would both best explain who we are, and who I am.

I: Okay, could you talk a little bit more about ‘reformed,’ what you mean by that?

R: Sure. It’s a tradition that finds its source in history in the work of the reformers in the 16th century in Martin Luther and John Calvin who saw the need for a great reform within the Roman Catholic church at that time, and despite their best efforts to lobby and urge for reform within the church, when those efforts were rebuffed, they sought to then establish what they felt to be a more pristine version of what the church ought to be, by coming back to the basics of the faith, and coming back to what does truly define our authority ... finding authority in scripture alone, saved by faith alone, by grace alone, through Christ alone, for the glory of God alone.

(Pastor Peter)

T5.5-2: Trinity Bible Church (Nondenominational)

I: How would you describe yourself, or this church, if they align, as a Christian?

R: Okay, the words people would identify with would be conservative and evangelical. Not fundamental or fundamentalist, not charismatic, or mainline, or whatever.

I: Could you talk about those terms a little bit, what they mean to you?

R: We would hold that the bible is the inerrant word of God, and whatever it speaks to is true, so long as we can understand it accurately. That doesn’t say that every translation is inerrant, but just the original revelations and writings of the scriptures, would be inerrant, meaning without error. That doesn’t mean that there’s all kinds of cultural uniquenesses to it because it was written in the age that it was written. So it would be conservative evangelical, is a very good word for it. We believe in being involved in the community and things like that. So, we’re not trying to retreat, and things like that.

(Pastor Randall)

T5.5-3: Redeemer Lutheran Church (Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran)

I: How would you identify yourself as a Christian ... you hear a lot of labels, things like evangelical, liberal, Pentecostal, reformed, moderate, fundamentalist, those types of things, would you use any of those terms or any other terms to describe your faith?

R: Evangelical I guess is one of the labels that our - I would most closely identify with. I think
labels - for the most part, I would say just biblical. There’s a lot of labels out there that maybe I don’t really identify with or I don’t understand, but [I] try to keep things pretty straightforward, straight out of the bible, and beyond that, I don’t know what else to call it.

I: How would you define evangelical? Like you said, it’s a term that gets used a lot; what does that mean for you?
R: And that’s part of why I said biblical. I don’t really know [what evangelical means] because that word gets used a lot. To be honest with you, I’m not entirely sure what people put with that word, I think it means different things to different people. Some of the stuff you hear in the media, they use it as a derogatory term. As it’s used within the church, I think it means more based on scriptural teachings and that sort of thing. But, to be honest with you, I need to spend some time looking into what officially that does mean.
(Brandon)

T5.5-4
I definitely don’t feel comfortable with evangelical with all the other people that would be in that category.
(Max)

T5.5-5
I: How would you identify yourself as a Christian ... ?
R: The one [term] that would probably ring most deeply in my heart would be reformed. I wouldn’t be as fired up about our particular denomination, say, “Well I’m PCA!” as just the fact that PCA situates itself within the reform tradition and those ideas, or those theological emphases that I think are really important for living the Christian life. Everything from thinking about Luther and Calvin and what they were really fighting for in terms of God’s sovereignty, and the central place of God’s word, and faith alone, and those kinds of things really mean a lot to me ... So for me it’s more reformed than Presbyterian. And a lot of those terms are a little slippery to me. I wouldn’t consider myself Pentecostal, but evangelical is a word that I almost feel like doesn’t really mean anything anymore, because you see those Barna surveys where they’re like, “77% of evangelicals don’t believe that Jesus is the only way,” or something. And you’re like, “Well then you’re not an evangelical.” So I would say reformed is close to my heart.
(Reese)

T5.5-6
[Responding to a question about how she would identify herself religiously]
R: I would say - I’m a believer in Jesus Christ is what I would say. You go to the hospital and they say, “What’s your religion,” and people would put Baptist, Methodist, right? I put Christian, that’s it. It doesn’t matter what church, as long as you believe, because when we get to heaven we’re not going to have any of those, right?
(Margery)
T5.5-7

I: How would you identify yourself as a Christian ... terms like evangelical, liberal, Pentecostal, reformed, moderate, fundamentalist, conservative, on and on, are there any of those that you would use to describe yourself?

R: No, not really, I mean, I would just say I love Jesus and I just love hearing about him and following him because he loved us. I wouldn’t put a label on myself though.

(Heather)

T5.5-8

I: How would you identify yourself and if this aligns with Crossroads, identify Crossroads as a church...?

R: Evangelical, dispensational. Dispensational is important verbiage ...

I: Could you define dispensational a little bit for me?

R: You know, I’m not great. But you get on the website you will [understand better]. What it basically is saying is that God has never changed, but when we look at the history of the world, we see that the way He interacts with His people - the way He dealt with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden is different than the way God dealt with [people] in the Old Testament times, either before the flood or after the flood. And that time during Christ when He was on earth [was different too]. So those clear delineations of what those dispensations are, that is what you get on the website, you’ll understand better. I’m not an academic. But I would say that what the whole dispensation movement is about is understanding that for us to say that God has always dealt exactly the same way with His people ... that wouldn’t be true.

(Pastor Jacob)

T5-9

I: How would you identify yourself as a Christian ... ?

R: So I would say, WELS, it’s a reformed church. I would say more than anything though, whether or not WELS existed or not, I believe that the bible is the true inerrant word of God. And so that’s really sort of the basis, regardless of what Lutheran churches happen to do ... you go back to the bible, and you interpret the bible. And so I’d say bible based I guess more than anything.

(Dana)
Nomothetic Quote Table 6 (T5.6): Biblical Inerrancy

T5.6-1
[Responding to a question about how he would define his faith]
Confessional, as opposed to moderate, as opposed to liberal. Confessional, stating that what scripture says is therefore true ... Confessional to me then, would be that we believe what scripture says whether it makes logical sense or not. And there are things in the bible that simply do not make sense. I often say to people, if someone were to take a course in religious studies, and study all of the religions of the world, and then on the basis of that personal research and logic, pick one, nobody would pick Christianity, because it simply is not logical - the virgin birth of Christ, we believe Jesus physically rose from the grave ... Confessional means, confess what scripture says, don’t allow human reason and logic to get in the way, because logic is a handmaid to faith, but where the two conflict, then logic needs to be laid aside, and faith says, the God who created this world, and rose from the dead, can also give us a book that speaks truthfully.
(Pastor Barry)

T5.6-2
So we truly do, when I say confessional, we really believe that the bible is not pluralistic, it isn’t something that you can read and interpret in a variety of different ways, any more than you could give somebody who has a Type A blood a Type O blood transfusion. I mean there are some absolutes that you just can’t mess with, and that certainly the word of God is such an absolute.
(Pastor Barry)

T5.6-3
I believe everything in the bible is true, and you kind of have to; it is the word of God. In the beginning the Word was God and the Word was living [reference to John 1:1], I mean you can’t really argue with those words that Jesus spoke. I believe that there is no [errancy]* in the bible.
I believe that everything [in the bible] read in its proper context is true. There are some things, obviously parables were not literal, but Christ Jesus used them as parables to reiterate or to illustrate the main message. In those things - literally you’re not going to throw seeds onto the path and stuff. If you have the faith of a mustard seed you can move mountains and stuff. I don’t believe Jesus was saying you can go move Mount Everest, that’s why it’s a parable.
(Ralph)

*I used the term “inerrant” in the question and Ralph misunderstood its meaning and literally said there was “no inerrancy in the bible.” This actually happened in another interview before Ralph’s as well, and so I stopped using the term. I think it is clear from the context of the rest of the answer that Ralph meant to say that he believes there are no errors in the bible.
When you’re conservative theologically it hinges on your view of the bible itself and its preservation, its original inspiration, and then of course God preserving it through the years; and then it becomes authoritative ... Conservative theologically I would have to define as the bible, although it is not a history book, when it speaks historically it is considered accurate, although it is not a science book, when it has anything to say about science it is accurate. And with that in mind, views such as some of the archeological finds, or scientific views, if they are correct, they would have to line up with the Word [the bible]. What I have found is, where science and history have facts, they do line up with the Word, but where there is theory, that’s when they tend to part, part ways. So conservative theologically I think would be based on the inerrancy of the scripture, that it is authoritative.

(Pastor Darin)

I: Do you find it difficult to reconcile your scientific background with your faith, or is that something that you feel like you've been able to accomplish fairly easily?

R: I think I've been able to accomplish that. I don’t try to explain it [meaning the bible] away. But with any of the miracles of the bible, you have to accept it, as your faith allows you to accept it, as fact. If there’s any conflicts between science and faith, that science says [something] can’t be true, but the bible tells us it is, it’s [science is] just our flawed human thinking ... we haven’t come to the point where we can - or come to a point where there is no answer other than the faith [answer] that is taught to us by the word of God. So that’s where I try to put myself, because I know I’m going to be closer to being correct from a scientific point of view if I just accept the fact that my faith allows me to believe it [meaning the bible]. And, like I say, we just haven’t reached the point scientifically that we can come up with a logical conclusion.

(Trent)
**Nomothetic Quote Table 7 (T5.7): Climate Change in the Bible**

**T5.7-1**
One of the things the Lord has done in my ministry is He’s laid on my heart to speak concerning the concerns of man. When global warming was such a hot topic, during the election, and some of the political push, is when I felt like the Lord laid on my heart this topic. What does the bible say, that’s important for us to know? This is what Al Gore says, this is what Obama says … okay, what does the bible say? … So as a believer, you can leave a service like that, and I think have a great confidence in God, and assurance that you do not have to go home today and think that somehow a meteorite is going to come crashing down and destroy the whole earth. Now do meteorites crash? Yeah. Will there be fires in various parts of the world, tornados, and monsoons, or, or tidal waves? Yes, that’s all part of the natural course, and has always been, since the day of, at least, the fall of man, and Noah’s flood after that, the seasonal changes, climatic changes.
(Pastor Darin)

**T5.7-2**
We’ve already done the global warming by water thing, right? The ice caps have already all melted and submerged the earth, and that’s already happened. I’m not saying that couldn’t happen for certain regions of the earth. But I know from scripture that it isn’t going to happen a second time, that God said, “I’ll never flood the earth again, and here’s the rainbow” [reference to Genesis 9:11-15]. So in that regard, I cannot believe in global warming as something that is going to affect the entire planet. Okay, it may change things in various areas, right. And so the animals, the life, that lives in that area is going to either have to adapt or move. But I don’t think it’s going to affect the whole planet at large, and in the same way that it did with the flood.
(Julie)

**T5.7-3**
Obviously in scripture, with Noah, He [God] caused some serious climate change because of His dissatisfaction with man and the way they [humans] were relating to each other and to Him.
(Camden)

**T5.7-4**
What the bible describes as global warming is not what people are describing as global warming today. It’s not a gradual heating up of the earth, it is a chaotic, cataclysmic event in which the earth is consumed
(Pastor Darin)

**T5.7-5**
The bible does describe the earth being destroyed by fire, it does say that. It’s not a total annihilation of the earth; Clarence Larkin, in one of his studies, and Clarence Larkin dates back to the 1700’s, 1800’s, he calls it the “baptism by fire,” the earth is going to be baptized in fire.
Peter described it in 2 Peter chapter three as being “reserved unto fire” and in that very chapter, in 2 Peter 3, he [Peter] describes the earth having been destroyed by a flood, talking about Noah’s flood, and then it being reserved unto fire.
(Pastor Darin)

**T5.7-6**

*Responding to a question about what has influenced his perceptions of climate change the most*

Whether or not global warming is true is a scientific and not a biblically driven reality. So I can’t look at my faith and I can’t look at the bible to answer the question is global warming real? I either have to look at Al Gore, or some meteorologist or oceanographer and say, “Give me the scientific evidence.” That’s what’s going to drive my decision.
(Pastor Barry)

**T5.7-7**

I: *Is global warming an issue that the Wisconsin Synod has an official position on at all?*
R: No, our church body has no opinion on matters of government and society. We have individual opinions, and so you would hear any one of our pastors preach a sermon on how to be, and why we need to be a good environmentalist and not abuse what God has given to us, but our church, again, part of our confessional definition, does not make pronouncements on issues unless they are moral issues, like abortion, like family, man plus woman … So political pronouncements, as I say, unless they are moral issues that scripture deals with, we don’t have an official Wisconsin Synod position, but we all have personal opinions, and we would separate the two.
(Pastor Barry)

**T5.7-8**

I: *Do you think that it’s a topic that your religious beliefs inform your opinion on?*
R: No.
I: *Okay, and why would you say no to that?*
R: Because the bible doesn’t address global warming. And we’re just getting it from people in the world … it’s just something that’s not addressed in the bible, so we don’t go there.
(Pastor Preston)

**T5.7-9**

I: *All in all, what do you think impacts your view on global warming/climate change the most?*
R: What is the most? Good question, good question. Let me think about that. Well, the scientific phenomenon of global warming or climate change, that I [would] say is mostly impacted by whatever research I’ve done on the Internet; obviously, because the bible doesn’t talk to that. It doesn’t say by the way, your car’s going to produce carbon dioxide and it’s going
to ruin [the atmosphere], it doesn’t say that. So the scientific portion of it I think is definitely mostly driven by what research I’ve done on the Internet.
(Simon)
Nomothetic Quote Table 8 (T5.8): The Creation Story

T5.8-1
[Responding to a question about the relationship between humans and nature]
I think most evangelicals, myself included, would [look to] see what transpires literally and historically in the book of Genesis, early on in the chapters of Adam and Eve. He [God] establishes them as essentially rulers and tenders over the creation. That there is a stewardship entrusted to Adam and Eve and that has been passed on to all individuals since then, that you’re to tend, we’re to be fruitful and multiply. We see that as really a charge to all individuals. The idea of squandering resources, there’s something inconsistent with that responsibility of stewardship. And yet there is also equally so a freedom and a liberty to use the creation. There’s nothing illegitimate about maximizing the uses of resources necessary without, of course, despoiling the environment, and squandering resources, and revealing ourselves as unfaithful stewards of the environment. So, there’s kind of a tension there, obviously. But we would be just as aggressive in saying let’s utilize resources as we would in saying let’s not abuse resources.
(Pastor Cecil)

T5.8-2
You know, in Genesis, when God created the world, He set man, woman on earth to be rulers over creation. So I think that there’s a direct correlation to God saying this is yours, I’ve made it, rule over it. And I think as a direct result of the fall of man and of [humanity’s] sinful nature, we’ve been destructive and not good stewards of what was entrusted [to us].
(Alice)

T5.8-3
R1: So earth, it is cursed because of the choice that we made. God created the earth, and He created it perfect. And then He brought man into the earth. And He created him perfect. And then here comes Eve. I’m not blaming Eve, but I’m just saying that they both made the choice to sin against God. And therefore, the earth being cursed is a consequence. And you can see it in the bible where it says the earth groans for the renewal [reference to Romans 8:22].
R2: For the return.
R1: For the return of the Lord … You’ve probably been able to enjoy a sunrise on a mountaintop or something like that.
I: Once or twice. Yeah.
R1: And I don’t know about you, but I did that once on the base of Pike’s Peak. We went to a little peak right there near the base and looked out, and it was awesome. And we got to do it on Haleakala in Hawaii. And you just look at it, and it gives you goose bumps. And if this world is cursed to where it is not where it was before man sinned, what in the world did it look like? I mean, I bet you it was absolutely amazing. No thorns! No weeds! What the heck. I’d love that. No crabgrass! Come on!
(R1: Drew, R2: Lily)
Nomothetic Quote Table 9 (T5.9): God’s Sovereignty and the Created Hierarchy

T5.9-1
I: Is there anything else that you’d like to say about any of this stuff?
R: Just that God’s in control. That’s what I believe.
(Laura)

T5.9-2
You know, since I was a child, I’ve always been a strong believer in what my church and parents have told me, that God is in control. And if the world ends tomorrow, I’m at peace with that, I know where I’m going.
(Pastor Preston)

T5.9-3
R: Well I think it’s very clear in scripture that you’ve got the creator, the Sovereign God, and then we are the creation. Now, humans He placed in the Garden and said, “Rule the earth and subdue it.” That doesn’t mean run amok and go crazy, when you look at Adam’s role in the Garden, he was actually the caretaker of the creation, to the point where he named the animals. When you look at that, if you look at that as a pattern of what God established, you look at it and say, “This is something that we are charged [with].” So I think my role is, in relation to creation is, to be a good steward of it.
(Camden)

T5.9-4
R: God made the earth for us. In my favorite chapter in Matthew, [Jesus is] like, “I’m gonna take care of you, I take care of the birds, why wouldn’t I take care of you.” That would lead me to believe that God would think that we are more important than nature. That’s Matthew chapter 6 [Matthew 6:26-30].
I: So how are we to interact with nature based on that?
R: We’re supposed to respect it because it’s God’s creation for us, so obviously we need to respect it. God wants us to respect it.
(Janica)

T5.9-5
In reformed thinking there’s this phrase called the ‘cultural mandate,’ which means that, having been made in the image of God and having been given the commission to fill the earth and subdue it, we have a certain responsibility to use the earth well and to be vice regents, or to be, as we’ve said, stewards of it. So to put it under our power, not in the sense of dominating it to make ourselves feel powerful, but where it can be harnessed for good, we are to harness its energy. So I guess in some ways that’s why we build dams or why we create lakes, that we have the capacity to use the forces of nature for our good, for our enjoyment, for our sustenance, for our flourishing. But we’re also to have in mind, as we do all those things of manipulation, that
God has given it to us, and so we’re not to use it in ways that are destabilizing to the overall system that He’s given us. So yeah we have that mandate to put to use what He’s given us.
(Pastor Peter)

T5.9-6
We have dominion. We do. We are not the same as the bear, as the worm, and when people become so intelligent, and we see this very clearly in the book of Romans, if someone wants to mitigate all of that, and they think they’re closer to the earthworm, they can start crawling with the earthworm. You know? But no, we are different, and to think we aren’t, we’re using our knowledge to become fools. And this is exactly what it says in the book of Romans [reference to Romans 1:22-23]. We become so knowledgeable we become fools. And it really hasn’t changed.

The reason why we want to do that as human beings, the reason why we want to gain so much knowledge [is] that we can become masters of our universe. And then this whole pride issue steps in, which is what has separated us from God from the beginning. So the reason why we want to have this knowledge, the reason why we want to be the center of the universe is so that we are the ones making the decisions - that we are not under anybody’s authority, and that’s wrong. We’re under authority; we’re under the authority of God to show respect to other human beings, to show respect to the environment.
(Pastor Jacob)
Nomothetic Quote Table 10 (T5.10): Perceptions of Climate Change Science

T5.10-1
R: From 2/04 to 2/06 the people at NASA who release things to the press manipulated the figures about what - that global warming is occurring. And they had pictures on the article I saw where they placed some of the temperature sensors. I’m talking about this far from an incinerator, where the exhaust from an air conditioning thing could blow warm air across the temperature sensor.
I: I did not see that.
R: Oh gracious, I can forward it to you if you’d like. But it’s a manufactured thing for what reason I do not know.
(Daniel)

T5.10-2
Well obviously the popular media tells us one thing, that it’s pretty much a done deal, I mean it’s pretty much settled, this is a reality, and so we therefore need to X, Y, Z. You know, some of the things they’re proposing might be good things ... And there’s others that don’t perhaps have as much of a voice, the dissenters, the minority, that say that it’s not really an issue, or that we don’t have proof that it is, and therefore we don’t want to make radical changes based on science that’s unsure.
(Pastor Frank)

T5.10-3
A lot of the data [on climate change] I have seen is even contradicting one another, depending on who you’re reading. And I think there again I’ve got to question, and be somewhat suspect as to the background of those studies. I mean are we dealing with government funding, are we dealing with jobs that are trying to be protected, are we dealing with people that just want more research money, and by promoting this they’re able to get that, and I mean obviously they’re learning numerous things, but is there really a warming that’s taking place?
(Pastor Darin)

T5.10-4
I: So what do you think about it, do you think that a warming is taking place currently?
R: Well, in my own opinion, I know that scientific research says it is, but they can be wrong. So I don’t think it’s something that we should be extremely scared and nervous and fearful about, since we believe the bible says that we should not worry and fear.
(Pastor Preston)

T5.10-5
I: Do you perceive your faith to impact your views on global warming at all?
R: Yeah, I think in a couple of ways. I believe God created all of this, no doubt. I can’t look at a tree, I can’t look at a child and think that just happened, it’s not possible, I can’t rationalize that.
So, that said, that sort of shapes my beliefs on how all this came to be, on how we all got here. And if you look at a lot of these folks that are talking about climate change, global warming, they’re big bang guys, they’re evolutionists; they’re talking about all this stuff happened over umpteen million years ... So right from the get-go, I have to consider where they are basing their science. So they’re saying, “Well we did this study and this happened over umpteen million years after the big bang, after we all climbed out of the slime.” The foundation that they’re basing their science on is wrong. It’s wrong. So you have to look at everything they’re talking about from that perspective ... My starting point is, their science is based on some very flawed assumptions about how the world came to be. And so I don’t know how - they’re making huge leaps on the most fundamental things on how it all came to be. What other huge leaps are they making in the assumptions that they’re making on - whether it be warming trends or CO₂ levels in the atmosphere, those types of things. It destroys a lot of their credibility in my mind. And then the other thing would be, it seems like there’s a lot of effort to quash debate on it; that also damages their credibility.

(Brandon)

T5.10-6

I: What would you say, all in all, informs your view on the topic [of climate change] the most ... ?

R: I would say that I’ve made an effort to go out and read up on this stuff, educate myself, but when you boil it back down, [it] goes back to what I said earlier about the fundamental foundation of what the science is based on. People that are big bang, they don’t believe the world was created. And so when you take away that foundation of what they are talking about, what do they have left? It’s one guess piled on another guess to a point now where they can’t even see back where they started. So that’s a big piece of it. It’s hard to have a conversation with someone or to read someone’s article and put a lot of credibility into it when they’re saying 45 million years ago, or whatever else it was when we emerged out of the soup, and then have them tell me that the sky is falling because I’m driving an American made vehicle. That doesn’t compute for me. So I would say that ultimately it comes back to my faith, and it comes back to the fundamental perspective that I have on all this stuff versus a lot of where the scientific community is coming from and their perspective on it, and we’re miles apart. So the fact that I can’t get - I cannot come to any conclusion other than the fact that the world was created and I was created; I can’t reconcile that.

(Brandon)
**Nomothetic Quote Table 11 (T5.11): Perceptions of Climate Change Advocates**

**T5.11-1**
Even if Al Gore is wrong, I do think that we still have to always approach our use of the environment with great care and concern. I think there are some environmentalists who maybe go so far as to protect all things, to prevent all sort of intrusion in to the world. And here’s where the devil’s in the details; I could speak in broad overarching themes about having regard for the environment, but then when it comes to whether I protect the entire population of the spotted owl versus whatever the reasons were that we weren’t, I don’t know anymore, I don’t know [what I would say], I’d have to hear the merits of either case for that, because I know that some environmentalists maybe put the earth as some sort of deity in itself, and would try to protect the way the earth is at all costs. I think that because we consider God to be at the center of the universe and because we believe ... [God] has given us responsibility to subdue the earth in proper ways, then we can’t turn the respect for the earth into an unqualified respect for the earth.

I probably have to flesh out what I mean by unqualified respect. It’s just this; I do think that there is a hierarchy in the way that God has made that which lives. I believe that because He has given us food and plants to eat, that humans therefore take more priority and therefore that’s why we do harvest grain, that’s why we do cut down trees to build homes. Because I believe that we have been made in His image, He has a particular regard for us, He has a regard for all living things, but He has for some reason given us a particular uniqueness, and therefore wants us to use that which we have for the good of those made in his image. So that’s what a more qualified respect for the earth is.

(Pastor Peter)

**T5.11-2**
My friend Molly is in a book club with all nonbelievers, and she said that those ladies are concerned about the fabric on the chair and where it came from. And they’re very disturbed about things. They want everything in their life to be - make sure that it came from a good - that it didn’t harm anything. And everything should be organic. Then there are other people that are so concerned about organic food and natural foods - I don’t know, maybe they just take it a little too far and just get so caught up in it. It’s kind of like, well, my friend that’s in the book club, she just really feels, and that’s not a firsthand example, but she feels like it’s their idol because that’s what they talk about. Everything is about that, and it gives their life purpose and meaning. But they’re kind of missing the point, that God created the earth to use for our benefit and that’s okay.

(Lily)

**T5.11-3**
I think for me, one of the things is I read some global warming stuff, was just that thought in Romans 1, how people exchange the glory of God for worshipping created things. And one
point that someone was making was it’s easy to exchange worshipping God and being a steward of creation to worshipping the earth, where you get people so focused on the cause of global warming or environmental issues that really that becomes the idol. I don’t think anything should do that in our lives, but we’re constantly tempted to make something that’s not ultimate, ultimate, and make the ultimate thing not ultimate.

(Reese)

T5.11-4

I feel like [climate change is] one of those things that the world, meaning the non-Christian world, talks about it all the time, all the time, all the time ... As a Christian, there’s a little red flag [there] because 90% of what the world thinks is important, I’m like, “Well, I don’t really trust that person.” Or, all celebrities [are] talking about it; I don’t really care what celebrities think. But if my pastor ... was talking about it ... or if it was James Dobson or somebody in the Christian worldview saying, “Hey, this is important, we need to think more about it,” then maybe I would be more prone to [say], “Oh, okay.” And that’s weird that I would compartmentalize that, that way. But I think I’m so skeptical of what the politicians, and the Al Gores of the world, and the celebs [say].

(Shelly)

T5.11-5

The people that advocate it [climate change] are people that want political power and want control over finances. Now, if we were to have agreed to the Kyoto treaty or whatever it was that was put forth over global warming, it would have ruined our economic system and that’s their ultimate goal, make America just like every other country. And I think that we’re a unique country.

I: So do you feel like it’s primarily foreign interests that are advocating that or are there people within the US that are advocating that?

R: Well it’s both, it’s both. You have people like Al Gore, and your left leaning political thinkers that are advocating - they want more power and they’re advocating global warming as a human cause. You have people from countries that don’t have strong Christian bases that advocate the same thing just to bring the United States down to their size. That’s the ultimate goal. That’s what I believe anyway.

(Jeremiah)

T5.11-6

The reality of it is, there are other things that influence Christian culture. It’s like any other argument that goes on, you end up saying and believing things that you really don’t, and there’s a complexity of what’s causing you to believe what you believe. And what I’m saying is, the bible isn’t the only thing that is shaping, and forming, Christian popular thinking. There are other forces in our culture, one of which would be just a very reactionary movement against anything that is left. And since the environmental movement, in some ways, is espoused completely and endorsed completely by the left, thus all environmentalism gets perceived to be
left and liberal, when it really isn’t ... But the problem is, it’s not held in balance. It’s [the environmental movement has] become an aggressive thing that has an end to itself. And so it becomes joined at the hip with other movements, and then there becomes a reaction to it, and everything is politicized and polemicized, instead of people thinking through logically and all this.

I: So the church’s role could be presenting a more balanced perspective?

R: Yeah, yeah, but what it is, that’s left, and the church is on the right, and therefore we don’t like that. That’s really what happens in a lot of peoples’ minds.

(Pastor Randall)
**Nomothetic Quote Table 12 (T5.12): Stewardship**

**T5.12-1**

I: You’ve mentioned the word stewardship. That’s another word that gets used a lot. What does that mean in your own words?

R: You hear a lot of talk about stewardship of money. And I think that what, so in both contexts, if you’re a steward of money or a steward of something else, you are entrusted with something to, that’s not your own to care for and to use in a responsible way. So if we are to be good stewards of our money, it’s realizing that all I have belongs to the Lord. And I’m entrusted to use it according to His will and according to His glory. Does that make sense?

I: Then how would that relate specifically to the environment?

R: I think that creation was created by God for His glory. And He entrusted man to rule over it in such a way that would honor Him and that would care for the earth. And so we are stewards of the earth and of what God has entrusted to us. And as a result, I don’t think we have been good stewards and have thus created global warming.

(Alice)

**T5.12-2**

I: Do you see your faith informing your view on the topic of global warming at all?

R: Absolutely a hundred percent. That’s not to say I have always followed that, I used to kind of be the, “It’s not that big of deal, it will all sort itself out.” Over the past four years as I’ve embarked on some new things, and seen other places, it’s become much more to me where it is a spiritual issue ... I can say unequivocally my faith has driven my views on the environment.

I: Okay, how so? Could you talk a little bit more about how you see it as a faith related issue?

R: I think we’re commanded to be good stewards of the earth, good stewards of everything we’re given. And so in that very command and in that very view, it’s what are we doing as Christians to take good care of this earth that God’s bestowed upon us? Granted, it’s His, so if we’re truly children of the King, we’re going to take care of what’s His, because we’re representing Him. So when it comes to the environment, I’ve literally, when it comes to things I can impact, it’s [saying to myself], “Okay what am I doing?” Instead of driving there could I walk or could I bike there? Could I change the way I utilize the natural gas that is pumped into my house? Teaching my children why should we not litter? Is it just that you’ll get fined, so it’s more of a mandate? Or is it, let’s talk about what God commanded us to do as citizens, temporary citizens of this planet. He created all this, so there’s a lot of different things that drive that for me, and it’s all traced back to my faith in Christ. Furthermore, if you look in Psalms and it says nature speaks to His handiwork and His divinity, even more so we should be protecting it.

(Camden)
I: You’ve talked already about stewardship and what our role is in relationship to the creation. A lot of folks I’ve talked to have talked about our role as the call of dominion that you read about in Genesis. So could you maybe contrast your view with that, or just talk about that ... ?

R: Oh man, that is a beautiful, beautiful thing that God has created. It goes back to what I was saying before where ... the strong are designed to serve the weak ... Dominion in scripture, who has more dominion than God? Who has more dominion than Christ who stepped out of heaven to take on the vulnerable body in the incarnation of a human being, to live in this broken world and ultimately be subjected to a criminal’s death by people who were falsely accusing him, and then to conquer death. I mean, that is dominion. Dominion is stewardship, they are absolutely, 100% tied together ... You see this throughout the scripture, whether it’s with kids, whether it’s with gardens, whether it’s with whatever. What we are called to do in the Garden [of Eden] - the call is to work it and to keep it, and directly to protect it and serve it. Again that’s something that we as human beings created in the likeness of God, have been given this power over creation to do with as we choose because God’s given us the freedom to do that. But that ultimate responsibility He’s given to us in that authority is service, that’s that great call on our lives. So I think anybody who mis-defines dominion as exploitative or dominating dominion is completely missing the point. They don’t understand the true, holistic gospel story. The true gospel is teaching us that dominion is authority that demands service.

(Max)
Nomothetic Quote Table 13 (T5.13): Sin and the Environment

T5.13-1
I think when humans rebel against God, it affects their relationship to Him, it affects their relationship to each other, and it affects their relationship to the world, which is their delegated task to take care of. And I think we see that in the way that we abuse - like, we eat too much when the rest of the world doesn’t have food, and we use too much water; all the different ways that we are selfish instead of being stewards.
(Reese)

T5.13-2
I: Do you think that sin impacts the human relationship with nature?
R: Yeah, definitely. For example, there’s businesses and industries that just trash nature, trash creation, simply for their lack of compassion or consideration of what creation is for itself ... and it’s usually because of selfish ambitions, whether it’s for wealth, or success, or power. Power always seems to be a big one for political sides. Success and wealth for people that struggle with vanity or pride, or just simply have that desire for wealth, which is futile, as Solomon says in Ecclesiastes ... I definitely think sin enters into a human’s heart and therefore influences his life’s ambitions and influences his actions, and I feel like those actions can - nature can take a toll because of it. Honestly, it’s just, it’s laziness, whether it’s someone who’s throwing their styrofoam cup out the window from McDonalds, or leaving a plastic wrapper. Or it’s selfishness, as we said, whether it’s with oil, or pollution, or stuff like that, it could be a number of things, but it all comes down to a lack of respect for what creation is, and what God put it there for. He put it there for us to enjoy and dwell, and to marvel at almost.
(Ralph)

T5.13-3
Before Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, Christ created creation in shalom, perfect peace and perfect harmony. But then sin entered and you had to kill a lamb to cover up their sin. That’s just a perfect example of what I feel like creation - it was supposed to be like this, but sin has developed and steamrolled or snowballed into what we have now: global pollution, nuclear energy has now been developed because of political power, and snap, someone could just lose their mind and go and destroy so much because of it.
(Ralph)

T5.13-4
I think the Lord wanted us to enjoy the Garden of Eden. It was definitely for [our] enjoyment - I mean, [the] animals were hanging out; the serpent wasn’t hurting anybody. I think the Lord did not intend it to be this way [referring to the contemporary/post-Eden state of the world]. I think sin changed a lot of things, including how man relates to the world around him. Because He [God] said [after Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden], “You will be a meat eater now. Now you are going to have to go kill the meat and find it” [Shelly’s personal interpretation
of Genesis 3:17-19]. Maybe God was just going to make us be fruit eaters, or maybe the Lord was just going to present something every night. We don’t know whether it was meat or not, but I think that the fall definitely changed the relationship of man and nature.

(Shelly)

T5.13-5
Sin sort of fractured that relationship, that perfect relationship in Eden. And because of our sin, the things we do in the environment, it’s [the environment is] going to war against us constantly. It’s not going to be just perfect and happy. I guess it was intended to be Eden, but after sin, that was broken. And [so] we will toil, and the soil will be full of thorns and so - I don’t know - I guess it’s going to be a battle.

(Melissa)

T5.13-6
I: Do you see sin impacting the human relationship with the natural world?
R: Yes.
I: How so?
R: Well, sin is just against God. And with sin comes consequences of sins. So I guess humans can impact what’s going on in the world with sin. Like pollution, to me, is really a sin because you’re not taking care of the world. To me, what’s weird is garbage and stuff. How do you get rid of it? With all these people, where can it go? Does it burn up in the atmosphere? Now see, stuff like that, I don’t have answers to. But I think about that. Like the oceans being polluted with garbage and sunken ships and dead bodies. Do they just decay or what impact do they have? I think about things like that, but I really don’t have the answers to it. But I agree that sin - there’s consequences to it, and global warming may be one of the consequences to the sins that we’re not taking care of the earth like we should. That’s a possibility.

(Laura)

T5.13-7
[Responding to a question about what she thinks is causing climate change]
So my thought on that is what we’ve done to our ecology, what we’ve done to our environment is sin, because we haven’t taken care of what God’s given us to be stewards of. And, as a result, there’s toxins. There’s all these environmental issues that are killing us every day, making our bodies intolerant to antibiotics, making all these things happen. So there has to be a faith connection to our responsibilities to global warming. Have we created this? Do I think it’s going on? Absolutely; as simple as the sin of from the beginning, we’ve not taken care of what we were given. And so when people say, well if you’re sick, you know, maybe there’s this or that. Yeah. I agree. It maybe wasn’t me specifically. We all contribute every day to our environment in harming it, in harming our children in the future of what we’re doing, our actions. So if they want to say that maybe people are sick because of sin, I would agree completely. But I’m thinking in the bigger picture, not just my 100 years on this earth or 40 years on this earth.
Yeah, I completely think there’s a major connection between our actions and, again, not being stewards of what He’s given us.
(Sandy)

T5.13-8

I: Some folks have said environmental pollution, even global warming, are examples of human sinfulness in relationship to the creation, to the natural world. Would you characterize it that way? Do you see us sinning against nature?
R: I don’t see us sinning against nature, because you can’t sin against nature. I know you probably mean that metaphorically, but just to be clear on the terms here.
I: Yes, please.
R: I think it’s important to be clear on the terms in this issue, because one of the issues that I think is going on is that there’s almost a worship of nature in the radical environmental movement. And that I reject. I would share some of their goals, but I would reject the rationale. [For environmentalists] It’s Gaia, it’s the earth, it’s alive, it’s we’ve got to honor Mother Nature. And [so] I say terms become very, very important in this discussion. I would say it’s not a sin against nature; it’s a sin against God, that this is God’s handiwork. This is His gift that He’s entrusted in terms of a stewardship to human beings, and that we sin against that gift. And so that’s what makes it offensive, that’s what makes it sin. It’s against a person, God. That He has certain commands, certain actions that He has taken to entrust stewardship to us, and when we are unfaithful in that stewardship, when we are indifferent to that stewardship, then that is sin.
(Pastor Cecil)
Nomothetic Quote Table 14 (T5.14): God is in Control Period

T5.14-1
He [God] is still - He didn’t just turn the dial on the clock and leave it going. He is still sovereign and still active in the planet that He’s given to us. He’s asking us to care for it, but He is still active in what’s happening with us and our planet. He’s still caring for us, and that makes it a little bit hard to explain away that tsunami, because I’m sure believers and unbelievers alike were killed in that tsunami. But God didn’t turn away when that tsunami happened. 
(Julie)

T5.14-2
I think God is always in control. He’s in control even if we got Obama for president. He chooses our leaders. You read what’s in the bible, in the history of the bible, He chose leaders. He chose David over Saul, and so He’s the one that’s in control, He’s even in control when we think He’s not. 
(Jeremiah)

T5.14-3
I believe that if it got to a point where global warming was [going to be] the destruction of the earth and that’s what God’s will was, then it would happen. I think if it’s not, and if we’re doing something wrong, God’s going to put people in place to help correct it either via government, which that might be part of the reason they’re pushing it. And if they are, then God’s going to - I really believe that I will feel ... a pulling that says, “You know what, Tyler, you need to get on board, you’ve got to do something about it.” Now that could be the fact that I’m just not praying enough about it. I don’t know. But I do know that ... when it gets to [that] point, I think God’s going to speak to a lot of people. And you’re going to know for sure that - You know what, we need to straighten up. 
(Tyler)

T5.14-4
I: Do you mind if I just ask your opinion on whether or not you think global warming is happening?
R: I think that we’ve had warming and cooling, and we’re going to do whatever God wants, and I don’t think that human beings are going to make a big difference. I do think that we must be conservative of the earth, and we can’t just run roughshod, but I don’t think as far as the emissions of the gasses, we’re not going to change the climate. I wish we could, and I think that if they want to put umbrellas between us and the sun, it would be about as much use as what they’re doing. But that’s my opinion.
I: Sure, so maybe warming, maybe not warming?
R: Oh, we’re warm, yeah.
I: But it’s not human caused.
R: No, and it’s also part of the cycles that the earth has gone through since the beginning.
I: Would you say that you’re concerned about the warming right now?
R: Not really, because I really don’t think we can do much except enjoy nice warm winters.
(Agnes)

T5.14-5
I: I’m interested in if you see your faith impacting your view on global warming at all?
R: Not really. I mean I trust what God’s doing and He’s in control of everything, so if this is happening, it’s happening for a reason. And we don’t always see [God’s] reasons … but I think He’s in control of it, not matter what, whether it’s good or bad.
(Heather)

T5.14-6
I: Do you see your faith impacting your view on the topic of global warming at all?
R: I think so.
I: How so?
R: Well, I think that if we don’t have our faith, that we’re going to believe these people that are telling us these things [about climate change] … We have God to look to and trust, and He’s in control of everything. He is in control. So I don’t worry about it. I don’t think about it that often. I mean, when it’s 117 degrees it’s like, well maybe this is [global warming]. But He’s in control of it. And my faith - I just trust Him. He’s going to be in control. What’s going to happen, it’s going to be because He’s going to let it happen.
(Laura)

T5.14-7
R: My personal opinion, and you might want to quit this [the interview] right now, I mean after I say what I do - God’s in charge of how this world runs. We cannot control a climate; man thinks they can. Global warming - one day God’s going to burn it up and we’re not going to have any say so whatsoever. And I thought, why do I waste my time concerned about global warming? God wants me to be a good steward of what He has given me, including the earth. However, I can best use my time teaching His word, ministering to others, doing what changes lives, and that’s God’s word. So that is it, that’s the bottom line for me.
I: So it’s not something that you’re concerned about.
R: No, no. They can try to fix it; they can’t do that. God is so sovereign over all that. Nope, I am not concerned about it at all.
(Margery)

T5.14-8
R: A resolution passed recently to hold global warming to 2 degrees, did you see that?
I: The legislation to try and limit emissions to curb global warming?
R: Wow, if that isn’t man trying to play God. We are going to limit how the temperature rises globally?
(Pastor Barry)
T5.14-9

[Responding to a question about whether or not humans can impact climate]

R: Honestly, I think the climate piece of it is beyond our control. I think that as [a] sort of macro-scale - I don’t think we can control that stuff. I think it’s human arrogance to think we can. That goes back to [what I was saying before about] the scientific community, I think they’re being arrogant to think we can control that stuff. Now, can we control pollution? Absolutely. Can we come up with better ways to do things that have a less harmful impact on the environment, whether it be water quality or just tearing up the landscape ...? Absolutely we can. But can we change the temperature? I don’t think so. I think there’s too much volcanic stuff that we don’t understand. There’s methane vents at the bottom of the ocean that are putting out more CO$_2$ than any of us will in our lifetimes, and those things open, and close, and reopen somewhere else, and we don’t understand it, we can’t control it. Solar radiation, it will have an off day and an on day, and that’s so far beyond our control we can’t even comprehend it.

(Brandon)
Nomothetic Quote Table 15 (T5.15): God is in Control, But...

T5.15-1
I really believe that God is sovereign over what He created, and so I don’t think that we are going to go down a path that God is going to be surprised about, and therefore not going to know what’s going to happen or what to do about it ... my concern isn’t with the end result because I think the Lord has that in control.
(Pastor Jason)

T5.15-2
I think we’ve been given the freedom to inflict damage or whatever. I mean just look at the Cold War and if we had launched all those atomic bombs; that would have gone really bad. Now the question of, in my view of God’s sovereignty, and what I think the bible says about it, is that God sits over all of creation. And so whatever happens within that system, God is allowing or ordaining or however you want to use and interchange those words. And so whatever is going to happen has been known by Him and has been ordained by Him from the beginning of the world ... But I think it would be ignorant to say that we can’t affect a system that God has set in place. I think we have a lot of ability to affect a lot of things. I mean we can blow the tops off mountains, we’ve got a lot of power, in a sense.
(Pastor Jason)

T5.15-3
[Responding to a question about whether or not humans can impact the climate in light of God’s sovereignty]
P: Oh boy, that’s a good one. Can we really so malign the earth in such a way that it revokes God’s sovereignty over all things? I believe the Lord has both a decreedal will and a permissive will. He ordains some things by direct choice and He permits other things at His discretion. And sometimes, many of the things He permits He doesn’t disclose to us the reasons why. But that He calls us to be stewards at all, I think means that He doesn’t mean to revoke our sense of responsibility for what He’s given us. Jesus talks about the parable of the talents, he affirms those who use well what they’ve been given for the good of themselves and for the good of those for its purpose. So in terms of God’s sovereignty, I don’t think He would mean to just give us something, and at the same time not instill in us a sense of responsibility for what we’ve been given, we are to use it well. Does He intervene in history in order to prevent future calamity? He does. But for some reason, He also gives us a measure of responsibility and causality in the way things turn out. So I don’t believe that there’s anything that happens in the world that God doesn’t have an interest in, or a concern for, or an ability to do differently. But I do believe that He allows us to sometimes reap the whirlwind, if we sow in ways that are calamitous to us, then He will allow us to reap that whirlwind.
(Pastor Peter)
[Responding to a question about whether or not humans can impact a global system like climate]

R: That is a great question. I think God, in essence, I don’t want to say draws back and let’s man make his own mess ... I think man can have an effect; does it catch God by surprise? No. Does He allow it to happen? Yes. Does He know it’s coming? Yes. Does any of that make sense to me? Not really, but that’s where my faith comes in and says I’m a finite being, and in spite of it not making sense I’m going to believe it. So I think there’s an element to which God is allowing things to happen. I think if you look at changes in the environment, weather patterns, and so on and so forth, erosion, all those things are unmistakable. Now is that God saying, “I’m going to cause this to happen.” Or, “I’m going to allow it to happen, and man, you’re going to have to deal with the outcomes of it.” I mean, if you go back to the Garden [of Eden], He cursed the ground. Well was that God doing that, or was that man’s sin as a consequence of that? I believe it was the latter. Adam sinned, and therefore all men sinned, and we are bearing the consequence of that sin. So it was man’s action that caused God to say, “I’m a holy and just God, therefore there has to be a consequence to that.”
(Camden)

[Responding to a question about his concern over climate change]

Am I concerned to the point where I think we should do more to reduce our carbon footprint if we’re so enabled? Yes. Concerned about it to the point of, I’m scared? No, because I don’t believe as Christians we’re called to live in a state of fear. That’s not to say that we’re supposed
to be reckless. So that’s where I’m concerned about it. Do I try to do things in my home to try and reduce my carbon footprint? Yes, because I think the more we can do that, we’re being better stewards of what we’ve been given. But I’m not running around going, you know, solar flares are going to come and burn the daylights out of us in the next 25 years. That’s just, and if that happens, it happens, but I’m not concerned about it to that level.
(Camden)

T5.15-7
God is letting us do it [create climate change] through His infinite wisdom, maybe to finally reach a point where we learn a very, very important lesson. And maybe just right before the verge, right before the edge, where the things really go wrong, and it will either be His judgment day or a very important lesson that we’re about to learn.
(Trent)

T5.15-8
I: You mentioned the idea of God potentially intervening at some point with the changing climate ... [could you] talk a little bit more about His control over this event that’s taking place.
R: Okay. Well, if He’s not ready to have judgment day occur, then He will intervene some way. Hopefully it’s through moving the minds of men to solve for the problems, and at the same time, benefit the entire world, maybe benefit the Third World countries. Maybe the answer will come out of an area that needs that type of attention of the world. And then all of a sudden, I’ll just use an example of Central Africa, becomes the center of the world on how to conserve energy and how to turn sand into some type of fuel. And so I think that’s how He’ll intervene.
I: To help us to prevent a cataclysmic change in environment.
R: Exactly, exactly. If we’re about to wipe out a species of animal that is essential, is one of the essences of life, then we’ll learn something, you know, this creature has an enzyme that may have a cure for a disease.
(Trent)
Nomothetic Quote Table 16 (T5.16): Premillenial-Dispensationalist Eschatology

T5.16-1

[Responding to a question about his views on the end times]

R: It’s a good question, it’s an interesting question, because most people don’t think much more beyond today, or this week, or maybe next month. They don’t think about eternal things, or what am I going to do when I get old, what am I going to do when I die. As a society, we don’t want to think about that, that’s no fun. We don’t think about eternity. The bible is pretty clear though; no matter what one’s view on eschatological, end times things is, and there’s different views within evangelicalism, whatever one’s view is, it certainly includes that fact that things are not going to just keep going along the way they are, something is going to happen. God is going to intervene; Christ is going to return. However the timing of that works, [it] is going to set things right, in some way or another.

From my own perspective, from our church’s perspective, we’re pre-millenial, pre-tribulational dispensationalists. You probably know what those things are, but premillennial is that Christ is going to come before the millennium, the thousand-year reign of Christ on the earth, Christ is going to come back before then. Pre-tribulational refers to the time of the seven year tribulation. We believe that there is going to be a seven year tribulation like what the book of Revelation, and others as well, talk about. We think Christians will be removed from the earth before that happens, but we realize that we could be wrong on that. Others believe differently, well okay, that’s fine. Then, there will be a thousand year reign of Christ on earth, then the curse of the earth is reversed, and the desert blossoms, and the lion lays down with the lamb, and peoples’ life spans are extended. Some people think that’s kind of crazy or radical, but if you take the bible at face value, if you take it relatively literally, then it says those things. A lot of people take it symbolically, and okay, well fine, but whatever it is, there is going to be judgment and there is going to be good, and at some point in time God is going to bring in a new heavens and a new earth, because the old ones will be destroyed with fire. God destroyed it once with a flood, said He’d never do it again. This is really encouraging, no more floods, it’s going to end by fire. Oh yeah, great [laughing]. But anyway, the current one is going to be destroyed, and there’ll be a new one, and there won’t be any environmental concerns then. (Pastor Frank)

T5.16-2

I: Could you define dispensational a little bit for me?

R: You know, I’m not great … What it basically is saying is that God has never changed. But when we look at the history of the world, we see that the way He interacts with His people, the way He dealt with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden is different than the way He dealt with [people] in the Old Testament times, either before the flood or after the flood, and that time during Christ, when He was on earth. So those clear delineations of what those dispensations are. That is where you get on the website, you’ll understand better; I’m not an academic. But I would say that what the whole dispensation movement is about is understanding that for us to
say that God has always dealt exactly the same way with His people wouldn’t be true ... God hasn’t changed, but the way He deals with his people has changed.
(Pastor Jacob)

**T5.16-3**
I also think it’s real clear Jesus is going to come out of the clouds in the sky, and that’s how it’s going to happen, and He’s going to swoop up the believers. So it’s that black and white.
(Dana)

**T5.16-4**
I do believe there’s going to be a millennial kingdom, I believe that Jesus will come and we’ll be raptured, and he’ll set up a kingdom here on earth.
(Marcus)
Nomothetic Quote Table 17 (T5.17): God is in Charge of the End Times

T5.17-1
Well, I don’t know exactly how God will do away with this earth and make the new one. But the point is that He’s the one doing it. Not that He couldn’t use us as agents in some way, but that it’s not something that I need to worry about, [that] I’m accidentally going to cause the earth to be destroyed; God will, and then create the new one.
(Lily)

T5.17-2
I believe that what God says in the bible is true, and that one day He is going to destroy this earth and make a new heaven and new earth, I believe that. I don’t know how He’s going to do that, I am not God. But I believe He’s going to do it, He will do it His way, His timing.
(Margery)

T5.17-3
I think end times will be all God. It will be all Him. And whatever’s happening at the moment will become insignificant and meaningless.
(Trent)

T5.17-4
You know, if you read the bible, it says that God is going to destroy the planet someday, going to melt the elements with an intense heat. So, I mean, we’re not going to destroy it, even if we tried [laughing]. I think God reserves that right for Himself, and He’ll do so in judgment at His appointed time, and we’re not going to beat Him to the punch. That doesn’t mean that we shouldn’t take care of it; we are to take care of creation.
(Pastor Frank)

T5.17-5
So I’m sure that we could have an impact, you know, every butterfly’s thing has an effect. But I don’t feel like global warming is something that is going to kill - that eventually the earth is going to implode or whatever, become too hot to live, because the bible’s clear on how things are going to end ... It’s not like the earth is going to be destroyed by some natural event; it’s going to be God that does that ... So it’s not something that I worry about, like, “Oh, my goodness, we’ve got to change everything or we’re going to die, or the generations to come are going to die.”
But I think it’s important. One thing I think is good that’s come out of all the concern is just really from an American consumerism kind of way of life, it’s helped me to realize I throw a lot of stuff away and I can easily make changes that would be good, not because I’m worried about global warming necessarily but just about being a good steward of what we have.
(Lily)
T5.17-6
I believe that if it got to a point where global warming was the destruction of the earth and
that’s what God’s will was, then it would happen. I think if it’s not, and if we’re doing something
wrong, God’s going to put people in place to help correct it either via government, which that
might be part of the reason they’re pushing it. And if they are, then God’s going to - I really
believe that I will feel a - I haven’t prayed that much about it, but I’ve never felt a pulling that
says you know what, Tyler, you need to get on board, you’ve got to do something about it. Now
that could be the fact that I’m just not praying enough about it. I don’t know. But I do know
that I think when it gets to the point where [it gets bad], I think God’s going to speak to a lot of
people. And you’re going to know for sure that, you know what, we need to straighten up.
(Tyler)

T5.17-7
R: Well, if He’s [God is] not ready to have judgment day occur, then He will intervene some way
[regarding climate change]. Hopefully it’s through moving the minds of men to solve for the
problems, and at the same time, benefit the entire world, maybe benefit the Third World
countries. Maybe the answer will come out of an area that needs that type of attention of the
world. And then all of a sudden, I’ll just use an example of Central Africa, becomes the center of
the world on how to conserve energy and how to turn sand into some type of fuel. And so I
think that’s how He’ll intervene.
I: To help us to prevent a cataclysmic change in environment.
R: Exactly, exactly. If we’re about to wipe out a species of animal that is essential, is one of the
essences of life, then we’ll learn something, you know, this creature has an enzyme that may
have a cure for a disease.
(Trent)

T5.17-8
You hear all sorts of crazy stuff in terms of the world coming to an end, and the oceans taking
over, and this different stuff.
(Alice)

T5.17-9
If the icecaps are going to melt, they’re going to melt. I don’t see it as a catastrophic, oh my
gosh, the sky is falling scenario as the media makes it out to be.
(Drew)

T5.17-10
I can’t say for certain that I believe in global warming. I can’t say, I know there’s evidence and
I’ve been watching this evidence on the news, but I can’t say for certain that I believe that the
world is going to end that way.
(Julie)
T5.17-11
I: Would you say that it’s an issue that you’re concerned about ...?
R: You know, Global warming no. And a lot of it is, let me separate that, am I concerned to the point where I think we should do more to reduce our carbon footprint if we’re so enabled? Yes. Concerned about it to the point of, I’m scared? No, because I don’t believe as Christians we’re called to live in a state of fear. That’s not to say that we’re supposed to be reckless. So that’s where I’m concerned about it. Do I try to do things in my home to try and reduce my carbon footprint? Yes, because I think the more we can do that, we’re being better stewards of what we’ve been given. But I’m not running around going, “solar flares are going to come and burn the daylights out of us in the next 25 years.” And if that happens, it happens, but I’m not concerned about it to that level.
(Camden)

T5.17-12
I think we can certainly do a lot to harm our environment. But can we do so much that we, that we - I’ll just be honest, you look at the movie The Day After Tomorrow, and Al Gore’s stuff ... this is just hysteria ... Can we impact it? Yeah. But is it accurate and honest to say that we’re going to destroy the world as it’s described? I think that’s way over the top.
(Pastor Randall)

T5.17-13
The fear today is that we are going to burn ourselves up, the fear today is that we’re going to do something that is going to result in the earth being consumed, and we have no place to live. Years ago it was the Omega Man movie, and I think recently [I am] Legend; the whole idea of this concept of one man being left because we’ve destroyed our civilization, and that’s the fear that’s out there. Well does this fear have any merit? And so it [my sermon] was a comparative [study] of, this is what God says, this is what man is saying, this is what the fear is based on, now is there any need for that fear?
(Pastor Darin)

T5.17-14
Probably the difference of me versus maybe someone who doesn’t have a real strong faith or belief system, when they say get your mask, load up on your mask for the swine flu or stock your cellar with your food or whatever in case we have - I’m fine. I’m going to be fine always. Always I’m going to be okay. The kids are always going to be okay. I just, I have a real peace. Not an ignorant peace, because I know; I know I’m sick. I know, I understand all that, but I have just a real peace that it never was in my hands anyway and completely believe that it just wasn’t. So there can’t be any better place than in His so I don’t have that worry.
(Sandy)

T5.17-15
I: Would you say it’s [climate change is] a topic that you’re concerned about, or not really?
R: I am not really concerned about it ... it actually comes back to the way that the bible talks about the earth, and what’s going to happen to earth, and what’s going to happen to the people on the earth before it happens to the earth. The bible does describe the earth being destroyed by fire, it does say that ... the earth is going to be baptized in fire. Peter described it in 2 Peter chapter three as being “reserved unto fire” and in that very chapter, in 2 Peter 3, he [Peter] describes the earth having been destroyed by a flood, talking about Noah’s flood, and then it being reserved unto fire. And so that phrase, reserved, gives me great peace and confidence that God has said there is nothing that is going to happen to the earth until He is ready for it to happen to the earth, so there is no fear involved that there’s going to be some sort of collision with meteorites in space, or moving too close to other galaxies, there’s no fear there, in my view, because God’s word says that He has preserved it, reserved it for a specific time, and then it will go through a fire.
(Pastor Darin)
I think that Revelation tells us, well, not just Revelation – I think the bible tells us that there is going to come a one-world government in which Christians are going to be persecuted more so than under Nero or the Roman Empire. It will be more widespread throughout the world. So I think that’s coming. (Simon)

I can see this [climate change] as being a potential mechanism to trigger this one-world government, because you can see that, obviously, it’s global warming, so you’re going to have a global solution. And a global organization then, like the UN or something along those lines, that is going to be controlling this. And so as you have people sign onto this global warming phenomenon, well, you have to give up some of your sovereignty of your nation in order to participate in this, because you have to give up your sovereignty to handle your natural resources [according] to this organization. Well, once you start doing that kind of thing, that’s just one more slot that’s been - that’s one more cog in the wheel to have a global dictator. (Simon)

I think it’s [global warming is] a way that they’re trying to make money and control people which to me it’s the end of the world, the end times. It’s going to be a one-world government, and I think that’s the start. This is the process of the world now getting together and doing things together. And I think it’s eventually going to be the one-world government which controls people, which they want. (Laura)

My view of end times is such that there will one day arise a one-world ruler. I think the bible in the book of Revelation and elsewhere speaks of an individual that comes and basically exercises a control both religiously but also politically over the entire planet. And that we can see the spread of globalization, of the internationalizing of issues, that there will be a one-world currency I believe that is understood in some passages in Revelation. And I think a lot of these, while I’m not going to blame global warming for this, I’m going to say that these are steps towards the internationalizing of issues that will make it much easier for an individual to come along and exercise that kind of despotic rule over the planet. (Pastor Cecil)

I: Would you say it’s [climate change is] something you’re concerned about?
R: Not really. I think Jesus is coming back a lot sooner than we have to worry about the climate change.  
(Marcus)

T5.18-6

I: You’ve already mentioned that you don’t think it’s [climate change is] going to be that big of a problem because of Jesus’ return. Could you just talk a little bit more about that? 
R: Well, I just see a lot of the current events that are happening in and around the Middle East right now. It’s always been a flashy place, and now, I’m trying to think, was it, I think it was Ezekiel that prophesied that Israel would be destroyed and then re-established, and then that generation wouldn’t pass before he [Jesus] returned, or the messiah would come, and then build his temple and all that good stuff. And so I just see current events building up over there, and back to the literal interpretation, I think it’s going to be a lot sooner than later that he’ll return. I know there’s glacial retreat in Alaska and average temperatures are warmer in places, and like I said, just climate patterns are moving around. But I don’t think that’s really going to make much difference in the next 10 to 15 years.  
(Marcus)

T5.18-7

R: I read a couple things on the web. And it seemed like some churches were painting pictures that had to do with Revelation and apocalyptic scenarios that were just like what? Get out of here. And if too many people are listening to that that haven’t been exposed and don’t have a strong Christian foundation underneath them to begin with, then shame on those churches for doing that, because then you’re teaching and preaching things that aren’t biblical. And you’re doing it to souls that don’t know any better, don’t have a strong enough biblical foundation. So you’re messing with people’s faith and how weak or strong it is. So I do not think that churches have any business doing that sort of a thing. That would be, that’s my concern.  
I: Sure, sure. That makes sense. And were those churches painting that picture specifically in relation to global warming?  
R: Yeah. There was one that I saw, Red Sky Ministries or something.  
I: Okay. I’m not familiar with that.  
R: I just did a search on global warming and bible; I just did a BING search on it, and I think it was called Red Sky Ministries. I’ll have to see if I can find it here.  
I: Interesting.  
R: And I didn’t read a whole lot of it. But it seemed like this guy was claiming to have been, to have had visions while he was awake, and spoken to from God. And it’s like, whew, this is - hopefully that stuff doesn’t lead people astray. But if he’s claiming to be a Christian, then it’s scary if people would think that he’s speaking for all Christians there.  
(Dana)
Nomothetic Quote Table 19 (T5.19): Evangelism and Climate Change

T5.19-1
I: Do you think that Downtown Presbyterian has any sort of role to play on this topic [of climate change] ... ?
R: I would shudder, I would shudder to see them espouse anything from the pulpit or even a banner on the street that would declare caring for our planet before they would espouse faith in Christ ... It would disappoint me greatly if that was our new vanguard, if that was our bandwagon, instead of what Christ has done for you. Because ultimately if we die by some effect of global warming or by something that we have neglected to do on this planet, but we don’t know Christ, it’s, it doesn’t matter, you’re dead anyway. Knowing Christ is the opportunity to live forever. So I really hope that we never have a banner out there on the street or anything from the pulpit helping us to recycle. It’s not the place, it’s not the role of the church.
(Julie)

T5.19-2
I: Do you think that churches should be talking about it [global warming]?
R: Not necessarily. The church has a goal, and that is to preach Christ and change lives through the word. That is their major goal, and that is the purpose of the church, not to be involved with global warming.
(Margery)

T5.19-3
I: Do you think that churches have a role in addressing the issue of global warming?
R: I’m not sure about that. I feel like churches, their focus needs to be equipping people to tell others about Jesus, about God, about what it means to be a Christian. I think that that is the role of churches. Now, again, with people’s preferences [about whether or not to address climate change] there might be churches’ preferences too - “Well hey, we’re a church, we need to be doing different things to conserve so that we help our environment,” and that’s a church’s preference. I think that too has to deal with the leadership that’s in that church, and having to do with peoples’ preferences, and one of those people might be big on the environment. But I don’t know, I guess because I haven’t ever seen it in the churches that I’ve grown up in, I’ve never seen that aspect.
(Hannah)

T5.19-4
[Responding to a question about what the church’s role should be on climate change]
R: I would say the environmental groups, that’s probably their focus, and Christians have other goals. I don’t know that stewardship is their primary thrust in life, but I think it should be part of it.
I: With that in mind, what role do you think the churches should be playing on this topic, if one at all?
R: I don’t know. I wish I could have made it to the Is God Green? seminar that our church put on. It would have been neat to see, neat to hear. Maybe that’s a good start, maybe that’s about where the church, I think, should fit in. But again I don’t think their focus should be on environmental issues.

(Marcus)

T5.19-5
I: Do you see churches in general having a role talking about it [climate change] either with their congregations or with their communities?

R: Yeah, I definitely do. Mosaic has “culture and theology nights” once a month and they talk about certain issues like – I think there was a financial one, and then they had racism, and just certain issues around the community. So I think global warming would be an amazing one to do, because I don’t know much about it. It would be good for the community to know more about it, and if we could do more for our environment, and more for nature.

(Heather)

T5.19-6
I: So would you like to see that [more discussion about global warming] from clergy, pastors?

R: I would be interested just to know what their opinion is on it. I would be very interested to know, “Is this just a bunch of smoke and lights and the big thing to be excited about right now? Is there some validity to all of this … ?” I would like some interpretation of, how do I take this view that the world is giving me and the culture’s giving me, and how do I take the bible and turn it into a biblical worldview? Is it something that needs to be turned into a biblical worldview? And can you all [meaning Christian leadership] do that? I mean, that’s your role, explaining to the Christian mass, well here’s what we think about this. And I would love to know is it just smoke and lights? Is it just a dog and pony show? Or is there really some things that I should be doing? And what would you suggest? What are the three most important things right now? … I mean, there are Christian scientists. What do they think about this, [those scientists] that have a biblical worldview and believe in creationism? … What should my role as a Christian be in this? I think it’s a very untapped place, [either that] or I’m not hearing it.

(Shelly)

T5.19-7
I: You mentioned that part of your role as a pastor is to develop positions on contemporary issues. Is this [climate change] an issue that you have addressed explicitly within your role at the church or in your classes, anything like that?

R: Not in classes. I’ve thought about doing that, but I just have not felt myself aware enough to do it responsibly. And so I wanted to prepare more for that. It’s such an extraordinary [issue]; it goes into so many areas of science; politics is an issue here. And to do a responsible job, I just haven’t felt able to do that. And yet as people have e-mailed me and asked my opinion, I’ve voiced it. I’ve tried to guide them to good resources and good sites. When I see a good article on something, I’ll forward it to them to keep them aware as I try to be aware. When I’ve
become aware of a Christian leader that is an expert in these areas, who has expressed it I think very nicely, then that’s something I would want to forward to them. But I do see it as part of my job as lay institute director and as executive pastor in areas of theology to do that and to help individuals formulate a biblically credible, theologically rigorous response to issues like this. Because a lot of believers are asking what should I think about this … ?

I: Is it something that you ever see Lewisville Bible having like an official position on?

R: No, because of what I said earlier is that I think it would be a compromise of our primary role. There’s some people in our church that are lobbyists, that have lobbying organizations in Washington. I try to stay current on what they’re doing, and whether it’s in healthcare or it’s areas of the environment or financial issues, because that’s, I think, the giftedness of the body of Christ, expressing itself out there like that. But that’s not our role. Our role would be to do what we can to make those same individuals as faithful to the bible and as theologically and biblically sophisticated as they can possibly be, so that now their expressions of their giftedness in the areas of, like I said, healthcare and finance and environment and whatever it might be, are as consistently biblical as they can be. So our job is, in maybe a secondary sense, to enable them to be more effective in their areas.

(Pastor Cecil)

T5.19-8

I: What role should the church be playing on the issue of climate change?

R: Well, I don’t think we need to be having sermons about it, per se. But I think if you teach the word [from the bible], then it comes out pretty clear that God wants us to - well we did just do a study of Genesis. Okay, Adam was supposed to work the garden and tend the garden. So obviously that’s what we’re called to do as well. And so I think that if the church as a whole would just teach the word of God, then things like that I think will take care of itself, so to speak. You’ll become a better husband, we’ll have better marriages, more balanced kids. And then that’ll just come naturally I think. You’ll want to take care of your environment …

I: And so you see that as your church’s role, just continuing to focus on scripture and having a stewardship lifestyle come out of that?

R: I think so. I think if you preach the word, and people apply it to their lives, you can’t help but have that, because it’s what you read in the bible.

(Simon)

T5.19-9

My brother’s church in Denver has been unabashedly supportive of the environment, to the point that they have made announcements that [say], “We are recycling, and we are doing this.” And they have had groups from Boulder and other places who have come to them and said, “This is really interesting, you’re a bible believing church, yet you’re supportive of the environment.” So it’s actually, for them, they didn’t plan it this way, but it’s been a source of outreach, and they’ve been able to have discussions about, “Why do you as bible-believers think this way? We’re not used to this.” And God’s really opened the door to that.

(Camden)
T5.19-10

R: I think for us in Coppell it’s an opportunity to be missional within our city. I think it’s important to a lot of people - like my parents are not believers and climate change and the environment is a really important issue for my dad. So for me as a believer to lead out in that, and to champion that, is a way for me to engage with the non-believer and say, “You care about the creation, let me tell you why you care about it. It’s not just because you think that it’s pretty.” And so for me a lot of it is just a missional thing.

(Pastor Jason)
Appendix B: Max’s Theology of Creation Care

Theology of Creation Care

The theology of “creation care” begins and ends with Christ. He is Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer. And, as part of His created order, He set man above nature extending to us the power and responsibility to create, preserve, and reconcile.

In God’s perfect design, He has woven man and nature together physically and spiritually that we would acknowledge our dependence on the Creator. “For by Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities – all things were created through Him and for Him” (Colossians 1:16).

The Word: Creator, Sustainer, Redeemer

“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters…Then God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness.’” Genesis 1:1, 26

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made.” John 1:1-3

Colossians 1:15 says Christ is “the firstborn of all creation.” Jesus was with God and was God in the beginning as He spoke the heavens and earth into existence. John says that all things were made through the Word and this is corroborated by the plural pronouns used in Genesis 1 (“Let us make man in our image, after our likeness”).

God’s chosen process of creating through the Word is mysterious and foundational to a correct understanding of the intended relationship between man and creation. We see in Genesis and John that the Word is Creator of all things. But, as Hebrews 1 further explores this mystery, we see the Word is also Sustainer and Redeemer:

“Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days He has spoken to us by His Son, whom He appointed the heir of all things, through whom also He created the world. He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of His nature, and He upholds the universe by the word of His power.” Hebrews 1:1-3

Christ “upholds the universe by the word of His power.” The vast expanse of stars beyond galaxies we have explored or could even imagine, the order and coordination of our solar system, the perfect placement of the earth from the sun, and the exact balance of atmospheric
gases inhaled by lungs that pump continuously by the grace of God – all things big and small are upheld by the word of Christ’s power. The Word is the Sustainer of all creation.

God has spoken to us in many ways – through creation, the fathers and prophets of Israel, His Son, and now His Spirit – but the message has been consistent: all of creation needs and God offers redemption.

Hebrews continues:

“At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to Him. But we see Him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone.

For it was fitting that He, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering.” Hebrews 2:8-10

It is for Christ and by Christ that all things exist. And He is the Founder (Greek: “archegos” or Chief Leader, Author, Captain, Prince) of their salvation.

The Author of Creation is also the Author of Salvation. God spoke all things into existence through and for His Word, Jesus, but man fractured the created order. But that’s not the end of the story. The Word provides a path to redemption through the cross. The Word is the Redeemer of all things.

If Christ is Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer of all things – not just man – we must explore this story He is writing that includes the whole of creation waiting “with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God” (Romans 8:19).

God saw His creation was “good” (Genesis 1:4), “good (1:10),” “good (1:18),” “good (1:21),” “good (1:25),” “very good (1:31)” “And God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good.” Genesis 1:31

As God is creating light, land and sea, sun and stars, fish and birds, animals, and man, He stops to observe six times that His creation is good. We ought to pay attention to what God sees as good six times over.

God loves creation and that makes it our concern as well. Creation’s goodness should inform everything from our role as stewards on earth to our eschatology.

Creation’s goodness is independent of its utility to man

“*The trees of the Lord are watered abundantly, the cedars of Lebanon that He planted. In them the birds build their nests; the stork has her home in the fir trees.*
The high mountains are for the wild goats; the rocks are a refuge for the rock badgers.” Psalm 104:16-18

God’s final act of creation before resting was to create man. Before man existed, God saw the light, the earth, the waters, the heavens, vegetation, the sun, the stars, every creature living in the waters, the birds, livestock, everything that creeps on the ground, and the beasts of the earth as good. Before man existed, creation was good.

Evidence of the goodness of non-human creation can be seen daily in the ecosystems that sustain the life God has given. Psalm 104 describes the provision of His trees, mountains and rocks for birds, goats, and rock badgers. Life is sustained even (and sometimes especially) where man is absent.

Mitosis and meiosis occur without man’s involvement and regardless of his appreciation. The hydrologic cycle brings “rain on a land where no man is, on the desert in which there is no man, to satisfy the waste and desolate land, and to make the ground sprout with grass” (Job 38:26-27). The angle of the earth’s axis, the rotation and orbit of the earth, and the resulting seasons all benefit human and non-human creation alike. Their existence is certainly not dependent upon man.

Creation exists for God's glory, not man's

“[Christ] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities – all things were created through Him and for Him.” Colossians 1:15-16

“The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims His handiwork.” Psalm 19:1

Christ is the center of creation, not man. Not only were all things created through Jesus, they were created for Jesus.

The idea that creation exists solely for the benefit of man must surely be questioned when water, land and wind – elements of God’s creation He saw as good in Genesis 1 – bring devastation to man in the form of tsunamis, earthquakes and hurricanes. The first clue that creation exists for God’s glory and not man’s is the obvious breakdown in the intended relationship between man and creation. Where creation and man sustained each other in the Garden of Eden, each now brings both life and death to the other.

The second clue that creation exists for God’s glory is nature’s magnitude. Why do flowers exist in remote fields where no man will ever enjoy their beauty? Why do distant planets exist where no man will ever explore their mystery? Because creation was not created for man. “The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims His handiwork.”
God has wired creation to sing His praises. The Bible is filled with references to ways creation inspires worship, but we don’t need the Bible to teach us about creation’s power to stir the soul. Civilizations throughout history have attempted to explain the order of creation – the stars, the seasons, the wind, the oceans. We have assigned them gods, we have assigned them special powers, we have worshipped them. Theologians call creation’s spiritual inspiration “general revelation.” General revelation leads us to believe there must be something bigger, some kind of Designer. Without “special revelation,” the direct Word of God, general revelation is insufficient to communicate the truth of the Gospel but, like John, creation served as a herald to the coming Christ. Without Christ, we are left to wonder about the God displayed in creation but with Christ, we can see that creation provides much more insight into the nature of God than we might have previously recognized. From its opening act, creation taught us about Jesus:

“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. And God said, ‘Let there be light,’ and there was light. And God saw that the light was good. And God separated the light from the darkness.” Genesis 1:1-4

The New Testament reveals new spiritual significance of this first act of creation:

“And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his deeds have been carried out in God.” John 3:19-21

“Again, Jesus spoke to them saying, ‘I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.’” John 8:12

“This is the message we have heard from Him and proclaim to you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say we have fellowship with Him while we walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.” 1 John 1:5-7

This is the Gospel. We loved the darkness but the Light of the World has come to expose what we long to keep hidden. If we allow that light to shine on the darkness of our souls, we are not only reconciled to Christ but also to each other.

CS Lewis famously expounded on the analogous relationship between the sun’s light and the enlightenment brought by Christ, saying “I believe in Christianity as I believe that the sun has risen, not only because I see it, but because by it I see everything else.”
Creation has been singing – shouting even – the praises of God from the beginning but while the benefit man receives from the inspiration and provision of creation is significant, it is not ultimate. Creation praises God because He is worthy to be praised. Creation exists beyond man’s reach and imagination yet, to the extent that man does engage with creation, creation’s true service to man is pointing us to its Creator.

**God invites us to be part of His creation**

“O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth! You have set your glory above the heavens. Out of the mouth of babies and infants, you have established strength because of your foes, to still the enemy and the avenger. When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers the moon and the stars, which you have set in place what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? Yet you have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor. You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas. O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!” Psalm 8

When considering the magnitude of God’s creation, the realization that Almighty God could place the moon and stars in the heavens with His fingers, our response ought to be like David’s: why does God even think about man? We are utterly insignificant in the shadows of His towering mountains or on the shores of His roaring oceans.

Yet He has ascribed to us significance.

“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10). So in some mysterious way, we are both part of His creation – sharing the sixth day with the beasts of the earth, livestock, and everything that creeps on the ground – and yet set apart.

The Jews were tempted to focus more on their significance than their insignificance. They acknowledged that their significance was as the people of God, but they began to take it too far, claiming that heritage as a right, not a gift. John the Baptist sharply rebuked crowds who came to be baptized by him calling them a “brood of vipers” and then warning, “...do not begin to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ For I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children for Abraham” (Luke 3:8). Without God, there is no difference between us and rocks. The balance of our call and our position before Him is difficult but essential.
Psalm 8 establishes the terms of our significant insignificance, wondering first why God even thinks about man and continuing with the acknowledgement of man’s God-ordained responsibility of “dominion over the works of [His] hands.” We are nothing but what God has made us. And He has made us both part of and authority over His creation.

**Man is prioritized over the rest of creation**

“...then the Lord God formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.” Genesis 2:7

The reality of our simultaneous insignificance and significance is rooted in the creation of man. We are dust plus breath. Insignificance and significance.

The “ingredients” of man are our essence. We are literally made from the earth. The Hebrew for man (“adam”) is similar to the Hebrew word for soil, ground, or earth (“adamah”). It is from this earth that existed and was seen as good before man that man was formed.

Being made from dust should not only lead to the spiritual reality of our insignificance, it should be a reminder of the physical reality of our inextricable link with non-human creation. We are made from creation and utterly, biologically dependent upon its produce, water, shelter, and air.

Yet we are not only dust. We have been given the breath of God. The Hebrew word for “breath” is “nesamah” which is used elsewhere in Scripture as a reference to the Spirit of God (Job 33:4). “Nesamah” is also related to the word used at the end of Genesis 2:7 for “living creature.” This Hebrew word is “nepes,” or life, breath, soul. The Hebrew concept of man included his inner self (“nepes”) and his outer self (“sem” or name/reputation).

Man is not merely a physical being. He has a soul, or the breath of God.

Genesis 1:27 is more explicit, saying “So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.” This is not said about any other aspect of creation but man. Only man was created in the image of God. We have been given the Spirit of God and thus a unique place in His creation.

This position in the created order is what David is alluding to in Psalm 8 when he says “You have made him a little lower than the heavenly beings and crowned him with glory and honor.” In the hierarchy of created beings, man is a little lower than the heavenly beings but more valuable than nature.

Jesus speaks this truth clearly in Matthew 6:
“Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?” Matthew 6:26

Man has more value. That is clear. But non-human creation still has value. So what is man’s role as the bearer of the image of God in this created order?

The answer is found both in Genesis 1 and Psalm 8: dominion.

**Man is given dominion over all creation**

“And God blessed them. And God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.” Genesis 1:28

“You have given him (man) dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet, all sheep and oxen, and also the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens, and the fish of the sea, whatever passes along the paths of the seas.” Psalm 8:6-8

To understand this divinely ordained responsibility, we must correctly define dominion.

“Dominion” in Greek is “kyrieuo” which means to rule. This same word that is first introduced in Genesis 1 is explained through the context of the Gospel in Luke 22. Jesus responds to the disciples’ argument over which was to be the greatest by saying:

“The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship (“kyrieuo”) over them, and those in authority over them are called benefactors. But not so with you. Rather, let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves. For who is the greater, one who reclines at table or one who serves? Is it not the one who reclines at table? But I am among you as the one who serves.” Luke 22:25-27

Jesus redefines dominion in the Kingdom of God. Godly dominion is evidenced by service. The hallmark of every example of God-ordained authority or dominion in Scripture – Christ and the Church (Mark 10:45), husband and wife (Ephesians 5:25-32), pastor and people (Ephesians 4:11-12), parents and children (Ephesians 6:4), man and nature (Genesis 2:15) – is service.

Unless dominion is exercised for the benefit of the dominated, it is misused.

Christ, of course, is the ultimate example of dominion as service. In the Incarnation and then His death on the cross, Jesus establishes the pattern for authority that is to be emulated with all creation.

“[Jesus], though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped but made Himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of
men. And being found in human form, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.” Philippians 2:6-8

Dominion and authority are God-ordained responsibilities, not perverse pursuits by men. Dominion as destruction is perversion. Dominion as service is the created order.

God commanded us to “work and keep” creation
“The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and keep it.” Genesis 2:15

Scripture further defines man’s dominion over nature by explaining that we are to tend it like a garden. “Work” in Hebrew is “abad” which means to serve. “Keep” in Hebrew is “shamar” which means to be on guard or to preserve. So our command is to engage with and preserve creation. This is the rhythm God established for the relationship between man and the rest of creation.

If we attempt to strip away the spiritual and simply observe the material reality, the truth of this rhythm is still apparent. If you exploit a garden for one season’s fruit without regard for the consequences, it will not produce fruit the next.

With the role God has given us as stewards, guards, preservers of creation comes the responsibility of making difficult choices to balance what is good for human and non-human creation. We cannot choose to serve and protect either man or nature for we have been made stewards of both.

Man and creation are intertwined spiritually
“...cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust and to dust you shall return.” Genesis 3:17-19

While man was made from the earth and depends on it to live, our relationship with creation is not just physical. Genesis shows that the land was cursed because of man’s sin. It was subjected to futility, to produce thorns and thistles, bound to decay because of man. Creation contracted death from man.

Unfortunately, man’s sin is not only responsible for creation’s sentence to bondage, but we are often the executors of that sentence by using and abusing creation as an instrument of sin, fueling our lust, greed, and idolatry.

Man’s disobedience of God has left creation groaning as it waits for redemption:
“For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the freedom of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.” Romans 8:19-23

Creation’s decay should be a constant reminder of our sin. But, conversely, creation can offer beautiful illustrations of His redemption – like flowers springing forth from the very dirt from which we are made.

I am full of earth
You are heaven’s worth
I am stained with dirt, prone to depravity.
You are everything
That is bright and clean
The antonym of me, you are divinity.
But a certain sign of grace is this
Through the broken earth, the flowers come up
Pushing through the dirt
“Wholly Yours” by the David Crowder Band

This is the Good News Christ offers to man and nature suffering from the futility and bondage of sin. He is the source of freedom, of new life, even for the broken earth.

All of creation is God’s, He controls it all and holds it all together
“For every beast of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills. I know all the birds of the hills, and all that moves in the field is mine.” Psalm 50:10-11

“…all things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.” Colossians 1:16-17

Scripture is filled with verses illustrating God’s complete control of creation. Here are just a few examples:

• He is the original Creator:
  o God brought creation – the heavens and the earth and everything on it – forth from nothing (Genesis 1)
  o God laid the foundation of the earth, determined its measurements, laid its cornerstone, set the boundaries for the sea, commanded the morning, created storehouses of snow and hail, designed the places where light and wind are distributed, and numbers the clouds (Job 38)
• **He can create, move, alter, and kill every living thing:**
  - The plagues provide ten examples of God’s power over creation: He turned the Nile into blood (Exodus 7:14-25); He filled Egypt with frogs (8:1-15); He turned dust into gnats (8:16-19); He covered the land with flies (8:20-32); He killed the Egyptian’s livestock but spared the livestock of Israel (9:1-7); He caused boils to break out on man and beast (9:8-12); He sent hail to kill every man, plant, and beast in the field (9:13-35); He brought locusts to eat every plant left after the hail (10:1-20); He darkened Egypt for three days (10:21-29); and He struck down all of Egypt’s firstborn (11-12).
  - Jesus cursed a fig tree, causing it to wither immediately (Matthew 21:18-22)
  - After Jesus’ resurrection, He met the disciples after a fruitless night of fishing telling them to “Cast the net on the right side of the boat” where they hauled in 153 large fish (John 21:1-14)

• **He can manipulate the inanimate for His purposes:**
  - God led Israel in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night (Exodus 13:17-22) and divided the Red Sea to enable Israel’s escape from Egypt (Exodus 14)
  - Jesus rebuked the wind and the waves during a great storm, leading His disciples to marvel, “What sort of man is this, that even winds and sea obey him?” (Matthew 8:23-27)
  - Jesus multiplied five loaves and two fish to feed more than 20,000 (Matthew 14:13-21)
  - Jesus walked on water and enabled Peter to do the same (Matthew 14:22-33)

• **He can heal the human body (below are just the examples from Matthew):**
  - Cleanses a leper (Matthew 8:1-4)
  - Heals a paralyzed servant (Matthew 8:5-13)
  - Cures Peter’s mother-in-law’s fever (Matthew 8:14-17)
  - Told a paralytic to rise and walk (Matthew 9:1-8)
  - Instantly healed a woman who had been bleeding for 12 years (Matthew 9:20-22)
  - Raised a little girl from the dead (Matthew 9:22-26)
  - Gave two blind men their sight (Matthew 9:27-31)
  - Restored a man’s withered hand (Matthew 12:9-13)
  - Healed all of the sick of Gennesaret (Matthew 14:34-36)
  - Healed the lame, blind, crippled, and mute (Matthew 15:29-31)
  - Healed two blind men (Matthew 20:29-34)

• **He has total control of the spiritual as well as the physical (again, just from Matthew):**
  - Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit in the womb of a virgin (Matthew 1:18-25)
  - An angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph to explain Jesus’ birth (Matthew 1:20-21)
  - The wise men were warned in dream not to return to Herod (Matthew 2:12)
  - An angel warned Joseph to take the family to Egypt (Matthew 2:13-15)
  - An angel told Joseph to return to Israel (Matthew 2:19-23)
  - Jesus cast demons out of two men into a herd of pigs (Matthew 8:28-34)
  - He cast out a demon to give a mute man his speech (Matthew 9:32-33)
  - He gave the power to heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers and cast out demons to His disciples (Matthew 10:5-8)
Jesus’ control of creation – from every cell in the human body to the wind and waves – is unquestioned. He can create, manipulate, heal or destroy any element of creation or creation in its entirety. Nothing is beyond his control and, in fact, “in him all things hold together.”

The existence, then, of disease, futility, and death gives insight into God’s ways. Passages from Deuteronomy 28:15-68 to Romans 8:19-23 explain that sin is the root of the suffering and death of human and non-human creation alike. God could eradicate suffering and disease if He so chose. But He hasn’t. So God’s control over but allowance of sickness and death is proof that all of creations’ existence is for Him. It is not all about us. This can be seen clearly in verses like James 1:2-3: “Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.”

In the end, God will restore the heavens and the earth

“For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the freedom of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now. And not only creation, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.” Romans 8:19-23

“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 he who was seated on the throne said, ‘Behold, I am making all things new.’” Revelation 21:1, 5

Sin and the death it brings are constantly on display in human interaction and in nature. But thankfully God promises freedom to all of creation from the bondage of sin and death.

Without diving into the whole of eschatology, it is important to establish here that the world to come will be characterized by a physical reality. In other words, “heaven” is not merely a spiritual state, but a physical place (Luke 24:51, Acts 1:11). And what’s more, God promises “a new heaven and a new earth” (Isaiah 65:17, 2 Peter 3:13, Revelation 21:1). And the righteous will be present in this renewed creation in resurrected bodies (Romans 8:23, Philippians 3:20-21).
God’s promise of a new heaven and new earth is clear, but the debate focuses on whether God will destroy the heavens and the earth and replace them or redeem their existing physical state.

The physical is not inherently evil, as many heretics have asserted throughout history. God’s original creation and Christ’s incarnation are powerful evidence of this truth. Before the Fall, God saw His creation as “very good.” So the destruction and replacement of the current physical world seems to be an admission of defeat to the brokenness introduced to creation by sin. Scripture certainly seems to teach that creation will be restored, not replaced.

Our role as we wait for Christ to come again: Reconciliation

“[C]reation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.” Romans 8:21

“For in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through Him to reconcile to Himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of His cross.” Colossians 1:20

The story of creation is a grand depiction of the Gospel. It was created good, sentenced to decay because of sin, and longs for promised renewal. And our role in creation is nothing less than to be stewards of this Gospel story.

The great hope of the Gospel is redemption, renewal, reconciliation. In Colossians, Paul says that Christ is reconciling all things to Himself. In 2 Corinthians, he discusses our role in Christ’s reconciliation:

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.” 2 Corinthians 5:17-18

Christ will reconcile all things “whether on earth or in heaven” to Himself and He entrusts us with the message of reconciliation.

“Message” here in Greek is “logos,” the same word used in John 1 to describe the Word of God. This Word that created all things (John 1:1-3), that upholds the universe (Hebrews 1:3), that became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14), that promises to reconcile all things (Colossians 1:20) has invited us to take part in this chapter of His story, to carry the message of reconciliation of both the physical and the spiritual as we eagerly await His final restoration.
God wired glimpses of this restoration into His creation. A doctor can stitch a wound or set a broken bone, but he cannot heal. This is to be our role with creation, to set things back into their proper place for God to restore.

God certainly doesn’t need us, but He does offer us a role in His great story. God the Creator, Sustainer, and Redeemer created us in His likeness and gave us explicit instructions to model His character with His creation. Let us proclaim the Gospel by continuing to create, by working and keeping His great global garden, and by sharing the message of reconciliation through the awesome, humble responsibility of dominion.
Appendix C: Interview Guide for Pastors

**Religious Identity**: To start off with, I’d like to learn about your involvement with (church name).
1. How long have you been a pastor at (church name)?
2. How did you come to be a pastor at (church name)?
3. (If not the lead pastor) What is your pastoral role at (church name)?
4. Have you been a part of any other denominations as a pastor or church member?  
   - If so remember to ask if beliefs as they relate to climate change would have been different.
5. For how long have you been a Christian?
6. How did you become a Christian?
7. How do you identify yourself as a Christian?
   
   **Probe/Clarification**: For instance, are there any labels that you feel describe you well? Some common labels you hear associated with Christianity include denominational labels, evangelical, liberal, Pentecostal, reformed, moderate, fundamentalist, or conservative.
   Would you use any of these terms to describe yourself?
8. What does it mean to you to be a (whatever they named) Christian?
9. In your opinion, how does being a (whatever they named) differ from being a (whatever they said they were not)?

**Perceptions of Climate Change**: Now if you don’t mind, I’d like to learn more about your opinions on global warming.
10. If you’ll forgive the pun, global warming has been a pretty “hot topic” recently. How do you feel about it?
   
   **Probe/Clarification**: In your opinion, is the earth getting warmer?
   **Follow Up**: Do you think warming temperatures are the result of human activity?
11. Are you concerned about global warming? Why or why not?
12. Where do you tend to get information on global warming?
   **Follow Up**: What are these sources saying about global warming?
13. Does your denomination, or this church, have an official position on climate change?
   
   - If so, where is this statement available, and does the church actively distribute this information?
14. Transition Question: Is global warming a topic that is ever discussed at (name of church) in sermons, in a study group, or in casual conversation?
   
   **Follow Up**: If so, what is said about global warming? How do people react?

**Religious Beliefs and Climate Change**: One thing I’m interested in is how religious beliefs might impact people’s views on global warming.
15. Do you think they do? Why or why not?
16. Do you feel that your religious beliefs impact your views on global warming?
17. Are there any particular beliefs that you feel impact your views on global warming?
   
   **Follow Up**: Can you explain that belief for me, and maybe how it relates to global warming?
Probe: Are there any other religious beliefs that might impact your views on global warming?

**Specific Religious Beliefs and Climate Change:** In addition to the beliefs that you’ve mentioned, I’d like to ask you about some other specific beliefs, which you may or may not hold, and whether or not those beliefs impact your views on global warming.

18. In your opinion, what is the relationship between God, humans, and nature?
   Follow Up: Do you think that belief impacts your opinions about global warming?
19. Do you think that humans have control over global warming?
   Follow Up: Does God have control over global warming?
   Follow Up: Do you think that belief impacts your opinions about global warming?
20. Do you think that sin impacts humans’ relationship with nature?
   Follow Up: Does that belief relate to your views on global warming?
21. Could you describe for me your beliefs about the end times?
   Follow Up: Do you think those beliefs impact your views on global warming?
22. Stewardship is a word that gets used a lot these days, does that word have a religious meaning in your view? What does stewardship mean to you?
   Follow Up: How does the idea of stewardship relate to global warming?
23. All in all, what do you think impacts your views on global warming the most – personal experiences, views of friends and family, the media, your religious beliefs, politics, or something else?

**Christian and Church Role in Climate Change:** Finally, I’d like to ask you a little bit about what you think the Christian role should be on this issue.

24. In your opinion, what role, if any, should Christians play in addressing global warming?
   Follow up: Do you think that Christians are fulfilling that role at the present time? Why or why not? What needs to change?
25. In your opinion, what role, if any, should your church be playing in addressing global warming?
   Follow up: Do you think that your church is fulfilling that role at the present time? Why or why not? What needs to change?
26. In your opinion, what role, if any, should churches in general be playing in addressing global warming?
   Follow up: Do you think that the church is fulfilling that role at the present time? Why or why not? What needs to change?

**Wrap up.** Just to wrap up, I have a couple of demographic type questions that are helpful to keep track of for all of the study participants.

27. Do you mind if I ask your age?
28. Have you done any post-secondary schoolwork such as attending a college or university, technical school, etc? Do you mind if I ask what you studied there?
29. Are you affiliated with a particular political party? For which party would you say you most often vote?
30. Would you describe yourself as politically liberal, moderate, or conservative?
Appendix D: Interview Guide for Non-Pastors

**Religious Identity:** To start off with, I’d like to learn about your involvement with (church name).
1. How long have you been involved with (church name)?
2. How did you become involved with (church name)?
3. What does being ‘involved’ with (church name) mean to you?
   - **Probe/Clarification:** For instance, do you attend Sunday services? Do you attend any other church events or activities such as prayer services, bible studies, anything like that?
4. For how long have you been a Christian?
5. How did you become a Christian?
6. How do you identify yourself as a Christian?
   - **Probe/Clarification:** For instance, are there any labels that you feel describe you well? Some common labels you hear associated with Christianity include denominational labels, evangelical, liberal, Pentecostal, reformed, moderate, fundamentalist, or conservative.
   - **Would you use any of these terms to describe yourself?**
7. What does it mean to you to be a (whatever they named) Christian?
8. In your opinion, how does being a (whatever they named) differ from being a (whatever they said they were not)?

**Perceptions of Climate Change:** Now if you don’t mind, I’d like to learn more about your opinions on global warming.
9. If you’ll forgive the pun, global warming has been a pretty “hot topic” recently. How do you feel about it?
   - **Probe/Clarification:** In your opinion, is the earth getting warmer?
   - **Follow Up:** Do you think warming temperatures are the result of human activity?
10. Are you concerned about global warming? Why or why not?
11. Where do you tend to get information on global warming?
   - **Follow Up:** What are these sources saying about global warming?
12. Transition Question: Is global warming a topic that is ever discussed at (name of church) either by a pastor, in a study group, or in casual conversation?
   - **Follow Up:** If so, what is said about global warming? How do people react?

**Religious Beliefs and Climate Change:** One thing I’m interested in is how religious beliefs might impact people’s views on global warming.
13. Do you think they do? Why or why not?
14. Are there any particular beliefs that you feel impact your views on global warming?
   - **Follow Up:** Can you explain that belief for me, and maybe how it relates to global warming?
   - **Probe:** Are there any other religious beliefs that might impact your views on global warming?
Specific Religious Beliefs and Climate Change: In addition to the beliefs that you’ve mentioned, I’d like to ask you about some other specific beliefs, which you may or may not hold, and whether or not those beliefs impact your views on global warming.

15. In your opinion, what is the relationship between God, humans, and nature?
   Follow Up: Do you think that belief impacts your opinions about global warming?

16. Do you think that humans have control over global warming?
   Follow Up: Does God have control over global warming?
   Follow Up: Do you think that belief impacts your opinions about global warming?

17. Do you think that sin impacts humans’ relationship with nature?
   Follow Up: Does that belief relate to your views on global warming?

18. Could you describe for me your beliefs about the end times?
   Follow Up: Do you think those beliefs impact your views on global warming?

19. Stewardship is a word that gets used a lot these days, does that word have a religious meaning in your view? What does stewardship mean to you?
   Follow Up: How does the idea of stewardship relate to global warming?

20. All in all, what do you think impacts your views on global warming the most – personal experiences, views of friends and family, the media, your religious beliefs, politics, or something else?

Christian and Church Role in Climate Change: Finally, I’d like to ask you a little bit about what you think the Christian role should be on this issue.

21. In your opinion, what role, if any, should Christians play in addressing global warming?
   Follow up: Do you think that Christians are fulfilling that role at the present time? Why or why not? What needs to change?

22. In your opinion, what role, if any, should your home church be playing in addressing global warming?
   Follow up: Do you think that your church is fulfilling that role at the present time? Why or why not? What needs to change?

23. In your opinion, what role, if any, should churches in general be playing in addressing global warming?
   Follow up: Do you think that the church is fulfilling that role at the present time? Why or why not? What needs to change?

Wrap up. Just to wrap up, I have a couple of demographic type questions that are helpful to keep track of for all of the study participants.

24. Do you mind if I ask your age?
25. What is your occupation? How long have you been in this line of work?
26. Have you done any post-secondary schoolwork such as attending a college or university, technical school, etc? Do you mind if I ask what you studied there?
27. Are you affiliated with a particular political party? For which party would you say you most often vote?
28. Would you describe yourself as politically liberal, moderate, or conservative?
Works Cited


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