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## Environmental Hospitality: A Christian Ethic for the Era of Climate Change

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ENVIRONMENTAL HOSPITALITY:  
A CHRISTIAN ETHIC FOR THE ERA OF CLIMATE CHANGE

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Dedicated to Mik and Pip

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## ABSTRACT

In 2015, Pope Francis published his second encyclical entitled *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home*. The encyclical's primary purpose was to address the widespread inequality, poverty and injustice that threatens to worsen as we begin to see the effects of global climate change. Pope Francis's entreaties to care for the earth as our home, and for the those left vulnerable due to environmental crises, can be connected to a tradition of hospitality that has a long history in Christian theology.

My research aims to answer the questions: What would an ethic of environmental hospitality look like? And is the rhetoric of hospitality useful when coming up with solutions to the ecological and cultural crises arising as a result of global climate change? In answer to the first question, there is some scholarship in environmental ethics that comes very close to advocating for hospitality when dealing with issues of biodiversity and habitat loss, climate refugees, resource scarcity, and other future ramifications of global warming. A recontextualization of God as host, nature as a home, and humanity as guest differs from the stewardship model of environmental ethics in that the misuse of nature is no longer simply a form of mismanagement, it is now an act of inhospitality, a breach of an ancient and fundamental relational bond, that of host and guest.

Beyond rhetoric, hospitality can function as a practical avenue for action and change in humanity's treatment of each other and of nature, moving toward systems that value care, restoration, and generosity. My hope is that this research adds definition and shape to the discourse of environmental hospitality.

## INTRODUCTION

This thesis examines Christian ethics of hospitality and seeks to link that tradition to an ethic of environmental care. The language of hospitality can provide a useful framework for rethinking environmental ethics and creating a fruitful dialogue between those Christians who already see environmentalism as a part of their Christianity and those Christians for whom environmentalism has become a politically partisan issue with which they disagree. These are Christians who can be called climate change denialists, and while addressing the problem of climate change denial is one aim of this thesis, my goal is to advocate for environmental hospitality as a productive way of looking at Christians' relationship to the rest of creation. This includes those who might have, as Pope Francis says, "distinctive approaches to understanding reality."<sup>1</sup> Through discussions of the dominion and stewardship models and their (at best) mixed results, we see the need for a new way of connecting evangelicals to environmental causes. More than a rhetorical framework, hospitality is commonly acknowledged as a virtue and a practice in Western Christian tradition. In going beyond rhetoric, hospitality can function as a practical avenue for action and change in humanity's treatment of each other and of nature, moving toward systems that value care, restoration, and generosity.

I was brought to this topic through a desire to understand the intractable nature of the climate change debate and how it reflected the wider problems of polarization and partisanship in American communities. In the early months of 2018 much of the news centered around the problems with social media algorithms and the easily manipulated data which can create echo chambers in online spaces. As for my news feeds, I often see political posts from both of the

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<sup>1</sup> Pope Francis, *Laudato si'* (2015), [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150524\\_enciclica-laudato-si.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html), sec. 45.



opposing camps, those in the community I grew up in which is conservative and evangelical, and those friends I have made in the past several years in academia and elsewhere for whom the changing political tides of the last two years have been bleak and disheartening. While most of my conservative friends, often friends of my parents more than my own, will post explicitly Christian content, very rarely will anything be particularly controversial to their own community, and on the occasions that political content is posted it tends to be axiomatically consistent with conservative values. They were by and large silent on social media platforms throughout the 2016 presidential campaign, and while few of them publicly showed support for Donald Trump, the post-election statistics indicate that over 80% of self-identified evangelicals voted for him and generally agree with his politics.<sup>2</sup> There is a growing body of work in both academia and journalism which attempts to understand the somewhat surprising level of support that President Trump continues to receive from American evangelicals, but it seems that while on paper he does not line-up with evangelical's morals or values, they nevertheless are willing to overlook his multiple moral failings in favor of the conservative policies he has put forward.

One notable exception to this came in the early weeks of 2017 along with the news that there would be an absolute ban on the United States' acceptance of refugees and all immigrants from seven primarily Muslim countries. Never before in my personal social media feeds had so many of my conservative evangelical acquaintances spoken out about their opposition to any of the policies or legislative agenda proposed by the Trump administration or his campaign. The backlash to the travel ban was visible from both camps in my digital feeds, and most evangelicals cited scripture alongside their posts decrying the travel ban as un-Christian. It struck

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<sup>2</sup> Gregory A. Smith and Jessica Martinez, "How the faithful voted: A preliminary 2016 analysis," Pew Research Center, November 9, 2016. <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/11/09/how-the-faithful-voted-a-preliminary-2016-analysis/>.

me then that the thing which incited outrage was not the ostensibly unchristian things the president had done, but it was this act of inhospitality and unwelcome that had crossed a line for those evangelicals who saw America as a Christian nation, and therefore as a nation called to hospitality and the welcome of the stranger in need. It was the unchristian act of turning away refugees that finally led my conservative evangelical friends to distance themselves from absolute support, or at least silent assent, of the administration, and to instead assert that it was a part of their identities as Christians to practice hospitality as a nation.

This story provides anecdotal evidence of something far more complex within American evangelical Christianity. There is certainly a split among Christians who value an ethic of hospitality as a part of their religious practice and identity and Christians who have instead leaned into a more closed and protective stance toward outsiders who may present a threat to their communities and national identities. While many conservatives' opinions on immigration are in line with some of the more drastic and nativist politics of the president, there seems to be at least some in the evangelical community who still value care for the stranger as a part of their political stance toward refugees and asylum seekers. This has again been in evidence over summer months as news of immigrant families being torn apart at the border—children being taken from their parents only to be held in detention centers resembling cages—has circulated and again provoked outspoken opposition from many conservatives on my news feeds as well as numerous signed statements by evangelical groups and faith-based groups more broadly.<sup>3</sup>

Locating environmentalism in the rhetoric and tradition of Christian hospitality provides

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<sup>3</sup> Jack Jenkins (@jackmjenkins), "...thread of all the faith groups/faith leaders condemning either the Trump admin's zero tolerance policy that separates families (and/or asylum change), Sessions' argument that the Bible supports its enforcement, or both," Twitter thread, June 15, 2018, <https://mobile.twitter.com/jackmjenkins/status/1007655921365995521>

evangelicals with a new set of practices and outlooks by which to care for the natural world as well as their fellow humans who are displaced due to climate change.

This thesis contains three chapters. The first chapter provides some background on the environmentalist movement in American as well as the history of evangelicalism and its connection to conservative politics in the second half of the twentieth century. Then the chapter moves into a discussion of several Christian environmental theologians and faith leaders who, through their work, have attempted to address care for the environment and action on climate change. Lastly, the potential for an ethic of hospitality to influence environmental attitudes and practices for Christians will be introduced. The next two chapters focus on two of the overarching dynamics that make hospitality unique from other virtues in the Christian tradition. The first is the dynamic of identities and the fluid yet stabilizing force of the pact between the host and guest that establishes their roles and commitment to each other, while simultaneously altering their identities irrevocably. The second dynamic of hospitality which sets it apart is the location in which it takes place. Discussion of the spaces of hospitality shows us the important and relevant ways that boundaries and borders are crossed in the act of hospitality. These spaces include the home, the margins or edges of society, and the globe.

The tradition of welcoming the unknown stranger, and the act of making room for the Other, can be extended to non-human creation within the context of the earth as our home, as well as being applied to those who have been displaced by ecological crises. In his 2013 book, *The Future of Ethics*, Willis Jenkins proposes a way of doing ethics that uses a religious community's "moral inheritances to support adaptive patterns of action." "Agents can learn new moral competencies..." he says, "by participating in projects that use their inheritances to create

new responsibilities for unexpected problems.”<sup>4</sup> This is my hope for environmental hospitality—that it might provide the framework for a reform project aimed at creating theological space for evangelicals to accept the urgency of the crisis of climate change, and to encourage action and social change by using the Christian tradition of hospitality differently.

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<sup>4</sup> Willis Jenkins, *The Future of Ethics: Sustainability, Social Justice, and Religious Creativity* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2013), 4 – 5.

# CHAPTER 1

## ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS AND CHRISTIAN HOSPITALITY

This chapter provides some history of the religious and political attitudes towards environmentalism in America which have led to widespread climate change denialism in today's politics and a broader lack of concern or engagement in environmentalism in today's American culture. Second, this chapter addresses the continuing effects of Lynn White's 1967 thesis on academic and theological scholarship in particular how his ideas regarding Christianity have led to, or at least influenced, multiple ecotheologies and attempts at returning to more environmentally oriented Christian doctrine. The chapter then concludes with a look ahead at the project of the rest of this thesis: establishing an ethic of environmental hospitality which is grounded in a Christian hospitality ethic and which in part aims to address conservative attitudes toward climate change. This is my hope for environmental hospitality—that it might provide a framework that creates theological space for evangelicals to accept the urgency of the crisis of climate change, and to encourage action and social change by using the Christian tradition of hospitality differently.

In the 1960s, awareness of the global effects of industrialization and human consumption on the environment was just beginning to emerge, and environmental problems such as pollution of water and air became pressing issues for the American public. In 1962, Rachel Carson's book *Silent Spring* raised awareness about the detrimental effects of man-made chemicals and technology on nature. Then in 1969, the Santa Barbara oil spill, which lasted for ten days and spilled approximately 3.25 million gallons of crude oil, brought man-made environmental problems back to the forefront of American political concerns. The next year President Nixon, in

his State of the Union address, spoke of “reparations for the damage we have done to our air, our land, our water.”<sup>1</sup> That year also marked the first celebration of Earth Day. At this point in the twentieth century the moniker of “environmentalist” did not yet denote party affiliation or political agenda beyond the broadly acceptable and reasonable desires to curb pollution and protect public health. It was Nixon, a Republican president, who established the EPA and other environmental initiatives. It was also an issue that Nixon saw as a political win for himself.

The 1980’s also marked the beginning of the modern academic field of religious environmental ethics. The proliferation of scholarship in religious environmental ethics stemmed from a short but influential article written by the historian Lynn White in 1967. The article, entitled “The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis,” placed blame for the growing global environmental crisis on the reckless anthropocentrism of Western Christianity, democratic values, and unfettered scientific progress. White’s thesis is a product of its moment in history. He wrote “The Historical Roots” at a time when awareness of global warming was still relegated to new science, and before the Nixonian era political shifts which took environmentalism into the realm of American political opinion. Later in the chapter, we will explore further Lynn White’s thesis and some responses to it, but before that some terms should be defined.

### **1.1 Defining the Problem**

Climate change denialism is a cultural phenomenon situated primarily within the conservative evangelical Christian political landscape of America. For the purposes of this chapter the outlines of climate denialism must be laid out. Often the phrase “climate skepticism” can be used synonymously with climate denialism. There is, however, a different connotation

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<sup>1</sup> Russell E. Train, “The Environmental Record of the Nixon Administration,” *Presidential Studies Quarterly* 26, no 1 (1996), 185.

when referring to skepticism rather than denial. The term “skepticism” is both euphemistic in comparison to “denialism,” and too closely tied to scientific rhetoric to be as useful in this context.<sup>2</sup> Climate change denialism—the complete or partial denial that the earth is warming, that massive biodiversity loss is imminent, and that human activity is the cause of this environmental degradation—is a more potent and accurate descriptor for the purposes of this thesis.

The conservative political narrative surrounding climate change has often been predicated on the idea that there is no scientific “consensus” on the causes or extent of global warming. “True science is never “settled,”” one conservative think-tank has accurately stated. But the message implied in such anti-climate change propaganda is that a lack of certainty should produce distrust in scientific findings.<sup>3</sup> Much research has been done on the concerted effort by right-wing think tanks, funded by fossil fuel industry giants, to mainline the message of scientific uncertainty surrounding climate change to the American people.<sup>4</sup> Despite this, evangelicals are not necessarily lacking the information to persuade them. Research shows that more information and education on a subject does not persuade those who are entrenched in their closely held beliefs. Climate change denial is not solely indicative of a lack of information but is instead exacerbated by cognitive bias and cultural identity.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Laurel Kearns, “The Role of Religions in Activism,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Climate Change and Society*, eds. John S. Dryzek, Norgaard, Schlosberg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 414-428.

<sup>3</sup> Craig D. Idso, Robert M. Carter, S. Fred Singer, *Why Scientists Disagree About Global Warming: The NIPCC Report on Scientific Consensus*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Arlington Heights, IL: The Heartland Institute, 2016), xii.

<sup>4</sup> Naomi Oreskes and Erik M. Conway, *Merchants of Doubt: How a Handful of Scientists Obscured the Truth on Issues from Tobacco Smoke to Global Warming* (New York: Bloomsbury Press), 2010.

<sup>5</sup> Dan M. Kahan, Ellen Peters, Maggie Wittlin, Paul Slovic, Lisa Larrimore Ouellette, Donald Braman, and Gregory Mandel, “The Polarizing Impact of Science Literacy and Numeracy on Perceived Climate Change Risks.” *Nature Climate Change* 2, no. 10 (2012): 732. See also Aaron M. McCright and Riley E. Dunlap, “The Politicization of Climate Change and Polarization in the American Public's Views of Global Warming, 2001–2010,” *The Sociological Quarterly* 52, no. 2 (2011): 155-194.

The distrust of science and lack of scientific literacy can be connected to a long history of antagonism towards science—particularly post-Darwinian science—found in many communities of evangelical Christians. The work of sociologist Laurel Kearns on evangelical environmental movements and attitudes is helpful for understanding climate denialism and its place in our society. She argues that the primary explanations for the denial of climate change can be found in the connections between evangelical Christianity and the diminished authority of “secularized” scientific knowledge over religious knowledge, as well as “the connection between certain strands of conservative Christianity, individualism, concepts of freedom, and market ideology.”<sup>6</sup> Kearns argues, however, that the role of religious knowledge and activism is crucial to the fight against climate change. “Although seemingly desirable, just putting something in a religious, moral, and ethical frame is insufficient.”<sup>7</sup> Instead, she sees the combination of economic, scientific, and other ideological framing as important parts of the complex workings of religious communities’ responses to climate change.

The term “evangelical” has taken on different meanings over time and has a long history within American Christianity. I use the term, understanding that it merges a broad range of Christian denominations and subcultures into a single group. Today the term is often used in a political context to describe a particular voting-block, and for many Christians it is a self-descriptor with no pejorative connotation (unlike a label such as “fundamentalist,” which has been dropped by many who see it as old-fashioned). Using such a generalized term to describe the religious community in which climate change denialism has primarily arisen requires mentioning the wide variety of positions and cultures that fall into the category of “evangelical.”

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<sup>6</sup> Laurel Kearns, “Cooking the Truth: Faith, Science, the Market, and Global Warming,” in *Ecospirit*, eds. Laurel Kearns and Catherine Keller (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), 109.

<sup>7</sup> Kearns, “Religions in Activism,” 425.



There are evangelicals for whom the environment is a concern and evangelical groups who advocate for action to be taken, either socially or politically, to address climate change. Often such organizations represent the opinions of younger generations of evangelicals for whom the effects of climate change hold more direct personal significance.

Kearns helpfully classifies evangelical attitudes toward environmentalism into two opposing categories. “Creation-care evangelicals” are those who accept climate science and share a concern for the environment, in a way similar to most secular and non-ideologically conservative religious groups. These groups include the Evangelical Environmental Network (EEN), the Au Sable Institute, Blessed Earth, Flourish, Restoring Eden, and Christians for the Mountains.<sup>8</sup> Kearns uses the term “wise-use-stewards” when referring to groups such as the Cornwall Alliance for the Stewardship of Creation, and the Acton Institute for the Study of Religion and Liberty. These are climate change denialist groups closely allied with conservative political movements such as the Religious Right, and concerned that environmentalism threatens private property rights, free-market ideology, and the “role of God’s sovereignty in solving environmental problems.”<sup>9</sup> The stewardship model of evangelical environmentalism has thus far yielded few results, partly due to it’s being co-opted by anti-environmentalist evangelical groups. While both sides use the language of “stewardship” in advocating their positions toward environmental causes, Kearns sees fit to name the denialists “wise-use-stewards,” in order to underscore their own use of the language and instead to give pro-environmentalist evangelicals a label with less baggage attached. The usefulness and drawbacks of the stewardship ethic will be returned to in the next chapter.

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<sup>8</sup> Laurel Kearns, “Green Evangelicals,” in *The New Evangelical Social Engagement*, eds. Brian Steensland and Philip Goff (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 157-178.

<sup>9</sup> Kearns, “Religions in Activism,” 421.

There are also demographics within climate change denialism that do not fall into the category of “evangelical.” These include groups who differ theologically, such as many conservative Catholics, as well as ideological conservatives for whom environmentalism is a partisan issue that has come to represent government overreach. In addition, the gendered and racial features of climate change denial should not be neglected. Research has shown that middle to upper-class, conservative white males are more likely to be dismissive or doubtful of information regarding climate change and the threats posed by it.<sup>10</sup> The overlap with political conservatism is perhaps the most important when discussing climate denialism. The political and cultural hegemony of primarily white, male, affluent conservatives is a hinderance to those looking to change the status quo of environmental practice and policy in America. While a cultural phenomenon, the political ramifications of American climate change denial are felt globally and could end up determining whether we as a species are able to survive on a continuously warming planet. Without political action from the US government efforts to counteract climate change will be hugely obstructed.

## **1.2 Evangelicals and Science**

As evangelicals and fundamentalists have felt the threat of secularization in institutions and the broader society, so the political Christian Right has been galvanized over the course of the last century. A long history of antagonism against science and scientific knowledge has undeniably shaped the evangelical Christian Right of today. Many conservative Christians hold a

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<sup>10</sup> Aaron M. McCright and Riley E. Dunlap, “Cool Dudes: the Denial of Climate Change Among Conservative White Males in the United States,” *Global Environmental Change* 21, no. 4 (October 2011): 1163-72. See also Aaron R. Brough, James E. B. Wilkie, Jingjing Ma, Mathew S. Isaac, David Gal, “Is Eco-Friendly Unmanly? The Green-Feminine Stereotype and Its Effect on Sustainable Consumption,” *Journal of Consumer Research* 43, no 4 (December 2016): 567–582.

belief in the Genesis creation story, interpret it as a literal seven-day creation, and see Darwinian evolutionary theory as antithetical to that narrative. The Scopes Trial of 1925 marked the first major clash of creationists with what they saw as a secularization of schooling. This secularizing trend continued throughout the twentieth century with Supreme Court cases in the 1960's regarding prayer and Bible reading in school.<sup>11</sup> Also in the sixties, the introduction of non-religious sex education in public school prompted outrage from Christian conservatives.<sup>12</sup>

These events were among many that are still painted as “defeats” for traditional Christian education, and conversely as “victories” for those deemed hostile to Christian values, adding to the narrative of the “culture wars,” which is still commonly cited today. Historian Andrew Hartman points to the evangelical activism surrounding schooling and curriculum as springing “from a desire to reassert religious control over a society that was becoming increasingly modern and secular.”<sup>13</sup> Hartman deems creationists not as unscientific, but instead as adhering to a pre-Darwinian scientific method based on observation, rather than manipulative experimentation, which has become outdated as new and more advanced scientific methods were developed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

In addition to the lack of belief in scientific epistemologies, both Hartman, citing biologist Stephen Jay Gould, and Kearns acknowledge a general lack of understanding surrounding the terminology of scientific “theory” among evangelicals.<sup>14</sup> Examples of this misunderstanding of scientific theory include a speech by Ronald Reagan in 1980 in which he stated that evolution was “a scientific theory only, and it has in recent years been challenged in

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<sup>11</sup> Engel v. Vitale, 370 US 421 (1962), and Abington v. Schempp, 374 US 203 (1963).

<sup>12</sup> Daniel K. Williams, *God's Own Party: The Making of the Christian Right* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 62-67, 82-85.

<sup>13</sup> Andrew Hartman, *A War for the Soul of America: A History of the Culture Wars* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2015), 71.

<sup>14</sup> Kearns, “Cooking the Truth,” 110. Hartman, *Soul of America*, 109.

the world of science—that is, not believed in the scientific community to be as infallible as it once was,” and again echoed several decades later by then representative Mike Pence on the floor of Congress in 2002 where he stated, “I believe that someday scientists will come to see that only the theory of intelligent design provides even a remotely rational explanation for the known universe... as new theories of evolution find their ways into the newspapers and into the textbooks let us demand that educators around America teach evolution not as fact but as theory.”<sup>15</sup> Both of these quotes bolster Kearns’ argument that many Christians see science as a matter of worldview, in which belief is a choice and science is often an untrustworthy source.<sup>16</sup> Lack of trust in science, as well as a suspicion of the purveyors of science, has driven evangelical political action in the past, and can still be identified today in modern disbelief in climate science.

In his book *How Culture Shapes the Climate Change Debate*, Andrew Hoffman outlines a framework for the patterns of distrust between climate change deniers and those who have no problem accepting the science on anthropogenic global warming. His four elements succinctly sum up the problems conservatives have with science and the way in which it is communicated. These are: a) distrust of the messengers, b) distrust of the process that created the message, c) distrust of the message itself, and d) distrust of the solutions that come from the message.<sup>17</sup> This last step is evident in the connection American evangelicals have with capitalist free-market ideology which Kearns points out. Most often the resistance to proposed political solutions to climate change are met with arguments that such measures would hurt the economy, and that more regulation signifies unjustified government manipulation of the market. As Kearns notes,

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<sup>15</sup> Pence speech on the floor of congress, 2002.

<sup>16</sup> Kearns, “Cooking the Truth,” 112.

<sup>17</sup> Andrew Hoffman, *How Culture Shapes the Climate Change Debate* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2015), 21.

often the messaging of climate change activism and policies are far more efficacious when framed in economically advantageous terms.<sup>18</sup>

Scientific terms that are often misunderstood or misrepresented by conservative evangelicals include “theory,” “skepticism,” and “consensus,” and have come to epitomize the political rhetoric on climate denial. In fact, the framing of climate change as “scientifically uncertain,” has been a central political strategy for climate skeptics and deniers since the early 1990’s and has also typified various evangelical statements and declarations on the subject of climate change. For example, the 2006 statement ‘Climate Change: An Evangelical Call to Action,’ begins with an acknowledgement that the need for more certainty on the science has led to hesitation on the part of the signatories.<sup>19</sup> The Southern Baptist Convention, which is the largest Protestant denomination in America, issued back-to-back resolutions on climate change in 2006 and 2007, both asserting the uncertain and disputed position of climate science, and the later resolution making quite clear that only policies “that will improve the stewardship of the earth’s resources without resulting in significant negative consequences,” to the economy, should be pursued.<sup>20</sup>

A remarkable difference between the “Call to Action” statement and the SBC resolutions lies in their understanding of justice and care for the poor in the context of a changing climate. While the “Evangelical Call to Action” claims that “the consequences of climate change will be significant, and will hit the poor the hardest,” the SBC conversely argues that environmentalist regulation and policies will impact the poor most of all. In her book *Between God and Green*,

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<sup>18</sup> Kearns, “Cooking the Truth,” 98.

<sup>19</sup> “Climate Change: An Evangelical Call to Action,” Evangelical Climate Initiative, 2006, <http://www.christiansandclimate.org/statement/>.

<sup>20</sup> “On Environmentalism and Evangelicals,” SBC Resolution, 2006, accessed June 11, 2018, <http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/1159/on-environmentalism-and-evangelicals>. “On Global Warming,” SBC Resolution, 2007, accessed June 11, 2018, <http://www.sbc.net/resolutions/1171/on-global-warming>.

Katharine Wilkinson details the theological and scriptural roots of the “Evangelical Call to Action,” and she interviews congregants of several evangelical churches to gauge their responses and attitudes toward climate change. She found that among those evangelicals she talked to, the idea of connecting care of the environment to care for the poor was viewed as absurd. The prevailing belief in free-market capitalism was among the strongest reasons why evangelicals weren’t concerned about climate change, even though they claimed a stewardship ethic of environmental care.<sup>21</sup> While care for the poor and love of neighbor are deeply held convictions of evangelical church-goers, ideas about how to ameliorate poverty are often seen through the political ideology apparent in the SBC resolution on global warming. Finding a connection to care for the poor and care for the environment will require use of biblical and traditional Christian theology and rhetoric in order to fight climate change denialism in American evangelicals.

Climate change denialism is not the only challenge when we examine societal attitudes and behavior towards the environment. It’s worth noting that not all inaction in fighting climate change is due to flat out denialism many theorists point to the incongruence between our beliefs and our behaviors, especially when it comes to sustainable living and political activity. Kari Marie Norgaard argues convincingly that even in communities where climate science is accepted and the effects of climate change are apparent, mobilization and action are still impeded by socially organized denial.

Through a framework of socially organized denial, our view shifts from one in which understanding of climate change and caring about ecological conditions and our human neighbors are in short supply to one whereby these qualities are acutely present but

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<sup>21</sup> Katharine K. Wilkinson, *Between God & Green: How Evangelicals Are Cultivating a Middle Ground on Climate Change* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 135.

actively muted in order to protect individual identity and a sense of empowerment and to maintain culturally produced conceptions of reality.<sup>22</sup>

Anna Peterson also writes about the lack of environmentalist action in groups who claim to care about the environment or espouse environmental values. While most Americans say that they have environmental values or concerns, and many claim to be “environmentalists,” very few Americans have ever voted based on those concerns, and many only engage minimally in everyday “green” practices, if at all.<sup>23</sup> Peterson suggests that it is the primary task of ecotheologies and environmental ethics is not to innovate “better knowledge or values, but rather to figure out how to get people to live according to the good ideas we already have.”<sup>24</sup>

The next section examines the range of ecotheologies that have arisen since Lynn White’s article was published and the common thread in these works in the suggestion that our ecological crisis arises out of a dysfunction in humanity’s relationship to the rest of nature, as well as the often-articulated remedy of emphasizing interconnectedness and a right relationship to nature.

### 1.3 Ecotheologies

Lynn White begins his article by giving multiple examples of the ways in which “all forms of life modify their contexts.”<sup>25</sup> Focusing on the effects of the human species on other forms of life, White observes that humanity has now reached a point in its technological advancement in which we can alter life conditions globally. Humans have and will continue to

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<sup>22</sup> Kari Maria Norgaard, *Living in Denial: Climate Change, Emotions, and Everyday Life* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2011), 207.

<sup>23</sup> Anna L. Peterson, “Talking the Walk: A Practice-Based Environmental Ethic as Grounds for Hope,” in *Ecospirit*, eds. Laurel Kearns and Catherine Keller (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), 45-62.

<sup>24</sup> Peterson, “Talking the Walk,” 50.

<sup>25</sup> Lynn White Jr., “The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis.” *SCIENCE* 155, no. 3767 (Spring 1967): 1203-1207.

modify our own context as well as that of all of life on earth. Human modification of ecology is ubiquitous to the point that “in a sense, humanity has become earth’s habitat,” as Willis Jenkins puts it.<sup>26</sup>

Perhaps the most oft-debated element of White’s thesis is his polemical take on Western Christian cosmology, particularly its anthropocentrism, but his argument includes what he deems the “arranged marriage” between science and technology that took place in the mid-nineteenth century and that is exemplified in Baconian ideas of scientific exploitation of nature.<sup>27</sup> This confluence of applied science and technology, pre-dated but still ultimately colored by early Medieval Christian conceptions of the separation of man and nature, provides the mechanisms by which rampant exploitation of the environment grew and our ecological crisis took root. White’s solution, interestingly, rejects further technological advancement or solutions based in scientific progress, and instead advocates for a change in theology first. “What we do about ecology depends on our ideas of the man-nature relationship. More science and more technology are not going to get us out of the present ecological crisis until we find a new religion or rethink our old one.”<sup>28</sup>

White takes issue with several aspects of Western Christianity. Primarily he attributes the societal habits of environmental exploitation to Judeo-Christian theology. “Especially in its Western form,” White states, “Christianity is the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen.”<sup>29</sup> He blames the Genesis creation narrative for promoting a dualistic view of humans and nature for Christians and Western civilization more broadly, allowing for the interpretation that

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<sup>26</sup> Willis Jenkins, *The Future of Ethics: Sustainability, Social Justice, and Religious Creativity* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2013), 2.

<sup>27</sup> White, “The Historical Roots,” 1.

<sup>28</sup> White, “The Historical Roots,” 5.

<sup>29</sup> White, “The Historical Roots,” 4.



the primary function of nature is to serve the needs and whims of its human masters. Because White claims that science and technology are not the answers to our environmental problems, he instead takes the view that Christianity must be changed, and he sees the possibility for such a change in the work of St. Francis of Assisi. This “alternative Christian view,” White claims, allows for a “democracy of all God’s creatures” in which “all things animate and inanimate [are] designed for the glorification of their transcendent Creator.”<sup>30</sup>

Linking religious cosmology to environmental problems has been a “field-shaping” assumption in environmental ethics.<sup>31</sup> It was this premise—that cultural cosmology is predictive of patterns of behavior—which initially spurned theologians and scholars alike to respond to White. Theological attempts at addressing climate change have ranged from agreeing with Lynn White and proposing new axioms as he suggests, to rebutting White’s ideas about Christian anthropocentrism and recalling the robust theological foundations within Christianity regarding creation and nature. Even those who wish to defend their cosmology from White’s thesis still almost unanimously go along with his proposition that cosmological worldviews of humanity’s relationship to nature influence social action.<sup>32</sup>

How have theologians responded to White’s cosmological claims? Theologians such as James Gustafson have laid out detailed typologies and frameworks for developing environmental theology from Christian doctrine and scripture. Gustafson calls his approach a “theocentric perspective,” and advocates for a posture of human participation in nature out of appreciation for God’s creation. He enumerates four Christian postures toward the environment; Despotism,

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<sup>30</sup> White. “The Historical Roots,” 5.

<sup>31</sup> Willis Jenkins, “After Lynn White: Religious Ethics and Environmental Problems,” *Journal of Religious Ethics* 37, no. 2 (May 2009): 284.

<sup>32</sup> Jenkins. “After Lynn White,” 283-309.

Dominion, Stewardship, and Subordination.<sup>33</sup> According to Gustafson, what Lynn White calls Dominion is really Despotism, in that while Dominion sees creation as a “gift or “loan” from God, Despotism “assumes sovereign ownership and thus implies the right to use nature arbitrarily.”<sup>34</sup>

Gustafson further criticizes a despotic attitude toward nature by equating it with idolatry of human desire and power, and he uses Martin Buber’s relational model of *I-Thou* to describe the spiritual and eternal significance of relating to nature, others, and God in non-utilitarian ways. For Gustafson, neither Despotism nor Subordination draw their central perspectives from biblical sources, whereas Dominion and Stewardship can be more easily identifiable in the common biblical passages cited on topics of nature and environmental resources. Gustafson’s participation model of theocentric environmental ethics could resonate with more conservative audiences. There are very few places where his theology transgresses against the “orthodox” beliefs of Protestant evangelicalism, and his theocentric perspective keeps humanity “radically dependent” on a transcendent and almighty God.<sup>35</sup>

In contrast to the transcendent—though omnipresent—God of Gustafson, Sallie McFague is an ecofeminist theologian who pushes for a minimalist, embodied theology of “the world as God’s body,” which, she emphasizes, is focused on practice rather than metaphysical claims.<sup>36</sup> She focuses on the language we use when we talk about ourselves and when we talk about God. McFague premises her book on the idea that action and religious practice stem from belief and our “set of assumptions,” about ourselves, God, and creation.<sup>37</sup> “The problem lies in our

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<sup>33</sup> James Gustafson, *A Sense of the Divine* (Cleveland: The Pilgrim Press, 1994), 77-107.

<sup>34</sup> Gustafson, *Divine*. 87, 90-91.

<sup>35</sup> Gustafson, *Divine*. 48.

<sup>36</sup> Sallie McFague, *A New Climate for Theology: God, the World, and Global Warming* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 105.

<sup>37</sup> McFague, *New Climate*, 5.

theologies and our anthropologies,” McFague states, and she proposes an “ecological anthropology” in which individualistic and capitalist views are replaced with a more communitarian understanding of ourselves and how we are related to everything else.<sup>38</sup> In the end she makes the point that “one cares for what one loves,” and therefore care for creation will follow a love of both creation and Creator. “Body theology is basic theology: feed the hungry. Body theology is climate change theology: care for the planet.”<sup>39</sup> Unlike Gustafson, McFague’s embodied process theology requires a God that is not transcendent but present and incarnate.

These two theologians represent very different theological camps, but their approaches are representative of the many discourses in ecotheologies and religious environmental ethics. Thus far, the work of theologians such as Gustafson—closer to traditional stewardship theology, and McFague—less traditional theology advocating “radical communitarianism,” has had little to no effect in convincing American evangelical Christians of the urgency of climate change or dislodging the grip of denialism within this community.

While not explicitly responding to Lynn White, Pope Francis’s 2015 encyclical *Laudato Si’: On Care for Our Common Home* contains sweeping admonitions of exploitative technological advances, irresponsible “misuse of creation,”<sup>40</sup> and the rampant proliferation of global poverty and economic inequality. *Laudato Si’* is remarkable for the breadth of topics covered and the far-reaching positions the pope introduces. While the contents of the letter are in line theologically with the teachings of the Catholic Church, much of the pope’s diagnosis of the problem mirrors Lynn White’s thesis. Pope Francis emphasizes the shared need for action and “a

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<sup>38</sup> McFague, *New Climate*, 31, 43 – 51.

<sup>39</sup> McFague, *New Climate*, 118 – 19.

<sup>40</sup> Francis, *Laudato si’*, sec. 6.

new universal solidarity,” encompassing everyone on earth.<sup>41</sup> He begins the letter by stating his wish to “enter into a dialogue with all people about our common home.”<sup>42</sup>

The problem, as diagnosed by the Pope, is that humanity has lost a correct view of itself in relation to God and his creation. “We have come to see ourselves as (the earth’s) lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will.”<sup>43</sup> This human/God relationship is one of three “fundamental and closely intertwined” relationships that the pope indicates have been thrown into disharmony by human sin. The three relationships are (1) with God, (2) with other humans, our neighbors, and (3) with the earth and creation.<sup>44</sup> Catholic ethicist Kate Ward points out that Pope Francis’s antidote to the disconnection and distortion of these key relationships is the “spiritual practice of encounter.” Encountering those who are at the margins of society, those who are in need, and encountering them with openness and generosity “deepens our understanding of the possibilities of hospitality,” in a time when inequality and injustice are proliferating.<sup>45</sup> This practice stems from a virtue of hospitality that Ward argues characterizes the pope’s own personal theology as a Jesuit, and for Ward this practice of encounter can also be found in a feminist ethic of hospitality. Hospitality, however, has a much broader foundation than that of the Jesuit tradition, or the Catholic tradition, or in feminist ethics. As an ancient artifact of human civilization, the tradition and practice of hospitality can be useful when discussing ethics of any kind, perhaps even of a global kind.

One commonality between Pope Francis, Gustafson, McFague, and White, as well as several other environmental scholars and theologians, is the rhetoric of interconnectedness and

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<sup>41</sup> Francis, *Laudato Si’*, sec. 14.

<sup>42</sup> Francis, *Laudato Si’*, sec. 3.

<sup>43</sup> Francis, *Laudato Si’*, sec. 2.

<sup>44</sup> Francis, *Laudato Si’*, sec. 66.

<sup>45</sup> Kate Ward, “Jesuit and Feminist Hospitality: Pope Francis’ Virtue Response to Inequality” *Religions* 71, no. 8 (April 2017): 8.

ecological relatedness between humans and nature. Reference is often made to “ecological” approaches which regard creation as being interrelated and interdependent. Ecosystems, living spaces, and human behavior, are all connected, Pope Francis tells us, and “integral ecology” includes protecting “the cultural treasures of humanity,” as well as non-human creation which itself has intrinsic value.<sup>46</sup> McFague also uses the language of “ecological anthropology” when advocating for a theology of relatedness. “We need to acknowledge our place as dependent and interrelated with all other life-forms in order to attain a just, sustainable planet where we—and the others—can flourish.”<sup>47</sup> This emphasis on the ecological status of human and non-human creatures alike can be a powerful argument for environmental ethics and creation care, but the language used when talking about our interconnectedness must be connected to a rhetoric that resonates with traditional Christian values in order to be an effective tool in fighting climate change denial. The rhetoric and practice of hospitality has shaped the identity of Christians since the early days of the church and can provide a useful context for the type of relatedness and interdependence that humans have with the rest of creation.

#### **1.4 Defining Christian Hospitality**

The language of hospitality can provide a useful framework for rethinking environmental ethics and creating a fruitful dialogue between those who might have, as Pope Francis says, “distinctive approaches to understanding reality.”<sup>48</sup> In order to change the environmentally antagonistic position of most American evangelicals there must be a new way of connecting evangelicals to environmental causes. More than a rhetorical framework, hospitality is

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<sup>46</sup> Francis, *Laudato si'*, sec. 143.

<sup>47</sup> McFague, *A New Climate*, 57.

<sup>48</sup> Francis, *Laudato Si'*, sec. 62.

commonly acknowledged as a virtue and a practice in Western Christian tradition. In going beyond rhetoric, hospitality can function as a practical avenue for action and change in humanity's treatment of each other and of nature, moving toward systems that value care, restoration, and generosity.

Hospitality can be a genuinely difficult concept to define. The definition of hospitality that is common among Christian scholars is some variation on “the welcoming of the stranger.”<sup>49</sup> This is by no means a comprehensive representation of hospitality, especially when one considers the difference in scale when talking about hospitableness globally. Hospitality requires a sense of place that is bounded and yet open. Hospitality transforms the identities of those who give and receive it, even to the point of reversing the roles of host and guest and blurring the lines between identities. In this way hospitality is set apart from other traditional Christian ethics.

This instance of coming face-to-face with someone who is unable to reciprocate the gesture is what Christine Pohl claims as “the distinctive Christian contribution” to our understanding of hospitality.<sup>50</sup> While Pohl's claim here is perhaps overstated—caring for a stranger in need without expectation of reciprocity can be found in other traditions and cultures outside of and predating Christianity—she strikes upon an important theme in Christian hospitality, namely, care for those in need. The Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas ties the “welcoming of the Other” with humanity's ontological state of limitation and need.<sup>51</sup> So it seems that the default context for hospitality within the Christian tradition is that of a stranger in need,

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<sup>49</sup> See Amy G. Oden, *And You Welcomed Me: A Sourcebook on Hospitality in Early Christianity* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001), 13; Christine Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1999), 4; Jessica Wroblewski, *The Limits of Hospitality* (Minneapolis: Liturgical Press, 2012), xi.

<sup>50</sup> Pohl, *Making Room*, 6.

<sup>51</sup> Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), 146.

knocking at the door of one who has the means to meet those needs. Christian hospitality must come from an understanding of one's own need and God's hospitality to us in our need.

### 1.5 The Two Hospitalities

The corruptibility of hospitality is central to the work of Jacques Derrida. He refers to the “two hospitalities,” one the absolute and impossible, the other the performative and contradictory. Derrida uses a wide variety of language to talk about the ways in which hospitality, once performed, is perverted or corrupted into inhospitality, and ultimately violence. This violence is tied to the sovereignty of the host which must be protected from those who would cross the boundaries of the home and thereby cross into the identity of the host. “Sovereignty can only be exercised by filtering, choosing, and thus by excluding and doing violence.”<sup>52</sup> This is true of both hospitality in a household as well as hospitality inscribed into law and enacted by the State. Here briefly we'll look at some of the ways in which Christian hospitality has been corrupted in some of its modern iterations.

While scholars such as Wroblewski, Pohl, and Oden claim hospitality as essential to Christian identity and practice, today hospitality is a concept often associated with food service and tourism industries. Pohl laments the “disappearance” of Christian hospitality, believing that discussions of poverty, diversity, and other important political issues, lack a “coherent theological framework” of hospitality among Christians today.<sup>53</sup> McNulty also sees the hospitality “industry,” as well as discourses of hostility towards immigrants, as corruptions of the original meaning of hospitality. “The theological importance of hospitality appears to have been

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<sup>52</sup> Jacques Derrida and Anne Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality: Cultural Memory in the Present*, translated by Rachel Bowlby (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 55.

<sup>53</sup> Pohl, *Making Room*, 8.

supplanted entirely by something that is mutually exclusive with it: in religious myth, the hospitality act was forbidden to have any economic dimension, and the stranger was held to be divine and to merit the absolute respect of the host.”<sup>54</sup> These two corruptions of hospitality—the commoditization of hospitality into an industry, and the anti-immigrant sentiment bordering on nativism—are prominent forces in American culture and politics today, and more specifically in white evangelical American culture.

Arguments against the entanglement of conservative Christianity to corporate capitalism are numerous. Pope Francis, for instance, blames the “magical conception of the market,” for the extreme consumerism and exploitation that leads to poverty as well as environmental scarcity.<sup>55</sup> While critiques of unfettered corporate capitalism on grounds of environmental degradation are common and valid, this line of environmentalist rhetoric is often counter-productive when looking for effective communication strategies to address climate change denialism. Anti-regulation, free-market ideology is at the core of many evangelicals’ worldview, and the solutions which receive the most push-back are often those which are painted by conservatives to be anti-free-market.

Historian Darren Grem has written about the inextricable connections between evangelical Christianity and corporate America.

In and through corporate America, conservative evangelicals defined and redefined themselves and attempted to stake their claim on American society... Indeed, corporate elites, businesses, and their money shaped the meaning of “conservative evangelical” itself. To be a “conservative” type of “evangelical”... came to mean that one embraced the American business elite, engaged in business-making, and worked out one’s religious identity through corporate work, buying patterns, and consumerism.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Tracy McNulty, *The Hostess: Hospitality, Femininity, And the Expropriation of Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), viii.

<sup>55</sup> Francis, *Laudato si’*, sec. 190.

<sup>56</sup> Darren E. Grem, *The Blessings of Business: How Corporations Shaped Conservative Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 8.



Grem's book *The Blessings of Business* gives detailed accounts of the social and financial successes of evangelical businesses. He spends a good portion of his book discussing the origins of Chick-fil-A and its "Christian business" practices and philosophies. Truett Cathy, the founder of Chick-fil-A viewed, his success in business as God's approval of the way he ran his company. Christian principles were corporatized by Chick-fil-A into concepts such as "servant leadership" and "stewardship of resources," and the language of hospitality was incorporated by Chick-fil-a into policies such as requiring employees to call customers "guests" and creating the position of "hospitality director" in some stores. Along with other evangelical-owned businesses such as Holiday Inn and Days Inn, Chick-fil-A became part of the hospitality industry that we recognize today by adapting explicitly Christian principles, such as hospitality, into managerial strategies and employee training.<sup>57</sup> Grem outlines the anti-gay, "family values" politics of businesses such as Chick-fil-A, as well as bringing up other dubious business practices in the company's supply chains and hiring practices.<sup>58</sup>

Another compelling account of the problematized notion of Christian hospitality in American culture can be found in the book *The Southern Hospitality Myth*, by Anthony Szczesiuł. Szczesiuł, in discussing the long-standing myth of southern hospitality, asks the question, "why have we chosen to remember and valorize this particular aspect of the South?" when the concept of southern hospitality arose out of a slave economy and conspicuous consumption on the part of wealthy slave-owners. "Indeed, the legendary hospitality of antebellum planters—the "origins" of the myth—was only possible through slaves, whose labors provided their masters both the wealth and the leisure to entertain their guests freely."<sup>59</sup> He

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<sup>57</sup> Grem, *Blessings of Business*, 121-161.

<sup>58</sup> Grem, *Blessings of Business*, 156-161.

<sup>59</sup> Anthony Szczesiuł, *The Southern Hospitality Myth: Ethics, Politics, Race, and American Memory* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2017), 23-24.

argues that the myth of southern hospitality serves as a “foundational narrative within the larger national project of southern exceptionalism,” and functions still today as a means to protect white national identity and privilege.<sup>60</sup> The performative and false hospitality of slave owners, enabled by the economic practices of the time, is perhaps the best example of how hospitality can come to mean something “mutually exclusive” to its original meaning, as McNulty says. The violence which was essential to the creation of the myth of southern hospitality is indicative of a corruption of hospitality which is also tied to southern Christian culture and economic systems of oppression.

In the work of Szczesiul, as with Kearns and Grem, we see the rhetoric of Christian hospitality used for capitalist enterprise in the service of free-market ideology. This mythologized narrative of hospitality has covered up corrupted aspects of the Christian virtue, but it has kept a strong sense of hospitality as being integral to evangelicals’ identities as Christians and as Americans, and this leaves possibilities for a redemption of the hospitality tradition in evangelicals’ theology and religious practice.

### **1.6 Rescuing Christian Hospitality**

While the allegiance of conservative evangelicals to free-market capitalism and individualistic values is perhaps stronger than ever in the twenty-first century, the Christian tradition of hospitality encourages, if not an abandoning of such ideology, at least a softening of it, toward practicing an openness to the stranger in need and an understanding of the interconnectedness of creation. The rest of this thesis will look at some characteristics particular to the Christian tradition of hospitality and how they can be applied to issues of climate change and environmental crisis in a way that can still appeal to conservative Christians who have not

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<sup>60</sup> Szczesiul, *Southern Hospitality Myth*, 2-7.

yet connected care for the environment to their identities as Christians. An understanding of hospitality as a part of a Christian environmental ethic will hopefully provide the groundwork for evangelicals to take action against climate change, live more environmentally conscious lifestyles, and to encourage openness and care for those who are most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change

## CHAPTER 2

### THE ROLES AND IDENTITIES IN HOSPITALITY

In this chapter I argue that a recontextualization of the Christian view of humanity's role in creation into one of hospitality, instead of stewardship or dominion, will enable evangelicals to recognize the value of caring for the environment from a place within their already deeply held doctrine. First, the identities and roles which are central to hospitality will be explored, through the etymology of "hospitality" and relying heavily on the work of Emile Benveniste, Jacques Derrida, and Tracy McNulty. In addition, the Christian hospitality tradition will be expanded upon, putting the practice of the hospitality relationship into an ecological framework. Whereas stewardship and dominion promote human disconnection from the rest of creation, hospitality brings the relatedness and connectedness of all created things into a bond that evangelical Protestants appreciate and identify with.

#### 2.1 Host and Guest

The beginning of hospitality is the taking on of a new identity. The relationship between a self and an Other becomes that of a host and a guest. These new identities are marked not only by the new roles on each side, but also by a fluidity, or transferability, which will be explored later in the chapter. In Emile Benveniste's etymological study of the word "hospitality" we find a linking of two Latin root words: *hostis*— meaning either "guest" or "host," and *potis*— meaning "master."<sup>1</sup> Both roots signify the importance of the identities on either side of the hospitality bond, and both will be explored here briefly.

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<sup>1</sup> Emile Benveniste, "Hospitality," in *Indo-European Language and Society*, translated by Elizabeth Palmer (London: Faber and Faber, 1973) 71-83.

According to Benveniste, *hostis* conveys a meaning related to compensation and reciprocity. “A *hostis* is one who repays my gift by a counter-gift,” Benveniste tells us, this makes the guest neither a stranger, nor an enemy, but instead someone who has entered into an agreement in which there is an exchange, or a debt incurred.<sup>2</sup> The social practice of hospitality rests on the expectation of reciprocity by both parties, and so *hostis* comes to mean both host and guest.

In the context of hospitality is it the position of master that is both necessary and simultaneously put at risk by opening the home to a stranger. The *potis*, or “master of the house,” describes a man who is not only an owner of property, but who personifies and represents his tribe or family. Additionally, *potis* signifies that the master “is eminently himself.”<sup>3</sup> This denotes a certain personhood not afforded to any other person within the family or household. He is, as Benveniste puts it, “the only one who is important.”<sup>4</sup> Jacques Derrida cites Benveniste at length in several of his works, and he emphasizes the pact, or *xenia*, as the mechanism by which hospitality is enacted. This pact is defined by a peculiar type of reciprocity; reciprocity which is familial because, as Derrida says, a “proper name,” or a nameable identity, “is never purely individual.”<sup>5</sup>

This concept of collective identity also derives from *potis* in the concept of the “ipseity” or the “master who is at home.” This identity was tied to mastery and possession of land, wealth, and importantly, those people who were not attributed personhood or ownership over

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<sup>2</sup> Benveniste, “Hospitality,” 76-77.

<sup>3</sup> Benveniste, “Hospitality,” 71.

<sup>4</sup> Benveniste, “Hospitality,” 74.

<sup>5</sup> Jacques Derrida and Anne Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality: Cultural Memory in the Present*, translated by Rachel Bowlby (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 23.

themselves.<sup>6</sup> The collective family accepts a stranger into the dwelling, even while those who share the dwelling do not necessarily have a choice, or even agency, to provide hospitality. In order for the master to become the host he must have possession of a place, a home, in which to host. He must also be in that place, he cannot host from someone else's home. According to Emmanuel Levinas, this at-homeness is what defines the ipseity. Therefore, the ipseity of the host is necessary for the welcoming of the Other. There is a further link between ipseity and hospitality in the word *hosti-pet-s*, also *hospes*, meaning the guest-master, which Derrida points to as important in the power dynamics of the hospitality pact.<sup>7</sup> The derivation of the word despot – *despotes*, comes from this same root.<sup>8</sup>

In the introduction to her book *The Hostess*, Tracy McNulty discusses the history of the meaning of hospitality in depth. “When we put together these two roots—*hostis* and *potis*—we find that the institution of hospitality implies the union of two somewhat contradictory notions: a social or legal relationship defined by reciprocity and exchange, and despotic power, mastery, and personal identity.”<sup>9</sup> From the outset there is a tension within the host/guest relationship. The tension is predicated on the uneasy balance of power and the reciprocal nature of the pact. McNulty points out that the pairing of *hostis* and *potis* “implies not only the power of mastery, but power over the guest.”<sup>10</sup> Both host and guest are made vulnerable by entering into the hospitality relationship, and either could misuse their power over the other in an exploitative manner. The guest places themselves in the care of the host, leaving themselves open to hostility

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<sup>6</sup> Benveniste, “Hospitality,” 71.

<sup>7</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 18, 57.

<sup>8</sup> Benveniste, “Hospitality,” 71. Here Benveniste points out that *despotes* is very like the word *dominus*, which “designated the person who personified the family group *par excellence*.”

<sup>9</sup> Tracy McNulty, *The Hostess: Hospitality, Femininity, and the Expropriation of Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), xi.

<sup>10</sup> McNulty, *The Hostess*, xi.

while in a foreign place, but also necessitating a degree of assimilation to that place which is not their home. Likewise, the host opens themselves and their space to the guest, leaving vulnerable that which was secure before the guest arrived. The host's very position within the household is threatened by the arrival of a foreign and unknown stranger. If the guest misuses the space, destroys part of the home or in some way violates the ownership of the master, they break the relationship forged by the hospitable pact. The host has more power over the guest, but simultaneously it is the host who has taken on more of the risk.

Among the risks posed in the giving of hospitality is the potential usurping of the host's identity. According to Derrida this is the essential paradox of hospitality. The admittance of a guest into the space of the host poses risks to the identity and mastery of the host and those who live within that space. Hospitality demands openness to the stranger, an altogether unknown and mysterious Other, but in the admittance of the stranger they become a mystery no longer, and they must either undergo an assimilation to the host's environment, which Derrida calls the "first act of violence," or they do not assimilate and become hostile to the host, threatening to take over the role of master.<sup>11</sup> McNulty argues that this tension is both embodied and resolved within the act of hospitality because hospitality also insists on the primacy of the relationship over the identity of the individuals.<sup>12</sup> The identity of both master and stranger is therefore transformed by the taking on of a new identity and role and the accepting of the inherent risks involved. This emphasis on relationality over individualistic identity is a key component of an ethic of environmental hospitality.

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<sup>11</sup> Derrida and Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality*, 15.

<sup>12</sup> McNulty, *The Hostess*, viii.

Already we begin to see the crucial importance of ownership in the context of a hospitality ethic. In the Christian and Jewish traditions, often the role of owner or master over creation is attributed to God.<sup>13</sup> In this sense, God is the *potis*, the master and sovereign over his own creation. Hospitality is a key theme running through both Old and New Testaments, and often God is portrayed as a host, graciously providing for Israel, a nation often identified with the perpetual sojourner and stranger. God therefore also takes on the role of *hostis*, host to those who he has welcomed into his creation.

In this view, humanity takes on the role of the stranger who becomes the guest. As guests within the creation of God, we receive life and the earth's resources as a gift which should not be taken advantage of. Reciprocity in the hospitality pact takes a backseat in early Christian understandings of hospitality. "Christian hospitality is distinguished from that of Greek and Roman kinds because the starting point of Christian hospitality lies in the hospitality of God rather than in the good will of a fellow human being."<sup>14</sup> The original hospitality is God's hospitality towards us, which we receive without hope of reciprocity, instead with the understanding that hospitality must be practiced towards others. The roots of the Christian identification with the stranger and the Other will be discussed later in this chapter.

The various etymological connections between hospitality and the identity of the master are essential to understanding the *xenia*, the pact which bonds both host and guest together and which can only be enacted by the master of the household. The hospitality pact is the mechanism by which the identities of both master and stranger are transformed and simultaneously

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<sup>13</sup> Psalm 24:1 "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it."; Deuteronomy 10:14 "To the Lord your God belong the heavens, even the highest heavens, the earth and everything in it."

<sup>14</sup> Ilsup Ahn, "Economy of "invisible debt" and ethics of "radical hospitality": Toward a paradigm change of hospitality from "gift" to "forgiveness", " *Journal of Religious Ethics* 38, no. 2 (2010), 247.



subordinated to their new relationship. Hospitality “both allows for the constitution of identity and challenges it,” making the connectedness of the host and guest more important than the protection of their identities. The connection between the role of master and owner to the roots of the words *despot* and *dominion* can now be put into the context of the Christian creation narrative. Next, we will look at the common understandings of humanity’s role within creation and how they differ from the hospitality model. Then we will look at why a hospitality model for environmental ethics works better than the previous understandings.

## 2.2 Dominion and Stewardship

Historically Christian environmental ethics has centered around the Genesis creation story. The first two chapters of the Bible are the location of many points of doctrine on which evangelicals remain politically polarized, including gender and sexual ethics as well as seven-day creationism and anti-evolution ideology. In Genesis chapters one and two we find two divergent directives from God to humans with regards to our role in creation, and which form the basis for the two most prominent ecotheological models. The first can be found in Genesis 1:28. Here the directive from God is found, to “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 air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.”<sup>15</sup> This verse has lent itself to many justifications of environmental policy and behavior that American evangelicals hold to, including climate change skepticism and denial. Interpretations of Genesis 1:28 are grounds for what is commonly referred to as the dominion environmental ethic. Defined by an absolute power and right to control creation, a dominion ethic is often seen as “fringe” Christian cosmology and necessitating a more

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<sup>15</sup> Genesis 1:28, NRSV.

temperate approach, even from quite conservative communities. While the strictest dominion view may still only be on the fringes of Christian belief, it carries an oversized power in American policy-making in the twenty-first century.<sup>16</sup>

As part of his argument against the corrupt anthropocentrism of Western Christianity, Lynn White condemns Christian dominionism, saying that it has led to the use of technology to exploit natural resources and irreparably damage the environment. While the directive to “have dominion” has certainly led to destructive attitudes toward the environment, as R.J. Berry points out, “dominion in the early Christian centuries was predominantly concerned with a mutual sharing of creation and not a legitimization of despotism.”<sup>17</sup> He goes on to describe what Lynn White also very quickly recounts in his article, the move away from pagan animism in early Christianity and the desacralization of nature, as well as the Enlightenment era ideas such as Francis Bacon’s project to use science as a means to harness nature and reassert humanity’s dominion over it. As a part of the hierarchical worldview of mediaeval Christianity, Lynn White also blames the Christian view that links human possession of the *imago dei* with a belief “that it is God’s will that man exploit nature for his proper ends.”<sup>18</sup> While White’s explanation of Christian environmental attitudes toward nature lacks nuance, the connection of the image of God in humanity and the dominion over nature that results is a clear one. Human dominion over the rest of creation is therefore linked to God’s ultimate dominion over all of his creation.

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<sup>16</sup> Emily Atkin, “Scott Pruitt vs. The Pope,” *The New Republic*, February 27, 2018, <https://newrepublic.com/article/147198/scott-pruitt-vs-pope>.

<sup>17</sup> R. J. Barry, “Introduction: Stewardships: A Default Position?,” in *Environmental Stewardship: Critical Perspectives, Past and Present*, edited by R. J. Barry (London: T&T Clark), 6.

<sup>18</sup> Lynn White Jr., “The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis.” *SCIENCE* 155, no. 3767 (Spring 1967): 1206.

James Gustafson indicates that the dominion view of humanity's relationship with nature can slip easily into "despotism" and, as White argued, leads to the desacralization of nature and the usurping of God's role as creator and master.<sup>19</sup> This connection of dominion and despotism, which we saw earlier in Benveniste's etymological work, suggests that humans are too quick to take on the role of despot over creation, which is a usurping of God's ownership over creation. There is no justification of such despotic dominionism in the biblical text according to Gustafson, who instead advocates a stance of human participation in nature, similar to a stewardship ethic, which he calls "the ideal-type of dominion."<sup>20</sup> Pope Francis also argues that "we have come to see ourselves as [earth's] lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will."<sup>21</sup> This, he says, is a wrong view of our relationship to nature, and the pope instead endorses a view of our role in creation as "responsible stewardship."<sup>22</sup>

Along with the dominion model of Christian environmental ethics, evangelicals often apply the rhetoric of environmental stewardship to environmental ethics in order to convey a milder anthropocentric stance. The stewardship ethic is derived from Genesis 2:15 which reads, "The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it."<sup>23</sup> The stewardship ethic presents multiple problems when constructing or adopting a Christian environmental ethic that will appeal to most American evangelicals. While many evangelical public figures and clergy would not claim a dominion ethic, instead opting for a stewardship ethic, often there is no demonstrable difference in the treatment of the environment in their communities and churches.

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<sup>19</sup> Gustafson, *Divine*, 82.

<sup>20</sup> Gustafson, *Divine*, 92.

<sup>21</sup> Francis, *Laudato si'*, sec. 2.

<sup>22</sup> Francis, *Laudato si'*, sec. 116.

<sup>23</sup> Genesis 2:15, NRSV.

Some scholars, such as Michael Northcott, point out that an ethic of environmental stewardship too quickly produces practices not of care and responsible management, but instead of co-ownership and human domination. “The tradition of stewardship legitimates the reordering of the non-human world in the interests of human welfare,” therefore Northcott advocates a view of humanity as “members of the community of life which includes humans and non-humans.”<sup>24</sup> This ordering of the world in the interests of human welfare is central to the way many evangelicals view our species’ place within God’s creation, however. De-emphasizing humanity’s privileged place in creation will not draw in evangelicals for whom the *imago dei* is a component of their identity as a human which gives them the right to have dominion over nature.

Clare Palmer also criticizes ideas of Christian stewardship for giving too much mastery over creation to humanity. She argues that there is very little evidence for a biblically grounded stewardship ethic, and that adherence to a stewardship model can promote ideas of human separation from nature, the view that nature is a resource meant for human use and control, and a sense that nature is somehow dependent on human management.<sup>25</sup> She points out that the relationship between a master and his steward is one of business management, not an intimate relationship predicated on care. She also argues that there is no coherent ethic of environmental stewardship found in either Old or New Testament. She cites God’s interaction with Job in chapters 38-41 as an example of humanity’s irrelevance to nature. “The animals are also completely independent of humanity: the hawk, the mountain goat, the wild ox, the leviathan; they are not made for humanity.”<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Michael Northcott, *The Environment and Christian Ethics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996). 129.

<sup>25</sup> Clare Palmer, “Stewardship: A Case Study in Environmental Ethics,” in *Environmental Stewardship: Critical Perspectives—Past and Present*, edited by R.J. Berry (London: T&T Clark, 2006), 70.

<sup>26</sup> Palmer, “Stewardship: A Case Study,” 65.

The lack of interest in environmental stewardship in conservative evangelical communities, as well as the more malicious co-opting of the term by organizations like the Cornwall Alliance, diminishes the potential for a stewardship model of environmental ethics to sway pro-environment action among evangelicals. There is, however, potential for a new discourse surrounding environmental stewardship and dominion when contextualized alongside the Christian ethic and virtue of hospitality. While a stewardship model treats nature as a resource for human use and management, there is a case for a biblical model which places nature outside of human's control or domination. A recontextualization of God as host, nature as a home, and humanity as guest differs from the stewardship model of environmental ethics in that the misuse of nature is no longer simply a form of mismanagement; it is now an act of inhospitality, a breach of the most fundamental of relational bonds, that of host and guest.

The position of ownership in a hospitality context differs from that of a stewardship context. Benveniste distinguishes *potis* (or *posis*, in Greek) from *despotes*, in that *despotes* signifies "solely an expression of power," and not "the sense of 'master of the house'" which is true of *potis*.<sup>27</sup> Therefore *despotes*, which Benveniste links to *dominus*, is separated from the sense of home present in the idea of the *potis* root in hospitality. Derrida further links the ideas of dominion and stewardship when he points out that *despotes* is in fact a synonym of *oikonomos*, which means housekeeper, or steward.<sup>28</sup> While Derrida questions Benveniste's separation of *potis* and *despotes* partially based on the connection of *oikonomos* to the concept of *oikos*, or 'home,' the discussion of these terms brings a deeper understanding of the linkages between the origins of the concept of hospitality and the concepts of dominion and stewardship which are so

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<sup>27</sup> Benveniste, "Hospitality," 72.

<sup>28</sup> Jacques Derrida, "Hostipitality." *Angelaki: Journal of Theoretical Humanities* 5, no. 3 (2000): 13.

elementary to Christian environmental theology. Especially when considering that the root for ‘ecology’ is also *oikos*, it is useful to place humanity’s role within God’s creation in the context of a hospitality relationship, an identification as guests within God’s created *oikos*.

Considering the etymological roots of these various concepts, the connection between the language of hospitality and the environmental theology derived from Genesis is clear. No longer can the dominion ethic lead to despotism and abusive treatment of the environment. Instead, the framing of hospitality allows the dominion ethic to be understood as humanity’s obligation as host within the *xenia* bond. God’s original hospitality is drawn from his dominion over his creation, and his directive to “have dominion” gives humanity not a license to exploit, but an obligation to welcome and care for the environment and all who inhabit it.

### **2.3 Christian Identification with the Other**

The practice of hospitality in the early Christian church no longer emphasized the reciprocal aspect of the arrangement, instead focusing on care for those who cannot repay you for your hospitality. “Sheltering strangers was essential to the survival of Christianity in a hostile empire,” writes Amy Oden, “Before one can truly offer hospitality, one must understand one’s own marginal position.”<sup>29</sup> This is once again characteristic of God’s hospitality which humans do not have the means to reciprocate. Instead, Christians are called to turn to those in need, those who “could not return the favor,” and offer hospitality just as God does to us.<sup>30</sup> Christine Pohl argues convincingly that Christian identity is grounded in marginality and that the times when

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<sup>29</sup> See Amy G. Oden, *And You Welcomed Me: A Sourcebook on Hospitality in Early Christianity* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001), 38-39.

<sup>30</sup> Christine Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1999), 6.

the church has been marginalized from society are when the practice of hospitality has been the most vibrant in Christian communities.<sup>31</sup> The evidence for marginality and otherness as a fundamental Christian identity can be found in both Old and New Testaments.

In the creation narrative of Genesis, we see the displacement of humanity from Eden, and then from Babel, which are the results of human sin. McNulty argues that the nomadic lifestyle of Abraham and his descendants is instituted by God as “an ethics of exile and displacement” which redeems their primary identity not to a place or homeland, but to the God they follow.<sup>32</sup> Israel becomes defined as a people only in their connection to God, who assumes the role of master and who personifies the group identity. Even once Israel entered the promised land, Pohl argues, God still owned the land and therefore Israel was still to identify as “chosen-yet-alien,” and as sojourners living in the land with God’s permission.<sup>33</sup>

McNulty explains that while the patriarch of Israel, or the *potis*, represented his family, later the nation of Israel, and took on the role of host to others, the role of host was never fully his because it remained God’s.<sup>34</sup> Because the patriarch of Israel is never fully “at home” the position of ipseity is never attainable for Israel or its leaders, and therefore remains with YHWH.<sup>35</sup> God’s chosen people are perpetually identified with the stranger and therefore the guest, and God is the perpetual host who welcomes them and provides for them. Israel was both “dependent on God for welcome and provision and answerable to God for its own treatment of

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<sup>31</sup> Pohl, *Making Room*, 106.

<sup>32</sup> McNulty, *The Hostess*, 5.

<sup>33</sup> Pohl, *Making Room*, 27-28.

<sup>34</sup> McNulty, *The Hostess*, 6-7.

<sup>35</sup> McNulty, *The Hostess*, 6.

aliens and strangers.”<sup>36</sup> In this way creation belongs to God and it is he who is the *potis* and *hostis*, the head of the family and the practitioner of hospitality.

This tradition of displacement and sojourning is carried forward into the Christian tradition from its grounding in Judaism, and the early Christian identity is often also rooted in marginalization and otherness.<sup>37</sup> This marginalized identity of Christians is what Amy G. Oden argues in her book, *And You Welcomed Me*. Christ represents the poor, outcast, and vulnerable, and much of his teachings are centered around the welcome and care of those who are in need. The teachings of Jesus, and his identification with the “least of these,” bring new dimension to the virtue of hospitality. “The apparent stranger is not simply the poor, the stranger, the widow, the sick who knock, but Christ himself.”<sup>38</sup>

There remains a strong narrative of marginalization among American evangelicals in modern times, although it has not necessarily resulted in an embrace of the openness of hospitality as practiced by the early church. Along with a sense that post-sixties America is in a time of moral decline, most evangelicals identify strongly with a cultural declension narrative that ironically has served as a political rallying point for evangelicals since the early twentieth century. Andrew Hartman makes the argument that while conservative, white, middle- to upper-class protestants make up the majority of what he calls “normative America,” nevertheless that demographic has lost many battles in the “culture wars” of the past 50 years.<sup>39</sup> Bethany Moreton also provides an analysis of American evangelicals’ identification with persecuted Christians in third-world countries, often black or brown people, as an understanding of their own “embattled

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<sup>36</sup> Pohl, *Making Room*, 16.

<sup>37</sup> Oden, *Welcomed*, 39. Also Pohl, *Making Room*, 104-124.

<sup>38</sup> Oden, *Welcomed*, 50-51.

<sup>39</sup> Andrew Hartman, *A War for the Soul of America: A History of the Culture Wars*. Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2015), 5.



minority” status. This “modern-day martyrdom” as Moreton calls it, allows evangelicals to retain their identification with those who are suffering and oppressed, all the while harboring anti-immigrant nativist views and enjoying affluence and privilege.<sup>40</sup> While experiencing a loss of total hegemony has not exactly amounted to marginalization of evangelicals in society, the feeling of loss and decline is still strong within that community and plays an important role in their collective identity.

While the early church underwent oppression and hostility from society, their identification with the oppressed and the refugee became the basis for an identity grounded in hospitality. The modern church has inherited a tradition of hospitality, but while evangelicals still often identify as countercultural and marginalized, their openness to the other, the stranger in need, has not also extended to issues of refugee migration and environmental crisis in the twenty-first century. Connecting the tradition of hospitality back to the practice of hospitality and its focus on the other in need is necessary if the Christian hospitality ethic is to be recovered in a way that, as Pohl says, “connects our theology with daily life and concerns.”<sup>41</sup> Hospitality carries particular weight in the Christian tradition due to its reliance on practice. As an ethic, hospitality means actively putting oneself at risk in order to care for others. Pohl tells us that for Christians, “hospitality is important symbolically in reflection and reenactment of God’s hospitality and important practically in meeting human needs and in forging human relations.”<sup>42</sup> Pohl regards “the power of recognition” as an ultimate source of justice and equality within a Christian understanding of hospitality. Christians are meant to recognize Jesus in every stranger, a

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<sup>40</sup> Bethany Moreton, “Why Is There So Much Sex in Christian Conservatism and Why Do So Few Historians Care Anything about It?” in *The Journal of Southern History* LXXV, no. 3, (2009): 737.

<sup>41</sup> Pohl, *Making Room*, 8.

<sup>42</sup> Pohl, *Making Room*, 29-30.

reminder of each person's dignity, worth, and of the *imago dei* in even the most alien of others or neediest of strangers.<sup>43</sup> For Pohl, as well as for Oden, this recognition must include an emphasis on shared humanity and commonalities rather than differences.<sup>44</sup>

## 2.4 Fluidity of Roles

There is also an ancient tradition, in Christianity as well as other traditions, that understands the mysterious or unknown guest as divine, a deity disguised as a stranger.<sup>45</sup> Often a feature of ancient tales of hospitality, the unknown stranger who is a deity could either bring blessings or harm depending on the generosity of the host.<sup>46</sup> In this reversal of roles the divine comes to the home of a human in order to receive hospitality, and in this exchange there would be "the occasion to gain recognition by the divine."<sup>47</sup>

This calls back into question the potential threat to the identity of the host as master. In the act of welcoming in the Other, the master risks his household, but he also cannot avoid giving away some part of what he owns, what makes him the master. This dispossession can be presented as a threat to the very sovereignty and individualism of the host, but it can also be seen as a blessing, by divine guests but also those who are not divine. In her book *The Limits of Hospitality*, Jessica Wroblewski talks about the "best experiences of hospitality," in which "guests also take on some of the roles of hosts and hosts also experience the presence of their guests as

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<sup>43</sup> Pohl, *Making Room*, 61-68.

<sup>44</sup> Pohl, *Making Room*, 98.

<sup>45</sup> Ladislaus J. Bolchazy, *Hospitality in Early Rome: Livy's Concept of Its Humanizing Force* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 7-11.

<sup>46</sup> Bolchazy, *Early Rome*, 7-9.

<sup>47</sup> McNulty, *The Hostess*, xxi.

refreshment and gift.”<sup>48</sup> The interchangeability of the host and guest does threaten the identity of the host, but it also leads to blessings and the reciprocity of the hospitality pact.

In the monotheistic traditions the initial example of this exchange with the divine, and one of the most significant stories of hospitality in scripture, is in the story of Abraham and the mysterious strangers at Mamre in Genesis 18. Abraham who is the patriarch, does not recognize the three men, but enthusiastically welcomes them in all the same. This story, Pohl writes, “connects hospitality with the presence of God, with promise, and with blessing.”<sup>49</sup> McNulty argues that in this exchange, “the host necessarily both knows and does not know the identity of his divine guest: hospitality is motivated by the potentially sacred nature of the guest, whose true identity must nonetheless remain unknown for authentic hospitality to take place.”<sup>50</sup>

In the act of hosting a deity, the master is now taken care of by the stranger. The dual meaning of *hostis* is again important in this instance of reversal of roles. There is a displacement of the host, which, for Derrida, is the “divine law,” the “implacable law of hospitality.” He writes, “The host (*hote*) who considers himself the owner of the place, is in truth a guest (*hote*) received in his own home. He receives the hospitality that he offers *in* his own home; he receives it *from* his own home – which, in the end, does not belong to him.”<sup>51</sup>

In the position of host, Christians give hospitality as a part of their identification with Christ. Jesus is seen in the gospels traveling and being welcomed in as a guest into the homes of many whom he encounters. To them he then offers healing, hope, and an invitation into God’s household and to Christ’s table. In essence he offers hospitality to his hosts. “The fluidity or

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<sup>48</sup> Jessica Wroblewski, *The Limits of Hospitality* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012), 73.

<sup>49</sup> Pohl, *Making Room*, 24.

<sup>50</sup> McNulty, *The Hostess*, 9.

<sup>51</sup> Jacques Derrida, *Adieu to Emmanuel Levinas* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 42.

indeterminacy in the distinction between host and guest is nowhere more clearly seen than in the life of Jesus, who welcomed people into the kingdom of God even as he broke bread in the homes of others.”<sup>52</sup> The hospitality of Christians must reflect the hospitality of Christ to his hosts, both as receiving and then also giving.

The person of Jesus embodies the role of guest, the stranger in need who has been welcomed in, and he also occupies the role of the supreme Host. In the sacrament of the Eucharist, the body and blood of Christ are shared and he is “both host and meal.”<sup>53</sup> Once again, the language of Christ as host in eucharistic hospitality is found in the Latin word *hostia*, which Beneviste tells us is connected to *hostis*, and which “denotes a compensatory offering” to “appease the anger of the gods.”<sup>54</sup> Pohl tells us that the Eucharist “most fundamentally connects hospitality with God because it anticipates and reveals the “heavenly table of the Lord.”<sup>55</sup>

We see God as both host, master of creation, and guest, identified with the stranger and disguised in order to receive hospitality from humans. Humanity therefore also has the role of both host and guest. Guests within God’s divine space and given the gift of his care and original hospitality. Hosts in that we are to welcome the stranger as if welcoming Christ, and to love even our enemies. The command to “have dominion” must be contextualized within the hospitality pact, understood as a sacred relational bond which if transgressed leads to inhospitality and violence against God’s creation. The transferability of the host/guest relationship offers a new framework through which we can see our relationship to nature. In our role as guest we are

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<sup>52</sup> Wroblewski, *Limits*, 75.

<sup>53</sup> Pohl, *Making Room*, 30.

<sup>54</sup> Benveniste, “Hospitality,” 76.

<sup>55</sup> Pohl, *Making Room*, 30.

neither owners nor stewards but beneficiaries of God's hospitality who are tasked with offering hospitality to others.

## **2.5 Conclusion: Relationship over Identity**

The identities of host and guest are a prominent element of Christian hospitality, both in the role of God as original host, and in the role of the Christian who is always guest in the hospitality of God, and who also enacts the role of host towards others who are in need out of the model of God's hospitality. In contrast to the traditional dominion ethic toward nature, a hospitality bond between God and humanity allows for human hospitality toward and respect of creation. The anthropocentrism that Lynn White condemned in Western Christianity is defined by a usurping of God's role as master. Instead of viewing God as the original host and master, an ethic of dominion outside of the hospitality context ignores the fundamental relationship of humanity to its creator, as well as to the rest of creation.

As was discussed earlier, the roles of host and guest are peculiar from other common roles assigned to humanity in Christian environmental ethics due to the primacy of the relationship, the bond of hospitality, over the preservation of the identities of the host and guest. The identity of marginalized stranger is fundamental to the Christian understanding of themselves and their community, and it is only in the context of the hospitality of God that Christians are transformed into guests, those who have been welcomed in. It is also with the understanding of oneself as an outsider or stranger that a Christian can extend hospitality to those who cannot repay them, encouraging a right relationship with God, our neighbors, and the rest of creation

## CHAPTER 3

### THE LOCATIONS OF HOSPITALITY

In the second chapter we discussed the bond of hospitality and the emphasis placed on the identities and the roles the host and guest play in the hospitality pact. The roles in a hospitality relationship are fluid and interchangeable, and this provides a new way of addressing humanity's role in nature and in caring for the environment, a role that is defined both by the position of guest and host. This chapter will explore the locations of hospitality, starting with the home and then addressing what it means to do hospitality on the margins with those who are marginalized. Here we will also look at the limits of hospitality and the potential for hospitality to be subverted into something altogether inhospitable and violent. Finally, this chapter will look at what hospitality means for a globalized community and how a Christian hospitality ethic fits into the issues of climate refugees, global warming, and the lives of future generations. In the pursuit of an environmental ethic of hospitality, I will argue that care for the environment must be linked to care for the Other in Christian ethics, and that environmental hospitality allows for a sense of place that will appeal to conservative evangelicals while also fitting into Christian theology more broadly.

As we saw in the last chapter, hospitality requires that the identities of host and guest take a back seat to the relational bond they enter into. Similarly, the act of hospitality requires both a distinct space in which to welcome in someone who before was unknown and outside, while also requiring a permeability, an openness to those who are strangers. Jessica Wroblewski makes this point when she says:

The most basic distinction between hosts and guests is not because of intrinsic and fixed differences between them but is rather a function of their relationship to a particular space... Even if the space that a guest is being welcomed into is metaphorical... we might still say that welcome implies welcome *into* somewhere that is distinct from other spaces...hospitality requires not only the enclosure of walls that separates the home from the street but also the permeability of doorways that allows admission and passage from one to the other.<sup>1</sup>

This need for both boundaries and openness echoes the tension discussed in chapter two between the identities of host and guest and the ultimate bond which alters both host and guest. “This impossible limit between the maintenance of identity and its opening to what is different from or nonidentical to it identifies a fundamental tension within the hospitality relationship: between identity and relation, or between ontology and ethics.”<sup>2</sup> This is, it would seem, what Derrida means when he says that “ethics is hospitality.”<sup>3</sup> One’s treatment of the other, the unknown alterity, must involve a level of hospitality, an openness to someone other than “I,” and therefore an ethics. “One might even argue that every ethics is fundamentally an ethics of hospitality, since the original meaning of ethos is “abode” or “dwelling place.”<sup>4</sup> And so this chapter will look at the spaces in which hospitality takes place as they are essential to the very act of hospitality, and in connection to the knowledge that the locations of hospitality exist in the world in which we live, the earth and its environment.

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<sup>1</sup> Jessica Wroblewski, *The Limits of Hospitality* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012), 75.

<sup>2</sup> Tracy McNulty, *The Hostess: Hospitality, Femininity, And the Expropriation of Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), xiv.

<sup>3</sup> Jacques Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 17.

<sup>4</sup> Tracy McNulty, *The Hostess*, xv.

### 3.1 Spaces of Hospitality

There are three conventional “spaces” commonly referenced in the language of Christian hospitality. Foremost among these hospitable spaces is the home or household. This is the language Pope Francis chooses to adopt in his encyclical, both metaphorically speaking of the earth as a home, but also when speaking practically about lack of housing for the poor and how owning a home “has much to do with a sense of personal dignity.”<sup>5</sup> Sallie McFague also utilizes the theme of home and points out that the word “ecology” comes from the roots for “home” (*oikos*) and “word” (*logos*), “words about home.”<sup>6</sup> The metaphor of the earth as our home, and the home of all creation, is used often in ecotheologies and it provides grounding for an ethic of environmental hospitality. Caring for the earth as a home means understanding that the shared burden of climate change will include making space for others and cultivating a habitable planet for human and non-human life.

The second common location of hospitality is “the margins.” Encounter happens at the margins, according to Kate Ward,<sup>7</sup> and openness to those at the margins of society is a vital component of hospitality according to Christine Pohl.<sup>8</sup> Hospitality to the stranger, the opening up of one’s space, and emptying oneself in order to make room for others, these are essential parts of hospitality. Ward argues that Pope Francis’s spiritual practice of encounter “must be interpreted in a concrete, embodied way,” due to his focus on urban planning, physical assistance

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<sup>5</sup> Francis, *Laudato si’*, sec. 152.

<sup>6</sup> Sallie McFague, *A New Climate for Theology: God, the World, and Global Warming* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2008), 48.

<sup>7</sup> Kate Ward, "Jesuit and Feminist Hospitality: Pope Francis' Virtue Response to Inequality." *Religions* 8, no. 4 (2017): 11.

<sup>8</sup> Christine Pohl, *Making Room: Recovering Hospitality as a Christian Tradition* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1999), 104-124.



for the poor, and the evils of individualistic and isolationist technological advances.<sup>9</sup> In the second chapter the connection of Christian identity and marginality was explore in the practice of the early church and especially in the life and ministry of Jesus. This chapter will delve more deeply into what it means to have a Christian ethic of environmental hospitality that encounters those at the margins, those left most vulnerable due to the changing climate.

The third location wherein hospitality takes place is in the context of the globe. Hospitality can provide a framework for how we treat one another in the globalized space of modern day which is broken up by national boundaries that dictate the movements of people and prompt international conflicts increasingly linked to environmental catastrophes. In this chapter the cosmopolitan hospitality of Immanuel Kant will be connected to environmental ethics. There seems to be a sizeable gap between hospitality as a domestic practice of social norms rooted in relationality and what Kant puts forth as the “right of hospitality” in his elaboration of the conditions that he deems necessary for perpetual peace. We jump from concepts of ancient hospitality between families and travelers, homes, and cultural traditions, into a discussion of nations, legal rights, and citizenship. And beyond that, there is still much that can be explored by way of drawing connections and outlining the differences between these two directions the tradition of hospitality takes. A key contribution to understanding the relationship of hospitality as mythologized social etiquette to hospitality as institutionalized and concretized laws comes from Jacques Derrida in his works on cities of refuge and absolute versus limited hospitality.

Related to this is the subject of identities, on the national level but also within the conventions of hospitality. Are the roles of host and guest important in debates about immigration and cosmopolitanism? Who is the Other? Hospitality, on an essential level, has to

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<sup>9</sup> Ward, “Jesuit and Feminist Hospitality,” 8.

do with our treatment of others. When stripped down to this most bare-bones definition there is not a large gap between the small-scale hospitality of home-life and the large-scale hospitality of refuge seekers and immigration laws. A Christian ethic of hospitality requires an opening of the home, whether that home is a building or a nation. Our treatment of the other is the overlap between these two paradigms in hospitality.

### 3.2 The Limits of Hospitality

As we saw in the second chapter, the root words from which hospitality is derived include as immediate tension between “reciprocity and exchange” and “possession and mastery.”<sup>10</sup> There is a further tension, an actual contradiction, in the Latin word *hostis*, which is also the root for “hostility.” As Derrida points out, hospitality is “a word which carries in own contradiction incorporated into it,” and once it is put into action hospitality cannot avoid also enacting a paradoxical hostility to both guest and non-guest alike.<sup>11</sup> Those who are welcomed in must undergo a “first act of violence,” and must assimilate their own identity to that of the host or host country. And those who are not welcomed in are excluded from the pact, very likely to their detriment.<sup>12</sup>

For Derrida, hospitality is always somewhat corrupted and unjust. Once it is enacted, “from the very threshold,” hospitality brings with it a form of violence. A helpful discussion of violence and hospitality can be found in Jessica Wroblewski’s book, *The Limits of Hospitality*. Wroblewski traces the Derridean notion of absolute hospitality and the “tension between the desire

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<sup>10</sup> McNulty, *The Hostess*, ix-xi.

<sup>11</sup> Jacques Derrida, “Hostipitality.” *Angelaki: Journal of Theoretical Humanities* 5, no. 3 (2000): 3. Jacques Derrida and Anne Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality: Cultural Memory in the Present*, translated by Rachel Bowlby (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000), 53-55.

<sup>12</sup> Derrida and Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality*, 15.

to offer an unconditional welcome... and the limiting conditions that make a particular welcome possible.”<sup>13</sup> She makes the case that limiting hospitality does not necessitate harm to another, but at times can in fact prevent the spread of violence or ensure the continuance of hospitableness in the future. Derrida’s conception of absolute hospitality, which is also largely derived from Levinas’ work, is a hospitality without limits and therefore can lead to a giving over of oneself, even to the point of transitioning from the role of host into a hostage, in order to satisfy the needs of the Other.<sup>14</sup>

Absolute hospitality is not the extent of Derrida’s ethic of hospitality. His conception of hospitality is rounded out by the “mutual necessity of absolute and conditional hospitality.”<sup>15</sup> While the abstract version of hospitality before it is embodied should be that of absolute hospitality, or what Derrida calls the Law of Hospitality, once hospitality is enacted it must be limited in order to be effective. For Derrida, as it is for Wroblewski, there is no such thing as a practice of absolute hospitality, but the idealization of it is important to preserve.<sup>16</sup> An act of inhospitality can be an act that obstructs further violence, and perhaps hospitality is not always the correct or healthy answer to structural problems and acts of violence. “It would be better to say that violence—that is, the harm that we inevitably do to ourselves and others—is a deviation from what it means to be human in any normative sense.”<sup>17</sup> Since the home and the identity of the host must be preserved for the act of hospitality to be meaningful, an ethic of environmental hospitality must be contextualized to spaces which carry the significance of home.

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<sup>13</sup> Wroblewski, *Limits*, 31.

<sup>14</sup> Wroblewski, *Limits*, 22. Derrida and Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality*, 55.

<sup>15</sup> Wroblewski, *Limits*, 25.

<sup>16</sup> Wroblewski, *Limits*, 25.

<sup>17</sup> Wroblewski, *Limits*, 27.

### 3.3 The Home

As was briefly addressed in the last chapter, the home, or *oikos*, is the primary location of hospitality. The theme of home is a common one in ethics, and it corresponds to the original meaning of *ethos*, which is “abode” or “dwelling place.” In the work of Emmanuel Levinas, the importance of the dwelling place of the “I” is paramount. It is connected to the ipseity of the individual, the host who is at home in himself and his identity, and who is in a place of power, as Levinas puts it, “a site where I *can*.”<sup>18</sup> The place where the individual is at home is the place where the welcome of the Other can happen, without the position of power the host cannot offer a welcome of hospitality. It is the space of the home or household that hospitality originates from.

In her book *A New Climate for Theology*, Sallie McFague turns to questions of space and place. She references *kenosis*—the self-emptying and self-limitation, as of Christ, in order to make space for others—as an important feature of her embodied theology. “Bodies need space,” she writes, “*kenosis*—self-limitation so that others may have place and space to grow and flourish—is the way God acts towards the world and the way people should act toward one another and toward creation.”<sup>19</sup> Wroblewski also mentions that Derrida refers to hospitality as a giving over of space, a “self-limitation,” which “requires both mastery and surrender, possession and gift, identity and openness.”<sup>20</sup> In the act of creation, God allowed space to be made for us, and in the incarnation and crucifixion, Jesus also emptied himself for others. This interpretation of *kenosis* lends itself to the Christian practice of hospitality in that it involves the creation of

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<sup>18</sup> Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, translated by Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), 37.

<sup>19</sup> McFague, *New Climate*, 136. See also Sarah Coakley, *Powers and Submissions: Spirituality, Philosophy and Gender* (Malden MA: Wiley Blackwell Publishing, 2002).

<sup>20</sup> Wroblewski, *Limits*, 30.

space for those in need, and it requires the giving, not just of space but of one's self, to the Other. Environmental hospitality should include making space for others, in our hearts, as Christine Pohl writes, as well as our homes. Pohl argues that for Christians, making space for hospitality to others requires "intentionality in applying it to the complex and separate spheres of contemporary life."<sup>21</sup> These spheres of contemporary life should include private and public spaces, and in fact the modern context for hospitality should be expanded to include the sphere which provides a home to us all, the earth.

The metaphor of the earth as our home is a common one in Christian theology. Amy Oden tells us that "God offers hospitality to all humanity, first by establishing a home (oikos) for all. God provides creation and its glories for the habitation and enjoyment of all creatures."<sup>22</sup> Her inclusion of all creatures, human and nonhuman alike, is a reminder that creation is all connected and shares the same space, the earth. The word *oikos* is the root of the word ecology and denotes a sense of home as well as interconnectedness. In *Laudato si'* Pope Francis elaborates on the metaphor of earth as our home, and he states his belief that Saint Francis, who is the patron saint of ecology, is also "the example par excellence of care for the vulnerable."<sup>23</sup> Along with his use of the metaphor of earth as home, the pope also spends a lot of the encyclical discussing the importance of housing and living space for the poor. "Having a home has much to do with a sense of personal dignity and the growth of families. This is a major issue for human ecology."<sup>24</sup> Pope Francis explicitly ties care of the environment to care for the poor and those who do not have a place or home of their own.

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<sup>21</sup> Pohl, *Making Room*, 151-152.

<sup>22</sup> Amy Oden, *And You Welcomed Me: A Sourcebook on Hospitality in Early Christianity* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001), 87.

<sup>23</sup> Francis, *Laudato si'*, sec. 10.

<sup>24</sup> Francis, *Laudato si'*, sec. 152.

The language of home and domesticity has a history of being linked to the rhetoric of hospitality as a feminine virtue in evangelical communities. Anxieties over changing gender norms and the gay rights movement in the sixties, seventies and eighties led to books, curriculum and campaign materials, all devoted to the concepts of “family values,” and essentialist ideas of “masculinity” and “femininity.”<sup>25</sup> Bethany Moreton’s work on the feminization of the workforce and its correspondence with the rise of service work in the second half of the twentieth century gives a clear picture of the connection between home-life and evangelicals’ concerns about the family. “The work undertaken in stores, hospitals, schools, and restaurants, after all, is the reproductive labor of the household thrown out into the marketplace, the work of care that reproduces a labor force.”<sup>26</sup> Christine Pohl also recognizes how hospitality has shifted over the last two centuries into more professional and institutionalized settings which rob hospitality of its power to bond host and guest together. “The future of Christian hospitality is partly tied to the future of the home and family,” she argues, saying that the connection of the household to the ministry of hospitality must be reestablished.<sup>27</sup>

While the understanding of domesticity and hospitality as being tied to essentialist concepts of femininity and heteronormative family structures is problematic, it nonetheless is one way in which the tradition of hospitality is very clearly integral to evangelicals’ political priorities and Christian identities. If nothing else, the prominence of conservative sexual ethics in the collective identities of evangelicals has preserved the idea and language of hospitality and it’s

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<sup>25</sup> Darren E. Grem, *The Blessings of Business: How Corporations Shaped Conservative Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 178. Andrew Hartman, *A War for the Soul of America: A History of the Culture Wars* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2015), 77. Daniel K. Williams, *God’s Own Party: The Making of the Christian Right* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 105.

<sup>26</sup> Bethany Moreton, “Why Is There So Much Sex in Christian Conservatism and Why Do So Few Historians Care Anything about It?” in *The Journal of Southern History* LXXV, no. 3, (2009): 735.

<sup>27</sup> Pohl, *Making Room*, 58.

connection to care of others in the home as crucial to Christian morality and religious practice. The contextualization of earth as our home brings with it a sense of obligation to care for the planet, and to share the earth in openness and hospitality to others.

### 3.4 The Margins

While the placement of hospitality in the home is important and can be used in the metaphor of planet earth as our shared home, perhaps just as compelling a location for hospitality is hospitality at the margins. This requires a different framework for hospitality, but it is one that could resonate among evangelical audiences. The Christian identification with the displaced and marginalized is what brings the Christian a recognition of their dependence on God's hospitality, as well as an understanding of what it means to be hospitable to those who are also marginalized. "As members of God's household, Christians were to live as aliens in the world—aliens who practiced hospitality to strangers."<sup>28</sup> The idea of earth as our home, while common among ecotheologians and useful as a metaphor, is incomplete for most Christians who instead believe that heaven is their eventual and eternal home. Even Pope Francis reminds us that "we are journeying towards... our common home in heaven," as the end of *Laudato si'*.<sup>29</sup> Along with the identification with the stranger there must be an acknowledgement that hospitality is an indispensable part of a Christian's life.

If the earth is not the Christian's eternal home then the practice of hospitality on the margins is fundamental to the Christian's journey. This mirrors Jesus's ministry, as he traveled and taught, receiving hospitality from his hosts while simultaneously offering welcome into the

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<sup>28</sup> Pohl, *Making Room*, 32.

<sup>29</sup> Francis, *Laudato si'*, sec. 243.

family of God. Along with her emphasis on the Christian identity being rooted in otherness and marginality, Christine Pohl tells us that a constructed or cultivated marginality is important for Christians who find themselves no longer in danger of persecution and no longer on the margins of society. “Many of us are situated so centrally that we have to make conscious decisions to experience marginality in our lives,” she writes.<sup>30</sup> This includes a continued identification with those who are on the margins as well as an intentional movement towards them in the places where they are and with the goal of hospitality.

### **3.5 Who Is My Neighbor? Proximity and Universality**

Perhaps the most salient of biblical teachings on how to treat the other person, is in the parable of the Good Samaritan. In Luke 10:29-37, the answer to the question “Who is my neighbor?” comes to include those who did not warrant or expect hospitality before. Jesus leads us to understand that the neighbor can be anyone, even an enemy. Neighbor-love and hospitality are not always distinguished from one another in any meaningful sense. Pohl, for instance, states that “the practice of hospitality forces abstract commitments to loving the neighbor, stranger, and enemy into practical and personal expressions of respect and care.” She takes the parable of the Good Samaritan to indicate a “universalizing of the neighbor” which brings all into the category of neighbor, regardless of proximity or status.<sup>31</sup>

Hospitality certainly evokes a more practice-based ethic, whereas neighbor-love can be more of an attitude, but the relationship between the two is more complex than that. Hospitality is not simply the enactment of neighbor-love. A comparison of hospitality and neighbor-love on

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<sup>30</sup> Pohl, *Making Room*, 123.

<sup>31</sup> Willis Jenkins, *The Future of Ethics: Sustainability, Social Justice, and Religious Creativity* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2013), 117-128. Pohl, *Making Room*, 75.



two crucial points will illuminate how they are related. The first element is that of place, the spaces in which hospitality and neighbor-love are enacted. While the language of “neighbor” seems to imply an “at-homeness” involved in neighbor-love, the parable of the Good Samaritan does not seem to necessitate that the loving neighbor be at home, but instead that the neighbor be the one who draws near to those in need, rather than moving farther away. This drawing near is remarkable in the story due to the social situation of the Samaritan being one who is already far off, removed from the man on the side of the road by social divisions. The love of the Samaritan for the Jewish man in need breaks the social barriers that divide them and it both physically and metaphorically brings the two nearer to each other. They are neighbors.<sup>32</sup>

While both hospitality and neighbor-love require porous boundaries, the crossing of boundaries in neighbor-love does not imply an “at-homeness” as it does in hospitality. The act of hospitality requires the host to be at home, with doors open to welcome in the one who is not at home. This is the second element of comparison, that of the power differential between host and guest and the fluidity of roles, which was discussed in the last chapter. The *hostis* root of hospitality signifies reciprocity and can denote a meaning of either host or guest, this is closer to the concept of neighbor-love, neighbor to neighbor, than the alternate root of hospitality, *potis*. It is the “at-homeness,” mentioned in the last chapter, that gives the host the identity of ipseity, the “sovereignty of oneself over one’s home.”<sup>33</sup> This also requires a certain limitedness to hospitality which is not present in neighbor-love. Derrida, in discussing the limitations of hospitality, brings up the “filtering, choosing, and thus excluding and doing violence,” that is necessary in the act of

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<sup>32</sup> For a more detailed discussion of this see Thomas M. Walker, “Who is My Neighbor? An Invitation to see the World with Different Eyes,” in *Global Neighbors: Christian Faith and Moral Obligation in Today's Economy*, edited by Douglas A. Hicks, Mark Valeri (Cambridge: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2008), 3-15.

<sup>33</sup> Derrida and Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality*, 55.

hospitality for the preservation of the host as master. In order for hospitality to remain what it is, in order that the guest actually receive the benefits of hospitality, the host, in his finitude, must remain host and exclude some outsiders while including others.

In her book *Between God and Green*, Katharine Wilkinson interviews congregants of several evangelical churches on their views about environmental theology and climate change. She uses the ECI's document—entitled “Climate Change: An Evangelical Call to Action,” and its stated emphasis on neighbor-love as part of a Christian response to climate change—to talk to evangelicals who are resistant to climate science or who espouse climate change denial. In her research she finds that while most evangelicals agree with basic dominion and stewardship conceptions of care for creation, they do not link those responsibilities to a need to act on climate change. “This perceived disconnect between stewardship and climate change produced a generally conflicted response to the idea of climate care. Similarly, congregants frequently saw love of neighbor as distinct from climate change and were unwilling to apply that precept to the issue.”<sup>34</sup> Wilkinson found that among the reasons for evangelical disbelief of climate change, a lack of “systemic think,” and instead an emphasis on direct and individualistic action, contributed to the idea that combating climate change in order to impact poverty was absurd.<sup>35</sup> Finding ways to connect climate care to care for the poor will be an important part of galvanizing evangelicals, despite the prevailing problem of an individualistic values and free-market ideology.

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<sup>34</sup> Katharine K. Wilkinson, *Between God & Green: How Evangelicals Are Cultivating a Middle Ground on Climate Change* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 89.

<sup>35</sup> Wilkinson, *God and Green*, 106.

Those who are, and will continue to be, most affected by the ramifications of climate change are those on the margins.<sup>36</sup> Those who are initially already vulnerable due to poverty and resource scarcity are already feeling the effects of drought, increased storm and weather intensity, and sea-level rise.<sup>37</sup> Preferring the term “climate-displaced persons” over the term “climate refugees,” Timothy Doyle and Sanjay Chaturvedi point out the problems with the constructed category of “climate refugee” as they are deemed victims of a problem which cannot be attributed to a political entity or precise human agency. While the blame for the forced migration of millions of people due to the climate cannot be pinned down, the obligation to welcome and care for those who have been displaced, the “people without a place,” must be taken up by Christians for whom empathy for the stranger is an essential characteristic.<sup>38</sup>

A second demographic who will feel the effects of climate change most is future generations. The language of the Southern Baptist Convention in their 2007 resolution regarding environmental issues, “On Global Warming,” speaks to concerns about the “effects on economies and impacts on the poor” that policy measures to fight climate change will bring. This focus on the rising cost of goods for the poor, rather than the numerous other vulnerabilities exacerbated by global warming, is indicative of the free-market capitalist ideology of many members of the SBC, but also indicates what Richard Howarth refers to as presentism. Presentism is the moral framework which privileges current generations above future generations. Because, as Howarth says, “people hold altruistic preferences concerning the

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<sup>36</sup> Pope Francis, *Laudato si'*, sec. 48. Christiana Zenner, *Just Water: Theology, Ethics, and the Global Water Crisis* (Maryknoll NY: Orbis Books, 2014), 32. “Climate Change: An Evangelical Call to Action,” Evangelical Climate Initiative, 2006, <http://www.christiansandclimate.org/statement/>.

<sup>37</sup> Timothy Doyle and Sanjay Chaturvedi, “Climate Refugees and Security: Conceptualizations, Categories, and Contestations,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Climate Change and Society*, edited by John S. Dryzek, Norgaard, Schlosberg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 278-291.

<sup>38</sup> Pohl, *Making Room*, 87.

welfare of their children and grandchildren,” the regard for future generations falls by the wayside. Howarth argues that the logic of presentism is in fact unsound and makes the case that present generations do have an obligation to “the unborn members of future generations,” by means of their connection to their already-born progeny.<sup>39</sup> While the Christian’s obligation to those who are presently alive and in poverty is crucial, the care of creation for the sake of future generations is also a concern. While capitalist, free-market solutions to climate change may alleviate some contributors to poverty, there are other causes of the poverty and displacement of communities that are climate change related and which are in many cases exacerbated by forces of global capitalism.

The ancient roots of Christian identification with the sojourner and stranger were outlined in chapter two, but the affluence and centrality of Christian principles and evangelical Protestants in modern American culture is a difficulty to the continued identification with the “least of these” that Christians are supposed to emulate. While there is some truth to the claims of being “counter-cultural” from some evangelicals, it is somewhat inarguable that white evangelical Protestantism enjoys political power and cultural clout, even in a time when the cultural hegemony of “normative America” is beginning to wane.<sup>40</sup> In order for evangelicals to contextualize their inherited identification with the Other in the framework of environmental hospitality, an acceptance of a spiritual practice of encountering those at the margins must be cultivated. Just as Pohl argues that the church has been most faithful to its hospitable character

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<sup>39</sup> Richard B. Howarth, “Intergenerational Justice,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Climate Change and Society*, edited by John S. Dryzek, Norgaard, Schlosberg (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 338-352.

<sup>40</sup> Hartman, intro term “normative America.” There is also the problematic identification of white American evangelicals with the modern day “martyrs” in countries where Christian worship is suppressed or Christians persecuted, see Moreton, “Why So Much Sex?, 737.

when it has existed at the margins of society, so she suggests that “transformative hospitality still finds its most effective location on the edges of society, where it is offered by hosts who have a sense of their own alien status.”<sup>41</sup>

### 3.6 The Globe

Pope Francis extends his use of the home metaphor for earth into cosmopolitanism. “Beginning in the middle of the last century and overcoming many difficulties, there has been a growing conviction that our planet is a homeland and that humanity is one people living in a common home.”<sup>42</sup> Seyla Benhabib’s work on the tensions between human rights and democratic norms recognizes hospitality as a means of amelioration for the anxieties of globalization and mass migration. She writes, “the modern state system is caught between *sovereignty* and *hospitality*, between the prerogative to choose to be a party to cosmopolitan norms and human rights treaties, and the obligation to extend recognition of these human rights to all.”<sup>43</sup> Benhabib takes her conception of hospitality in the context of globalization from the work of Immanuel Kant.

In 1795 Immanuel Kant published *Toward Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch*. In it, Kant lays out his plan for a future in which the world is perpetually at peace under the established norms and rules of an international, global federation of states. Chief among these governing rules is what Kant calls cosmopolitan right. Cosmopolitan right, Kant says, will be “limited to the conditions of Universal Hospitality.”<sup>44</sup> For Kant, hospitality is constituted by “a

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<sup>41</sup> Pohl, *Making Room*, 124.

<sup>42</sup> Francis, *Laudato si'*, sec. 164.

<sup>43</sup> Seyla Benhabib, *Another Cosmopolitanism: Hospitality, Sovereignty, and Democratic Iterations*, edited by Robert Post (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 31.

<sup>44</sup> Immanuel Kant, “Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch.” (1795), 82.

host's conduct to his guest," and he fits this into his discussion of rights. In his proposed international cosmopolitan order, citizens have the "right of hospitality."<sup>45</sup> Which is to say, in a world at peace, anyone would have the right to visit another country, and to be welcomed there, as a visitor. To Kant's mind, "it is the spirit of trade, which cannot coexist with war," and so Kant's concept of hospitality is grounded in commerce.<sup>46</sup>

It is worth pointing out that this universal right of hospitality and visitation is not paired with an obligation of hospitality by the host country or its inhabitants. Whereas much of the Christian tradition surrounding hospitality speaks of the practice of hospitality as a virtue shown by the host to their guest, Kant wishes to establish the right of every person to hospitable treatment in a place that is not their home, rather than imposing the duty of hosting to a sovereign state. As Tracy McNulty points out, "Kant's vision of cosmopolitan hospitality is thus underwritten by the notion of commerce."<sup>47</sup> Unlike the definition commonly adhered to by Christians in which the reciprocity of the hospitable act is down-played and the neediness of the stranger is coupled with their inability to pay back the hospitality of the host, cosmopolitan hospitality is predicated on the transactional reciprocal roots of hospitality. Kant's cosmopolitan right, predicated on commerce and the common ownership of the earth, provides stability to a system lacking a mandate to care for or welcome the visiting stranger, but is incomplete in its scope. The injustices and prejudices of our modern context call for an ethic more strongly skewed to the obligation of hospitality by those who have wealth and resources to those who do not and those who are in need of support and care, more true to the ancient Christian virtue of hospitality.

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<sup>45</sup> Kant, "Perpetual Peace," 82.

<sup>46</sup> Kant, "Perpetual Peace," 92.

<sup>47</sup> McNulty, *The Hostess*, 58.

The shift from hospitality as a moral framework to hospitality used as a practical mechanism for coexistence loses much of its shared definition. Commerce based hospitality takes away the personal nature and vulnerability in hospitality. There is no longer a risk, it's purely transactional, and in this loss of risk there is also a loss of "intimate interpersonal contact that is so crucial to ancient hospitality."<sup>48</sup> In this way Kant's cosmopolitan right of hospitality is dissimilar, even antithetical, to the "risky hospitality" of the monotheist traditions, which Laurie Zoloth points out, is an asymmetrical relationship, one that "transforms the stranger into a brother."<sup>49</sup> However, one important component of Kantian cosmopolitan hospitality is in its premise of common ownership of the surface of the earth by all men.

It is not the *right of a guest* that the stranger has a claim to... but rather a right to visit, to which all human beings have a claim, to present oneself to society by virtue of right of common possession of the surface of the earth. Since it is the surface of a sphere, they cannot scatter themselves on it without limit, but they must rather tolerate one another as neighbors, and originally no one has more of a right to be at a given place on earth than anyone else.<sup>50</sup>

This common right to the earth espoused by Kant echoes the pope's appreciation for the environment as a common good, "belonging to all and meant for all."<sup>51</sup> As Benhabib puts it, "the spherical surface of the earth constitutes a *circumstance of justice*."<sup>52</sup> While the pope places ownership of the world with God instead of humanity, the interconnectedness of life on earth corresponds to the common ownership and responsibility for the planet in both Pope Francis's and Immanuel Kant's conceptions of an idealistic and peaceful world order.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> McNulty, *The Hostess*, 57.

<sup>49</sup> Laurie Zoloth, "Risky Hospitality: Ordinal Ethics and the Duties of Abundance," *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 83, no. 2, (June 2015): 373–387.

<sup>50</sup> Kant, "Perpetual Peace," 82.

<sup>51</sup> Francis, *Laudato si'*, 18.

<sup>52</sup> Seyla Benhabib, *Another Cosmopolitanism*, 33.

<sup>53</sup> Francis, *Laudato si'*, 5.

Cosmopolitanism implies a certain porousness of boundaries as well as a planetary scale which is fitting for such a globalized problem as climate change. A global cosmopolitan system of hospitality cannot be universalist. Cosmopolitan hospitality must retain the boundaries which separate nations. Just as hospitality requires the home to have an open door, so cosmopolitanism requires international freedom of movement between national boundaries. Benhabib envisions cosmopolitanism as the “emergence of norms that ought to govern relations among individuals in a global civil society,” and she tells us that unlike communitarianism which is reductionistic, cosmopolitanism provides a form of mediation between distinct countries who retain democratic sovereignty.<sup>54</sup>

Willis Jenkins also takes up the topic of cosmopolitan norms and proposes a “common moral citizenship,” that does not require common ground or global consensus, but instead a pluralist cooperation in battling the planetary problem of climate change.<sup>55</sup> In constructing a global cosmopolitanism, Jenkins attempts to lean into “structures of mutual belonging,” and stimulate cross-border agency apart from destructive global systems, which often obscure moral agency. These agents of change, cosmopolitan citizens, would work for better planetary relations, “cultivate friendship across boundaries,” and participate in projects that don’t require consensus of opinion or operate under existing corrupt systems. “Global ethics,” Jenkins argues, “should... let our moral worlds remain plural and seek those border-crossing projects and bridge-building discourses that support cooperative action on shared problems.”

Jenkins uses a Kantian expression of cosmopolitanism to establish proximity between global citizens. But Jenkins’s cosmopolitanism, instead of being based in a transactional

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<sup>54</sup> Benhabib, *Another Cosmopolitanism*, 19-20.

<sup>55</sup> Willis Jenkins, *The Future of Ethics*, 115.



commerce model of international cooperation, distinguishes itself from Kantian cosmopolitanism by being grounded in Christian neighbor-love and human connection. Christian cosmopolitanism builds empathy through encounter with the Other and provides a vehicle through which the practice of hospitality could be administered. “There is a border-crossing impulse to Christian neighbor-love... Love seeks proximity with those who might otherwise remain far apart by moving across boundaries to make relationships.”<sup>56</sup> This proximity enables the hospitality of meeting the physical needs of the poor, as well as providing opportunity for “practices of solidarity with suffering.”

The global space is perhaps the most tenuous of the three contexts of hospitality for an evangelical worldview, but if the tradition of Christian hospitality at home and on the margins is rekindled, perhaps in the future the cosmopolitan hospitality of Kant, or a system like it, might gain traction among evangelicals who see openness to and care for others as crucial to their Christian identity. By extension, some hospitality will become international in scale if evangelicals become open to climate refugees. It seems that although there is some anti-immigrant sentiment present in the evangelical community, especially among those most closely aligned with conservative politics, some communities of evangelicals are far more open to immigrants in need and refugees than their ideologically nativist counterparts. A hospitable response to the globalized problems of the twenty-first century can come naturally to evangelical Christians who embrace an openness to those who are displaced and vulnerable due to climate change.

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<sup>56</sup> Jenkins, *Future of Ethics*, 118. Jenkins refers to this type of neighbor-love as “neighbor-making love.”

### 3.7 Conclusion

In this thesis I have aimed to draw upon the unique dimensions of hospitality in to context of a Christian environmental ethic. The transferability of roles in the hospitality relationship can take the Christian view of humanity's place in creation away from a sense of domination and separation and instead move toward a sense of dependence and obligation to care for the world around us. Christians, whose identity has historically been rooted in marginality and displacement, can understand that God's hospitality to us takes place on the earth and in its environment. The earth is the Christian's temporary home, in which we receive God's hospitality while also becoming hosts to others, all those who are strangers to us and who are in need. While we, as humans, retain a certain power over creation, it is God who is ultimately the *potis*, the master over creation who has given us a similar power with which to be hospitable instead of exploitative.

If a mistaken understanding of our own principles has at times led us to justify mistreating nature, to exercise tyranny over creation, to engage in war, injustice and acts of violence, we believers should acknowledge that by so doing we were not faithful to the treasures of wisdom which we have been called to protect and preserve.<sup>57</sup>

While hospitality requires a sense of place and boundaries to be maintained, it simultaneously requires the host to open up their home to others and to be generous in their abundance. The instinct to be closed off to others is antithetical to the fundamental Christian practice of hospitality. Linking care for the poor and vulnerable to care for the environment, condemning environmental exploitation and instead advocating for an ethic of interconnectedness among creation, and founding cosmopolitan global ethics with consideration for intergenerational

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<sup>57</sup> Francis, *Laudato si'*, sec. 200.

solidarity; these are all components of environmental hospitality and make up a useful framework for Christians wishing to effect positive change for the climate.

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## **BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH**

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