

# Environment and religion

It is a religious duty to work to protect the environment. Many Scriptures emphasize that humans have a responsibility to care for the creation in behalf of the Creator, and not to despoil it. People in almost every religious tradition would agree with this sentiment.

Even without such Scriptures, we know instinctively that nature is precious. A pure mountain stream, a sunset in a clear sky, or a healthy forest all speak to our souls of the importance of preserving our earthly home.

Today is the time for religious people, for all people of good will, to come forward to defend the environment because it is under relentless attack. The Bush administration has proven itself an enemy of the environment, and we read almost daily of new attempts to undermine or remove controls to protect our air, water, forests, and health.

We were one of the few nations in the world that refused to sign the Kyoto protocol to reduce global warming. President Bush halted the "roadless rule" prohibiting new roads in national forests, which would open up more areas for timbering.

Despite his promise to enforce clean air standards, the president reneged on his campaign promise to cause polluting coal factories to install new pollution control devices when they remodeled. His so-called "Clean Skies" act actually weakens current clean air protections. The attempt by some in Congress to force automobile makers to build cars with greater fuel efficiency was resisted by the president and, largely due to pressure from his office, defeated by Congress.

Recently the Bush administration urged that mining companies be permitted to dump the residue

of their excavations into creeks and streams. The decision to withdraw funding from many agencies that work for population control ignores the fact that out-of-control growth of population inevitably leads to more environmental destruction. The list goes on and on.

Religious people, people who have convictions that the earth and water and air are God's and are to be used carefully and preserved for future generations, have a duty to cry out that this must stop. This is not "meddling in politics." This is religious people, consistent with their calling and Biblical mandates, speaking out against injustice and working for righteousness. Fighting to protect the environment is a religious duty; failing to do so is to betray one's own religion.

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