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Religious Motivation for Mitigating Human-forced Climate Change: Scientifically Informed, Politically Astute, and Collaborative

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Abstract

Purpose - Religious organizations are among the non-government groups in the USA that are addressing climate change phenomena from their various faith perspectives and, despite the differences in their traditions and practices, are collaborating with one another to achieve their mutual goal - the establishment of policies that will mitigate the real and anticipated perils scientists are forecasting. If sufficiently motivated by their faith, informed by climate science, and politically astute, these groups may be reliable allies for climate change decision-makers to tap as they strive to achieve their mutual goal. The paper aims to discuss these issues.

Design/methodology/approach - Focusing on the Coalition on Environment and Jewish Life, the Catholic Coalition on Climate Change, and Interfaith Power and Light, the author explores the diverse religious faith-based motivations underpinning their efforts, the extent to which they remain cognizant of the latest climate science, the structures through which they share their particular faith perspectives and collaborate with one another, and

their efforts to reach decision makers at various levels of governance.

Findings - Motivated by their religious faiths, these three organizations demonstrate that they are scientifically informed, politically astute, and collaborative with others in striving to achieve their mutual goal of mitigating the adverse effects of climate change locally to globally.

Research limitations/implications - The three groups on which the author focuses are based in the USA and collaborate with one another. In an earlier presentation prepared for an international conference, the author included two other groups outside the USA, but manuscript length precluded their inclusion in this submission. Perhaps the author's limited study will stimulate scholars to explore other groups in various parts of the world.

Practical implications - To assure and strengthen the momentum already underway, scholars of religions need to probe their foundations for responding to climate change, leaders of religious communities must heighten their efforts to educate their followers accordingly, adherents of religions must be open to embracing their motivating traditions, and religiously based groups must seek to collaborate with one another at various bioregional and political levels to demand actions that will advance a life-sustaining climate.

Originality/value - The author is unaware of studies exploring these three groups using the methodology the author employs for the purposes of describing and assessing the effectiveness of religious groups in addressing human-forced climate change.

Crucial to resolving ecological problems are the underlying reasons why people pressure decision-makers to make and implement policies aimed at mitigating their adverse effects. Evidence that human activities are forcing changes in the global climate non-attributable to natural causes presents a particularly complex problem around which people individually and collectively are rallying at local to international levels of governance. Religious organizations are among the groups addressing climate change from their particular faith perspectives. Despite differences in their religious traditions, some organizations are collaborating with one another to achieve a mutual goal - the promotion of practices and establishment of policies that will mitigate the existing and projected perils that climate scientists have been forecasting.

The Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life, the Catholic Coalition on Climate Change, and Interfaith Power and Light are among the many religious organizations in the USA (hereafter US) that are dedicated to mitigating the perils of human-forced climate change[1] . Discussed in this essay are:

- the faith-based motivations of these representative organizations;
- the means and sources through which they remain cognizant of the latest climate science;
- the structures through which they communicate their efforts with groups that share their faith perspectives and collaborate with other groups grounded in other religious faiths; and
- their efforts to reach decision makers at various levels of governance.

They emerge as scientifically informed, politically astute, and collaborative with other religious groups. Vital to the ongoing efforts of each group is the faith-based motivation that spurs and sustains their activities and the mutual goal that propels them to collaborate.

Coalition on the Environment and Jewish life

In 1992, the leadership of the major Jewish life organizations, eminent rabbis, denominational presidents, and Jewish US senators gathered in Washington, DC at the invitation of US Senator Al Gore and cosmologist Carl Sagan to discuss the creation of a Jewish response to the mounting environmental crisis. They agreed that the Jewish community has an obligation based on its religious faith to address the crisis. Subsequently, the Jewish Council for Public Affairs, the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, and the Jewish Theological Seminary of America established the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life (hereafter COEJL)[2] . They charged the new organization with the task of catalyzing a distinctively Jewish programmatic and policy response to the environmental crisis that would become permanently integrated into Jewish institutions. Though originally conceived as a time-limited project, COEJL has continued to engage, unify, and lead the diverse Jewish faithful in addressing "rapidly increasing threats that endanger the quality of human life and Earth" ([10] COEJL, 1992)[3] . Global warming is among the most pressing of these threats, COEJL insists, and the group is committed to mobilizing the members and diverse organizations of the Jewish community to address the climate crisis by:

- advocating appropriate legislation; and
- urging Jews to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the interest of future generations.

As stipulated and explained in [10] COEJL's (1992) founding statement, the climate crisis is "a religious challenge" for Jews:

For Jews, the environmental crisis is a religious challenge. As heirs to a tradition of stewardship that goes back to Genesis and that teaches us to be partners in the ongoing work of Creation, we cannot accept the escalating destruction of our environment and its effect on human health and livelihood. Where we are despoiling our air, land, and water, it is our sacred duty as Jews to acknowledge our God-given responsibility and take action to alleviate environmental degradation and the pain and suffering that it causes. We must reaffirm and bequeath the tradition we have inherited which calls upon us to safeguard humanity's home.

Educating the faithful is foundational to meeting this challenge. According to COEJL's tenth anniversary report, protecting the environment, human health, and biological diversity is a religious duty (a Mitzvah) that is emphasized in the first five books of the Hebrew Bible (the *Torah*), in major rabbinical discussions pertaining to Jewish law, biblical interpretation, ethics, customs, and history (Talmud), and other rabbinic literature. All are grounded in the commandment in genesis 2 to serve and protect the Garden of Eden. COEJL draws upon these "timeless texts" that illumine "God's gifts and expectations" to educate and stimulate Jews to think about and address in their synagogues, homes, and businesses the phenomenon of human-induced climate change and other environmental problems ([11] COEJL, 2002).

The religious basis for action figures prominently in the Jewish Energy Covenant Campaign that COEJL initiated early in 2012. Responding to Jewish leaders and teachers who are concerned about future generations, the Covenant is oriented toward transforming the world's energy economy as a concern that is integral to addressing global climate change. Signatories make a personal commitment to this overall goal and agree to strive to achieve specific objectives ([15] COEJL, 2012d). One commitment is to reduce their greenhouse gas

emissions by 14 percent by September 2014 when Jews will celebrate the beginning of the *Shmittah* year - the seventh year in the ancient Jewish agricultural cycle when Jews are commanded to release the earth from human stress by letting the land lay fallow and open to anyone who needs or wants to eat fruits and vegetables that grow on them ([13] COEJL, 2012b). The signatories proclaim in the Covenant:

For if we do not do these things, who will do them? Though we are neither prophets nor the sons and daughters of prophets, are we not Earth's custodians, guardians of a creation entrusted to us by God for all future generations, assigned to choose life? Call us watchmen, call us sentinels, call us your brothers and your sisters, who turn to you b'chol lashon shel bakashah, in every tongue of request: Join with us, that we may together restore what has been ruined, make straight the crooked way, preserve, protect, and cherish the bounty that is ours to tend and ours to bequeath, repaired, to those yet to come ([14] COEJL, 2012c).

COEJL emphasizes the religious duty of Jews in all walks of life, places, and political persuasions to be fully aware of the ecological issues that affect all Earth inhabitants, especially poor and vulnerable people. "We weep at the heavy burden that climate change imposes on the world's poor," COEJL educators and advocates insist from the Jewish sense of justice, "mourn its impact on the diversity of God's creations," and "tremble at the harm we impose upon our own descendants" whose vulnerability alarms them ([14] COEJL, 2012c). Though COEJL is concerned about and engaged in many issues affecting Jews and their heritage nationally and internationally (e.g. the safety of Israel, anti-Semitism, and the continuing problems of poverty, unemployment, health care and education), "the ecological crisis hovers over all Jewish concerns," the 1992 Founding Statement of the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life states. Because "the threat is global, advancing, and ultimately jeopardizes ecological balance and the quality of life," environmental issues must be "an immediate, ongoing and pressing concern" for the Jewish community ([10] COEJL, 1992).

Grounded in and motivated by the Jewish faith, COEJL's staff remains alert to studies by climate scientists through Jewish and interfaith organizations and reports issued by the US Environmental Protection Agency (hereafter EPA), other government agencies, and

non-governmental environmental organizations. Weekly consultations are held with scientifically informed environmental policy experts associated with the National Religious Partnership for the Environment of which COEJL is a founding partner with the Evangelical Environment Network, the National Council of Churches of Christ, and the US Conference of Catholic Bishops. Staff members also participate in and promote the involvement of Jews in webinars sponsored by the Jewish Council for Public Affairs on climate-related and other environmental issues in which scientists make presentations and answer questions. These consultations and webinars facilitate staff awareness and understanding of the latest climate science reports.

How does COEJL facilitate action based on Jewish beliefs? One practical project is "greening synagogues" for which specific "greening texts" in the Hebrew Bible and other cherished texts are identified for reflection and action by rabbinic and congregational professionals, youth and adult education, a variety of pertinent programs, groundskeeping, and purchasing goods ([16] COEJL, 2013). To facilitate these actions, COEJL initiated the Carbon Footprint Calendar whereby synagogues, Jewish organizations, and businesses can gage their baseline energy use and identify practical ways of reducing their consumption ([12] COEJL, 2012a). Reducing consumption is crucial to meeting the goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 14 percent in time for the commencement of the aforementioned *Shmittah* in 2014.

Networking with other Jewish organizations is key to COEJL's efforts to educate and engage the faithful on the need to mitigate human-forced climate change and how. Thus, COEJL maintains a growing network with other Jewish organizations. One organization within this network is the [32] Religious Action Center of Reformed Judaism (2013) whose staff advocates on energy and environmental issues at local, state, and national levels. One of the latest network efforts in which COEJL participated with the Religious Action Center and other organizations was the collection of signatures to support the EPA's rule to limit carbon emissions on new power plants ([27] Jewcology, 2013a). To facilitate networking with other Jewish organizations throughout the world, COEJL is collaborating with Canfei Nesharim (Wings of Eagles) to build and support a web portal of sources for a Torah-based environmental movement named [26]

Jewcology (2012). The site incorporates links to a wide array of Jewish environmental organizations and leaders around the world and aims to build:

[...] a multi-denominational, multi-generational, regionally diverse community of Jewish environmental activists, who are learning from one another and from an expanding set of Jewish-environmental resources, how to educate their communities about our Jewish responsibility to protect the environment ([26] Jewcology, 2012).

Sources include a plethora of practical applications in homes and businesses, curriculum development in schools, explanations of urban watersheds, and opportunities to join focused communities. All applications are grounded in the Jewish belief that the faithful are obligated to function responsibly in relation to God's creation.

Networking with Jewish and interfaith organizations is also crucial to COEJL's advocacy of legislation and administrative rules that are sufficiently protective of humans, especially the poor and vulnerable. COEJL's working relationship with the legislative staff of the [32] Religious Action Center of Reformed Judaism (2013) and collaboration with partners of the National Religious Partnership for the Environment (2013) has made possible their exerting more pressure on decision-makers. Their collaborative efforts include carefully developing strategies to address issues, coordinating their actions to achieve the most effective outcomes, and calling upon members of the partners' respective membership to participate.

Catholic Coalition on Climate Change

Launched in 2006 in response to the climate crisis and its effects on poor and vulnerable people, the Catholic Coalition on Climate Change (hereafter Coalition) consists of a growing list of national Catholic organizations including the US Conference of Catholic Bishops, Catholic Relief Services, the Catholic Health Association of the US, the National Catholic Rural Life Conference, the Franciscan Action Network, the Leadership Conference of Women Religious, and the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities ([5] Coalition, 2013b). The Coalition works closely with the Department of Justice, Peace and Human

Development of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops and shares ideas, information, and programs with Catholic organizations in other countries ([6] Coalition, 2013c). The biblical command to love one's neighbor for love of God grounds the application of teachings by the pope and bishops of the Catholic Church[4] to changes that human actions are forcing on the global climate. Their major teachings that have relevance for the climate crisis are:

- the life and dignity of the human person - a concern that cannot be separated from the well-being of other species, the air, the land, and waters upon which humans are dependent and with which humans interact;
- participation by individuals, families, and communities in addressing and mitigating human-forced climate change;
- the human right to a life-sustaining environment and responsibilities to work toward this common good;
- preference for the poor and vulnerable when making decisions about mitigating and adapting to adverse effects of climate changes;
- the dignity of labor engaged in mitigating and adapting to changes humans are forcing on the climate and the rights of workers to be protected in their labors;
- the solidarity of all people now and into the future who are and will be affected; and
- the moral responsibility each person has to care for God's creation ([4] Coalition, 2013a).

These principles provide the framework for the Coalition's efforts.

The Coalition strives to be cognizant of findings by climate scientists to assure that its educational and advocacy initiatives are sufficiently informed. A prominent source of information upon which the Coalition relies is the Pontifical Academy of Sciences (hereafter PAS), an institution of prestigious scientists founded in 1603 and re-established in 1936 by Pope Pius XI to promote progress in the mathematical, physical and natural sciences and in related epistemological issues ([30] PAS, 2013). According to a working group of the [29] PAS (2011), climate change is an urgent matter that requires a response by Catholics, and the Coalition aims to respond as fully as possible through stimulating programs ranging from daily

practical measures at all levels of socio-economic functioning to scholarly endeavors ([2] Coalition, 2012a).

Among the Coalition's major initiatives is the Catholic Climate Covenant that Catholic individuals, families, parishes, organizations, colleges, universities, and other institutions are called to join, take the St Francis Pledge to care for God's creation, and advocate on behalf of the poor who are most vulnerable to global climate change. Joining the Covenant requires a commitment to the following five elements of the St Francis Pledge:

1. pray and reflect on the duty to care for God's Creation and protect the poor and vulnerable;
2. learn about and educate others on the causes and moral dimensions of climate change;
3. assess how individuals, families, parishes, and other affiliations contribute to climate change by energy use, consumption, waste, etc.;
4. act to change choices and behaviors - beginning with the individual - to reduce the ways of contributing to climate change; and
5. advocate Catholic principles and priorities in climate change discussions and decisions, especially as they impact the poor and vulnerable ([9] Coalition, 2013f).

To facilitate acting on these five elements, the Coalition provides an array of resources that are rooted in Catholic teachings to care for God's creation. Among these resources are "toolkits" for implementing the pray-learn-assess-act-advocate elements of the St Francis Pledge ([8] Coalition, 2013e).

Training Catholics to serve as Climate Ambassadors is another major Coalition initiative. Selected from many applicants representing diverse professions and strategically located throughout the US, Catholic Climate Ambassadors give scientifically informed presentations on the moral implications of human-forced climate change that are consistent with the Catholic teachings enumerated above. These teachings are also outlined by Pope Benedict XVI in his 2010 World Day of Peace Message, *If You Want to Cultivate Peace, Protect Creation* ([1] Benedict XVI, 2009) and by the US Catholic

bishops in their 2001 statement, *Global Climate Change: A Plea for Dialogue, Prudence and the Common Good* ([36] US Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2011). Prudence is a key virtue underscored in Catholic teachings that has particular relevance for addressing and mitigating changes that human activities are forcing on the global climate.

Other initiatives include grants to Catholic educational institutions. One is to expand their efforts to link Catholic teachings on climate change with projects that empower members to act according to the St Francis Pledge. Another grant facilitates the development of lesson plans that help teenagers link their instincts to recycle and conserve with ancient teachings about caring for God's creation and especially for people who are most vulnerable to ecological degradation. The Coalition has also prepared and disseminated a St Francis Pledge toolkit to assist Catholic colleges and universities in linking their campus sustainability programs with their missions and identities ([8] Coalition, 2013e).

Because one dimension of the St Francis Pledge is advocacy, especially on behalf of materially poor and vulnerable people who are projected to be the most adversely affected by global climate changes, the Coalition works closely with the Department of Justice, Peace and Human Development of the US Conference of Catholic Bishops to address pending federal legislation and regulations ([33] Sadowski, 2009). Collaboration with the bishops demonstrates the Coalition's respect for them as the primary teachers of Catholic doctrine and morals. The Coalition communicates its advocacy efforts through a weekly newsletter to member organizations, dioceses, and other subscribers throughout the US ([3] Coalition, 2012b).

Interfaith Power and Light

Interfaith Power and Light (hereafter Interfaith) was founded in the year 2000 after Episcopal Power and Light had developed a coalition of Episcopal churches to purchase energy from renewable sources and California Interfaith Power and Light had organized hundreds of religious congregations for the purpose of educating their faithful about the moral and ethical mandate to address global warming. With affiliates in 39 states ([21] Interfaith, 2012b),

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Interfaith is an action-oriented national organization that serves its affiliates and their approximately 14,000 congregations by informing, encouraging, and facilitating action on energy issues with special attention to policies that "reduce greenhouse gas pollution, protect the health, beauty and integrity of God's Creation, support the health of human communities, and promote the use of clean energy" ([23] Interfaith, 2013b).

The variety of Jewish, Islamic, and Christian congregations that associate with affiliates in each state precludes reliance on any one religious faith to motivate action. All perspectives are considered vital to Interfaith's efforts at various levels of governance. Christian congregations cover the gamut of mainstream denominations (e.g. Baptist, Catholic, Episcopal, Evangelical, First Congregational, Lutheran, Methodist, Presbyterian, and United Church of Christ) to non-denominational and community-based churches. Jewish and Islamic congregations are diverse in their faith perspectives and levels of activities. With the help of leaders and scholars of these religions, Interfaith strives to stimulate congregations to appropriate their religious beliefs and traditions and to apply them to the climate crisis. Interfaith makes available initial resources that the religious communities have identified for use by clergy and congregations through its web site, social media networks, weekly newsletters, and e-mail alerts to issues that require timely responses. Among the sources for clergy are religious texts pertaining to caring for God's creation, sample sermons covering liturgical themes, worship resources for the various religions, recommended books and articles, and Earth-care hymns ([22] Interfaith, 2013a). The resources Interfaith offers to affiliates and the congregations associated with them include study guides geared toward age groups, films, music, posters, practical tips for using energy sources more efficiently and appropriately, and aids to help organize around energy issues ([23], [37] Interfaith, 2013b, c).

Throughout its activities, Interfaith underscores the obligation of the faithful to care for God's creation and to take action that avoids adverse effects on poor and vulnerable people near and far, now and into the future. Inter-generational justice looms large in Interfaith's efforts as it does for its affiliates and their many congregations.

Position statements on major issues pertaining to energy sources, technologies, and their use indicate that members of Interfaith's staff are familiar with major government and non-government scientific studies and reports and with basic scientific findings pertaining to the fuel cycles of various energy sources and technologies. To facilitate access to scientific and technological reports and data, Interfaith links to the [35] US Climate Action Network (2013) which links to many pertinent documents from various sources[5] . Some affiliates engage the scientific literature, provide comments on reports, and offer links to scientific and technical reports, articles, books, and lectures to aid congregations in responding to climate change and related energy issues ([21] Interfaith, 2012b; [34] Sunshine State Interfaith Power and Light, 2013).

Networking is key to Interfaith's functioning as a national base for its 39 affiliates, all of which network with their diverse congregations. In addition to encouraging and facilitating faith-based approaches to energy issues through its web site, newsletters, and e-mail alerts, Interfaith informs its affiliates on pending legislation, administrative rules, and regulations at federal and state levels. Interfaith also mobilizes them for advocacy action on national and regional levels that cross state boundaries and interests. To strategize and bolster their efforts, Interfaith gathers leaders of its affiliates and associating congregations together annually.

Interfaith also challenges congregations in the state affiliates to be as energy efficient as possible and to conserve their uses of energy sources. One example is Interfaith's initiation of "The Cool Congregations Challenge" in August 2012. Equipped with a carbon calculator to gauge the amount of greenhouses gases emitted from their use of fossil-fueled energy sources, congregations were given two months to collect data, calculate their carbon footprint, and share their calculations. Congregations were rewarded for their efforts according to four categories - energy efficiency and conservation, renewable energy, grounds and water conservation, and engaging congregants and communities. Interfaith is currently celebrating the successes of the "Cool Congregations" who minimized their emissions ([20] Interfaith, 2012a).

Interfaith pays close attention to the need for administrative rules and legislation at federal and state levels that relate to the organization's commitment to care for God's creation and to protect vulnerable people from the adverse effects of human-forced climate change. The Rev. Sally G. Bingham, the Episcopal priest who founded Interfaith, serves as the voice of the organization's advocacy efforts before federal agencies and legislators. She rallies representatives of state alliances and their congregations to join in pressuring decision-makers to take action on issues Interfaith deems essential to its mission. Working from position papers that show reliance on a variety of government and non-government sources, Bingham and collaborators advocate the following:

- energy efficiency as "the fastest, cheapest, and cleanest" way to reduce emissions;
- putting a cap on greenhouse gas emissions, selling emissions credits, and making part of the revenue from their sale made available to low-income people for making their residences energy efficient;
- the use of cleaner burning fuels in all vehicles for which fuel standards should be established;
- a rapid transition from coal to "clean energy" sources and their efficient use;
- discouraging tar sand mining to obtain liquid fuels;
- preventing the construction of more nuclear power plants to generate electricity until a means is available for isolating from the biosphere the highly irradiated spent fuel that is removed from the reactors;
- striving for 25 percent reliance on renewable energy sources by 2015;
- resolving the water, air, and land issues pertaining to hydraulic fracturing of shale to extract gas; and
- cautious reliance on natural gas as the transition is made to a clean, renewable, and efficient energy future ([23] Interfaith, 2013b).

Conclusion

Examination of two organizations grounded in a specific religious faith and one interfaith coalition of Jewish, Christian, and Islamic religious communities based in the USA attests to their efforts to be scientifically informed, politically astute, and collaborative with one another when addressing the climate crisis. The Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life and the Catholic Coalition on Climate Change systematically ground their activities in their respective religious faiths informed by scientific findings, network with groups that share their faith, and advocate for changes in and establishment of pertinent government policies. Key to their efforts is the faith perspective from which each draws its motivation and actions. In their endeavors, these two organizations quote from, reflect upon, and find significance in key sources revered by their religious traditions, and they apply their faith perspectives to mitigating the adverse effects of human-forced changes in the global climate.

Religious faith also motivates the activities of Interfaith Power and Light to address a plethora of energy issues relate to human-forced climate change. Grounded in a basic shared faith in God as the purposeful creator and sustainer of the world but recognizing and respecting the nuances of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, Interfaith works with affiliates in 39 states and their religious communities to stimulate their clergy and members to act on the basis of their faith in all aspect of their domestic, social, cultural, economic, and political life. Their shared goal is to mitigate the adverse effects of human-forced climate change. Throughout, Interfaith underscores the obligation to care for God's creation and to be especially attentive to the materially poor and vulnerable people who are most adversely affected in the present and those who are projected to be most adversely affected in the future. Like the Jewish and Catholic coalitions, intra-and inter-generational justice looms large in Interfaith's concerns.

Because religious faith motivates the groups and their members, scholars of the Abrahamic and other world religions can help by researching their traditions, reflecting carefully on them for their fruitfulness in addressing climate change and other ecological

problems, assuring they are sufficiently informed by our current scientific understanding of the world, and making their conclusions available to these groups. Scholars have produced many books, anthologies, and journal articles pertaining to religious foundations for addressing ecological concerns over the past 30 years ([17] Dolgin, 2013; [18] Foltz, 2013; [19] FORE, 2013)[6] . However, much more has yet to be accomplished and shared effectively with religious communities and organizations so their members can be deeply motivated to act within their various social, economic, and political contexts. Even more may be accomplished when religious groups collaborate with one another and with secular advocacy groups for their mutual good - a life-sustaining Earth.

Notes

1. Among others are Greenfaith (<http://greenfaith.org/>) headed by Fletcher Harding, the National Religious Partnership for the Environment (www.nrpe.org), the Forum on Religion and Ecology (<http://fore.research.yale.edu/>) founded and directed by Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim, and the International Network of Engaged Buddhists (www.inebnetwork.org/ineb/home). Scientists have been recognizing the need for collaboration with religionists to address ecological concerns as exemplified in efforts by the Union of Concerned Scientists' appeal in 1992 (www.ucsusa.org/about/1992-world-scientists.html), the Society for Conservation Biology through its Working Group on Religion and Conservation Biology (www.conbio.org/groups/working-groups/religion-and-conservation-biology), and the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (<http://iucn.org/>).
2. Leaders, staff, members, and network affiliates of the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life refer to their organization orally, in writing, and electronically by its acronym COEJL which is pronounced "COE-JL".
3. Issued on 10 March 1972, "The Founding Statement of the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life" lists "depletion of the ozone layer, global warming, massive deforestation, the extinction of species and loss of biodiversity, poisonous deposits of toxic chemicals and nuclear wastes, and exponential population growth" as other "most pressing" threats.
4. The Pope, who serves as the Bishop of Rome, and bishops worldwide constitute the teaching magisterium of the Catholic Church who establish doctrine and moral norms that the faithful are expected to

- embrace and follow. A compilation of these teachings are found in the [31] Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace (2004).
5. The Climate Action Network includes over 700 non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in more than 90 countries that promote individual and governmental efforts to limit human-induced climate change to ecologically sustainable levels through information exchange and the coordinated development of NGO strategy on international, regional, and national climate issues.
 6. A series of conferences on religion and ecology held at [Harvard University](#)'s Center for the Study of World Religions from 1996 to 1998 yielded ten volumes of essays relating ecology to nine of the world religions and a tenth on indigenous traditions. See [19] FORE (2013) for a list and abstracts of each. Though a seminal effort, much has been accomplished subsequently and much more needs to be accomplished by scholars to research religious sources, for religious leaders to appropriate and teach them, and for the faithful to apply them.

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Appendix

About the author

Jame Schaefer teaches, researches, and writes on issues that interface theology and the natural sciences with special attention to religious foundations for ecological ethics. She received a PhD from [Marquette University](http://www.marquette.edu), a Jesuit research university in the USA, where she currently serves as Associate Professor of systematic theology and ethics, directs the Interdisciplinary Minor in environmental ethics, and advises students for an environmentally active campus. For several years, she convened the Theology and Ecology Group of the Catholic Theological Society of America and subsequently its Interest Group on Catholic Theology and Global Warming that generated *Confronting the Climate Crisis: Catholic Theological Perspectives* ([Marquette University](http://www.marquette.edu) Press 2011) which she edited and contributed an essay. Among her other publications is *Theological Foundations for Environmental Ethics: Reconstructing Patristic and Medieval Concepts* (Georgetown University Press 2009). Prior to entering academia, Schaefer held leadership positions in local and regional environmental advocacy groups and served in several energy and environmentally-related policy positions by appointment of county, state, federal governments. Jame Schaefer can be contacted at: schaeferj@marquette.edu