

## **The Historical (x)ian) Roots of Our Ecological Crisis (September 1, 2019)**

For many years I've been interested in the relation between our deepest beliefs in the nature of reality (those deepest-held notions and attitudes traditional philosophy classified as metaphysical, ontological, religious, and the like) and our socio-political beliefs, including our beliefs about the biogeophysical environment and how we should treat it.

This interest of mine did not begin with the ecological movement of the 60s, but was certainly piqued a few years later when highly placed evangelical xtians like Reagan's Sec.of Interior James Watt began talking about and acting out their belief that we might as well use up our natural resources without concern for future generations or sustainable management because "the final days" and "the rapture" were immanent so we would soon be beyond this material vale.

Far from disappearing with Reagan and his band of delinquents, these issues are again of concern as the Trump juggernaut lurches along between the fantastical mentalities of his right-wing xtian base and the hardcore clearcut, ripoff, paint-it-black rapacity of his appointees to the bureaucracy and judiciary. It's no accident that (as, if I recall, it was Naomi Wolfe pointed out) fundamentalist religion and fundamentalist economics have come to roost in the oval office.

In this regard, the two links here, which have only today come to my attention, are pertinent. They are to a highly controversial 1967 article in Science by Lynn White, Jr ("The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis"), a highly-credentialed historian and self-declared "churchman", and to a 2016 article reviewing the controversies occasioned by White's article.

The central, and most controversial, point of White's article is that the use-it-up ideology in regard to the earth's resources is not something new, born of the Industrial Revolution and technological dynamic of modern times, nor (as famously proposed by Max Weber) something that first arose with the Protestant work ethic, but is intrinsic to the belief-system of western xtianity and has held sway in the western world (and its client states) since the early Middle Ages.

<https://science.sciencemag.org/content/155/3767/1203>

(Complete copy of the Science article in PDF format below)

<https://naturecoevocommunity.nature.com/users/24738-michael-paul-nelson/posts/14041-the-long-reach-of-lynn-white-jr-s-the-historical-roots-of-our-ecologic-crisis>