

# The Role of Religion in Environmental Attitudes

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*Objective.* This article examines the role of religion in public attitudes about the environment. While some have found that various aspects of theology and religious practices are responsible for lower levels of concern about the environment, the overall evidence is inconclusive, largely because the typical sample size is insufficient to gain insight into differences between religious traditions. *Methods.* We use ordered logistic regression to analyze data from the 2010 Cooperative Congressional Election Study, a large survey that allows us to unpack the relationships among religious affiliation, religiosity, and environmental attitudes. *Results.* Our results show that members of Judeo-Christian traditions are less concerned about environmental protection than their nonreligious peers, and that religiosity somewhat intensifies these relationships for evangelical Protestants, Catholics, and mainline Protestants. *Conclusion.* While the results generally support traditional arguments that religion depresses concern about the environment, they also reveal considerable variation across and within religious traditions.

Studies of public opinion regularly conclude that most Americans care about environmental quality. Evidence comes from studies considering general environmental concern (Dunlap, 2002; Guber, 2003), preferences for government action to address environmental problems (Klineberg, McKeever, and Rothenbach, 1998; Konisky, Milyo, and Richardson, 2008), and concern for specific issues such as climate change (Borick and Rabe, 2010; Leiserowitz et al., 2013). Some scholars have gone as far as to suggest that Americans share a common environmental ethic (Kempton, Boster, and Hartley, 1995).

This is not say to say that public opinion is immovable or uniform. Researchers have shown that Americans' environmental attitudes are sensitive, at least in the short term, to the ups and downs of the economy (Kahn and Kotchen, 2011), as well as to important events and conditions, such as oil spills and energy price spikes (Smith, 2003; Bishop, 2014). Plus, there are scores of studies finding important differences in environmental attitudes across individuals. Studies going back 30 years have found that Democrats and ideological liberals tend to express stronger environmental concern than do Republicans and ideological conservatives (Carman, 1998; Dunlap, Xiao, and McCright, 2001; Guber, 2003; Kanagy, Humphrey, and Firebaugh, 1994; Klineberg, McKeever, and Rothenbach, 1998; Konisky, Milyo, and Richardson, 2008; Press, 2003; Uyeki and Holland, 2000). In addition, scholars have found that younger and better-educated Americans generally have "greener" attitudes (e.g., Carman, 1998; Ignatow, 2006; Kanagy, Humphrey, and Firebaugh, 1994; Klineberg, McKeever, and Rothenbach, 1998; Xiao and Dunlap, 2007), while findings are mixed on other characteristics such as gender (Bord and O'Connor,

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1997; Davidson and Freudenburg, 1996; Xiao and Dunlap, 2007) and race (Jones and Carter, 1994; Mohai and Bryant, 1998).

Another important individual-level characteristic that may affect environmental attitudes is religion. According to recent data from the Gallup Organization, almost six in 10 Americans indicate that religion is “very important” in their life (another 23 percent say it is “fairly important”), six in 10 indicate that they belong to a church or synagogue, and four in 10 say they attended church or synagogue in the past week (Gallup, 2013b). Of course, this also means that many Americans say that they are not that religious, and even among those who are religious, people affiliate with denominations that vary immensely in theological traditions.

This religious diversity among Americans has motivated scholars to consider the role of religion in explaining variation in environmental attitudes. While several scholars have reported instances where people of different religious traditions exhibit more environmental concern (e.g., Hayes and Marangudakis, 2000), others have found few such differences (e.g., Wolkomir et al., 1997). Evidence is similarly mixed when it comes to religiosity. Some studies, for example, have found measures of religious commitment such as church attendance and prayer frequency to be unrelated to environmental preferences (Konisky, Milyo, and Richardson, 2008), while others have found that more religious individuals tend to express greater environmental concern (Eckberg and Blocker, 1996; Kanagy and Willits, 1993; Kanagy and Nelsen, 1995).

In sum, the existing evidence is inconclusive, and consequently we do not have a clear understanding of the relationship between religion and environmental attitudes. We suspect that a major reason for the inconsistent findings is that past studies have been plagued by data constraints. To date, scholars have relied on surveys with insufficient sample sizes and/or imprecise indicators of religious affiliation. These data limitations have made it difficult to parse out intertradition differences, and to determine the role of religiosity. In this article, we use the 2010 Cooperative Congressional Election Study (CCES) to overcome these problems. The 2010 CCES is ideal for our purposes because it has a large, nationally representative sample (over 55,000 respondents) and it contains detailed information on religion. These features enable us to delineate differences across (and within) religious traditions in environmental attitudes and consider whether and how religiosity conditions these relationships.

To summarize our main findings, we show that members of several Judeo-Christian traditions tend to express less concern about the environment than those who do not affiliate with these traditions, particularly when potential economic tradeoffs are considered, but that there is considerable variation across and within these traditions. We also find differences across specific denominations, and in particular that evangelical Protestant denominations tend to express the lowest levels of environmental concern. Moreover, we find that religiosity conditions the relationship between religious affiliation and environmental attitudes for individuals identifying with some religious traditions. In general, religiosity tends to push evangelical Protestants, Catholics, and mainline Protestants toward less environmental concern.

The balance of the article is organized as follows. In the next section, we review the relevant literature on the relationship between religion and environmental concern. We subsequently describe our data and methodological approach, and then discuss the main findings from our statistical analysis. In the final section of the article, we summarize our core findings, and offer some overall conclusions about the role of religion in environmental attitudes.

## The Role of Religion on Environmental Concern

Nearly a half-century ago, the eminent historian Lynn White delivered a now often-cited speech before the American Association for the Advancement of Science on the role of religious thought on environmental concern. In this controversial speech, “The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis,” later published in essay format in *Science* (White, 1967), White argued that the Judeo-Christian belief system negatively affects environmental attitudes by promoting an anthropocentric, “dominion-over-nature” worldview. White pointed to Christian influence dating as far as the Middle Ages as creating an exploitive attitude toward nature in Western culture, an attitude that was intensified by the technological development of the Industrial Revolution, which he argued contributed to an instrumental rationality and a widespread sense of entitlement over the earth and its resources. His analysis was not merely historical, however. White further posited that this historical Christian influence was an important factor in explaining the ecological crisis of the middle of the 20th century.

White’s thesis initiated an impassioned debate on the role of religion in environmental concern, at the very time at which the modern-day environmental movement was gathering momentum. This debate has not receded, and many have advanced a competing argument that Judeo-Christian religious traditions encourage their adherents to respect and protect the sanctity of nature.<sup>1</sup> Underlying this environmental stewardship ethic is a view that the Bible assigns humans the responsibility for caring for all of God’s creations, including the natural environment (Tarakeshwar et al., 2001; Wilkinson, 2012). There is some anecdotal evidence that this stewardship ethic has established a foothold in some organized religious organizations. For example, beginning as early as the 1970s, organizations such as the World Council of Churches began sponsoring environmental outreach and education programs designed to increase environmental awareness among religious communities (Fowler, 1996). Many Mainline Protestant denominations such as the Episcopal, United Methodist, and Presbyterian churches have long been active voices in support of environmental stewardship (Fowler, 1996; Kearns, 1996), and more recently even some evangelical organizations have expressed concerns for the environment (Wilkinson, 2012; Danielsen, 2013).

The academic literature has attempted to sort out which of these religious viewpoints—dominion or stewardship—best reflects Americans’ attitudes. Several studies of public opinion have reported a negative relationship between affiliation with Judeo-Christian traditions and environmental concern, a finding consistent with White’s thesis about dominion. For example, Eckberg and Blocker (1989) concluded that members of Judeo-Christian denominations were significantly less interested in supporting “tough” environmental protection measures. The authors additionally found that respondents who expressed a literal belief in the Bible were substantially more likely to support using the environment for the economy’s benefit. In their sample, conservative Protestants also favored the economy over environment. Similarly, Boyd (1999) found that fundamentalist Christians were significantly less likely to perceive pollutants as posing danger to the environment than were moderate or liberal Christians. She additionally reported that members of this group engage in fewer “green” behaviors than their moderate and liberal counterparts. Woodrum and Hoban

<sup>1</sup>Consistent with the literature on politics and religion, by religious tradition we mean major groups of religious affiliates (such as Catholics, Jews, mainline Protestants, evangelical Protestants) and by denominations we mean specific branches within these traditions (such as United Methodist, Episcopal, Reform Judaism). For more general discussion of the definitional issues in this literature, see Steensland, Robinson, and Wilcox (2000) and Woodberry et al. (2012).

(1994) reported some mixed evidence, finding that, while people who hold dominion beliefs are less likely to support environmental programs, belief in a literal interpretation of the Bible and religious affiliation do not necessarily predict dominion belief, or foster low environmental concern.

These studies do not distinguish between denominational affiliations, which means that reported correlations reflect average effects across many different denominations comprising Judeo-Christian traditions. Potentially disguised in these data, therefore, are potentially meaningful inter- and intradenominational differences in attitudes about the environment. Some work has attempted to identify these differences. Hand and van Liere (1984) found that, although Judeo-Christian traditions are slightly more predisposed to the “dominion” mentality, there is variation among the various denominations. They found, for example, that Episcopalians, Methodists, and Presbyterians are more environmentally minded than are Baptists and other conservative denominations. Subsequent studies have come to conflicting conclusions. In a study of six Judeo-Christian traditions (conservative, moderate, black, and liberal Protestant; Catholic; and Jewish), Wolkomir et al. (1997) found little distinction between them in terms of environmental concern. Compared with liberal Protestants, black Protestants were the only category to differ significantly, indicating less environmental concern. Dissimilarly, Hayes and Marangudakis (2000) found that Catholics and more conservative Protestant denominations were significantly less likely than liberal Protestants to support government policies that intervene on behalf of the environment. This relationship did not extend to their other measures of environmental concern. Last, in a recent study of climate change attitudes, Smith and Leiserowitz (2013) found that a majority of evangelical Protestants are concerned about global warming, but they are less likely than nonevangelical Protestants to believe that it is happening, it is caused mostly by human activities, and it will result in serious harm. In sum, the evidence of differences in attitudes toward the environment across people affiliating with various Protestant traditions remains unsettled.

One direction that scholars have pursued to reconcile this inconclusive evidence is to consider religiosity. Eckberg and Blocker (1996), Kanagy and Willits (1993), and Kanagy and Nelsen (1995) each found a consistently negative correlation between religious participation and environmental concern in bivariate relationships, but these effects reverse when sociodemographic variables are introduced, such that church attendance is positively associated with measures of environmental “greenness.” Eckberg and Blocker (1996) and Pepper, Jackson, and Uzzell (2011) additionally found a weak but positive association between religiosity indicators and personal environmental behavior, but Konisky, Milyo, and Richardson (2008) found that church attendance was unrelated to preferences for government action to address a wide set of environmental problems. In contrast, Wolkomir et al. (1997) found a positive relationship between religious salience and personal environmental behavior, when dominion belief is controlled, and Guth et al. (1995) found that highly committed evangelicals tend to be less concerned about the environment than their less committed counterparts. However, none of the interaction terms for mainline Protestants or Catholics showed statistically significant relationships with environmental concern. The authors interpret this finding as an indication that conservative eschatology primarily drives this relationship.

Much of the literature now views these mixed results as evidence of diversity in attitudes among affiliates of different religious traditions (Eckberg and Blocker, 1996; Wolkomir et al., 1997; Kearns, 1996). In addition, there does seem to be some support for this conclusion. In many cases, establishing statistical significance appears to be a much larger challenge than substantive significance; coefficients are moving in consistent directions, but

often lack statistical significance. Yet, several items remain unresolved. Just how does environmental concern vary across denominations? Are Protestants different than Catholics? Are both different than Jews? Do Protestants themselves hold divergent views on the environment—that is, do mainline Protestants tend to express more (or less) concern about the natural world than do evangelical Protestants, and which denominations within these traditions drive these effects? Plus, how does religiosity affect these relationships, if at all? Also, if religiosity does matter, does it matter in the same way across religious traditions?

We posit that previous scholarship has not fully answered these questions, in part, because the surveys analyzed have been limited in a couple of important ways. First, many of the surveys have not included detailed information on people's religious affiliations. As a consequence, it is difficult to interpret relationships since some often-used survey categories group together individuals affiliating with theological traditions that vary considerably; this is particularly true with Protestants where many studies have not been able to differentiate between more mainline and evangelical groups (Smith and Leiserowitz (2013) is a recent exception). Second, small sample sizes have made it difficult to fully consider the conditional effects of religiosity across different traditions. Even in a typical nationally representative sample of 1,000 to 1,200 respondents, differences are identified for very small numbers, which creates problems of statistical power. In this article, we are able to unpack the relationships among religious traditions, religiosity, and environmental concern by studying data from the 2010 CCES survey, which does not have these limitations. We discuss the survey, and the measures we develop from it, in more detail in the next section.

## Data and Methods

To examine how religious tradition and religiosity relate to environmental attitudes, we use data from the 2010 CCES (Ansolabehere, 2010).<sup>2</sup> The CCES has been administrated annually by YouGov via the Internet since 2006. Each survey is composed of two parts: a common section asked of all respondents, and team modules administered to subsamples of 1,000 persons. The questions analyzed in this article come from the Common Content portion of the 2010 survey, which included a detailed set of questions about religious affiliations and practices, allowing us to characterize individuals' affiliation and their level of religiosity.

YouGov uses a matched random sample methodology to generate nationally representative samples for its surveys. Specifically, the firm develops a target population from general population studies, and then draws a random set of respondents from this target population to create a "target sample." Then, using a matching algorithm, the firm selects potential respondents from its panel of opt-in participants who match the target sample (Rivers, 2007; Vavreck and Rivers, 2008). Studies comparing the CCES with other surveys, including those that rely on traditional random-digit-dialing telephone samples and random mail survey samples, have demonstrated the CCES survey to produce valid results (Ansolabehere and Rivers, 2013; Ansolabehere and Schaffner, 2014). All of the regression models we estimate below use the survey weights provided by YouGov.<sup>3</sup>

One of the features of the CCES surveys is large samples, which allow for analysis of attitudes and behavior at finer levels of geographical resolution than most survey samples. The main benefit for our purposes is that we can confidently compare attitudes among

<sup>2</sup>More information on the CCES survey can be found at (<http://projects.iq.harvard.edu/cces>).

<sup>3</sup>Results from models estimated without survey weights are substantively similar.

individuals of different religions traditions and religiosity, since the survey includes both detailed measures of denominations and has a large enough sample so that these denominations are populated with sufficient cases. The 2010 CCES included 55,400 respondents, although the sample we analyze is somewhat smaller due to missing data on some of the measures studied.

Our regression analysis proceeds in three stages with two dependent variables measuring environmental concern. The first stage estimates environmental concern across the major religious traditions. The second stage tests for variation *within* Protestantism by categorizing them according to the “RELTRAD” taxonomy proposed by Steensland, Robinson, and Wilcox (2000), as well as by considering denomination-level differences. The third stage studies the effects of religious commitment on these relationships through interactive effects of religiosity and religious tradition.

### ***Environmental Concern***

The 2010 CCES includes two measures of environmental concern. The first indicator reflects respondents’ feelings about climate change, and specifically perceptions about the level of action needed to address this issue. This five-point scale measures sense of urgency from low to high, ranging from “climate change is not occurring, this is not a real issue” to “climate change has been established as a serious problem, immediate action is necessary.”<sup>4</sup> Given that climate change is generally considered to be the most pressing environmental problem of the day, it is an important marker of public opinion on the environment. The second indicator is the common “jobs versus environment” question, which offers the potential for insight into the strength of a respondent’s level of environmental concern. This variable is also expressed on a five-point scale, ranging from “much more important to protect jobs” to “much more important to protect the environment.”<sup>5</sup> The response to this question is typically a good indicator of an individual’s general orientation toward environmental issues. Although neither of these survey items explicitly asks about dominion-over-nature attitudes, they do capture the expressed willingness of people to trade off environmental quality for human needs, which is a core component. Descriptive statistics for our two measures of environmental concern, and the rest of the variables we analyze, are provided in Table A1 in the Supporting Information.

### ***Religious Affiliation***

We first examine affiliation with major religious traditions listed in the CCES “Pew religion” question. This is a commonly used categorization of major religions, as identified

<sup>4</sup>The exact wording of this question is: “From what you know about global climate change or global warming, which one of the following statements comes closest to your opinion?” Options given are: “Global climate change has been established as a serious problem, and immediate action is necessary”; “There is enough evidence that climate change is taking place and some action should be taken”; “We don’t know enough about global climate change, and more research is necessary before taking any actions”; “Concern about global climate change is exaggerated. No action is necessary”; and “Global climate change is not occurring; this is not a real issue.” We rescaled this question so that concern runs from low to high.

<sup>5</sup>The exact wording of this question is: “Some people think it is important to protect the environment even if it costs some jobs or otherwise reduces our standard of living. Other people think that protecting the environment is not as important as maintaining jobs and our standard of living. Which is closer to the way you feel, or haven’t you thought much about this?” Options provided are: “Much more important to protect environment even if we lose jobs and have a lower standard of living”; “Environment somewhat more important”; “About the same”; “Economy somewhat more important”; and “Much more important to protect jobs even if environment worse.” Again, we rescaled the question so that environment runs from low to high.

by the Pew Research Center. Since we are concerned with the most prevalent traditions in the United States, we consider the Catholic, Protestant, and Jewish traditions, and combine respondents who indicate Mormon, Eastern or Greek Orthodox, Muslim, Buddhist, and Hindu traditions and “something else” into a single “other religion” category. We also created a “no affiliation” group by combining those who self-identify as “agnostic” and those who identify with “nothing in particular.” This group will serve as the excluded category in our regression models.<sup>6</sup>

We further examine differences using the religious traditions (RELTRAD) taxonomy developed by Steensland, Robinson, and Wilcox (2000), which creates six categories: evangelical Protestantism, mainline Protestantism, black Protestantism, Jewish, Catholic, and other affiliation. Steensland and his collaborators argue that this classification system captures the nuances of American religious traditions more precisely, and their measure has been widely adopted in social scientific studies on the role of religion in American life (for a review, see Woodberry et al. (2012)). For our purposes, the RELTRAD taxonomy allows us to analyze environmental attitudes across different types of Protestantism.<sup>7</sup> Table 1 shows the distribution of religious affiliation in the 2010 CCEs sample for the Pew and RELTRAD classifications. It is important to point out that the RELTRAD taxonomy divides denominational families in some instances, particularly among the Protestant traditions. For example, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, despite its name, is classified as a mainline Protestant tradition, while the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod is classified as an evangelical Protestant tradition.

Since we are also interested in environmental attitudes among individuals within major religious traditions, we also use denominational-level information to categorize respondents. More specifically, we created indicator variables for people who identified an affiliation with the following seven denominations: Baptist, Methodist, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Pentecostal, Episcopalian, and Jewish, and those who specifically identify themselves as nondenominational. We further identified those affiliated with the major groups within these denominational families (e.g., the Southern Baptist Convention, United Methodist Church, Evangelical Lutherans of America, Missouri Synod Lutherans, Presbyterian Church of the USA, Presbyterian Church of America, United Church of Christ, Church of Christ, Episcopal Church of America, Catholic Church, and Reform and Conservative Jews). In each case, we also created an “other” category to capture members of the denominational family but not of the identified group. Finally, we grouped the remaining Protestants with non-Judeo-Christian traditions in a general “other tradition category.”

<sup>6</sup>At Steensland, Robinson, and Wilcox’s (2000) suggestion, we additionally narrow the latter group by excluding those who attend religious services more than “never” or “seldom.”

<sup>7</sup>The Steensland, Robinson, and Wilcox (2000) taxonomy is based on categories from the General Social Survey (GSS). Although there are some subtle differences between the CCEs and GSS in this respect, we carefully replicated their coding system. Some of the major denominations in the “evangelical Protestant” subgroup include “Nonblack” members of churches affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention and American Baptist Association, Lutherans affiliated with the Missouri and Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synods, Nonblack Pentecostals, and nondenominational respondents who reported attending church more than once per month. Mainline Protestants include members of the Episcopal Church, Presbyterian Church of the USA, and United Methodist Church, and the black Protestant category includes the members of African Methodist Episcopal (AME) churches, National Baptist Convention, and African-American members affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention and American Baptist Association. Catholic and Jewish respondents comprise their own subgroups in this taxonomy, and there is a catch-all category “other affiliation” that includes Mormons, Buddhists, and Muslims.

TABLE 1  
Major Religious Traditions in the 2010 CCES Sample

Pew Religion Categories	Number	Percentage	RELTRAD Taxonomy	Number	Percentage
Catholic	12,348	22.30	Catholic	12,348	22.30
Jewish	1,678	3.03	Jewish	1,678	3.03
Protestant	26,421	47.40	Black Protestant	2,230	4.03
Other religion	4,571	8.26	Mainline Protestant	8,110	14.70
Nonreligious	10,526	19.00	Evangelical Protestant	12,739	23.00
			Other affiliation	8,525	15.40
			Nonreligious	9,734	17.60
Major Religious Denominations					
	Number	Percentage		Number	Percentage
Catholic	12,348	22.30	United Church of Christ	550	0.99
Southern Baptist	3,021	5.45	Congregational—other	169	0.03
Baptist—other	3,851	6.95	Church of Christ	878	0.02
United Methodist Church	3,211	5.80	Pentecostal	1,313	0.02
Lutheran ELCA	1,231	2.22	Episcopal Church of America	1,159	2.09
Lutheran Missouri Synod	958	1.72	Episcopal—other	260	0.46
Nondenominational Protestant	4,739	8.55	Reform Jewish	835	1.51
Presbyterian Church of USA	1,111	2.01	Conservative Jewish	512	0.92
Presbyterian Church of America	360	0.65	Jewish—other	346	0.62
Presbyterian—other	434	0.78			

NOTES: In the RELTRAD taxonomy, “other affiliation” includes the non-Judeo-Christian religions listed previously, as well as Christian (Mormon) and Protestant traditions not classified in the three major subcultures. The latter includes Protestant denominations such as Jehovah’s Witness, Christian Scientist, and Unitarian Universalist.

**Religiosity**

Our measure of religiosity is an additive index of three dimensions of religious commitment: personal religious importance, church attendance, and frequency of prayer.<sup>8</sup> After standardizing each variable to a scale with mean 0 and SD 1, and dropping cases with missing values, we construct a scale that runs from low to high such that high values indicate more “religious commitment.” This religiosity index has a Cronbach’s alpha value of about 0.81, which is a strong indicator that the items are internally consistent. In addition, a principal components factor analysis produces a single factor with an eigenvalue of 2.3 that provides additional justification for including these variables in a single scale. After studying the effects of religious affiliation on environmental attitudes, we will evaluate the conditional effects of religiosity on these relationships.

**Control Variables**

Our models control for numerous other factors that have been found to influence environmental attitudes. Political orientation is widely reported to have significant and

<sup>8</sup>The questions in the scale are as follows: “How important is religion in your life?” (very important, somewhat important, not too important, not at all important); “Aside from weddings and funerals, how often do you attend religious services?” (more than once a week, once a week, once or twice a month, a few times a year, seldom, never); and “People practice their religion in different ways. Outside of attending religious services, how often do you pray?” (several times a day, once a day, a few times a week, once a week, a few times a month, seldom, never).



substantial effects on almost every environmental indicator. Ideological liberals and self-identifying Democrats generally express more environmental concern, while ideological conservatives and self-identifying Republicans tend to express less (Boyd, 1999; Dunlap, Xiao, and McCright, 2001; Guber, 2003; Guth et al., 1995; Konisky, Milyo, and Richardson, 2008). We use a standard measure of political ideology from a seven-point scale that ranges from “very liberal” to “very conservative.” To control for party identification, we include dummy variables for respondents self-reporting as a “Democrat” or “Republican.” Demographic variables are also commonly cited as influential. Educational attainment is frequently a strong and positive predictor of environmental attitudes (Boyd, 1999; Hayes and Marangudakis, 2000; Ignatow, 2006; Wolkomir et al., 1997). In the analysis that follows, we control for education using a six-point scale, on which “no high school” is the low value and “postgraduate” is the high value. We also include controls for income measured on a 14-point scale (higher values reflect more income),<sup>9</sup> as well as for gender (1 is female, and 0 is male), race, and ethnicity (1 is minority and 0 is nonminority), and age. Last, attitudes about the environment have been found to vary by geographic region of the country; residents of southern states in particular have been shown to value the environment less (Kanagy and Nelsen, 1995). For this reason, we include a dichotomous variable labeled “South” (South is 1 and non-South is 0).

## Results

In this section we present the results of our regression analysis. We first focus on the relationships between religious affiliation and environmental attitudes, and then examine whether (and how) religiosity conditions these relationships. We estimate ordered logistic regression models because our measures of environmental concern come from survey responses to questions on five-point ordinal scales.<sup>10</sup>

### *Religious Affiliation and Environmental Concern*

The first two columns in Table 2 display regression results when using the Pew classification of religious traditions, and the third and fourth columns show the results when using the RELTRAD categories. The Pew models serve as a baseline for examining the effects of religious tradition on our two measures of environmental concern, while the RELTRAD models allow us to consider variation within Protestantism more closely.

<sup>9</sup>About 12 percent of the 2010 CCES sample did not provide a response to the income question included on the survey. Rather than drop these observations for our analysis, we imputed values using other information in the sample (specifically, we use the `impute` command in Stata 11.0). We also estimated the models dropping these observations, with substantively similar results.

<sup>10</sup>An underlying assumption of ordered logistic regression is that the relationship between each pair of outcome groups is identical. This is the proportional odds or parallel regression assumption, and if it holds, then there is a single set of coefficients that we can use to interpret the relationships of interest. If this is not the case, then it is necessary to estimate different models to uncover the relationships between each pair of outcome groups. To examine if our models violate the proportional odds assumption, we use Wald's test (Brant, 1990) with mixed results. Specifically, some of the variables of interest violate the proportional odds assumption, while others do not. For this reason, we elected to report coefficients from ordinal logistic models only. We did estimate generalized ordered logit models as well, and we note differences in interpretation when they appear in subsequent notes.

TABLE 2  
Religious Affiliation and Environmental Attitudes

Variables	Pew Categories		RELTRAD Categories	
	Climate Concern	Jobs–Environment	Climate Concern	Jobs–Environment
Catholic	-0.108* (0.044)	-0.215** (0.041)	-0.101* (0.045)	-0.214** (0.041)
Jewish	0.143 (0.079)	-0.151* (0.076)	0.155 (0.080)	-0.141 (0.077)
Protestant	-0.230** (0.040)	-0.185** (0.036)		
Other religion (Pew)	0.031 (0.061)	0.158** (0.054)		
Black Protestant			-0.220* (0.087)	-0.369** (0.088)
Mainline Protestant			-0.090 (0.047)	-0.060 (0.044)
Evangelical Protestant			-0.313** (0.046)	-0.259** (0.042)
Other affiliation (RELTRAD)			-0.047 (0.050)	0.072 (0.045)
Political ideology (conservative)	-0.587** (0.013)	-0.431** (0.012)	-0.584** (0.013)	-0.429** (0.012)
Republican	-0.398** (0.035)	-0.283** (0.035)	-0.400** (0.035)	-0.285** (0.035)
Democrat	0.782** (0.038)	0.258** (0.035)	0.779** (0.038)	0.264** (0.035)
Income	-0.018** (0.005)	-0.004 (0.004)	-0.018** (0.005)	-0.005 (0.004)
Minority	0.032 (0.037)	-0.062 (0.035)	0.037 (0.040)	-0.029 (0.038)
Education	0.067** (0.010)	0.080** (0.010)	0.063** (0.010)	0.076** (0.010)
Age	-0.005** (0.001)	-0.006** (0.001)	-0.006** (0.001)	-0.006** (0.001)
Female	0.207** (0.027)	-0.092** (0.026)	0.207** (0.027)	-0.092** (0.026)
South	0.012 (0.028)	0.029 (0.027)	0.015 (0.028)	0.035 (0.027)
Cut point 1	-5.959** 0.11	-4.142** 0.09	-5.989** 0.11	-4.155** 0.09
Cut point 2	-4.137** 0.1	-2.648** 0.09	-4.165** 0.1	-2.660** 0.09
Cut point 3	-2.829** 0.1	-1.145** 0.08	-2.856** 0.1	-1.155** 0.08
Cut point 4	-1.113** 0.09	0.140 0.08	-1.140** 0.1	0.131 0.08
Observations	51,844	51,784	51,844	51,784
Wald's $\chi^2$ ( <i>df</i> )	6,597 (13)	4,309.31 (13)	6618.4 (15)	4,327.2 (15)
$p > \chi^2$	0	0	0	0
Pseudo $R^2$	0.15	0.077	0.15	0.077

NOTES: Cells contain coefficients from ordered logistic regression models with SEs in parentheses. Statistical significance level: \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \* $p < 0.05$ .

We begin with the Pew models and climate change concern.<sup>11</sup> The negative coefficients indicate that Catholics and Protestants tend to be less concerned about global warming compared with those not affiliating with a religious tradition, a finding broadly consistent with White's hypothesis about the role of a dominion worldview. By contrast, Jews appear more likely to express concern about climate change compared with those individuals that do not associate with a tradition ( $p = 0.07$ ). Religious affiliation plays less of a discriminating role in how members of Judeo-Christian faiths prioritize jobs and the environment. As shown in the second column of Table 2, the negative coefficients indicate that Catholics, Protestants, and Jews, on average, all appear less willing to sacrifice jobs for the environment compared with those not identifying with a religious tradition. It is worth noting that the 2010 CCES survey was administered in the midst of the economic downturn that began in 2007, which may partially explain the consistent responses across these groups.<sup>12</sup>

We next examine if there are meaningful differences *within* Protestantism using the RELTRAD categories. Of specific interest here is whether the negative coefficients reported above for Protestants are driven by particular types of Protestant faiths—that is, do those affiliating with black, mainline, and evangelical churches differ in their environmental attitudes. Considering climate change attitudes first, the coefficients on each variable are negative, indicating that affiliation with each type of Protestantism is correlated with less concern for climate change, again compared with those who do not affiliate with any tradition (the coefficient for Mainline Protestants is just beyond conventional levels of statistical significance ( $p = 0.06$ )). The relative sizes of the coefficients, however, suggest a substantive difference. A statistical test of the equality of the relevant coefficients indicates that individuals who affiliate with an evangelical Protestant church, all else equal, are less likely than both mainline and Protestant churches to be worried about climate change.

A similar picture emerges in the jobs–environment model. Individuals affiliating with either black or evangelical Protestantism were less inclined to privilege environmental protection over job creation, compared with individuals in the nonaffiliated category. The coefficient for evangelical Protestants is a little larger than that for black Protestants, but overall Protestants are not unique in this regard, as both Catholics and Jews ( $p = 0.07$ ) also tend to prefer job creation, even at the expense of the environment.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup>Overall, estimates from generalized ordered logit models suggest substantively similar results. Specifically, for the jobs–environment models the effects found for the standard ordered logit model emerge for each matched pair of outcomes (response 1 vs. responses 2–5, responses 1 and 2 vs. responses 3–5, etc.). In other words, affiliating with each of these religious traditions pushes responses toward less privileging of environmental protection over jobs. For climate concern, Jews were more likely to be concerned across the matched pairs of outcomes. Catholics were less likely to express higher levels of concern (responses 1–3 vs. responses 4 and 5, responses 3 and 4 vs. response 5) and the negative association between identifying as a Protestant was consistent across the matched pairs of outcomes except for the lowest level of concern compared to the rest.

<sup>12</sup>Other surveys on the environment vs. jobs question show that the American public in general began to express more of a preference for jobs than the environment (e.g., Gallup, 2013).

<sup>13</sup>A generalized ordered logit specification produces virtually identical results for the jobs–environment models. With the exception of mainline Protestants, individuals who affiliate themselves with Catholicism, Judaism, and black and Protestant churches tended to express a preference for jobs over the environment across the matched pairs of outcomes (the coefficients for mainline Protestants are not statistically significant). In the case of climate change concern, the results for the generalized ordered logit models are the same as described above for Catholics and Jews. Regarding the three types of Protestants in the RELTRAD classification, evangelical Protestants and Jews were less likely to be concerned about climate across the matched pairs of outcomes, while mainline and black Protestants were only less likely to express higher levels of concern (responses 1–3 vs. responses 4 and 5 for mainline Protestants and responses 3 and 4 vs. response 5 for both mainline and black Protestants).

A couple of other results from the regressions reported in Table 2 deserve attention. First, in one of the four models, there is a positive and statistically significant association between being in the other affiliation group and environmental concern. It is difficult to substantively interpret this result because this category reflects an average effect across a diverse set of religious traditions, but the denominations included are all outside of the major Judeo-Christian traditions.<sup>14</sup> Second, the control variables generally reveal expected relationships. We find the strongest relationships among the political ideology and partisanship variables. Ideological conservatives and self-identifying Republicans tend to be less concerned about climate change and are more like to privilege jobs over protecting the environment. Conversely, Democratic identification strongly predicts a heightened sense of urgency about climate change and a preference for prioritizing environmental protection despite effects on job creation. In terms of the other individual-level characteristics, younger individuals and those with higher levels of educational attainment are on average more likely to express stronger environmental attitudes. Women and those with lower income all tend to worry more about climate change, while women tend to prioritize jobs over the environment.

Overall, the effects of religious tradition are consistently present, but how large are they? One way to evaluate them is in terms of changes in the predicted probabilities for the different responses. Using the parameter estimates from the models (holding the rest of the variables at their means), the change in predicted probabilities is modest, but substantively meaningful. The difference in predicted probabilities between non-Catholics and Catholics and non-Jews and Jews ranges from approximately 0.01 to 0.02 across the five response categories for both measures of environmental attitudes, while the difference in predicted probabilities for non-Protestants and Protestants ranges from about 0.02 to 0.04. These effects are quite a bit smaller than for political ideology and partisan identification, but they are comparable to several of the demographic variables, including gender, race and ethnicity, and education.

To further examine the relationship between religious affiliation and environmental concern, we next turn to models that further disaggregate religious traditions into major denominations. The results of these denomination-level models are shown in Table 3. These models also show variation within the Protestantism. In the climate change model, we find considerable variation among the denominations in the form of statistically different coefficients between and within religious traditions. For example, Baptists and nondenominational Protestants express less concern about climate change than most mainline Protestant denominations. We also find variation within the Protestant denominational families. For example, members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America statistically appear more concerned about climate change than members of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, and Reform Jews are more concerned about climate change than “other” Jewish denominations.

The variation between traditions is also present when we consider responses to the jobs versus environment question. Baptists and nondenominational Protestants are both statistically more likely to favor jobs over the environment than Methodists, ECLA Lutherans,

<sup>14</sup>The RELTRAD taxonomy groups all of the religious denominations considered outside of the “mainstream” of Judeo-Christian into one other affiliation category. These include “alternative” Judeo-Christian traditions such as the Church of Latter Day Saints, Eastern Orthodox, Jehovah’s Witness, and Unitarian Universalist, as well as other religions such as Buddhism, Hinduism, and Islam. In order to investigate the source of the positive, significant findings, we cross-tabulated these religions independently with our dependent variables and found that while Mormons and Eastern Orthodox appear less concerned about the environment, many, including those noted above, show more concern. We believe this explains the aggregate positive effects from this group.

TABLE 3  
Religious Denominations and Environmental Attitudes

Variables	(1) Climate Concern	(2) Jobs–Environment
Catholic	–0.070 (0.041)	–0.205** (0.039)
Southern Baptist	–0.288** (0.064)	–0.276** (0.064)
Baptist—other	–0.234** (0.062)	–0.303** (0.059)
United Methodist	–0.129* (0.057)	–0.099 (0.056)
Methodist—other	–0.176 (0.149)	–0.188 (0.160)
Reform Jewish	0.317** (0.096)	–0.048 (0.102)
Conservative Jewish	0.219 (0.135)	–0.219* (0.105)
Jewish—other	–0.116 (0.182)	–0.193 (0.192)
Lutheran ELCA	–0.031 (0.087)	0.039 (0.086)
Lutheran Missouri Synod	–0.331** (0.089)	–0.323** (0.081)
Lutheran—other	0.068 (0.150)	–0.002 (0.128)
Nondenominational Protestant	–0.343** (0.051)	–0.240** (0.050)
Presbyterian Church of USA	–0.001 (0.084)	–0.104 (0.083)
Presbyterian Church of America	–0.102 (0.133)	–0.079 (0.145)
Presbyterian—other	–0.208 (0.143)	–0.420** (0.150)
Pentecostal	–0.106 (0.095)	–0.059 (0.088)
Episcopal Church of America	0.035 (0.085)	–0.023 (0.091)
Episcopal—other	–0.018 (0.167)	–0.077 (0.145)
Other Protestant	–0.078 (0.087)	–0.238** (0.082)
Other Religion—Pew	0.067 (0.059)	0.167** (0.053)
Political ideology	–0.587** (0.013)	–0.430** (0.012)
Democrat	0.778** (0.038)	0.259** (0.035)
Republican	–0.402** (0.035)	–0.285** (0.035)
Income	–0.017** (0.005)	–0.004 (0.004)
Minority	0.044 (0.038)	–0.046 (0.036)
Education	0.062**	0.076**

*Continued*

TABLE 3  
Continued

Variables	(1) Climate Concern	(2) Jobs–Environment
Age	(0.010) -0.006**	(0.010) -0.006**
Female	(0.001) 0.207**	(0.001) -0.091**
South	(0.027) 0.019	(0.026) 0.040
	(0.029)	(0.028)
Cut point 1	-5.966** (0.110)	-4.149** (0.090)
Cut point 2	-4.141** (0.102)	-2.653** (0.087)
Cut point 3	-2.831** (0.098)	-1.148** (0.084)
Cut point 4	-1.113** (0.095)	0.139 (0.084)
Observations	51,844	51,784
Wald $\chi^2$	6,674.6 (29)	4,350.93 (29)
$p > \chi^2$	0.00	0.00
Pseudo $R^2$	0.152	0.078

NOTES: Cells contain coefficients from ordered logistic regression models with SEs in parentheses. Statistical significance level: \*\* $p < 0.01$ , \* $p < 0.05$ .

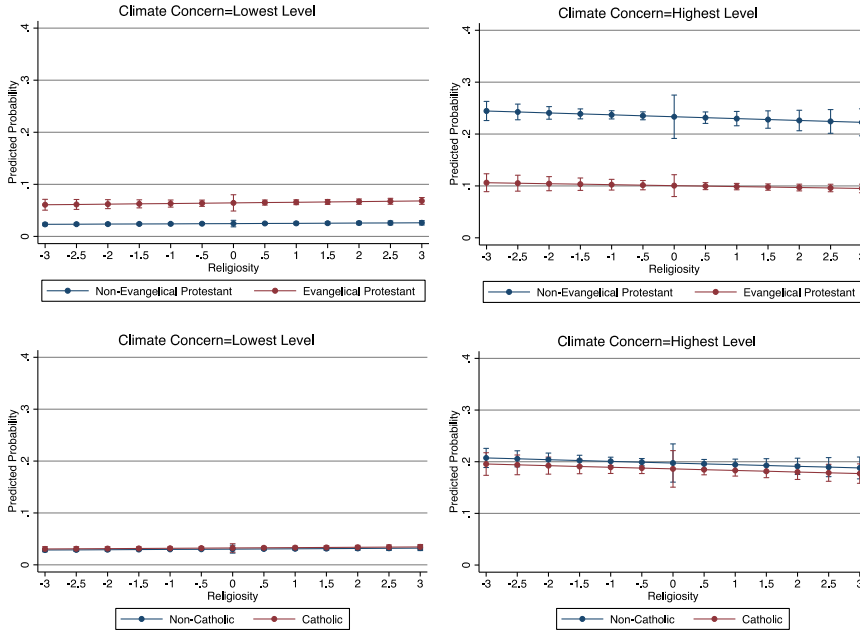
and Episcopalians. Conversely, the within-tradition variation largely dissipates in the jobs–environment model, although we do find statistically significant distinction between the members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America and Lutherans of the Missouri Synod with respect to the prioritization of economy and environment. Together, these findings suggest that denominations vary within religion traditions in terms of environmental attitudes, but they also support the idea that the RELTRAD taxonomy is an appropriate categorization of religious traditions, even as it divides denominational families.

### The Role of Religiosity

Our next set of regression models incorporates multiplicative interaction terms to study the conditional effects of religiosity on the relationships between religious affiliation and the indicators of environmental concern. To take into account differences in attitudes within Protestantism, we only estimate these models using the RELTRAD categories. The full regression results are presented in Table A2 in the Supporting Information. For Jews, black Protestants, and the catch-all other affiliation category, religiosity has no effect. In other words, for individuals in these categories, those with higher levels of religious commitment are no different than those with lower levels in their concern about climate change or in their privileging environmental protection over jobs. Religiosity does, however, seem to make some modest difference for Catholics in each model, for evangelical Protestants in

FIGURE 1

The Conditional Effect of Religiosity on Evangelical Protestants and Catholics, Climate Change



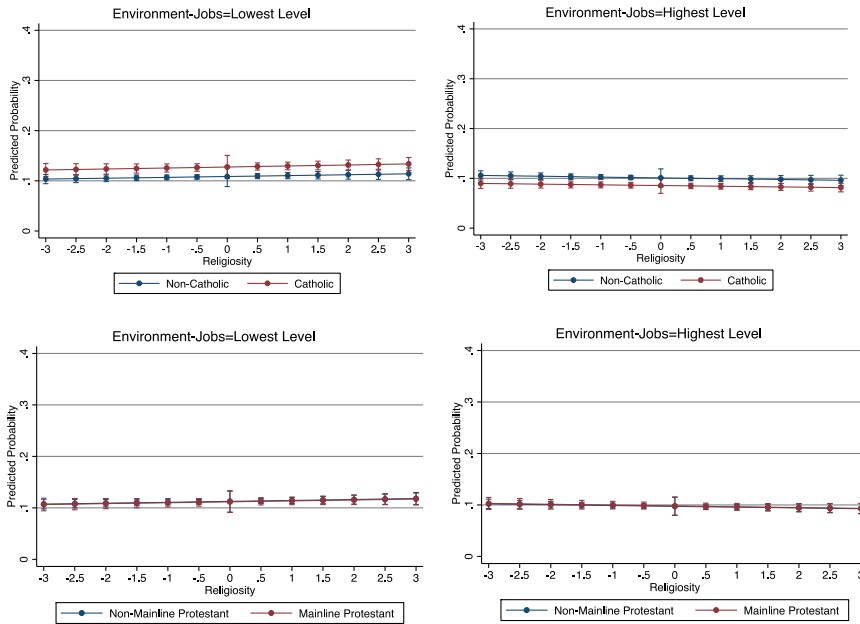
the climate change model, and for mainline Protestants in the jobs versus environmental model.<sup>15</sup>

Interpretation of multiplicative interactions in ordered logistic regression requires evaluation of the effect for each of the values of the dependent variable (in our case, for each level of concern about climate change, and for different points of willingness to trade off jobs for the environment). One way to do this is to compute predicted probabilities for different denominations for various values of religiosity for each response, setting the rest of the variables in the model to their mean levels. We plot these predicted probabilities for the lowest and highest values of the dependent variables in Figures 1 and 2 for the cases most suggestive of conditional relationships (graphs for the rest of the values are included in Figures A1 and A2 in the Supporting Information). Doing so reveals a small, but substantively important conditioning effect of religiosity. For example, for evangelical Protestants, a 2 *SD* shift on the religiosity scale implies about a 10 percent shift in the predicted probabilities of concern for climate change. Specifically, more religious commitment pushes evangelical Protestants even further into lower levels of climate concern and it makes them less likely to express a higher level of concern. The conditional effect of religiosity for Catholics is of a similar magnitude, and works in the same direction; more religious commitment pushes individuals toward lower levels of climate change concern and away from higher levels of

<sup>15</sup>Results from the generalized ordered logit models reveal substantively similar results, with just a couple of notable differences. First, the finding regarding the conditional effect of religiosity for Catholics dissipates in the climate change case, and disappears completely in the jobs versus environment model. Plus, the conditional effect of religiosity for evangelical Protestants in the climate model is most pronounced regarding the lower levels of concern, while the effect for mainline Protestants is consistent across all of the matched pairs of outcomes.

FIGURE 2

The Conditional Effect of Religiosity on Catholics and Mainline Protestants, Jobs–Environment



climate concern. The effect of religiosity for Catholics and mainline Protestants is also of a similar magnitude for preferences on protecting the environment even at the expense of jobs, and pushes people affiliating with these religious traditions in the same directions as noted above for climate change.

### Discussion and Conclusion

Scholars have examined the role of religion in shaping American’s environmental attitudes for many decades. Although researchers have found some consistent evidence that fundamentalist Christians tend to be less concerned about environmental problems (Boyd, 1999; Eckberg and Blocker, 1989; Woodrum and Hoban, 1994), findings are inconclusive on whether (and specifically how) these attitudes vary across different Judeo-Christian religious traditions and levels of religious commitment. We advance this literature by using a large, nationally representative survey to more fully unpack the effects of religious affiliation and religiosity on environmental attitudes.

Our analysis leads us to two central conclusions. First, people affiliating with Judeo-Christian traditions tend to express weaker environmental attitudes than individuals who do not affiliate with an established denomination. Therefore, nearly a half-century later, there is some evidence at least broadly consistent with White’s hypothesis about the influence of “dominion-over-nature” worldview among individuals affiliating with major Judeo-Christian faiths. There are several important caveats, however. Jewish respondents reported a higher level of concern about climate change than those not affiliating with a major tradition. This suggests that the strongest effect of religious tradition on environmental attitudes is among Christians. In addition, we find notable variation across and within



these traditions. In particular, when we allow for possible differences within Protestantism, we find that the negative association between being Protestant and environmental attitudes is particularly strong among evangelicals. We reach similar findings when we further divide the Protestant traditions into their major denominations. When denominational families are heterogeneous, lack of concern tends to center in denominations associated with the evangelical Protestant tradition. These findings suggest that individuals in religious traditions that are more prone to teach biblical literalism are less likely to express high degrees of concern about the environment.

A second important set of results pertains to religiosity. Higher levels of religiosity push evangelical Protestants and Catholics into even lower levels of concern about climate change and make them less likely to express a higher level of concern. More religious commitment also pushes Catholics and mainline Protestants to be more likely to privilege jobs over the environment. Thus, for many, religiosity tends to move people even further away from stronger environmental attitudes.

While our study sheds new light on the role of religion in environmental attitudes, it is important to place our findings in context with other determinants of these attitudes. The two individual characteristics that matter the most in our models are political ideology and party identification. These political characteristics are more important predictors than the religious affiliation variables across the models, which is consistent with a well-established literature finding that an individual's political orientation is generally the strongest correlate with environmental preferences (e.g., Dunlap, Xiao, and McCright, 2001; Klineberg, McKeever, and Rothenbach, 1998; Konisky, Milyo, and Richardson, 2008). This is not to suggest that religion is inconsequential. In fact, in many of our models, the regression coefficients are of about the same magnitude for many demographic attributes, such as gender, minority, and education. But, it does highlight that religion is not the main driver of environmental attitudes.

The 2010 CCES survey enabled us to disentangle differences in attitudes across denominational affiliations and levels of religiosity in a way that prior research has not been able to do. However, it is also important to emphasize the limitations of our analysis. Our research design allows us to identify patterns of attitudes across individuals, but we cannot say what it is about affiliating with a particular denomination or having a particular level of religious commitment that leads people to different views on the environment. This limitation is not unique to our study. The common explanation, of course, is based on theological differences, but this is not the only possibility. For example, there could be something in how people experience their religion (both inside and outside of a formal religious setting) that influences their attitudes. To the extent that people choose to affiliate with different religious faiths or practice their religion with varying levels of intensity, there also may be selection effects, raising the possibility that there are unobserved personal characteristics related both to these decisions and environmental preferences. Although we cannot sort out these and other possible explanations, this would be a useful direction for future research that would further enrich our understanding of how religion affects Americans' environmental attitudes.

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**Supporting Information**

Additional supporting information may be found in the online version of this article at the publisher's website:

**Table A.1.** Descriptive Statistics

**Table A.2.** Conditional Effects of Religiosity

**Figure A.1.** The Conditional Effect of Religiosity on Evangelical Protestants and Catholics, Climate Change

**Figure A.2.** The Conditional Effect of Religiosity on Evangelical Protestants and Catholics, Jobs–Environment