Environmental Crisis and Religious Rhetoric in Is God Green?

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Introduction

In the 2006 PBS documentary Is God Green?, Bill Moyers presents the emergence of two key contemporary trends in American political and religious life. The first is the growing popularity of an environmental movement within Christian evangelicalism called ‘Creation Care.’ Motivated by Biblical passages that suggest humans have been ‘commissioned’ as stewards to care for the earth, or ‘God’s Body,’ Creation Care emerged in the late 1970s, gained momentum in the 1990s, and now ‘constitutes the “fastest-growing form of Christian ministry,”’ according to the evangelical publication Christianity Today (Frame 1996: 84; see also Psaros 2006: 20-32). Is God Green? highlights what it sees as the emerging popularity of Creation Care, arguing that evangelicals are undergoing a ‘conversion to green.’

Moyers also uses Is God Green? to argue that the emergence of Creation Care in evangelical culture poses a threat to religious conservatives, who depend heavily on the evangelical vote to win elections.\(^1\) He argues that evangelicals who are grappling with the responsibility of environmental stewardship may be turned off by the Republican Party’s rather dismal record on environmental issues, and particularly on climate change. The film tells the story of former National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) leader Richard Cizik, and his efforts to release a statement with the Evangelical Climate Initiative calling for action on the issue.

In this chapter, I aim to contextualize Moyers’s claims about evangelicals and Creation Care. I argue that, in this film and in other texts, Moyers uses ‘god-talk’\(^2\) to make an argument on behalf of Creation Care, invoking an environmental justice frame that should theoretically resonate with many evangelical and mainline Christians. I rely on communication scholar Matthew Nisbet’s definition of framing, which refers to ‘interpretive storylines that set a specific train of thought in motion, communicating why an issue might be a problem, who or what might be responsible for it, and what should be done about it’ (Nisbet 2009a). The question considered in this paper is whether Moyers’s framing of environmental issues as fundamentally Christian is effective in Is God Green?.

I argue that the use of such framing - which often includes the use of ‘god-talk’ and ‘signaling’ (Domke & Coe 2008) - is potentially risky and invites multiple and perhaps contradictory readings, both by evangelical viewers and others, because of Moyers’s commitments to progressive politics on the left. As such, I don’t believe he can function as a believable or effective spokesperson for environmental issues to evangelical viewers. Proper framing of environmental issues - and especially of climate change - is not enough when it comes to communicating with evangelical Christians. The message itself must also be delivered by trusted leaders or members of the evangelical movement.

\(^1\) Domke and Coe have tracked the near reversal in voting trends of mainline Christians, evangelical Christians, and Catholics over the last three decades. Using survey data, these authors report that, in 1972, 50% of U.S. evangelicals identified with the Democratic party, and 35% identified Republican. By 2004, 56% of evangelicals identified with Republicans compared with the 35% who identified with Democrats (Domke & Coe 2008: 22).

\(^2\) The term ‘god-talk’ has been used by theologians and others since the 1960s. It is used here generally to refer to forms of speech, communication, or discourse which address one’s relationship to God, the Bible as authority, or otherwise Judeo-Christian imperatives or logic for taking action and being in the world. In short, it is religious language. See Blackstone (1966) and Macquarrie (1967) for early explorations of the concept.
Is God Green? and ‘God-Talk’: Moyers on Environmental Rhetoric

In addition to a decades-long career spent working in progressive politics, hosting a number of PBS investigative news programs, producing documentaries, and writing books, Bill Moyers is also known for advocating on behalf of the role of independent, investigative journalism in democracy. Many of his thoughts on the topic are captured in his book Moyers on America: A Journalist and His Times (2005) and have been backed by the force of his long-held position as president of the Schumann Center for Media and Democracy, a foundation that has historically funded progressive democratic and environmental organizations (Schumann Center for Media and Democracy, 2009). He has made a number of public speeches on the topic, one of which is significant for this paper: a 2005 speech Moyers delivered to the Society of Environmental Journalists (SEJ) called ‘A Question for Journalists: How Do We Cover Penguins and the Politics of Denial?’ (Moyers 2005a). In the SEJ speech, Moyers argued that environmental journalists needed to find a way to reach broader, more diverse audiences with their reporting, especially the ‘conservative Christian audience:’ ‘There is a market here for journalists who are hungry for new readers. The conservative Christian audience is some fifty million readers strong. But to reach them, we have to understand something of their belief systems’ (Moyers 2005a: 7). Moyers went on to recommend that environmental journalists learn to ‘speak the language of these evangelicals’:

… fundamentalists and Pentecostals typically speak and think in a different language. Theirs is a poetic and metaphorical language: a speech that is anchored in the truth of the Bible as they read it. Their moral actions are guided not by the newest IPCC report but by the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John (Moyers 2005a: 8).

Moyers delivered the SEJ speech not long after President George W. Bush won re-election, believed to have been carried to a ‘political mandate’ on the shoulders of a Republican, and substantially evangelical, base. In this speech, Moyers is clearly grappling with how to reach this evangelical group with environmental messages, arguing that, if environmental stories could be written using more god-talk in a particularly Christian sense, evangelicals would be more likely to care about environmental crises, such as climate change.

In the 2006 documentary Is God Green?, Moyers follows his own advice, using god-talk to tell the story of the Creation Care movement in evangelical culture. Is God Green? portrays multiple Christian congregations and leaders scattered across the country who have discovered a Biblical mandate to ‘care for God’s creation.’ The film is deeply inflected with ‘spiritual language’ and the ‘language of faith,’ (Moyers’s terms from the SEJ speech) both of which could also be called god-talk or ‘signaling.’ Communication scholars Domke and Coe note that American evangelicals have become acutely cued in to this signaling, which is a way that political leaders ‘speak the language of the faithful’ by using direct references to God or professions of faith. They write that the use of god-talk or signaling has been central to a larger ‘God Strategy,’ which politicians use to speak to and galvanize Christian majorities (Domke & Coe 2008: 19). Such signaling is a way of saying to evangelicals, ‘We don’t exclude you…I’m not going to judge you, or deny you, just because of your religion’ (qtd. in Domke and Coe 2008: 32).

Given Moyers’s advice to environmental journalists regarding god-talk, it makes sense that Moyers introduces Is God Green? by saying, ‘[Evangelicals] are people who take their faith seriously. Their opinions and beliefs matter.’ We may read this as a form of signaling to evangelicals that they are neither

3 Moyers was White House Press Secretary under President Lyndon B. Johnson. See Wicker (1965) and Beschloss (1998: 208-212) for more on Moyers’s complicated relationship with Johnson.

4 Little information about the foundation is publicly available, apart from what can be found on conservative-leaning muckraking sites. These sites indicate, however, that the foundation has been instrumental in providing millions of dollars in funding to environmental and other organizations. Moyers reportedly left the Foundation Presidency in 2007, when his son briefly took over the position.

5 This speech was reproduced widely on progressive websites, such as the progressive Common Dreams website (Moyers 2005b), and also appeared as a chapter in the book Moyers on Democracy (Moyers 2008).
‘judged’ nor ‘denied,’ and, in fact, *Is God Green?* is a basically positive portrayal of everyday evangelicals with ‘green’ sensibilities. In her work on the greening of evangelical Christianity, Marina Psaros notes that evangelicals are especially sensitive to the language of persecution, and welcome signaling that acknowledges it: ‘Not only does it [the persecution narrative] evoke certain images of perseverance and loyalty from Christian history; but, since the Scopes trial of the 1920s, evangelicals had been smarting from what they perceived as public humiliation and ridicule about their religious beliefs’ (Psaros 2006: 16). Moyers skillfully handles this sensitivity in his opening remarks when he argues evangelicals are to be taken seriously.

There are many examples of such signaling throughout the hour-long program. For example, Moyers always establishes the Christian credentials of those featured in the film, making sure to introduce them as devoted to their church and family, as politically conservative on issues such as abortion and gay marriage, and generally as salt-of-the-earth, hardworking, patriotic Americans. He does not question biblical authority on environmental or scientific issues, but in fact emphasizes it repeatedly. He never refers to Creation Care practitioners as ‘environmentalists’ but only as ‘stewards’ or as ‘green.’ *Christianity Today* explains that ‘stewardship’ is more palatable than ‘environmentalism’ to evangelicals because the latter is seen as ‘a secular environmental movement laden with humanistic and pantheistic views’ (Frame 1996: 83; see also Psaros 2006: 27). Moyers is clearly aware of this sensitivity, never mentioning environmentalism in the documentary explicitly, except to explain that evangelicals view it as the domain of liberals and ‘hippies.’

Moyers also manages this sensitivity by establishing the conservative bona fides of those he interviews in *Is God Green?*. The following interchange with former NAE and Creation Care leader Richard Cizik illustrates:

BILL MOYERS: You know, I have to ask you. Are you conservative?  
RICHARD CIZIK: Yes. Absolutely.  
BILL MOYERS: What's your position on abortion?  
RICHARD CIZIK: I'm pro-life. Abortion is wrong.  
BILL MOYERS: Homosexuality?  
RICHARD CIZIK: I'm conservative on this issue. I oppose same sex marriage.  
BILL MOYERS: And yet on the environment you sound like a -  
RICHARD CIZIK: Well, I happen to think that, you see, to be biblically consistent means you have to, at times, be politically inconsistent (Moyers 2006a).

Cizik has been instrumental in bringing Creation Care to the center of current evangelical discourse, and has been the figurehead for media portrayals of the environmental/evangelical debate. He frequently manages his media appearances in this way, by setting himself up as an impeccable evangelical who has been converted to “green” on the basis of Biblical authority.  

Another rhetorical tactic used in *Is God Green?* has to do with how the ‘green’ Christians portrayed in the documentary frequently frame their turn toward Creation Care as a conversion experience. Psaros’s research suggests that such a frame would be especially powerful for environmentally-minded evangelicals, who believe ‘the Holy Spirit helped them [evangelicals] make the link between environmental protection and their Christian values’ (Psaros 2006: 20). Furthermore, evangelicals who were active in the 1990s in defining Creation Care developed effective frameworks for convincing other evangelicals of their duty to protect the environment. According to Psaros,

To stop sinning, the faithful needed to align their relationship to the creation and learn to see themselves as stewards. Put in this frame, environmental protection becomes a non-negotiable Biblical mandate. This is a very powerful frame for evangelicals, who strive to understand and obey God’s will (Psaros 2006: 26).

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6 For example, Cizik engaged in an almost identical exchange with CNN reporter Christiane Amanpour in her investigative special report *God’s Warriors*, which aired initially in 2008 and continues to air periodically as of this writing (Amanpour 2008).
Moyers takes advantage of the Biblical mandate frame in Is God Green? when he cites the Bible as authority throughout the documentary. In fact, throughout the one-hour investigative report, only one scientist is cited as an authority on climate change, and that scientist has Christian credentials: he himself is an evangelical.\(^7\)

Another frame employed in the film is that of melodrama. Moyers casts the evangelicals of Is God Green? - Christians who are engaged in environmental activism or action—in terms of environmental melodrama. Environmental melodrama often relies on a David-versus-Goliath form of storytelling that would be appealing to evangelical viewers who are keyed into persecution narratives (Psaros 2006: 16; for more on environmental melodrama, see Schwarze 2006). The documentary begins with images of exploding mountaintops in West Virginia, leaving huge clouds of dust and debris hanging in the air, before settling in the rivers and valleys below. Aerial footage of lush, green mountains, their peaks removed to reveal the scarred earth below, is coupled with images of Christian activist Judy Bonds. Bonds had left the church at one point, but eventually returned to Christianity. She explains:

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\text{It was the unjustice that I saw that was being heaped upon the people... the blasting and children suffering from the coal dust. And the elderly suffering from the coal dust. And the flooding. And I began to pray for help, for guidance (Moyers 2006a).}
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For Bonds, faith in God functions as a source of strength to fight environmental and social injustice: she frames the mountaintop mining conflict as one between ‘good and evil,’ wherein the polluting mining companies are ‘evil’ and the citizens - the children, the elderly, and the working class, especially - are the good who suffer. This is a key aspect of environmental melodrama, according to communication scholar Steven Schwarze: ‘The distincively melodramatic frame typically interprets polarized, socio-political conflicts in moral terms. Conflicts are not simply about competing interests; the pursuit of these interests leads to moral wrongs...’ (Schwarze 2006: 250). In other words, Is God Green? skillfully takes an environmental issue, makes it a moral one, and therefore a potentially religious, or Christian, one.

Research shows that the environmental or social justice frame is particularly appealing to Christian audiences (Wardekker, et al. 2008: 59-65). The images of black water, fish kills, and dead-looking coal slurry in the West Virginia mountaintop removal section of the film are persuasive for this reason. Moyers pairs these images of ecological disaster with compelling personal stories of everyday evangelical Christians struggling for their health and livelihoods against large corporate polluters. The viewer is invited by way of monopathy - a ‘unitary emotional identification’ (Schwarze 2006: 244) - to side with these working-class, disenfranchised, and often poor Christian victims in a moral, environmental struggle.

The same kind of environmental or social justice frame may work for climate change communication with evangelicals. Writing about religious responses to climate change policy in the United States, Wardekker et al., report, ‘Religious groups in the United States frame the discussion on climate change and climate policy mainly as an ethical issue. The implications of climate change - and climate policy - for the poor is the dominant theme’ (Wardekker, et al., 2008: 65). Unfortunately, when Moyers turns to climate change and evangelicalism in Is God Green?, he does not frame that environmental issue in terms of ethics or justice, but rather as a partisan issue. His argument about climate change and evangelicals is that evangelicals are being duped by Republican leaders, and that they should fight back. This strategy departs from the god-talk, signaling, and justice framing Moyers uses in the rest of the film for dealing with other environmental issues, such as mountaintop removal. And, while the partisan frame may tell a true story, it is a frame that is probably less than effective with many evangelicals.

With the exception of his framing of the climate issue, then, many of Moyers’ tactics in Is God Green? seem right on target: they invoke a particularly spiritual language, use a melodramatic social and environmental justice frame, and respect the authority of the Bible and evangelical leaders. According to communication scholar Matthew Nisbet, traditional environmentalist frames of ecological crisis have

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\(^7\) This is Sir John Houghton, who led the ‘scales to fall’ from Cizik’s eyes at a 2002 conference on evangelicalism and climate change (Moyers 2006a).
largely failed, and it is time to appeal to alternative frames, such as the public health frame, or the moral/religious frame. This is particularly true for climate change communication, and Moyers may have missed an opportunity by switching frames midstream in Is God Green? In an essay on climate change communication, Nisbet argues

Reframing the relevance of climate change in ways that connect to a broader coalition of Americans - and repeatedly communicating these new meanings through a variety of trusted media sources and opinion leaders - can generate the level of public engagement required for policy action. Successfully reframing climate change means remaining true to the underlying science of the issue, while … making the complex policy debate understandable, relevant, and personally important (Nisbet 2009a).

Because climate change is a deeply complex, partisan issue, communicators must use frames that will appeal to broad sections of the American population. Strictly environmentalist frames - such as the threat of environmental apocalypse or of partisan-inflected blaming - will not work with many audiences, and may even backfire. A ‘morality and ethics’ frame, on the other hand, might be used successfully by opinion leaders to encourage action on climate change (Nisbet 2009a).

Nisbet’s work suggests that a multiplicity of communication frames will be most effective in communicating climate change to sections of the American public who are otherwise resistant to taking action or supporting policy initiatives on the issue. I argue, however, that not only must the message be framed in multiple ways depending on context and supported by research, but also that the notion of ‘trusted media sources and opinion leaders’ is a complex one, even fraught, when it comes to the evangelical community and climate change. In the next section, I point out that Moyers’s own communication practices and status as a left-leaning investigative journalist suggest some potential pitfalls of journalists’ embracing the ‘morality and ethics frame’ as a tactic in speaking to evangelical audiences. I suggest that the authority and status of the speaker is as important as the framing of the message itself: Just talking god-talk is not enough.

Potential Problems with ‘God-Talk’

In the 2005 SEJ speech, Moyers admits to walking a fine line when it comes to invoking signals that will be picked up by evangelicals: ‘I wouldn’t give up fact-based analysis,’ he argues, ‘…but I would tell some of my stories with an ear for spiritual language, the language of parable, for that is the language of faith’ (Moyers 2005a). Moyers, a vocal critic of the presidency of George W. Bush, is careful to make the distinction between spiritual language and ‘fact-based analysis,’ no doubt because he himself is concerned about the slippery slope between rhetoric and reality. We know that President Bush’s identity as an evangelical heavily influenced his policymaking, and some in the mass media credited his re-election to his ability to rally a predominantly evangelical base. A 2004 New York Times Magazine article by Ron Suskind argues that this sense of evangelical authority had led the Bush administration to an ‘easy certainty’ about complex matters ranging from foreign policy to poverty programs. One senior adviser to the President infamously told Suskind, who belonged to the ‘reality-based community,’ that ‘We’re [the Bush administration is] an empire now, and when we act, we create our own reality. And while you’re studying that reality - judiciously, as you will - we’ll act again, creating other new realities, which you can study too, and that’s how things will sort out’ (Suskind 2004).

Moyers argued against this shot at the ‘reality-based community’ in multiple venues during Bush’s second term in office, most notably in a short New York Review of Books essay called Welcome to Doomsday. In the introduction, he asserts,

We are witnessing today a coupling of ideology and theology that threatens our ability to meet the growing ecological crisis. Theology asserts propositions that need not be proven true, while ideologues hold stoutly to a worldview despite being contradicted by what is generally accepted as reality (Moyers 2006b: 19).
In *Welcome to Doomsday*, Moyers is particularly concerned with what he sees as an alarming trend among evangelicals who are committed to a literal reading of the book of Revelations in the Bible. Moyers writes that this group (typically referred to as ‘dispensationalists’)

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...sincere, serious, and polite as they tell you they feel called to help bring the Rapture [the end times] on as fulfillment of biblical prophecy. [...] The last time I Googled it, the Rapture Index stood at 144 - approaching the critical threshold when the prophecy is fulfilled, the whole thing blows, the Son of God returns, and the righteous enter paradise while sinners will be condemned to eternal hellfire (Moyers 2006b: 24-25).

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The upshot for Moyers is that, for these tens of thousands of ‘true believers,’ environmental crises like climate change are actually welcome because they signal the approach of the end times.

Although the picture Moyers paints of evangelical extremism is a terrifying one, one in which ‘the faithful are relieved of concern for the environment, violence, and everything else except their personal salvation’ (Moyers 2006b: 26), scholarship tells us that this picture of modern evangelical approaches to environmental crisis is far from complete. Environmental philosopher Max Oelschlager lays out a complex history of ecotheology, arguing, ‘...there has been growth in interest among the faithful - theologians, ministers, educators, and lay people - in the environmental crisis’ (Oelschlager 1994: 26). This interest, in fact, was born in the 1960s and 70s, and ‘the ecotheological literature is so large and growing so rapidly that no reader can hope to stay abreast of it’ (Oelschlager 1994: 26). In other words, while the numbers of dispensationalists may seem large, there is also a large group of evangelicals who engage with ecological threats and crises in ways Moyers would no doubt welcome.

I also wonder whether the portrayal of evangelicals Moyers presents in *Welcome to Doomsday* seems to directly undermine his efforts at ‘god-talk’ in *Is God Green?*. Given that the two were released nearly concurrently, and deal with overlapping themes - albeit in very different ways - it is hard not to compare the positive signaling or evangelical god-talk of *Is God Green?* with the deeply critical, even fearful, portrayal of evangelical extremists in *Welcome to Doomsday*.

In fact, neither of these two texts accurately portrays the diversity of identities that exist under the umbrella term ‘evangelical Christianity,’ and both seem to conflate evangelical Christianity with the Christian Right (they overlap but are not the same). Psaros helps to clarify the distinction somewhat. She argues that evangelicals hold three beliefs in common:

1) that the Bible is the literally true word of God, 2) that individuals must be “’born again” with Jesus Christ as their personal savior, and 3) that evangelicals who have been “saved” must attempt to save others by spreading the “truth” of the Bible (Psaros 2006: 10).

Yet, she continues, the ‘broad evangelical category contains a diverse spectrum of perspectives ranging from conservative fundamentalists who strive to distance themselves from secular society to more moderate evangelicals who see few problems with engaging in secular institutions and activities’ (Psaros 2006: 10).

Furthermore, when it comes to environmental issues and politics, the behavior of evangelicals seems to be dictated less by their religious beliefs and more by their partisan affiliations. For example, a recent survey conducted by the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life suggests exactly this, with Christian Americans viewing climate change similarly to the majority of Americans (Pew 2009), and beliefs about climate change being dictated more by party affiliation than church affiliation (Nisbet 2009c). This suggests that partisan frames may carry as much weight, if not more, as religious frames on this particular issue.

Other research shows that climate change is actually receiving increasing attention from religious groups, such as evangelical Christians in the United States. Wardekker et al., argue that while this attention needs to be viewed as part of a general cultural move to consider environmental crises, it also has the potential to

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8 See Psaros (2006: 18), and Wardekker et al., (2008: 55) for more on dispensationalism.
transform evangelical culture from within: ‘Where the conventional environmental movement is highly
distrusted among evangelicals/conservatives, these church-based initiatives seem to take upon themselves
roles similar to environmental groups’ (Wardekker, et al. 2008: 66). Because they adopt roles similar to
environmental groups does not mean, however, that they are willing to work with environmental groups, a
fact echoed by Psaros’s study of religious leaders involved in the Evangelical Climate Initiative, a group of
evangelicals who came together to release a statement calling for evangelicals to take action on climate
change. She writes that these evangelicals ‘have intentionally avoided any association with mainstream
environmentalism. Instead, they work from within their own religious community to reframe
environmentalism as a Christian duty’ (Psaros 2006: 8).

The picture that emerges here is this: while evangelicals typically vote Republican, and have been
characterized as the ‘least environmentally friendly bloc out of all of America’s major faith traditions’
(Psaros 2006: 8), interest among Christian groups in environmental issues has been developing for decades,
if primarily in contested or constrained ways. Furthermore, the ‘evangelical movement’ is quite diverse,
and while it may have made up a powerful voting bloc in past elections, claims that it is monolithic are
false. So, where Moyers depicts a new ‘rift’ over climate change or Creation Care in Is God Green?, it
can be argued that this supposed ‘rift’ is actually an outgrowth of a diversity of opinions and approaches by
evangelicals to the environmental problem (Psaros 2006: 37). In both Is God Green? and Welcome to
Doomsday, Moyers presents stark portrayals of two movements in evangelical Christianity: Creation Care
activism and dispensationalism, respectively. By not placing either group within the larger context of
evangelical Christian identity generally, Moyers potentially exaggerates or misrepresents the power and
significance of both movements.

Moyers’s depiction of evangelicals in Welcome to Doomsday is particularly polarizing. Nisbet warns that
framing controversial scientific topics such as climate change or evolution in such ways can actually shut
down dialogue. He writes, ‘…for scientists and journalists, a fourth ethical imperative is to avoid using
framing to denigrate, stereotype, or attack a particular social group or to use framing in the service of
partisan or electoral gains…’ (Nisbet 2009b). The tactics of Welcome to Doomsday seem to violate this
principle.

As we have seen, Moyers - who was raised as a Christian in Texas and who was in fact once ordained as a
Baptist preacher – could also be described as a member of the progressive left. It seems possible that when
he tries to invoke these competing identities in Is God Green? and Welcome to Doomsday, respectively, he
underestimates the connections evangelicals feel with the Republican party because of their stance on
social issues such as abortion and gay rights, and may in fact exacerbate the partisan nature of
environmental issues. Moyers may know god-talk, but if he is not seen as doing the god-walk by
evangelicals, his environmental messages could backfire. Is God Green? also raises interesting questions
about audience: Moyers was identified by and targeted for investigation by the Bush Administration for
having a liberal bias on PBS in 2005, in what many felt was something of a witch-hunt (e.g., see Eggerton
2005). This, in combination with his outspoken critiques of the Bush White House, solidified Moyers’s
reputation as a figurehead of ‘liberal’ investigative journalism. Given this, one wonders about his
effectiveness in using god-talk to reach conservative evangelicals as an audience, if that is in fact his
intended audience. Whether Moyers has any authority - moral, journalistic, or otherwise – with such
audiences is a question that is open for debate. It seems possible that figures like Moyers – and Al Gore,
for example - are polarizing figures, and therefore may not invoke evangelical frames as effectively as
others who have credibility with evangelicals might.

Such questions point to the risks involved in invoking god-talk as a rhetorical strategy or frame. This does
not mean that there can be no dialogue between evangelicals and environmentalists, though as we have
seen, the challenges to such conversations are great. It does mean, however, that dialogue on such issues
requires not only appropriate framing or signaling, but also an understanding of the complex context within
which ‘evangelicalism’ as a movement exists, and of the need for spokespersons or ‘opinion leaders’ (to
use Nisbet’s phrase) who can deliver the message in a way that will be received as authentic, persuasive,
and meaningful, rather than suspicious or manipulative. That said, even evangelicals who are firmly
ensconced in evangelical culture and who are seen as leaders there may have difficulty communicating
effectively about environmental crises such as climate change. As Richard Cizik - who continues to speak
out passionately to evangelicals about Creation Care, despite his 2008 ousting from the National Association of Evangelicals - said in a recent interview, ‘Just giving someone more information doesn’t always change people’s views. We tend to screen out ideas we don’t want to hear’ (Kloor 2009).

Works Cited


