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# The Religious and Political Origins of Evangelical Protestants' Opposition to Environmental Spending

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## Abstract

Evangelical Protestants are less likely than most other Americans to support environmental policies and spending to protect the natural environment. We use almost three decades of repeated cross-sectional data to examine the factors that promote evangelicals' opposition to environmental spending. Mediation models with bootstrapped standard errors show that affiliation with the Republican Party, biblical literalism, and religious service attendance mediate differences in support for environmental spending between evangelical Protestants and other Americans. The importance of these mediating variables, however, varies over time and by the group evangelicals are being compared to. Differences in support for environmental spending between evangelical and mainline Protestants, for example, are primarily due to views of the Bible, but not at all to Republican identification. The results shed light on the causal effects of religion on views of the environment, temporal changes in the social and political implications of religiosity, the persistence of divisive issues that support the continued existence of culture wars, and the future of government spending on environmental problems in a social context where scientific evidence is filtered through political and religious ideology.

**Keywords:** environment, evangelical Protestant, politics

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## Introduction

Environmental issues exploded into national prominence in 1970 (Erskine 1972), and have been “one of the most visible and volatile topics of American public policy” since (Andrews 2006:ix). While many Americans support environmental policies and spending, Christians, and especially Protestants, are relatively unlikely to do so (Greeley 1993). This comports with White’s seminal argument that Western Christian theology is antithetical to environmentalism: “Christianity . . . not only established a dualism of man and nature but also insisted that it is God’s will that man exploit nature for his proper ends” (1967:1205). Since White’s work, empirical research has both established a strong connection between Christianity—particularly conservative or evangelical Protestantism<sup>1</sup>—and views of the natural environment (e.g., Boyd 1999; Eckberg and Blocker 1996; Smith and Leiserowitz 2013), and highlighted diversity and change in Western Christian theological orientations to the environment (Danielsen 2013; Kearns 1996).

Evangelical Protestants’ relative lack of support for environmental public policy has been of special interest, and is likely influenced by their religious beliefs, religious participation, and political orientations. Conservative theology (Curry-Roper 1990), religious service attendance (Kilburn 2014), and affiliation with the Republican Party (Dunlap and McCright 2008; Greeley 1993; McCright and Dunlap 2011a; McCright, Xiao, and Dunlap 2014) are each negatively associated with environmentalism; and evangelical Protestants are relatively likely to attend religious services (Schwadel 2010a), affiliate with the Republican Party (Brooks and Manza 2004), and hold conservative religious beliefs (Hoffmann and Bartkowski 2008). Indeed, several studies suggest that these factors mediate the effect of evangelical Protestant affiliation on environmental attitudes (e.g., Eckberg and Blocker 1989; Greeley 1993; Sherkat and Ellison 2007).

In this article, we expand understanding of the direct and indirect effects of evangelical Protestant affiliation on support for environmental spending in several ways. First, while previous research on mediation generally compares evangelicals to other Americans as a whole

<sup>1</sup> Throughout this article, the term evangelical Protestant is used to refer to conservative Protestants more generally, including fundamentalists and Pentecostals.

(e.g., Eckberg and Blocker 1989, 1996; Sherkat and Ellison 2007), we compare evangelical Protestants with affiliates of a variety of other religious traditions. This allows us to think more broadly about how particular aspects of different religious traditions affect environmental spending beliefs. There are considerable differences in environmental perspectives among non-evangelical religious traditions (Guth et al. 1995). Separating the religiously unaffiliated from religious affiliates is particularly important given the strong connection between apostasy and environmentalism (Clements, Xiao, and McCright 2014). Second, the relative impact of political orientation, religious participation, and theology remains unclear. Our analysis quantifies these indirect effects. Third, numerous temporal changes—such as party polarization among religious traditions (Brooks and Manza 2004), growth of religious nonaffiliation (Schwadel 2010b), and variation in the association between religious affiliations and environmental perspectives (Clements, Xiao, and McCright 2014)—suggest that the relevant mediating variables differ over time. Consequently, our analysis incorporates temporal changes. Fourth, we employ a measure of views of environmental spending that adjusts for views of spending in other areas, thereby accounting for respondents' views of government spending more generally (Pampel and Hunter 2012).

We use repeated cross-sectional survey data from 1984 to 2012 and mediation models with bootstrapped standard errors to assess the direct and indirect effects of religious traditions on support for environmental spending. Results show that evangelical Protestants' relatively low likelihood of supporting spending on the environment is mediated by all three focal factors: religious beliefs, political party, and religious participation. The relative impact of the three mediators, however, varies by the religious tradition evangelical Protestants are being compared to, and across time periods. Specifically, the direct effects of religious affiliation dissipate in the 21st century. Evangelicals' relative lack of support for spending on the environment is now fully attributable to their conservative theology, disproportionate affiliation with the Republican Party, and, to a lesser extent, high levels of church attendance. We conclude by discussing how the findings relate to the causal effects of religion on views of the environment, temporal changes in the social and political implications of religiosity, the persistence of divisive issues that support the continued existence of culture wars, and the future of government spending on

environmental problems in a social context where scientific evidence is filtered through political and religious ideology.

### **Evangelical Protestants' Support for Environmental Spending**

Evangelical Protestants' views of the relationship between humans and the natural environment lead them to report relatively low levels of environmental concern and behavior (Boyd 1999; Guth et al. 1995). For instance, evangelical Protestants are less likely than other Americans to practice environmentally conscious behaviors, to express a willingness to sacrifice for the environment, to attribute climate change to human actions, and to worry about the consequences of climate change (Eckberg and Blocker 1989; Kilburn 2014). Evangelical Protestants are less likely than other Americans to support spending to protect and improve the environment (Eckberg and Blocker 1996; Greeley 1993; Kanagy, Humphrey, and Firebaugh 1994).

Following White's (1967) argument that Western Christian theology is antithetical to environmentalism (cf. Kearns 1996), conservative theology may be a key source of evangelicals' lack of support for environmental policy. Conservative Protestant eschatology promotes a worldview that supports inaction on environmental matters (Curry-Roper 1990; Eckberg and Blocker 1989; Tarakeshwar et al. 2001). Evangelical churches stress God's sovereignty, which encourages apathy toward environmental policies by emphasizing that God controls the fate of humans and the Earth (Peifer, Ecklund, and Fullerton 2014). The evangelical emphasis on the Book of Genesis, with its focus on human dominion over the Earth, promotes low levels of environmentalism (White 1967), particularly among those who view the Bible as the literal word of God. For instance, biblical literalists disproportionately privilege the economy over the environment, oppose measures to protect the environment, contest that human actions influence climate change, and express low levels of concern about the consequences of climate change (Eckberg and Blocker 1989; Kilburn 2014). Given the strong association between evangelical Protestantism and a literal view of the Bible (Hoffmann and Bartkowski 2008), biblical literalism may mediate the association between evangelical Protestant affiliation and environmental

perspectives (Eckberg and Blocker 1989; Guth et al. 1995; Sherkat and Ellison 2007). Thus,

*H1: Views of the Bible mediate differences in support for environmental spending between evangelical Protestants and other Americans.*

Frequent religious service attendance is a hallmark of evangelical Protestantism (Schwadel 2010a). Church participation is also a consistent predictor of support for environmental inaction, and may therefore be partially responsible for evangelicals' relative lack of support for environmental spending (Sherkat and Ellison 2007). For instance, religious service attendance is associated with questioning climate change (McCright and Dunlap 2011b), contesting that human actions impact climate change (McCright and Dunlap 2011a), and lack of concern about the consequences of climate change (Kilburn 2014). Exactly why this empirical association between church attendance and religious attitudes exists remains unexplained. It may be that church attendance increases exposure to theological messages orthogonal to environmental concern (Hand and van Liere 1984), or it may be that the social and institutional context of congregations plays a role independent of theology (Djupe and Hunt 2009). Adjudicating between these causal mechanisms is beyond the scope of analyses conducted here, but the empirical link is strong. Consequently,

*H2: Religious service attendance mediates differences in support for environmental spending between evangelical Protestants and other Americans.*

Finally, evangelical Protestants' connection to the Republican Party may lead them to be relatively likely to oppose environmental policy (Sherkat and Ellison 2007). Evidence of partisan differences in environmental attitudes in the general public was modest at best in the 1970s and 1980s (Guber 2003; van Liere and Dunlap 1980). Today, however, the partisan divide in environmental opinion is large compared to other social, economic, and foreign policy topics (Guber 2013). This growing political divide appears to be primarily attributable to increased skepticism about environmental

issues on the part of Republicans (Dunlap and McCright 2008; Guber 2013; McCright and Dunlap 2011a; McCright, Xiao, and Dunlap 2014). The impact of the politicization of environmental issues on evangelical Protestants' attitudes is evident in Peifer, Ecklund, and Fullerton's research in evangelical churches, where they conclude that "Southern Baptists [are] unwilling to heed calls for environmental concern because they are perceived to come from the liberal side of the aisle" (2014:389). Seeing the sizeable overlap between religious, political, and environmental perspectives, Greeley (1993) argues that the negative association between conservative religiosity and environmentalism is solely attributable to political attitudes and affiliations. Party affiliation should be particularly important when it comes to views of government spending on the environment due to the strong association between party choice and support for government intervention and spending more broadly (Klineberg, McKeever, and Rothenbach 1998). Hence,

*H3: Political partisanship mediates differences in support for environmental spending between evangelical Protestants and other Americans.*

### **Environmental Views in Nonevangelical Religious Traditions**

Mainline Protestants, black Protestants, Catholics, affiliates of other religions, and religiously unaffiliated Americans vary considerably in their environmental views, in ways not explained neatly by the White thesis (Clements, Xiao, and McCright 2014; Greeley 1993; Kearns 1996), their political affiliations (Putnam and Campbell 2010), or their religious activities and beliefs (Hoffmann and Bartkowski 2008; Schwadel 2010a). This suggests that differences in environmental perspectives between evangelical Protestants and affiliates of each of these major religious traditions are motivated by different clusters of religious and political factors. The mediating role of political partisanship is an obvious case in point. While evangelical Protestants are relatively likely to be Republican, mainline Protestants are also more likely than non-Protestants to affiliate with the Republican Party (Putnam and Campbell 2010). Conversely, Americans with no religious affiliation are particularly unlikely to identify as Republican (Baker and

Smith 2009), as are black Protestants (Putnam and Campbell 2010). These differences suggest

*H4a: Political partisanship has a particularly large role in mediating differences in support for environmental spending between evangelical Protestants and the unaffiliated.*

*H4b: Political partisanship has a particularly large role in mediating differences in support for environmental spending between evangelical Protestants and black Protestants.*

*H4c: Political partisanship has little or no role in mediating differences in support for environmental spending between evangelical and mainline Protestants.*

The mediating roles of religious beliefs and service attendance should also vary across religious traditions. While mainline and evangelical Protestants are relatively similar in their political affiliations, mainline Protestants attend church less often than affiliates of other Christian traditions (Schwadel 2010a). This suggests

*H5: Religious service attendance has a large role in mediating differences in support for environmental spending between evangelical and mainline Protestants.*

The unaffiliated are, not surprisingly, far less likely than even mainline Protestants to attend religious services (Schwadel 2010a). Consequently,

*H6: Religious service attendance should also have a large role in mediating differences in support for environmental spending between evangelical Protestants and the unaffiliated.*

Catholics are less likely than affiliates of other Christian traditions to view the Bible as the literal word of God (Hoffmann and Bartkowski 2008), which suggests

*H7: Views of the Bible have a large role in mediating differences in support for environmental spending between evangelical Protestants and Catholics.*

## Changes Over Time

The associations between religious traditions and views of environmental policy are not likely to be static. Notably, evangelical leaders are increasingly expressing interest in environmental issues (Danielsen 2013), and some prominent evangelical organizations have made official pronouncements concerning the need for environmental protection (e.g., National Association of Evangelicals 2004). Despite skepticism, these changes lead many to argue that evangelical Protestants have become more environmentally conscious (e.g., Clements et al. 2014; Danielsen 2013; Fowler 1995; Wilkinson 2012). This “greening of Christianity” thesis suggests

*H8: Differences in support for environmental spending between evangelical Protestants and other Americans decline over time.*

Evangelical Protestants became considerably more likely to affiliate with the Republican Party (Brooks and Manza 2004; Fowler et al. 2014) at the same time when environmental issues became increasingly partisan. Not only are the unaffiliated on the opposite end of the political continuum, but unaffiliated Americans may have become more liberal as politicized Christianity led many liberals to disaffiliate (Hout and Fischer 2014; Putnam and Campbell 2010). Thus,

*H9: Differences in support for environmental spending between evangelical Protestants and the unaffiliated should be increasingly mediated by political partisanship.*

The mediating role of religious participation should also vary over time. Catholics have declined in their church attendance more rapidly than affiliates of other religious traditions (Schwadel 2010a), which suggests

*H10: Differences in support for environmental spending between evangelical Protestants and Catholics are increasingly mediated by service attendance.*

## Data and Methods

We use data from the 1984 to 2012 General Social Survey (GSS) to examine the direct and indirect effects of religious traditions on relative support for environmental spending (RSES). The GSS is a repeated cross-sectional survey of samples of noninstitutionalized American adults. The GSS has been conducted annually or biennially since 1972, though key measures included in the analysis were not added to the survey until 1984. The survey is generally administered in person and it was an English-only sample until 2006. The response rate ranges between 70 percent and 82 percent, according to Response Rate 5 as defined by the American Association for Public Opinion Research (2008). After deleting cases without data on the focal variables, the sample size is 18,083. Listwise deletion of cases with missing data on the control variables reduces the sample size to 16,471.<sup>2</sup> See Smith, Marsden, and Hout (2013) for more information about the GSS.

## *Dependent Variable*

The GSS includes a series of questions that begin with the following statement: “We are faced with many problems in this country, none of which can be solved easily or inexpensively. I’m going to name some of these problems, and for each one I’d like you to tell me whether you think we’re spending too much money on it, too little money, or about the right amount.” Respondents were read a list of problems, which includes “improving and protecting the environment.” For each problem, responses are coded 1 for too much, 2 for about right, and 3 for

<sup>2</sup> For most of the control variables, there are relatively little missing data (35 or fewer cases).

There are 119 cases missing data on children in the home and 1,463 cases missing data on income. Respondents with and without missing data on children in the home are equally likely to support environmental spending (mean of relative support for environmental spending is 1.21 for both groups), though those with missing data on children in the home are less likely to be evangelical Protestant (20 percent vs. 25 percent). Conversely, respondents missing data on income are moderately less supportive of environmental spending than are those without missing data on income (means of relative support for environmental spending are 1.18 and 1.21, respectively), though there is no difference in evangelical Protestant affiliation (25 percent for both groups).

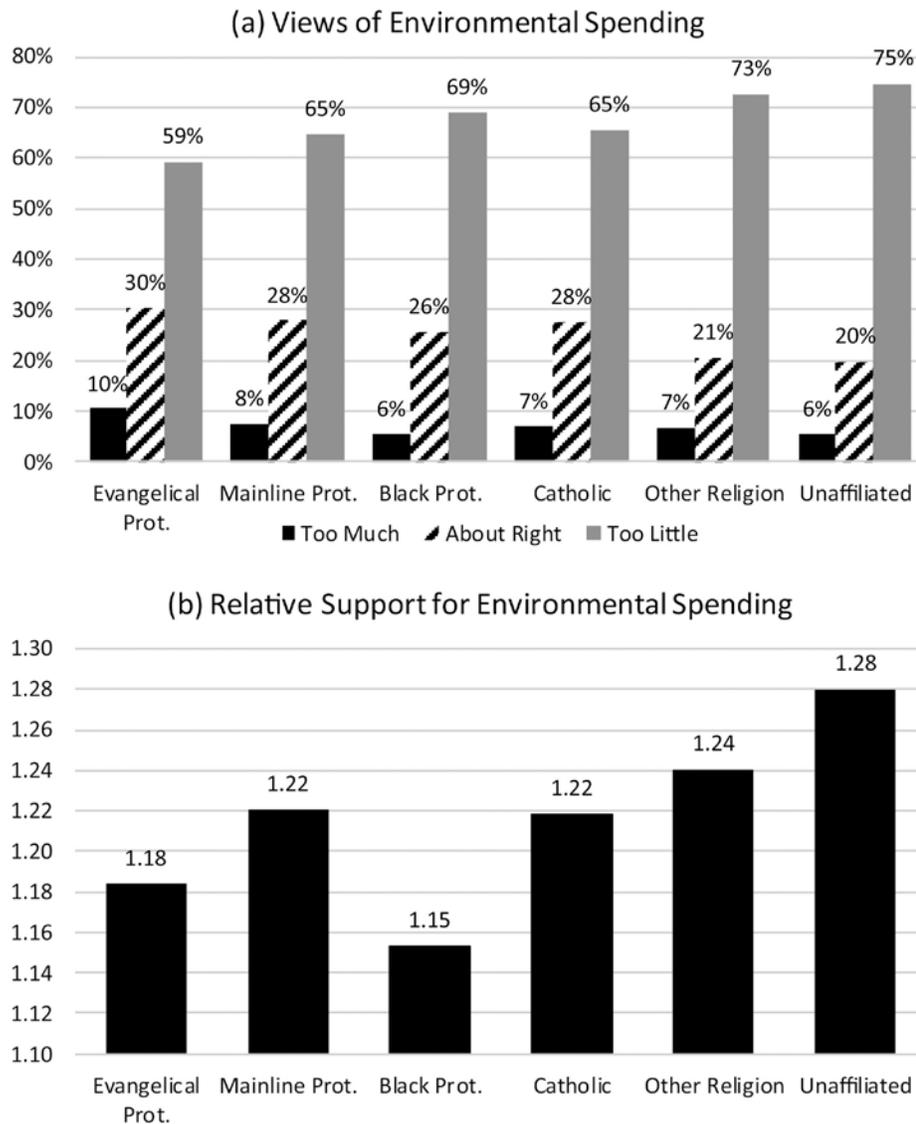
too little.<sup>3</sup> In several years, subsamples of respondents received an alternate version of the spending questions that instead only said “environment.”<sup>4</sup> We combine responses to both versions of the spending questions to ensure a large enough sample size.<sup>5</sup> The results are similar when only using data with the original question wording (see the Appendix in the Supporting Information).

Of course, no single survey item can provide a definitive measure of a multidimensional concept such as environmental concern. Nonetheless, support for government initiatives on the environment is the most commonly assessed aspect of environmental concern, it demonstrates high internal consistency, and it is highly correlated with ecological worldview (Guber 1996, 2003; Klineberg, McKeever, and Rothenbach 1998; van Liere and Dunlap 1981). Moreover, GSS data cover the longest time span of any available set of frequently measured trend data on environmental concern, and they “conform closely to the pattern found with other available trend data” (Jones and Dunlap 1992:30). One potential weakness with this measure is that differences between Republicans and Democrats in support for governmental initiatives on the environment “may have at least as much to do with their reactions to increased government intervention in general as with differences in their concerns about environmental issues *per se*” (Klineberg, McKeever, and Rothenbach 1998:737), which is why our measure adjusts for general attitudes toward governmental spending as described below. Still, the applicability of our results to understanding Americans’ perceptions of the seriousness of environmental problems or their participation in pro-environmental activities remains an open empirical question.

3 The nonenvironment problems in the list are space exploration, improving and protecting the nation’s health, solving problems in big cities, halting rising crime rates, dealing with drug addiction, improving the nation’s education system, improving the condition of African Americans, military, armaments, and defense, foreign aid, and welfare. Other items were included in fewer years of the GSS, and thus not included in the current analysis.

4 The nonenvironment spending questions were also reworded into more truncated forms. For instance, “space exploration” rather than “space exploration program,” and “health” instead of “improving and protecting the nation’s health.”

5 Previous researchers have also combined the different versions of the spending questions (e.g., Dietz, Stern, and Guagnano 1998). Others who only use data with the original wording report no meaningful differences between analyses with the different versions of the spending measures (e.g., Pampel and Hunter 2012).



**Figure 1.** (a) Views of environmental spending and (b) relative support for environmental spending by religious tradition. Data from 1984 to 2012 General Social Survey;  $N = 16,471$ .

As **Figure 1a** shows, evangelical Protestants are relatively likely to say we spend too much or about the right amount on the environment while the unaffiliated and affiliates of “other religions” are the most likely to say we spend too little. These differences in support for environmental spending, however, are influenced by variation in support for government spending more generally. Specifically, mainline and evangelical Protestants are relatively opposed to government

spending while black Protestants are relatively supportive of government spending.<sup>6</sup> Differences in views of government spending, while of sociological interest, are not the focus of this article. Instead, our goal is to explicate variation in support for environmental protection across religious traditions.

To adjust for views of government spending, we follow Pampel and Hunter (2012) by creating a ratio for each respondent of his or her support for environmental spending to the mean of the respondent's support for spending on other problems (see list of spending questions in Note 3). This measure of RSES is the dependent variable in all analyses (see **Table 1** for descriptive statistics for all variables). RSES scores above 1 indicate that respondents support environmental spending more so than government spending in general. For instance, a respondent who says we spend too little on the environment (coded 3) and averaged saying we spend about the right amount on other problems (coded 2) has an RSES of 1.5 (3/2). As Figure 1b shows, RSES also varies across religious traditions, but in notably different ways than the raw measure of support for environmental spending. The pro-environment attitudes of affiliates of "other religions" and especially black Protestants are reduced when using RSES.

### ***Independent Variables***

The focal independent variables are dummy variables for religious traditions: mainline Protestant, black Protestant, Catholic, "other religion," and unaffiliated. Evangelical Protestant is the omitted reference category. We employ Steensland et al.'s (2000) method for coding denominations into religious traditions. Jewish respondents are included in the "other religion" category due to the limited number of Jewish respondents. The models include controls for age, sex, race,

<sup>6</sup> The mean of support for nonenvironment spending (see measures listed in Note 3) is 2.11 for evangelical Protestants, 2.12 for mainline Protestants, 2.30 for black Protestants, 2.14 for Catholics, 2.16 for affiliates of other religions, and 2.13 for the unaffiliated ( $p < .001$  for difference between black Protestants and each other tradition,  $p < .001$  for difference between evangelical Protestants and black Protestants, Catholics, and affiliates of other religions).

**Table 1.** Variable means and standard deviations

	Mean	<i>SD</i>
Relative support for environmental spending	1.213	.311
Religious affiliation		
Evangelical Protestant	.253	
Mainline Protestant	.186	
Black Protestant	.097	
Catholic	.265	
Other religion	.074	
Unaffiliated	.125	
Mediating variables		
Republican	.279	
Religious service attendance	3.798	2.683
Bible literal word of God	.324	
Bible inspired word of God	.499	
Bible book of fables	.177	
Controls		
Age	44.932	16.381
Female	.521	
African American	.150	
Other race	.059	
White	.791	
Education	13.463	2.943
Family income	10.412	1.001
Married	.507	
Children in home	.363	
Urban	.224	
Suburban	.286	
Other urban	.381	
Rural	.109	
South	.364	

Data from 1984 to 2012 General Social Survey; *N* = 16,471.

marital status, children in the home, education, family income, urbanity, and region.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Age is coded in years of age, centered on the mean. Preliminary models reveal that age-squared does not have a meaningful effect on RSES, and is therefore not included in the models. A dummy variable for female respondents controls for sex. Dummy variables for currently married respondent and those with children under the age of 18 living in their homes control for household composition. Dummy variables for those living in the 100 largest Standard Metropolitan Statistical Areas (SMSAs) (urban), suburbs of the 100 largest SMSAs (suburban), and rural areas, with “other urban” areas as the reference category, control for urbanity. A dummy variable for respondents in the South Census Region controls for regional variation. Years of education and the log of family income (in constant [2000] dollars) control for education and income.

**Table 2.** Means of mediating variables within religious traditions

	<i>Republican</i>	<i>Bible Word of God</i>	<i>Bible Book of Fables</i>	<i>Service Attendance</i>
Evangelical Protestant	.381	.548	.046	4.634
Mainline Protestant	.388	.229 <sup>a</sup>	.132 <sup>a</sup>	3.764 <sup>a</sup>
Black Protestant	.055 <sup>a</sup>	.605 <sup>a</sup>	.079 <sup>a</sup>	4.688
Catholic	.270 <sup>a</sup>	.212 <sup>a</sup>	.142 <sup>a</sup>	4.089 <sup>a</sup>
Other religion	.214 <sup>a</sup>	.206 <sup>a</sup>	.335 <sup>a</sup>	3.720 <sup>a</sup>
Unaffiliated	.141 <sup>a</sup>	.100 <sup>a</sup>	.570 <sup>a</sup>	.900 <sup>a</sup>

Data from 1984 to 2012 General Social Survey;  $N = 16,471$ .

a. Differs from mean for evangelical Protestant ( $p \leq .001$ ).

### ***Mediating Variables***

The mediating variables assess political party, religious service attendance, and views of the Bible. A dummy variable indicates respondents who report being strong or not very strong Republicans. The reference category includes independents, strong and not very strong Democrats, and affiliates of other parties. Views of the Bible are measured with dummy variables for those who report that “the Bible is the actual word of God and is to be taken literally word for word” and those who report that “the Bible is an ancient book of fables, legends, history, and moral precepts recorded by men.” The omitted reference category is “the Bible is the inspired word of God but not everything in it should be taken literally, word for word.” Frequency of religious service attendance is a nine-category variable ranging from never to several times a week. As **Table 2** shows, the means of the mediating variables vary considerably across religious traditions. Evangelical Protestants are more likely than affiliates of other traditions except mainline Protestants to affiliate with the Republican Party. Similarly, except for black Protestants, evangelical Protestants have the highest rates of biblical literalism and religious service attendance.

### ***Analytic Strategy***

The most commonly used method of estimating indirect effects is the product of coefficients approach (Alwin and Hauser 1975; see review

by MacKinnon, Fairchild, and Fritz 2007). Other methods, such as determining indirect effects from the difference between the total and direct effects (Imai, Keele, and Tingly 2010), are not applicable in models with multiple mediators (MacKinnon, Fairchild, and Fritz 2007). The product of coefficients approach requires a series of models of mediating variables and both full and reduced-form models of the dependent variable to estimate the relevant coefficients (see Hayes and Preacher 2010). Our analysis, however, is complicated by a mix of dichotomous and continuous focal variables. The models thus include both OLS and binary logistic regression models. Standardized coefficients compensate for this variation in type of regression (MacKinnon and Dwyer 1993).

The product of coefficients approach to mediation is most often paired with the Sobel test (i.e., delta method) to determine standard errors and thus statistical significance (MacKinnon, Fairchild, and Fritz 2007). When there are multiple mediators, however, bootstrapped standard errors is the preferred method for estimating indirect effects (Preacher and Hayes 2008). Bootstrapped standard errors also provide greater statistical power and less rigid assumptions about the distribution of standard errors (Bollen and Stine 1990; Preacher and Hayes 2004). We employ nonparametric bootstrapped standard errors based on resampling the data 5,000 times with replacement. To limit the potential for type I error, we use percentile, rather than bias corrected, bootstrapped standard errors (Hayes and Scharkow 2013). The large sample size and number of times resampling the data should provide reliable estimates of the standard errors of indirect effects (Guan 2003). Given the method of estimating standard errors, it is important to note that none of the effects that are flagged as statistically significant contain zero in the 95 percent confidence interval (confidence intervals not shown). All analyses are conducted in Stata 13.<sup>8</sup>

8 The “bootstrap” command in Stata does not allow for the use of weights, which means the standard errors for the direct and indirect effects are unweighted. For parsimony, the OLS results reported in Table 3 as well as the models used to compute the direct and indirect betas are also not weighted. Nonetheless, alternative models that are weighted show highly similar results (not shown). This should not be surprising as relevant research suggests that such weights should have relatively little impact (Johnson and Elliott 1998), particularly since the weight is partially a function of independent variables in the model (Winship and Radbill 1994), such as age and race.

## Results

### *Direct and Indirect Effects*

Results using aggregated 1984 through 2012 GSS data are shown in **Table 3**. The top portion of the table reports results from OLS models of RSES. Model 1, which includes only religious tradition variables, demonstrates that affiliates of all traditions except black Protestant have higher rates of RSES than evangelical Protestants, and black Protestants have lower rates than evangelicals. This variation in RSES across religious traditions partially reflects differences in age, race, and education. In particular, the unaffiliated are younger than religious affiliates,<sup>9</sup> black Protestants and affiliates of “other religions” are relatively unlikely to be white,<sup>10</sup> and evangelical and black Protestants have disproportionately low levels of education.<sup>11</sup> Thus, when age, race, and education are added to Model 2, differences between evangelicals and both the unaffiliated and affiliates of “other religions” decline notably, and black Protestants are no longer less likely than evangelical Protestants to support environmental spending.

Model 3 includes all the control variables but no mediating variables. There is little change in the effects of religious traditions between Models 2 and 3. In Model 3, mainline Protestant ( $b = .038$ ), Catholic ( $b = .027$ ), “other religion” ( $b = .045$ ), and unaffiliated ( $b = .075$ ) have positive effects on RSES. *Ceteris paribus*, compared to evangelical Protestants, estimated RSES is .12 standard deviations higher for mainline Protestants, .09 standard deviations higher for Catholics, .15 standard deviations higher for affiliates of “other religions,” and almost one-quarter of a standard deviation higher for the unaffiliated.

9 The average age is 56 for evangelical Protestants, 50 for mainline Protestants, 40 for the unaffiliated, and 44 for black Protestants, Catholics, and affiliates of other religions ( $p < .001$  for difference between unaffiliated and each other tradition).

10 Eighty-eight percent of evangelicals, 94 percent of mainline Protestants, 3 percent of black Protestants, 86 percent of Catholics, 79 percent of affiliates of other religions, and 83 percent of the unaffiliated are white ( $p < .001$  for difference between black Protestants and each other tradition,  $p < .01$  for difference between affiliates of other religions and each other tradition).

11 The mean of education is 12.9 for evangelical Protestants, 14.1 for mainline Protestants, 12.5 for black Protestants, 13.4 for Catholics, 16.6 for affiliates of other religions, and 14.0 for the unaffiliated ( $p < .001$  for difference between evangelicals Protestants and each other tradition,  $p < .001$  for difference between black Protestants and each other tradition).

**Table 3.** Relative support for environmental spending, 1984–2012

<i>OLS Models</i>	<i>Model 1</i>		<i>Model 2</i>		<i>Model 3</i>		<i>Model 4</i>	
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>
Intercept	1.184	.005***	1.237	.014***	1.063	.028***	1.116	.029***
Mainline Protestant <sup>a</sup>	.037	.007***	.038	.007***	.038	.007***	.022	.008**
Black Protestant <sup>a</sup>	-.030	.009***	.020	.013	.020	.013	.006	.013
Catholic <sup>a</sup>	.034	.007***	.028	.007***	.027	.007***	.007	.007
Other religion <sup>a</sup>	.056	.010***	.046	.010***	.045	.010***	.017	.010
Unaffiliated <sup>a</sup>	.096	.008***	.078	.008***	.075	.009***	.022	.010*
Age			-.003	.000***	-.003	.000***	-.003	.000***
African American <sup>b</sup>			-.061	.010***	-.060	.010***	-.061	.010***
Other race <sup>b</sup>			-.032	.010**	-.031	.010**	-.032	.010**
Education			.005	.001***	.004	.001***	.004	.001***
Female					-.007	.005	-.004	.005
Family income					.008	.003**	.009	.003**
Married					-.011	.005	-.003	.005
Children in home					-.012	.006*	-.010	.006
Urban <sup>c</sup>					.001	.006	-.004	.007
Suburban <sup>c</sup>					.004	.006	.003	.006
Rural <sup>c</sup>					-.007	.008	-.004	.008
South					.005	.005	.009	.005
Republican							-.060	.006***
Service attendance							-.005	.001***
Bible literal word of God <sup>d</sup>							-.034	.006***
Bible book of fables <sup>d</sup>							.016	.007*

## Standardized Direct and Indirect Effects of Religious Traditions

	<i>Mainline Protestant<sup>a</sup></i>		<i>Catholic<sup>a</sup></i>		<i>Other Religion<sup>a</sup></i>		<i>Unaffiliated<sup>a</sup></i>	
	<i>Beta</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>SE</i>
	Total effect (Model 3)	.052	.010***	.046	.010***	.044	.009***	.093
Direct effect (Model 4)	.027	.010**	.010	.010	.014	.009	.024	.010*
Total indirect effect	.025	.003***	.036	.004***	.030	.003***	.069	.006***
Indirect effects								
Republican	.002	.001	.011	.002***	.011	.001***	.021	.002***
Service attendance	.006	.001***	.003	.001***	.004	.001***	.019	.004***
Bible literal word of God <sup>b</sup>	.013	.002***	.017	.003***	.009	.002***	.020	.004***
Bible book of fables <sup>b</sup>	.004	.002*	.005	.002*	.006	.003*	.010	.004*

Data from General Social Survey;  $N = 16,471$ .

a. Evangelical Protestant is the omitted reference category.

b. White is the omitted reference category.

c. Other urban is the omitted reference category.

d. Bible inspired word of God is the omitted reference category.

\*  $p \leq .05$ ; \*\*  $p \leq .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$  (two-tailed test)

The control variables show that education and income have positive effects on RSES while age, nonwhite, and children in the home have negative effects.

Model 4 includes mediating variables. As expected, Republican identification ( $b = -.060$ ), religious service attendance ( $b = -.005$ ), and biblical literalism ( $b = -.034$ ) are each strongly and negatively associated with RSES, and viewing the Bible as a book of fables is positively associated with RSES ( $b = .016$ ). Together, these variables fully mediate the differences in RSES between evangelical Protestants and both Catholics and affiliates of “other religions.” Although partially mediated, mainline Protestant ( $b = .022$ ) and unaffiliated ( $b = .022$ ) continue to have moderate effects on RSES in Model 4.

The bottom of Table 3 reports standardized total, direct, and indirect effects of religious traditions on RSES. Total effects are derived from Model 3 and direct effects are derived from Model 4. Although standardized coefficients indicate change in the dependent variable associated with a one standard deviation increase in the independent variable, interpreting the substantive impact of these standardized direct and indirect effects is complicated by the lack of observed variance for the dichotomous mediators (see MacKinnon and Dwyer 1993). Consequently, we focus on comparing the relative size of the standardized effects.

As the bottom portion of Table 3 shows, all religious traditions except black Protestant have positive, significant total effects (black Protestant results not shown). These total effects correspond to the OLS results in Model 3. The total effect of mainline Protestant is about evenly split between direct (beta = .027) and indirect (beta = .025) effects; the indirect effect is disproportionately due to biblical literalism (beta = .013). Unaffiliated also has meaningful direct (beta = .024) and indirect (beta = .069) effects on RSES, though the indirect effect is almost three times the size of the direct effect. Republican (beta = .021), service attendance (beta = .019), and biblical literalism (beta = .020) each mediate the effect of unaffiliated on RSES to a similar degree. Catholic (beta = .036) and “other religion” (beta = .030) have significant indirect effects but no meaningful direct effects.

Republican affiliation does not mediate differences between mainline and evangelical Protestants, but it mediates a similarly large proportion of the (total) effect of Catholic (24 percent), “other religion” (25 percent), and unaffiliated (23 percent). These findings only

partially support H4a, which suggests that Republican mediates much of the difference in RSES between evangelicals and the unaffiliated. These results, however, strongly support H4c, which proposes that Republican affiliation has little role in mediating differences between evangelical and mainline Protestants. We believe this finding is likely due to relatively similar patterns of partisanship among evangelical and mainline Protestants, at least compared to non-Protestants.

The two views of the Bible measures combined account for 32 percent of the (total) effect of mainline Protestant, 48 percent of the effect of Catholic, 34 percent of the effect of “other religion,” and 23 percent of the effect of unaffiliated. The relatively large mediating role of views of the Bible in differences in RSES between Catholics and evangelicals supports H7. We expected that differences in doctrine are largely responsible for Catholics’ greater RSES due to the Catholic propensity to place less authority in the Bible.

Service attendance accounts for 12 percent of the (total) effect of mainline Protestant, 7 percent of the effect of Catholic, 9 percent of the effect of “other religion,” and 20 percent of the effect of unaffiliated. The large mediating influence of religious service attendance on differences between evangelicals and the unaffiliated supports H6; and the smaller but still relatively large mediation of the effect of mainline Protestant partially supports H5. These findings are likely due to low levels of religious participation among mainline Protestants and especially the unaffiliated. Overall, the results in Table 3 demonstrate that much of the difference in RSES between evangelical Protestants and other Americans is mediated, but the degree of this mediation varies across comparison traditions, as do the relevant mediating variables.

### ***Changes Over Time***

We divide the sample into three roughly equivalent 9- to 10-year periods to examine how the direct and indirect effects change over time (Table 4). In the first period, 1984–1993, evangelicals’ estimated RSES does not differ meaningfully from RSES for Catholics, black Protestants, or affiliates of “other religions.” This is evident in the total effects, which are only significant for mainline Protestant (beta = .041) and unaffiliated (beta = .070). Differences in RSES between evangelical Protestants and both mainline Protestants and the unaffiliated are

**Table 4.** Period-specific standardized direct and indirect effects of religious traditions on relative support for environmental spending

	<i>Mainline Protestant<sup>a</sup></i>		<i>Black Protestant<sup>a</sup></i>		<i>Catholic<sup>a</sup></i>		<i>Other Religion<sup>a</sup></i>		<i>Unaffiliated<sup>a</sup></i>	
	<i>Beta</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Beta</i>	<i>SE</i>
1984–1993 ( <i>N</i> = 5,093)										
Total effect	.041	.017*	.011	.021	.028	.018	-.007	.016	.070	.016***
Direct effect	.017	.017							.026	.017
Total indirect effect	.024	.005***							.044	.008***
Indirect effects										
Republican	.000	.001							.006	.002*
Service attendance	.003	.002							.009	.005
Bible literal word of God <sup>b</sup>	.014	.005**							.017	.005***
Bible book of fables <sup>b</sup>	.007	.004							.012	.006
1994–2002 ( <i>N</i> = 5,509)										
Total effect	.063	.017***	.057	.019**	.062	.017***	.084	.015***	.104	.016***
Direct effect	.036	.017*	.029	.019	.029	.018	.053	.016***	.037	.017*
Total indirect effect	.027	.006***	.029	.006***	.033	.007***	.031	.006***	.067	.010***
Indirect effects										
Republican	.005	.002*	.016	.005**	.015	.003***	.017	.003***	.024	.004***
Service attendance	.011	.003***	.008	.002***	.006	.002**	.009	.002***	.031	.007***
Bible literal word of God <sup>b</sup>	.012	.004**	.006	.002*	.014	.005**	.007	.003**	.016	.006**
Bible book of fables <sup>b</sup>	-.001	.003	-.001	.003	-.002	.003	-.003	.005	-.004	.007
2004–2012 ( <i>N</i> = 5,869)										
Total effect	.045	.016**	.011	.019	.054	.018**	.050	.015***	.117	.016***
Direct effect	.018	.016			.011	.017	.012	.015	.024	.018
Total indirect effect	.026	.005***			.043	.006***	.039	.006***	.092	.012***
Indirect effects										
Republican	.004	.002			.013	.003***	.015	.003***	.034	.005***
Service attendance	.005	.003*			.004	.002*	.004	.002*	.017	.008*
Bible literal word of God <sup>b</sup>	.011	.003***			.017	.005***	.011	.003***	.024	.007***
Bible book of fables <sup>b</sup>	.006	.003			.008	.004	.009	.004	.017	.009

Data from General Social Survey. Models control for age, sex, race, marital status, children in the home, education, family income, urbanity, and region.

a. Evangelical Protestant is the omitted reference category.

b. Bible inspired word of God is the omitted reference category.

\*  $p \leq .05$ ; \*\*  $p \leq .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$  (two-tailed test)

fully mediated. In this first period, mainline Protestant is predominantly mediated by biblical literalism (beta = .014). Unaffiliated is similarly mediated by biblical literalism (beta = .017), and to a lesser extent Republican affiliation (beta = .006).

Unlike the first period, all the religious traditions have meaningful total effects in the second period, 1994–2002. The direct effects of both black Protestant and Catholic are not significant, indicating that differences between these two groups and evangelicals are fully mediated. Republican (beta = .016) is the key mediator for black Protestant, accounting for 28 percent of the total effect. Although there is no difference in RSES between evangelical and black Protestants at the aggregate (1984–2012), when there is a difference (1994–2002), it is substantially mediated by Republican affiliation, which partially supports H4b. Mainline Protestant (beta = .036), “other religion” (beta = .053), and unaffiliated (beta = .037) have meaningful direct effects on RSES in 1994–2002. Nonetheless, much of the total effect of each of these traditions is mediated: 43 percent of the mainline Protestant effect, 37 percent of the “other religion” effect, and 65 percent of the unaffiliated effect. In contrast to the first period, the effect of mainline Protestant is partially mediated by service attendance (beta = .011) in 1994–2002. Also unlike the first period, biblical literalism (beta = .016) plays a smaller role than both Republican (beta = .024) and service attendance (beta = .031) in mediating the effect of unaffiliated.

In the final period, 2004–2012, each religious tradition except black Protestant has a meaningful total effect, though none of them have meaningful direct effects. The Catholic effect is again disproportionately mediated by biblical literalism (beta = .017) and Republican (beta = .013). Thus, in contrast to H10, there is no evidence that service attendance became a more meaningful mediator of differences in RSES between evangelicals and Catholics. Unlike the previous time periods, Republican (beta = .034) is the largest mediator of differences in RSES between evangelicals and the unaffiliated in the final period. Republican affiliation mediates 9 percent of the (total) effect of unaffiliated in 1983–1993, 23 percent in 1994–2002, and 29 percent in 2004–2012. This growth in the mediating influence of Republican supports H9. Interestingly, Republican also became a more important mediator of differences between evangelicals and affiliates of “other religions,” mediating 20 percent of the total effect in 1994–2002 and 30 percent

in 2004–2012. Overall, the results in Table 4 indicate growth in disparities in RSES between evangelical Protestants and other Americans from the first to the second period, and a decline in nonmediated differences (i.e., direct effects) from the second to the third time period.

## Discussion

It has been 50 years since White (1967) published his influential argument that Western theology promotes an anthropocentric worldview that is opposed to environmentalism. The White thesis is often applied in an overly broad manner. It has been properly critiqued for failing to account for the evolving place of nature in theology, as well as the diversity of denominational interpretations of biblical passages including those that promote a stewardship perspective (Kearns 1996). Our findings show that biblical literalism has a robust, negative effect on RSES. In support of H1, biblical literalism also mediates much of the difference in RSES between evangelical Protestants and other Americans. These results are in accord with the more limited empirical assertion that conservative Protestants and biblical literalists are relatively unlikely to support behaviors aimed at improving and protecting the natural environment, which has been widely supported by empirical research (e.g., Boyd 1999; Eckberg and Blocker 1996; Smith and Leiserowitz 2013). While other mediating factors are important, evangelical Protestants' views of the natural environment appear to be disproportionately influenced by their theological perspectives.

Although White's (1967) work portrays biblical teachings as the fundamental cause of evangelicals' lack of support for environmental protection, the above results show that political partisanship also plays a large role. This finding supports H3. There is substantial political party polarization in environmental perspectives (McCright and Dunlap 2011a; McCright, Xiao, and Dunlap 2014). Religious affiliation has similarly become a polarized identity, with evangelical Protestants constituting a core constituency of the Republican Party (Brooks and Manza 2004; Fowler et al. 2014). Consequently, there is now considerable overlap between evangelical Protestantism, affiliation with the Republican Party, and low levels of environmentalism. Republican affiliation, however, is far from the only relevant mediator, as some researchers argue (e.g., Greeley 1993). Despite the confluence between

evangelical Protestantism and the Republican Party, theology appears to be more important than politics in promoting low levels of environmentalism in the evangelical Protestant community.

While playing a considerably smaller role than theology and politics, religious service attendance also mediates the association between evangelical Protestantism and RSES, especially differences between evangelicals and the unaffiliated. This partially supports H2, and aligns with research that suggests that evangelicals' theological views of mastery over nature are reinforced by church attendance (Hand and van Liere 1984). This finding also reflects the social nature of religion and the reinforcement of social and political, rather than theological, cues from clergy and churchgoers within the congregational context (Djupe and Gilbert 2003; Wald, Owen, and Hill 1988). The above results suggest that evangelical Protestants' views of environmentalism are impacted, though only moderately, by their high frequency of church attendance.

Finally, the results in this article shed light on temporal changes in the association between evangelical Protestant affiliation and support for environmental spending. They suggest that differences in environmentalism between evangelicals and non-Christians are increasingly motivated by political partisanship. More broadly speaking, the results provide mixed support for the "greening of Christianity" thesis (Clements, Xiao, and McCright 2014; Danielsen 2013; Fowler 1995; Wilkinson 2012), which proposes that differences in environmentalism between evangelicals and other Americans decline over time (H8). On the one hand, differences in RSES between evangelicals and other Americans increased considerably between 1984–1993 and 1994–2002, and remained robust in 2004–2012. This clearly does not support the greening thesis. On the other hand, differences in RSES between evangelicals and other Americans are fully mediated in 2004–2012. In other words, the direct effects of religious tradition did in fact decline. Thus, how one interprets the greening of Christianity thesis affects whether it receives support. Evangelical Protestants continue to be less likely than other Americans to support environmental spending, but this difference is now fully attributable to (in order of magnitude) theology, political party, and religious participation.

As with all quantitative analyses based on cross-sectional data, causality is a primary concern. The model we proposed assumes that religious affiliation affects views of the environment, not vice versa. It is

possible, however, that people switch religious affiliations in response to their environmental perspectives. Relatedly, although social scientists traditionally model religion as a predictor of political orientation, recent research suggests that political affiliations can also affect religious affiliations (e.g., Hout and Fischer 2014; Putnam and Campbell 2010). While not definitive, we can partially address the issue of causality with retrospective measures of religious affiliation at 16 years of age.<sup>12</sup> Appendix B reports results from mediation models like those in Table 3 but with an additional dummy variable for switching to an evangelical denomination. Comparing the results, the substantive conclusions are unchanged. Moreover, there are no meaningful differences in support for environmental spending between those who switched to an evangelical denomination and those who were evangelical Protestant at both age 16 and at the time of the survey.

Generalizability of the above results is limited by the measure of views of the environment. Support for environmental spending is both a common measure in the extant literature (maximizing comparability with other research) and tracks well with a variety of other measures of support for government initiatives on the environment (Jones and Dunlap 1992; van Liere and Dunlap 1981). Nonetheless, views of government spending are politically divisive (Rudolph and Evans 2005). Given the known strong effects of political affiliation on questions focused on environmental spending, we follow Pampel and Hunter (2012) in adopting the relative RSES measure employed here. By normalizing scores, the RSES measure accounts for generic tendencies people hold that are specific to governmental spending, and seeks to better isolate the explanation of environmental public opinion specifically. Thus, political effects in models we show are attributable to the politicization of environmental issues, not general shifts in the stance of respondents toward government spending. We would expect political effects to be even stronger in models looking at an absolute environmental spending dependent measure, and the results in Appendix

<sup>12</sup> We divided evangelical Protestant respondents into those who were affiliated with an evangelical denomination at age 16 and at the time of the survey (18.6 percent of respondents and 73.3 percent of evangelicals) and those who were affiliated with an evangelical denomination at the time of the survey but not at age 16 (6.8 percent of respondents and 26.7 percent of evangelicals). We refer to the latter category as those who switched to evangelical Protestant. It is important to note that we have no knowledge of respondents' religious affiliations between 16 years of age and the time of the survey.

C suggest this is the case. Political party plays a larger mediating role when overall support for government spending is not taken to account, which comports with Republicans' skepticism for government spending more generally (Rudolph and Evans 2005). This finding supports the use of a measure of relative support of environmental spending to avoid conflating views of the environment with views of government. At the same time, exactly how applicable our results are to alternative dimensions of environmental attitudes, such as perceived environmental threats, remains unknown. Moreover, the relationship between attitudinal disposition and engagement in a variety of pro-environmental behaviors (e.g., recycling, participation in environmental organizations, energy conservation, and purchasing behavior) is complex and often tenuous (Kollmuss and Agyeman 2002; Tarrant and Cordell 1997). Future research can build on the analyses in this article with additional measures of environmental concern and activity.

Adoption of the RSES measure does produce one finding that does not comport with previous research (or, indeed, the results we receive when using an unadjusted support for spending measure). Our finding that black Protestants are the closest comparison group to evangelical Protestants in terms of RSES stands out as both interesting and easily misinterpreted. This does not mean that black Protestants are unsupportive of the environment. Black Protestants as a group report modestly high levels of absolute support for environmental spending and would show up as supportive of environmental policy in traditional polling (see Appendix C).<sup>13</sup> When the dependent variable accounts for views of spending more generally, however, these differences cease to exist. Black Protestants as a group stand out because they are comparatively supportive of environmental spending in absolute terms, but more like evangelicals in their tepid support for spending on the environment relative to other national issues. In our view, this suggests that the initial impression of moderately high support displayed by black Protestants for environmental spending is spurious to their greater approval of government spending generally (Rudolph and Evans 2005; also see Note 6). Given the similarities in theology and religious behavior between evangelicals and black Protestants (Lincoln

<sup>13</sup> Note, more generally, that our measure of relative support for environmental spending is above 1 for each religious tradition. Environmentalism enjoys broad support relative to many other categories of governmental spending.

and Mamiya 1990), their similar perspectives on support for the environment makes some sense.

The results are also limited by our measure of religious affiliation. Despite considerable overlap between those who are affiliated with evangelical Protestant denominations and those who self-identify as evangelical, there are notable differences (Hackett and Lindsay 2008). Moreover, the conservative Protestant community is not homogeneous. Subpopulations of conservative Protestants—evangelicals, fundamentalists, and Pentecostals—often have different social and political perspectives (Garneau and Schwadel 2013). Even within specific denominations, environmental perspectives may vary across congregations (Djupe and Hunt 2009).

In addition to alternative measures of religious affiliation, future research can expand on the analyses in this article with more detailed measures of theology. As noted above, although biblical literalism is a widely used measure of conservative theology, it may be acting as a proxy for more specific theological perspectives. For instance, Wolkomir et al. (1997) suggest that the association between biblical literalism and environmental concern reflects the literalist view that humans have dominion over nature, and Barker and Bearce (2013) argue that belief in the “Second Coming” of Jesus Christ is the proximate cause of evangelicals’ relatively low levels of support for government action on global warming. There are also theological arguments that support environmentalism (Danielsen 2013) and specifically spending on the environment (McCammack 2007). In the larger evangelical community, those who adhere to such theologies, particularly those from younger generations (Smith and Johnson 2010), may indeed provide support to the greening of Christianity thesis. Ultimately, a multidimensional approach that incorporates a variety of theological perspectives as well as measures of values and goals broadly speaking (Larson 2010) is likely required.

## **Conclusions**

Evangelical Protestants are, as expected, particularly unlikely to support spending to protect and improve the natural environment. This resistance to environmental policy appears to be largely motivated by politics and theology, which suggests that the American populace is

highly polarized by a combination of religious tradition, religious belief, political partisanship, and environmental perspectives. Evangelical Protestants and unaffiliated Americans represent opposite ends of the continuum on environmental views, religious beliefs, and political affiliations. Not inconsequentially, these are now two of the three largest religious traditions in the United States (Putnam and Campbell 2010). Large numbers of Americans staked to opposing perspectives on a constellation of issues is indicative of Hunter's (1991) work on culture wars, where he argued that elites seek to mobilize constituencies through divisive social issues. While Hunter focused on issues related to sex and gender, environmental protection is also an important element of contemporary culture wars; and one that is evident in the general population, not only among elite political actors (Evans 2003).

As the culture war thesis suggests, evangelical Protestants' environmental perspectives may reflect not just theological differences but also political and social cues from religious leaders and fellow congregants (Djupe and Gilbert 2003). Although some evangelical elites support environmentalism—for instance, those leading the evangelical environmental network that connects a pro-life perspective with environmentalism—many prominent evangelical leaders vocally oppose environmental policy (Danielsen 2013; McCammack 2007). These cues regarding environmentalism can be highly influential, particularly when they incorporate religious explanations (Djupe and Gwi-asda 2010). Such religious explanations for opposing environmentalism are reinforced by a literal view of the Bible, which can support a mastery-over-nature perspective (Schultz, Zelezny, and Dalrymple 2000) that is antithetical to an ecological worldview (Dunlap et al. 2000). Thus, not surprisingly, our results suggest that biblical literalism is the foremost cause of evangelicals' views of environmental spending. In addition to biblical literalism, other core evangelical beliefs, such as premillennial dispensationalism, support inaction on environmental problems (Curry-Roper 1990). A major challenge for evangelical reformers seeking to green their religion will be framing pro-environmental policies in ways that align with evangelical and fundamentalist religious beliefs. Increased political polarization on environmental issues and party sorting along religious lines promise to considerably complicate this task.

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**Supporting Information / Appendix.** Additional Analysis (*follows*)

**Contents:**

**Table A1:** Standardized direct and indirect effects of religious traditions on relative support for environmental spending without data using alternate question wording,<sup>a</sup> 1984-2012.

**Table A2:** Standardized direct and indirect effects of religious traditions on relative support for environmental spending with switching to evangelical Protestant,<sup>a,b</sup> 1984-2012.

**Table A3:** Standardized direct and indirect effects of religious traditions on support for environmental spending,<sup>a</sup> 1984-2012.

Table A1.1: Standardized Direct and Indirect Effects of Religious Traditions on Relative Support for Environmental Spending without Data using Alternate Question Wording<sup>a</sup>, 1984-2012

	Mainline Protestant <sup>b</sup>		Black Protestant <sup>b</sup>		Catholic <sup>b</sup>		Other religion <sup>b</sup>		Unaffiliated <sup>b</sup>	
	Beta	s.e.	Beta	s.e.	Beta	s.e.	Beta	s.e.	Beta	s.e.
Total effect	.043	.014**	.018	.015	.047	.015***	.042	.012***	.013***	.013***
Direct effect	.021	.014			.017	.015	.017	.012	.029	.014*
Total indirect effect	.021	.004***			.030	.005***	.025	.004***	.064	.008***
Indirect effects:										
Republican	.002	.001			.011	.002***	.009	.002***	.021	.003***
Service attendance	.006	.002**			.003	.001**	.004	.001**	.019	.005***
Bible literal word of God <sup>c</sup>	.009	.003**			.012	.004**	.007	.003**	.015	.005**
Bible book of fables <sup>c</sup>	.004	.003			.005	.003	.006	.004	.010	.006

*Note:* Data from General Social Survey. Models control for age, sex, race, marital status, children in the home, education, family income, urbanity, and region; N=8,624.

<sup>a</sup> Respondents were asked if they think we spend too much, about right, or too little on “improving and protecting the environment.”

<sup>b</sup> Evangelical Protestant is the omitted reference category.

<sup>c</sup> Bible inspired word of God is the omitted reference category.

\*  $p \leq .05$ , \*\*  $p \leq .01$ , \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$  (two-tailed test).

Table A1.2: Standardized Direct and Indirect Effects of Religious Traditions on Relative Support for Environmental Spending with Switching to Evangelical Protestant<sup>a,b</sup>, 1984-2012

	Switched to evangelical <sup>b</sup>		Mainline Protestant <sup>b</sup>		Black Protestant <sup>b</sup>		Catholic <sup>b</sup>		Other religion <sup>b</sup>		Unaffiliated <sup>b</sup>	
	Beta	s.e.	Beta	s.e.	Beta	s.e.	Beta	s.e.	Beta	s.e.	Beta	s.e.
Total effect	-.009	.009	.049	.010***	.023	.012	.042	.011***	.041	.009***	.090	.010***
Direct effect			.026	.010*			.008	.011	.013	.009	.022	.011*
Total indirect effect			.023	.003***			.034	.004***	.028	.003***	.067	.006***
Indirect effects:												
Republican			.002	.001			.011	.002***	.011	.001***	.021	.002***
Service attendance			.005	.001***			.002	.001**	.003	.001***	.018	.004***
Bible literal word of God <sup>c</sup>			.013	.002***			.016	.003***	.009	.002***	.019	.004***
Bible book of fables <sup>c</sup>			.004	.002*			.005	.002*	.006	.003*	.010	.004*

Note: Data from General Social Survey; models control for age, sex, race, marital status, children in the home, education, family income, urbanity, and region; N=16,471.

<sup>a</sup> Switched to evangelical defined as being affiliated with an evangelical denomination at the time of the survey but not at age 16.

<sup>b</sup> Evangelical Protestant at both age 16 and the time of survey is the omitted reference category.

<sup>c</sup> Bible inspired word of God omitted reference category.

\* p ≤ .05, \*\* p ≤ .01, \*\*\* p ≤ .001 (two-tailed test).

Table A1.3: Standardized Direct and Indirect Effects of Religious Traditions on Support for Environmental Spending<sup>a</sup>, 1984-2012

	Mainline Protestant <sup>b</sup>		Black Protestant <sup>b</sup>		Catholic <sup>b</sup>		Other religion <sup>b</sup>		Unaffiliated <sup>b</sup>	
	Beta	s.e.	Beta	s.e.	Beta	s.e.	Beta	s.e.	Beta	s.e.
Total effect	.060	.010***	.051	.012***	.059	.010***	.058	.009***	.093	.009***
Direct effect	.040	.010***	.029	.011**	.022	.010*	.029	.009***	.025	.010**
Total indirect effect	.021	.003***	.022	.004***	.037	.004***	.029	.003***	.068	.006***
Indirect effects:										
Republican	.003	.002*	.015	.004***	.019	.002***	.017	.002***	.034	.003***
Service attendance	.006	.001***	.003	.001***	.003	.001***	.004	.001***	.017	.004***
Bible literal word of God <sup>c</sup>	.012	.002***	.004	.001***	.016	.003***	.009	.002***	.019	.004***
Bible book of fables <sup>c</sup>	-.001	.002	-.001	.001	-.001	.002	-.001	.002	-.002	.004

Note: Data from General Social Survey. Models control for age, sex, race, marital status, children in the home, education, family income, urbanity, and region; N=16,471.

<sup>a</sup> Dependent variable is a three-category measure of support for environmental spending (1=spend too much, 2=spend about right, 3=spend too little).

<sup>b</sup> Evangelical Protestant is the omitted reference category.

<sup>c</sup> Bible inspired word of God is the omitted reference category.

\* p ≤ .05, \*\* p ≤ .01, \*\*\* p ≤ .001 (two-tailed test).