**Dangerous Dogma**

When I attended Sunday school in the early seventies we had few lessons which centered on the environment. Those that did occur introduced me to the term stewardship and to the idea that the earth was a gift from God. Environmental responsibility was foremost in many minds at the time. Wild Kingdom was on every Sunday night. The Environmental Protection Agency was newly born. The ink was fresh on both the Clean Air Act and Clean Water Act. There was a general sense of accomplishment for taking long due actions to protect the Earth for the next generation, my generation. Unfortunately, attitudes and convictions have drastically changed.

Instead of strengthening environmental laws, they have had the flesh picked from their bones. When given the choice of conservation or exploitation, we seem to blindly choose the latter. Faced with the environmental cataclysm of global warming, we chose the less responsible term, "climate change". At the center of these attacks is the abundantly vocal Moral Majority. More concerned with the jobs created by strip mining than the desecration the process creates, these voters devoutly attend the polls and elect candidates who share their views. "Drill Baby, Drill" is their response to concerns over environmental cataclysms such as Deepwater Horizon. The members of this group consider themselves Christians. I am appalled by their wanton disregard of the natural world.

Though it is obvious that a single group cannot embody an entire belief structure, they certainly appear to outnumber and over shout the Christian environmental stewards. The historically popular Judeo-Christian view of mankind places him at the top of a hierarchy in relation to all other organisms. As pointed out by Lynn White Jr., "God planned all of this explicitly for man's benefit and rule: no item in the physical creation had any purpose save to serve man's purposes." This assertion permits unchecked exploitation with no spiritual detriment whatsoever. Modern Christianity asserts its distance from fanatical behavior like that evidenced during the Spanish Inquisition, but they continue to claim a predominance over nature that was sanctified by the earliest tenets of the church.

Admittedly, I am not a member of the Moral Majority. My political affiliation is tree-hugging, hippie liberal. As I have gotten older, I have explored the origins and practices of various faiths. I was initially surprised at the diverse spectrum of alternate viewpoints. The majority of world religions see themselves as members of the natural world as opposed to overlords who rule it. I identify myself as a deist. I have an intensely strong belief in our creator, but very little faith in the men who interpret his will to suit their purposes. I find the greatest spiritual resonance in the initial tenet of Buddhism; "First, Do No Harm." I believe destruction depletes my soul. I believe the destroyers will ultimately answer for their actions. Those who recklessly burn, scrape, and annihilate this world need to stop excusing their disregard with dogma. Humanity has a fading opportunity to rescue our species from extinction. It is an action long delayed.