

# Theology and Corporate Environmental Responsibility: A Biblical Literalism Approach to Creation Care

MARK BENJAMIN SPENCE  
Mississippi Avenue Baptist Church

LEE WARREN BROWN  
Texas Woman's University

**ABSTRACT:** In this paper, we use theological development to help understand why biblical literalists, particularly those American evangelicals who believe in a literal interpretation of the Bible, are less likely to engage in Corporate Environmental Responsibility (CER) than other religious people. The hermeneutic we employ is a historical-grammatical method of exegesis to show that biblical literalists should actually care more for the environment than non-biblical literalist due to the creation care mandate found in Genesis 1. While religion has been studied in organizations, the research often focuses on outcomes of religion in the workplace or on firm level outcomes in the aggregate. We offer individual theology as a possible causal mechanism behind the influence that religion has on individuals and organizations. Theological beliefs influence individual behaviors, and understanding this process has implications for organizations. We discuss generalizability to those of differing faiths and non-religious individuals. We also discuss implications of increased creation care through CER for organizations.

**KEYWORDS:** Religion, Christianity, corporate environmental responsibility, biblical literalism

## INTRODUCTION

Religion and its impact on corporate environmental responsibility (CER) is a topic relevant to management scholars today. It fits at the intersection between CER literature and the growing literature of religion in the workplace. In this paper, we make the theological case for Christian business people to engage in CER behaviors. We will first review the literature on religion in the workplace and CER. We follow with a theological examination of appropriate responses to CER in the workplace for Christian leaders. We argue that regardless of eschatology (theology of the end times), Christian business leaders should show concern for their firm's CER because of the higher order command to be caretakers of the earth. Using a historical-grammatical method of exegesis on the appropriate scriptures, we make a theological argument for Christians to play a leading role in CER. We conclude with the implications of this view on both business practitioners, generalizability of these implications to people of

other faiths and non-religious persons, and future directions for management research.

CER is a quality of life issue, for not just human life, but all life. Generally speaking, there is a positive relationship between religions and corporate social responsibility (CSR) (Brammer, Williams & Zinkin, 2007). Furthermore, studies have shown that there is a general positive relationship between religions and CER (Du, Jian, Zeng & Du, 2014). However, American evangelicals typically display low levels of ecological concern (Greeley, 1993), which is a likely cause for lower support for environmental programs and initiatives in politics, theology, or business CER. In this paper, we will explore this tension and attempt to understand the reasons why evangelicals typically do not support environmentalism at the individual level or CER at the organizational level, and we offer a theological justification for why they should.

Rather than use the term evangelical, we will employ the term biblical literalists because evangelicalism in the United States is currently experiencing an identity crisis.

Russell Moore (2016), a leader in the Southern Baptist Convention, offers insight into this identity crisis in an article in the *Washington Post*. Evangelical, according to Moore, is now understood only “in terms of election-year voting blocs or (according to) our most buffoonish television personalities.” Whereas the term used to provide doctrinal clarity, it has now been coopted to mean anyone who self-identifies as a conservative Christian. As a result, in this paper we will use the term biblical literalists, those who believe in a literal interpretation of the Bible, as an attempt to offer clarity.

Biblical literalists should have a positive relationship with CER, but in practice this is rarely true (Greeley, 1993). We examine why biblical literalists do not practice CER and offer a theology of creation care applicable for business leaders, individuals, and church leaders. While one may wonder if offering a theological motivation for creation care is sufficient, Francis Schaeffer (1980) argues, “[People] do what they think. Whatever their world view [sic] is, this is the thing which will spill over into the external world. This is true in every area, in student revolt and sociology, in all science and technology, as well as in the area of ecology.” Theology has a powerful sway over thought, and thought motivates action. A theology of ecology that balances eschatology with creation care will motivate biblical literalists, many who claim that the Bible is their strongest thought source, to engage in CER.

The paper will begin with a definition and discussion of CER. The second section will examine religion in organizational research. Then, we explore the generally positive relationship between religion and CER as well as the negative relationship between biblical literalists and CER. This leads into the section in which we develop a theology of care for the environment, including the hypothesis that biblical literalists tend to have an eschatology that results in a fatalistic attitude toward the environment. Since it is this environmental fatalism that is at the root of the problem with biblical literalist, an alternative theology is proposed that should motivate biblical literalists towards CER, regardless of eschatology.

This subject is a timely one. Many are exploring the relationship between faith and environmentalism. In 2015, Pope Francis published *Laudato Si'*, a papal encyclical on Care for Our Common Home. *Texas Monthly* published an article in May 2016 on Katharine Hayhoe, a leading climate change scientist at Texas Tech University and self-described evangelical Christian, who struggles to convince conservative Christians such as biblical literalists on the veracity of global climate change (Smith, 2016).

Ecology is humanity’s responsibility, a responsibility that can no longer be taken lightly.

## RELIGION AND CORPORATE ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY IN ORGANIZATIONS

### Corporate Environmental Responsibility

As a subset of the corporate social responsibility (CSR) literature, the study of corporate environmental responsibility (CER) examines the way in which a firm engages in responsible behavior toward their environment (DesJardins, 1998). Early work promoted CSR and CER by highlighting both the financial incentive and the ethical imperative for business leaders. Russo and Fouts (1997) found in an early examination of CER that CER positively influences firm performance. The relationship is moderated by industry growth rate in that returns are higher in high growth industries. This financial argument was complemented with studies focusing on the ethical responsibility that business leaders face. DesJardins (1998) builds out a justification for CER derived from a model of sustainable economics. DesJardins provided a pragmatic approach to corporate social responsibility. Using environmental examples, DesJardins criticizes classical and neoclassical models of CSR and provides an alternative model describing implications of CER at both the firm and industry levels. DesJardins then provides an ethical justification of the sustainable alternative to market economics.

While the ethical justification for CER is important, much of the recent work in CER has brought its focus back to CERs impact on firm performance. Kim and Statman (2012) find that firms invest in CER in a way that is profit maximizing in that firms attempt to seek the optimal return with their CER investments, and they quit when CER spending reaches diminishing marginal returns. This confirms the view that firms are shareholder conscious when approaching CER spending and opposes those who believe firms are underinvested in CER due to its potential financial returns. Delmas, Etzion, and Nairn-Birch (2013) studied CSR ratings and examined the differences in CSR processes and outcomes. In doing so, principle components of CER were found. Results indicated that financial performance was unrelated to outcome measures of CER but positively correlated with process measures. Firms that did well on actual CER outcomes, such as lower pollution, for example, do not actually perform better, but firms that put in place pro-

cesses, possibly for symbolic purposes, do see increased firm performance.

The evidence suggesting that CER adds value as a signaling device and firms do not receive actual benefits from the process of CER supports a critique of the CER literature. Corporate social responsibility has been viewed by some as an action of large firms that can bear the large costs as an alternate form of marketing (Nan & Heo, 2007; Maignan & Ferrell, 2004). If so, this provides unique challenges to small firms that have more difficulty communicating their CER activity. Baumann-Pauly, Wickert, Spence, and Scherer (2013) found in their qualitative work that small firms are equally sophisticated in their CSR efforts as that of larger firms. It is proposed that they have actual advantages in the implementation of CSR but struggle in the communication and reporting of those actions. The opposite effect is proposed for large firms who excel in communication and reporting of CSR but struggle in the actual implementation.

Investors are not blind to CSR actions by firms. In a study ranging from 1980-2009, Flammer (2013) found that companies that behave responsibly toward the environment experience a significant increase in stock price while firms that behave irresponsibly experience a decrease in stock price. This effect has strengthened over time due to the pressure to behave in an environmentally responsible manner increased during that time period. While firms are beginning to buy into the profitability of CER investments, consumers may be becoming more and more cautious of the motive behind firms engaging in CER. Nyilasy, Gangadharbatla, and Paladino (2013) investigate corporations' environmental performance on its brand attitudes and purchase intentions. Using an experimental design, green advertising was found to be ineffective in increasing brand attitude, and it decreased brand attitude compared to no advertisement at all. On the other hand, green performance, or actual corporate environmental performance, is important to a firm's brand attitude. In this paper, we argue that while the profit motive of CER shouldn't be ignored, for Christian business leaders, it is secondary to their responsibility of caretaker of the environment.

Finally, in a critique of the current state of businesses' role in supporting a sustainable environment, Milne and Gray (2013) argue that sustainability reporting has been supplanted by initiatives such as triple bottom line. In this, business engagement and sustainability have taken the forefront, and environmental sustainability has decreased in popularity. Popular benchmarking and

reporting standards and agencies institutionalize this process. Milne and Gray argue for a focus to return to the environment, and the current triple bottom line may actually reinforce greater instability by supporting business as usual. For Christian leaders, especially those holding to a biblical literalist view, we posit that the focus on CER and profitability should be a secondary consideration to the caretaker mandate and thus, this critique holds less weight if leaders are engaging in CER as a response to personal and theological duty rather than as a profit-maximizing endeavor. In the next section, we examine research highlighting religion's influence and role in organizations.

### Religion in Organizational Research

The study of religion in the workplace is a small but growing area of research. Ignored for many years, a recent focus acknowledges that individuals are greatly influenced by their religious beliefs, which often act as highly influential presuppositions, and they do not check this influence at the workplace door (Benefiel, Fry & Geigle, 2014; Miller & Ewest, 2015). In the next section, we summarize the current state of research on religion in the workplace, and we highlight the current lack of research that dives into the individual theology and how that theology influences employee behavior.

Weber (1904) provided early work on religion and organizations with his work on the *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Weber argued that hard work, discipline, and frugality are traits supported by Protestantism and Calvinism, in particular. As a result, Weber argued, countries in which Protestantism is widely practiced are positively related to productivity. While some have raised issue with the methods and implications of Weber's work (Udehn, 1981), it widely popularized the study of religions influence on organizations and society.

In more recent work on religion and its influence on organizations, Parboteeah, Walter, and Block (2015) specifically focus on entrepreneurship and propose that the level of a country's knowledge investments strengthen the relationship between religion and entrepreneurial activity. Using a sample from the Gallop organization, they found that there is a nuanced relationship between a country's religion and entrepreneurship and that there is evidence that religion had influences above and beyond that of national culture.

The influence of religiosity on CSR has been examined specifically in the literature. Jamali and Sdiani (2013) posit that the intensity of religiosity affects views

on CSR. They suggest that religion in business is not a broad categorical variable, but rather the intensity of religiosity is important. They support these claims with data from a multi-religious context. While these works give insight into the outcomes of religion on a variety of variables, there is little insight into the causal mechanisms behind these results. We believe that an understanding of the theological beliefs of individuals within an organization can help us better understand why these links between religion and organizational level variables exist. In the next section we examine evidence on biblical literalism and its potentially negative influence on the firm's CSR efforts. We then suggest that biblical literalists should actually engage in CSR and specifically in CER by using the historical-grammatical approach to exegesis to develop a theology that supports the higher order biblical mandate of caretaker found in Christian Scripture. We then examine Christian theology and attempt to find the casual mechanisms behind why biblical literalists behave in the way they do toward the environment.

### **Religion and the Environment**

In an early effort to determine the historical roots of humanity's ecological crisis, White (1967) speculates that Christians' view of humanity's relations to its environment has been key in environmental issues. White argues that our view of the man-nature relationship greatly influences our view of ecology and that this is derived from a disillusionment of nature in the first chapter of Genesis. White does note that there is great heterogeneity within Christianity and views of the environment. Some argue that Christian stewardship and creation theology actually support a greater concern for the environment (Kearns, 1996). In an effort to better understand the relationship between Christianity and environmental concerns, Schultz, Zelezny, and Dalrymple's (2000) empirical work found that individuals who expressed more literal beliefs in the Bible (biblical literalists) had significantly lower scores on pro-environmental behavioral scales. These findings are supported by Eckberg and Blocker (1989), who find that belief in the Bible predicted lower scores on four indexes of environmental concern. In the next section, we will examine the theological drivers behind this negative link between biblical literalism and the environment. Then, using the same historical-grammatical approach to exegesis, we argue for a biblical mandate of creation caretaker that supersedes views of indifference toward the environment. In addition, we examine the impact of these individual views of creation care in organizations and discuss the implications.

## **THEOLOGY OF ENVIRONMENTALISM**

As we discussed, there is a generally positive relationship between religion and CER (Du et al., 2014). However, this is not generally the case for Christians who believe in a literal interpretation of the Bible (Schultz, Zelezny, & Dalrymple, 2000). Particular concern will be given to what makes biblical literalists distinct from other religious groups in their lack of concern for the environment.

In this paper we argue that the distinction between biblical literalists and other religions is a fatalistic attitude towards the environment that is largely due to an eschatology popular among biblical literalists. This eschatology is dependent on one particular understanding of some of the apocalyptic literature in the Bible. The culprit, we believe, is not biblical literalism but a particular eschatology. Therefore, rather than argue for a lesser degree of literal interpretation of the Scripture, in this paper we will argue that the problem is not biblical literalism, but the lack of a theology of creation care based on a historical-grammatical exegesis of Genesis 1.

The goal of the historical-grammatical method of exegesis is to discover the meaning of the text based on what the author intended through literal, literary, and historical lenses. Corley and colleagues (2002) explained that the historical-grammatical method "makes use of many critical disciplines in order to shed light on the Scriptures and to understand them better. It studies the historical background together with grammatical, syntactical, and linguistic factors. It usually combines exegesis with exposition and is used largely in conservative circles" (p. 450). Biblical literalists typically adhere to the historical-grammatical method of exegesis (Corley et al., 2002).

In Genesis 1, God gives the responsibility of creation care to humanity. With a greater literalism in mind, we will advocate for CER as a component of humanity's responsibility for creation care. Of course, not every human or even every Christian believes in a literal translation of the Bible. This section will conclude with a discussion on why non-literalists as well as non-Christians will want biblical literalists to act in accordance with creation care in CER. In short, this paper argues that a belief that the Bible is literally true and that the world may one day be destroyed does not permit Christians to ignore their responsibility to be environmental stewards of the earth.

Jamali and Sdiani (2013) provide an interesting twist on the relationship between CSR and religion. They conclude, "religion or religious affiliation per se does not influence orientations to CSR, but rather the level (and

type) of religiosity” (p. 318). In other words, it is not the religion that one adheres to that impacts CSR but the depth to which they adhere to their particular religion. Jamali and Sdiani continue, “It is not religious affiliation or denomination that matters the most, but rather the level and type of religiosity among business professionals that is likely to influence their CSR attitudes and orientations” (p. 318). It is easy to assume, based on Jamali and Sdiani, that the more devoted one is to their religion, the stronger their ties to CSR. However, in regards to biblical literalists, the stronger their devotion to a literal interpretation of the Bible, the more likely they will have a negative relationship with CER as a subset of CSR (Schultz, Zelezny & Dalrymple, 2000).

Not all religions have a negative relationship between faith and environmentalism. Du et al. (2014) argue that “religion stands beside law and political strength as a social norm for strengthening CER” (p. 486). According to their study, there is a positive relationship between Buddhism and CER. The authors conclude that this positive relationship is not unique to Buddhism but includes other faiths including Christianity. They write, “Corporate environmental responsibility is a component of CSR, and there is an inherent coincidence in religion and environmental protection...the Judeo-Christian tradition teaches that the world is God’s creation, which undergirds Christian environmental stewardship” (p. 488). This stands in stark contrast with the action of some Christians as highlighted in the “Evangelical Declaration on the Care of Creation” (1995). In this declaration, the biblical literalist authors confess, “Forgetting that the earth is the Lord’s, we have often simply used creation and forgotten our responsibility to care for it” (p. 110). A quandary arises over why other religions, such as Buddhism and other strands of Christianity, have a positive relationship with CER, yet there is an inverse relationship between CER and the majority of biblical literalists.

Al Truesdale (1994) in *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* sheds light on this situation: “Lying beneath the failure by evangelicals on a broad scale to apply their moral, economic and political energy to the environmental crisis, there is a deep-seated despair about the future of the creation as we know it, a despair which many evangelicals have come to perceive as essential to the Christian faith” (p. 117). In other words, this irresponsibility towards environmentalism is tied to eschatological beliefs held by many literalists. These biblical literalists believe in the destruction of the earth during the apocalypse. In other words, some Christians believe that a literal

translation of apocalyptic literature in the Bible leads to a conclusion that one day the earth will be destroyed.

The belief that the earth will be destroyed easily translates into ecological fatalism. This fatalism results in a lack of concern for the environment. Out of all of the apocalyptic literature of the Bible, a literal interpretation of 2 Peter 3:10, without taking into account the unique nature of apocalyptic literature, is the most likely culprit for leading to the belief that the world is going to be destroyed. A belief in future cataclysmic destruction means that a biblical literalist in the workplace may not care about CER.

The author of 2 Peter 3 uses apocalyptic language to describe the end of the world. In basing an entire argument against environmental stewardship on this one passage alone, a fatalistic attitude towards the environment is understandable. Steven Bouma-Prediger (2001) explains this environmental fatalism: “If the earth will be ‘burned up to nothing,’ why care about it? Why care for something that will be destroyed?” (p. 76). As Bouma-Prediger postulates, a particular interpretation of this passage easily leads to environmental fatalism. Thankfully, he asks further questions, “But is this eschatology biblical? Will the earth be destroyed in the eschaton? Does Christian eschatology necessarily entail an ecologically bankrupt ethic?” (p. 76). Bouma-Prediger concludes, and this paper supports, that it is irresponsible to build a fatalistic attitude towards the environment based on apocalyptic literature alone.

While some may conclude that apocalyptic literature in the Bible leads to a belief that environmental protection is unnecessary because the future of the earth is destruction, this is not a *fait accompli*. A helpful illustration of this point is a simple side-by-side comparison of two English Bible translations, the King James Version (KJV) and the English Standard Version (ESV), that demonstrate the differences in attitudes towards environmentalism. According to the KJV translation, “the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up.” Were it not for other translations, among other things, the biblical literalist position would be set, and environmental fatalism would be somewhat understandable. However, other translations offer a different perspective on this verse. For example, the ESV translates this verse as, “But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.” Both translations of Scripture attempt a literal translation of the verse, originally written in Greek, and yet one states that the earth

will be burned up, while the other says it will be exposed. One version can lead to environmental fatalism while the other contradicts fatalism. An argument about the various merits of these two translations are not important to the thesis of this paper, but the differences between the two versions demonstrate the difficulty of developing theology based on apocalyptic literature.

Destruction is a common theme among apocalyptic works. In art, movies, and literature, the apocalypse is synonymous with the destruction of the world. That same bias is then assumed when one reads sections of the Bible that are apocalyptic. A strict literal approach to apocalyptic literature has challenges and is not consistent with the historical-grammatical method of exegesis. Fee and Stuart (1993) are experts on exegesis of the different types of literature in the Bible and write, "The images of apocalyptic are often forms of fantasy, rather than of reality" (p. 233). This point is easy to understand, one might hope, when reading about a multi-headed dragon emerging from the sea in the book of Revelation, but becomes a challenge when one reads that the earth will be "burned up" or "laid bare" in 2 Peter. Heide (1997) argues, "Often interpreters seem to meld apocalyptic into simple prophetic, forgetting that images in the vision are sometimes meant to symbolize rather than represent the details of an event" (p. 38). A literal translation of 2 Peter 3 then, if we understand Fee and Stuart (1993) as well as Heide (1997) may not necessarily mean that the future of the earth is destroyed. If it is not destroyed, then environmental fatalism has fatal flaws. There is a better option for biblical literalists.

Not all evangelical Christians believe that the world will be destroyed at the second coming of Christ. As Russell Moore (2014) argues, "Orthodox Christianity does not believe in the 'end of the world,' if by 'world' one means the destruction of the ecosystem or of the material cosmos" (p. 574). The alternative to destruction is a belief that at the end of days, God will renew and restore this earth. Moore underscores the importance of the relationship between the belief in restoration of the earth and environmentalism: "The permanence of the creation, as redeemed in Christ, matters to the task of environmental protection because it grounds the activity of earth-keeping in optimism and hope" (p. 574). At his return, Jesus will expose all that is wrong with this world in preparation for God's judgment. This is likely what the author of 2 Peter meant when writing, "The earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed." Therefore, keeping in mind the uniqueness of apocalyptic literature, a historical-

grammatical translation of 2 Peter 3:10 can instead be an encouragement towards the responsibility of Christians to care for creation. If everyone's works will be exposed, and God gives the responsibility for creation care to humanity, one day organizations' lack of care for the environment will be exposed.

On the other hand, some may still persist in the argument that the most literal translation of 2 Peter 3, even acknowledging the uniqueness of apocalyptic literature, is for the destruction of the world. A theological problem remains for those who argue in favor of complete destruction. This position requires that once the earth destroyed, God will have to recreate it *ex nihilo*, just as what some believe God did at creation. Those who hold to this position are required to find scriptural evidence for the recreation of the world, of which is absent from the Bible. Furthermore, the argument in favor of total destruction still does not negate the responsibility for creation care as eschatology should not be more important than current responsibility. Truesdale (1994) argues that a change in eschatology is in order. "So long as evangelicals hold to an eschatology that understands the world to exist under a divinely imposed death sentence, we should expect no major change in their disposition toward the environment or environmental movement" (p. 117). Too many evangelicals allow their eschatology to negatively impact their attitude towards the environment. To change their mind would entail a Herculean undertaking, rendering it entirely unlikely. There must be another way. As this paper argues, the path is for a greater acceptance of a literal interpretation of Genesis 1 that will result in heightened environmental responsibility. In the business place, this environmental responsibility will lead to a greater embrace of CER.

Christians must learn that their responsibility for creation care is not negated by their eschatology. As Bouma-Prediger (2001) argues, "Authentic Christian faith requires ecological obedience. To care for the earth is integral to Christian faith." In Genesis 1, God gives humanity the responsibility to care for creation. "And God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth'" (ESV). Moore (2014) explains what God means by dominion. "The concept of 'dominion,' found first in the opening passages of Genesis, sometimes alarms non-Christians because it seems to connote a sense of rapacious power...Biblical dominion is not, in Carl Henry's words, 'pharaoh-like,'

but instead is Christ-like” (p. 576). Schaeffer (1980) further explains, “When we have dominion over nature, it is not ours, either. It belongs to God, and we are to exercise our dominion over these things not as though entitled to exploit them, but as things borrowed or held in trust, which we are to use realizing that they are not ours intrinsically” (p. 70). The dominion given to humanity remains under God’s dominion over humanity and all of creation. For humanity, then, to have dominion over the earth is to mimic the example of Christ, who said in Matthew 20:28 that He came “not to be served but to serve” (ESV). Therefore, to follow Christ’s example, humanity must approach the care of creation with an attitude of a servant rather than one of exploitation.

Christians have the God-given responsibility to steward the earth. This attitude should not remain in the pulpit or in the pew but impact CER. In an article on environmental ethics in the textile industry, Divita (2005) argues from a Christian perspective. “Corporations must hold a commitment to justice for people and for nature on par with their financial commitments to shareholders. A corporation is no less a steward of the environment than an individual is, and it has the power to impact numerous lives simultaneously...” (p. 41). A corporation that exploits the environment is one that is not acting according to the God-given responsibility to care for creation. Heide (1997) explains,

We were given the responsibility to act as stewards over this created world. It would be easy to disregard the creation if we believe it has no future beyond the final judgment. We could simply treat it as a resource to be managed for the sake of optimum production. But if it does have a future existence, and if God feels strongly enough about saving it to make it a part of his eternal plan of redemption, then perhaps we should regard it as more than simply a source of food. (56)

Dominion over the earth is not exploitation; it is competent stewardship of the environment. The result must be corporations, which are made of individuals, that treat the environment responsibly.

In this section, we explored two positions that are based on a literal translation of the Bible and concluded that either understanding of 2 Peter 3 does not negate the responsibility to act with care for creation. Of course, these are not the only positions one may hold. There are those who are Christians but do not hold to a literal translation of the Bible, and there are those who are of other faiths or of no faith at all. What do we do for those

in this position? With apologies to lumping this diverse group of people together, we contend that those who are Christian, but non-literalists, or who are not Christians whatsoever, want biblical literalists to act as environmental stewards. As Pope Francis (2015) explains, “It is good for humanity and the world at large when we believers better recognize the ecological commitments which stem from our convictions” (p. 46). Those in this diverse group want biblical literalists to act with a greater literalism simply because improved CER benefits everyone and everything on the planet.

This paper offers the solution of encouraging greater, not less, literalism in the interpretation of the Bible. The goal is to encourage a greater literalism that emphasizes the responsibility given to humanity in Genesis 1 to be stewards of the earth. Eschatology does not negate responsibility. Even those Christians who believe that the future of the earth is destruction should also believe that God made humans responsible for care-taking the earth that should influence CER. As Schaeffer (1980) argues, “It is not because Christianity does not have the answer, but because we have not acted on the answer” (pp. 58-59). The answer for biblical literalists is to believe that Christ will return and renew the earth and, coupled with Genesis 1, act on humanity’s responsibility for environmental stewardship that translates into CER.

## DISCUSSION

Research focusing on religion and organizations often focuses on the influence that religion plays in the organization and how that drives organizational level outcomes. In this paper we take a different approach. By focusing on the underlying theology of individuals in the workplace, we attempt to understand the casual mechanism behind religion’s influence in the workplace. In addition, we specifically focus on religion and its influence on CER. Using a biblical literalist approach, we offer a theological critique of the negative relationship between biblical literalist CSR that is both espoused by some and whose findings are empirically supported. We argue for an increase in both individual concern for the environment and organizational CER by biblical literalists.

The research on religion in organizations has provided a myriad of insights in recent years on what effects religion has on a variety of outcomes. It is now time to better understand why we see those influences. In this paper, we suggest that the underlying theology of indi-

viduals can have an influence on not only at the individual level but also on organizational outcomes such as CER. That being said, there are times where it is appropriate to reconsider these underlying theological beliefs. This is especially true when theological views are varied within a religion, are hinged upon less robust religious support, and do not hold up to historical views within one's religion. Using the historical-grammatical method of exegesis for theological development of creation care, we provide support for increased CER in organizations led by biblical literalists. We argue that biblical literalists should actually lead out in care for the environment rather than neglecting responsibility and lagging behind others in concern for the environment.

These conclusions can have implications for individuals, business leaders, and religious leaders. First, we conclude that individuals who hold to a biblical literalist interpretation of Scripture should lead in environmental care actions. We argue in favor of this position because of the mandate to care for creation in Genesis 1. In other organizational research, findings indicate that individual actions can aggregate up to influence the organization as a whole (Huselid, Jackson, & Schuler, 1997). If employees act out on their desire to engage in CER, firms might be more likely to embrace organization-wide CER initiatives. While individuals' actions can aggregate up to influence organizations, organizational leaders' behaviors can trickle down to influence individuals within the organization (Mayer, Kuenzi, Greenbaum, Bardes, & Salvador, 2009). In addition, organizational leaders have unique influence on the actions and direction of the firm (Barker III & Mueller, 2002). If these leaders commit to CER, employees are more likely to follow suit. Finally, religious leaders play a unique role in this dynamic. Religious leaders should not avoid teachings on environmental responsibility and creation care. They have a unique opportunity to influence and shape their parishioners' views on theology and thus influence behavior both individually and within organizations. We suggest that religious leaders take this responsibility seriously and at least consider the higher-order mandate of creation care, even if they believe in the eventual destruction of the earth.

## CONCLUSION

Understanding the influence of religion on individuals in the workplace and on organizations is a key goal of recent research on religion in organizations.

Unfortunately, this research stream has generally ignored the role that theology plays on an individual actor. This paper focuses on the theology and its influence on organizations through individual behavior. We conclude that not only does theology have a significant influence on behavior of individuals and organizations on CER, but that the same theological approach can be used to increase CER in organizations through an understanding of the theology of creation care.

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## ABOUT THE AUTHORS



**Dr. Mark Spence** serves as the lead pastor of Mississippi Avenue Baptist Church in Aurora, Colorado, and as an adjunct professor at Gateway Seminary, Rocky Mountain Campus. Although a native Texan, Mark is blessed to live with his lovely wife,

Janet, and his two boys, Parker and Jonathan, in beautiful Denver, Colorado.



**Lee Warren Brown, Ph.D.**, is an assistant professor of management at Texas Woman's University in Denton, Texas. Lee teaches strategic management and researches firm non-market strategies and ethical leadership. His work has been published in *Global Strategy*

*Journal* and the *Journal of Business Ethics*. When not teaching or researching, Lee enjoys spending time with his family, reading, and traveling.