

The Theology of Environmentalism Is Settled

“The science is settled” is a phrase often used to shut down debate. But perhaps the phrase would be more accurate if it was recast as “the theology is settled,” especially in relation to climate change, in which environmentalists pursue an aggressive response to remedying the apocalyptic consequences facing the earth.

The rationale behind using “theology is settled” is simple. [Science has changed frequently](#) over the course of human history. Theology, however, changes little, if at all, at least for stable religions, particularly when one’s theology revolves around an unchanging God.

Referring to environmentalist concerns and ideas as theological rather than scientific seems especially apt considering adherents’ insistence that everyone must believe as they do. Yet while environmentalism tries to present itself as based on sound, well-reasoned theology, it more frequently resembles the perpetually inaccurate street preacher who assures us that *this time* his calculations are correct, and that Doomsday is in fact *next Friday* rather than this past one.

Harvard Medical School graduate, novelist, script writer, and director Michael Crichton put it best during a [mid-2000s interview on CSPAN](#), when a college freshman asked him why he had previously described Environmentalism as “one of the most powerful religions in the western world.”

The idea that anthropologists have about what constitutes a religion, or what functions a religion serves, are a little bit different from how you think about it if you categorize religion as Christian, Muslim, Hindu, something like that. So

from the standpoint of an anthropological view, a religion is a collective set of beliefs. There is a leader or leaders who promote the beliefs among the followers, the followers make some kind of contribution or change in their lifestyle based on the religious belief. The religious belief gives them a total belief of the world in terms of how the world is structured, what's right what's wrong, what's good action, what's bad action. That all fits perfectly on to environmentalism.

Doesn't that strike a chord?

Environmentalism may not have one single leader, but it surely seems to have a variety of cardinals in the form of people like Neil DeGrasse Tyson and former Vice President Al Gore. Their word is gospel, and the movement will not suffer others to disagree with these leaders.

All observant Environmentalists are called upon to eschew the luxuries of modern life in the name of saving the planet. They practice a form of asceticism by trading out affordable and useful gas-powered cars for short-range electric vehicles at far greater expense. Self-denial even extends to keeping the thermostat low during the winter and using energy efficient—but light-deficient—lightbulbs. The dark and cold inside one's own home is preferable to being cast into the outer darkness by Environmentalism's watchdogs.

But the similarities with Environmentalism are more specific than mere generalities between the movement and world religions writ large. The history of Western civilization and its Judeo-Christian origins has profoundly influenced Environmentalism's theological background. As Crichton explains:

The other thing that environmentalism does... is it rather precisely maps a lot of Judeo-Christian beliefs about the origin of the world and so on. So that environmental

thinking, there used to be a sort of Eden and then people came and ruined that Eden, and that therefore we are sort of original sinners because we're destroying that planet. And what we can do, however, is get salvation through sustainability. And if you're a good person you'll seek salvation, and if you're a bad person you'll drive SUVs.

From Crichton's perspective, there were and are large environmental problems that need to be addressed. He simply found the dogma of the environmentalist movement to lack the solutions to those problems.

And dogma it is, for anyone who questions the orthodoxy of Environmentalism will be condemned and excommunicated. They are mocked as uneducated and banned from engaging in any conversation with the faithful.

Even if one agrees that the climate is changing, or that the change is caused by humans, the inquisitors of the environmentalist movement will not be satisfied. One must also agree with the orthodoxy as regards the size of the climate change problem, faithfully carrying out the penances assigned by the cardinalate at the Sierra Club. Crichton repeatedly condemned the [State of Fear](#) that the environmentalist movement casts over our culture, and for doing so he continues to be pilloried by the media more than a decade after his death. In 2020, one publication called Crichton "[the Darth Vader of the climate crisis.](#)"

But this is what the religion of Environmentalism does. Climate change is not a political issue that can stand a careful weighing of costs and benefits. It is a "crisis" and anyone who disagrees is a demon working against salvation. It does not matter how many people are without electricity, clean water, or sufficient food. Who cares how many people lose their jobs because of Environmentalism's policy prescriptions? It is dogma, and it is not to be questioned.

In the end, the goal of public policy should always be the bettering of the human conditions. While the environment we live in is certainly a large part of that equation, it is by no means the only one. This is what Crichton was saying, and it is prudent for us to ignore Environmentalist dogma that says otherwise.

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