

# **The Competing World Views of Environmentalism and Christianity**

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Religion is the root of any culture, and environmentalism has become a full-fledged religion in its own right. It is the most comprehensive substitute in the world today for Christianity so far as world view, theology, ethics, politics, economics, and science are concerned, and you need to understand it in order to counter it effectively, from presuppositions to policies, from classroom to movie theater, from evening network news to Internet and local newspaper.

And because environmentalism—the word coming from French meaning “surroundings,” that is, “everything,” and so meaning literally “everythingism”—because environmentalism is inherently totalitarian, demanding to define and control every aspect of life, it aims to take control of our entire political and legal structure, and indeed has already advanced far in that direction over the last three decades. You, as an individual, have a tremendously important role to play in the church’s battle against this impostor, with its alternative world view, its substitute doctrines of God, creation, man, sin, and salvation, and its lethal mix of bogus science and Marxist economics that threaten to fulfill the radical environmentalists’ and deep ecologists’ dream of ending industrial society and forcing humanity back into a primitive lifestyle—in which, as Thomas Hobbes put it, life was solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short.

## **The Environmentalist World View**

Environmentalism is a complete alternative world view from that revealed in the Bible, the world view that has blessed Western Civilization for nearly the last 2,000 years, enabling it to make incomparable advances in philosophy, politics, science, technology, economics, the arts, and every walk of life. I’m going to compare its positions on God, creation, humanity, sin, and salvation with those of Biblical Christianity, and then explain how that world view underlies climate alarm. Let me quickly explain one term for you, though, to prevent confusion. I’m going to write of “secular environmentalism” in contrast to “religious environmentalism.” What I *don’t* mean by “secular environmentalism” is that it is non-religious. It is religious to the core. What I *do* mean is that it *claims* to be non-religious and generally either denies or counts as irrelevant the existence of God, gods, or a spiritual realm. That is, secular environmentalism is the religion of naturalistic secularism applied to environmentalism. Religious environmentalism is any other religion applied to environmentalism.

### *Environmentalism’s Views of God, the World, and Humanity*

The dominant doctrines of God in environmentalism are atheism (belief that there is no God), pantheism (belief that God is everything), panentheism (belief that God indwells everything as the

soul does the body), and animism or spiritism (belief that every material thing, not just human bodies, is indwelt by a soul or spirit). Ironically, the atheism of secular environmentalism and the pantheism and panentheism of much religious environmentalism amount to essentially the same thing. If there is no personal Creator distinct from the universe, who created the universe out of nothing, then the universe effectively takes God's place, since it turns out to be the Supreme Being. Animism and spiritism turn out to be little different from panentheism, for while it asserts that god indwells everything, they assert that gods—souls or spirits—indwell everything.

Consequently, for both secular and religious environmentalism, every part of the universe—what we Christians call “creation”—is part of god, and it becomes impossible to distinguish sacred and holy from secular and profane—the latter word coming from the Latin *profanum*, meaning before (i.e., outside) the temple. Consequently, environmentalism, both secular and religious, tends to define all the Earth and all its inhabitants as sacred and holy. From that it tends to infer that everything has intrinsic worth, not dependent on human valuation, and particularly that, as Deep Ecology founder Arne Naess put it, all life is fundamentally one, and so “biological egalitarianism” is the preferred ethic—from which thinking flow thoughts of animal rights, plant rights, and ecosystem rights, all ideas newly enshrined in the constitutions of Switzerland (where one now must harvest a wheat field only in a manner that honors the dignity of the wheat) and Bolivia. While Biblical Christianity certainly affirms that mankind is answerable *to God* for its handling of the Earth and its inhabitants, it is difficult indeed to figure how non-rational beings can have any rights at all, since rights entail duties but non-rational things cannot have duties since they have no awareness of them, and even more difficult to figure how they might bring cases to enforce their rights, since of course they cannot know if their rights have been violated and cannot communicate what remedies they desire.

It also follows from all of this that humanity has no special, privileged position relative to other living things, or even, for some radical environmentalists, relative to non-living things. We therefore owe humane treatment to animals. But, we being not fundamentally different from animals, “humane treatment” means nothing fundamentally different from “animal treatment.” That is, humane treatment of animals equates with beastly treatment of humans—a consequence reflected in environmentalists’ general disdain for human population growth and conviction that the world is overpopulated and would be much better off with perhaps 5 or 10 percent of our present population, or perhaps even none of us. Hence British Prince Phillip’s statement that, out of concern for the environment, he would like to be reincarnated—and he believes in reincarnation—as a killer virus to reduce human population to a more reasonable level.

Environmentalists as a whole (though not all individual environmentalists) are so hostile to humanity primarily because they think people are a threat to the natural world, which they see as best untouched by human hands. “Nature knows best,” they insist—forgetting entirely that according to their world view we are part of, and indeed nothing more than part of, nature. Sin, for environmentalists, is interfering with nature, say, for example, by subduing and ruling it—which according to Genesis 1:28 God commanded us to do—which suggests that “sin is lawfulness,” the exact opposite of the Bible’s definition (1 John 3:4).

## *Environmental Ethics and Politics*

And what will save us from our sins against nature? What is the environmentalist gospel? The reordering of our lives by—you guessed it—environmentalists, who by some stroke of luck (for there is no personal God to credit) have somehow been exempted from the flawed character that afflicts the rest of us. *They* are both knowledgeable and virtuous enough to be entrusted with authority

1. to determine whether we'll drive the large, safe cars we prefer or the small, dangerous cars they prefer, or rather whether we'll drive cars at all or use only public transportation;
2. to decide the temperature at which to set our thermostats and the kinds of light bulbs we'll use and how much insulation we'll have in our homes;
3. to dictate whether we'll use disposable or cloth diapers, and plastic or cloth grocery bags, and inexpensive nuclear or fossil fuel or expensive wind or solar energy;
4. to rule whether we'll eat non-organic or organic foods, meat or vegetables, a wide variety of delightful and healthful foods grown around the world and transported to us or a narrow variety grown locally;
5. and whether and how many children we'll have.

All of these decisions, of course, will be based on the common-sense principle of sustainability. We must live according to this fundamental ethical maxim: *Our* way of life must be one that *every* generation of our descendants can have, too.

That this principle doesn't seem to be reflected in human history is of no concern. What does it matter that the 18<sup>th</sup>-century ancestors of today's Scots burned so much peat for fuel that its supply can't possibly have lasted for consumption at the same rate by their descendants three centuries later, or that 19<sup>th</sup>-century Britons and Americans and Scandinavians and Japanese consumed whale oil in such prodigious quantities that its supply can't possibly have lasted at that rate for their descendants even just a single generation later, or that practically all societies up to two centuries ago consumed so much wood for fuel that its supply can't possibly have lasted for consumption at the same rate by their descendants today? *We* must ration energy sources like coal, oil, and natural gas to ensure that *our* descendants three centuries from now, and three centuries from then, and so *ad infinitum*, will still be able to consume them at the same rate, and at the same prices, we do.

This we must do despite the fact that our descendants a hundred years from now will be several times wealthier than we are and thus better able than we are to afford the alternative energy technologies the environmentalists demand we switch to *now*—thus effecting a redistribution of wealth from the poorer people of the present to the richer people of the future (*unless*, of course, our immediate shift to those more expensive fuels stops economic development and leaves them worse off than we are, which would surely please serious Greens but doesn't seem to be the point they're using to sell sustainability to the unwitting public). We must certainly not assume that technological change will continue in the future as it has done in the past, making our present energy sources obsolete, as they did peat and whale oil and wood. No, we must assume that our descendants a thousand years from now will be using the same technologies we do, that human ingenuity has reached its end with our generation—except, of course, that we *will* generate technological

innovations *overnight* to make the instant switch to renewables easily affordable, which is why of course no sane person fears that legally mandated shifts from inexpensive fossil fuels to renewable biofuels, wind, and solar energy will be physically unworkable and economically devastating.

*Environmentalist Thought: The Flight from Reason to Mysticism*

If you're beginning to get the sense that there's something fishy about environmentalists' thought processes, you're right. Environmentalism, as Dr. Vishal Mangalwadi points out in his lecture for [Resisting the Green Dragon](#), a DVD series produced by the Cornwall Alliance, is in mad flight from reason to mysticism. Rejecting the divine Logos revealed to us in Scripture and the incarnate Son of God, the Logos that lightens everyone who comes into the world, environmentalism seeks knowledge from mystical, intuitive interaction with nature. Thus, "One itinerant environmentalist conducts 'workshops' in which participants are urged to remember their alleged evolutionary history by rolling on the ground and imagining what their lives were like as dead leaves, slugs, and lichens."<sup>1</sup> And Arne Naess, one of the chief framers of the Deep Ecology worldview and the coiner of the phrase *deep ecology*,<sup>2</sup> specified that his work consists not "of philosophical or logical argumentation" but is "primarily intuitions."<sup>3</sup> The focus on intuition in the Deep Ecology movement explains, in part, why feminism allies itself with environmentalism, particularly with Deep Ecology and animal rights. Feminism rejects science outright—or redefines it—because science operates in a manner not sufficiently sensitive to "feminine thought patterns" because it is a fundamentally "masculine" discipline. "Science's insistence on being tough, rigorous, rational, impersonal, and unemotional is intertwined with men's gender identities," says feminist theologian and animal rights theorist Carol Adams, author of *The Sexual Politics of Meat: A Feminist-Vegetarian Critical Theory*.<sup>4</sup>

The irrationality of environmentalist thought has even been formalized. Taking their cue from postmodernism, with its relativism and deconstructionism, which sees communication not as conveying truth but as exerting power, many leading environmentalists, especially some at the center of global warming alarmism, have embraced something called "post-normal science," a practice first defined and promoted in the 1960s primarily by philosophers of science [Jerome Ravetz](#) and Silvio Funtowicz. (It's no coincidence, by the way, that, according to the Wikipedia article on him, "Ravetz grew up in a left-wing family and although never a member of the American Communist Party he was what was then called a fellow traveler.")

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<sup>1</sup>Bidinotto James Bidinotto, "Environmentalism: Freedom's Foe for the '90s," *The Freeman*, 40:11 (November 1990), 409-420, at 410; citing Lindsay Van Gelder, "It's Not Nice to Mess with Mother Nature," *Ms.* (January/February 1989), 60.

<sup>2</sup>Cited in Evan Eisenberg, "The Call of the Wild," *New Republic* (April 30, 1990) p. 31. Naess apparently thinks so little of human beings that he cares little whether there are a hundred million or a billion of them, since elsewhere he suggests an ideal population of a billion; see Petr Borrelli, "The Ecophilosophers," *The Amicus Journal* (Spring 1988) 32-3.

<sup>3</sup>David Rothenberg, "Introduction: Ecosophy T: from intuition to system," in Arne Naess, *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle: Outline of an Ecosophy*, trans. and rev. David Rothenberg (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 2.

<sup>4</sup>Kim Bartlett, "Of Meat and Men: A Conversation with Carol Adams," *The Animals' Agenda* (October 1990), 13).

## *The Dangerous Phenomenon of Post-normal Science*

It's important that you understand post-normal science, for if you don't, you won't understand the vast public controversies now raging about various environmental claims—especially about alleged dangerous manmade global warming.

Eva Kunseler, a proponent of post-normal science, defined “normal science” this way:

[Normal] Science is a logic inductive process leading to theory formulation, while all the way put through critical tests that have been deductively derived from the theory; [philosopher of science Karl] Popper's critical rationalist concept of science is an objective progression toward the truth. . . . The term *normal science* refers to the routine work of scientists within a paradigm; slowly accumulating knowledge in accord with established theoretical assumptions. . . . The paradigm is enlarged and frontiers of knowledge and techniques pushed forward. The exercise of scholarly activities is defined by the dominance of the Mertonian [named for philosopher of science Robert K. Merton] CUDOS [C-U-D-O-S] norms of science. They include:

- (C)ommunalism—the common ownership of scientific discoveries, according to which scientists give up intellectual property rights in exchange for recognition and esteem;
- (U)niversalism—according to which claims to truth are evaluated in terms of universal or value-free criteria;
- (D)isinterestedness—according to which scientists are rewarded for acting in ways that appear to be selfless;
- (O)rganized (S)kepticism—all ideas must be tested and are subject to structured community scrutiny.

Kunseler then goes on to describe post-normal science:

The concept of post-normal science goes beyond the traditional assumptions that science is both certain and value-free . . . . The exercise of scholarly activities is *defined by the dominance of goal orientation* [emphasis added] where scientific goals are controlled by political or societal actors . . . . Scientists' integrity lies not in disinterestedness but in their behavior as stakeholders. Normal science made the world believe that scientists should and could provide certain, objective factual information. . . . The guiding principle of normal science—the goal of achievement of factual knowledge—must be modified to fit the post-normal principle. . . . For this purpose, post-normal scientists should be capable of establishing extended peer communities and allow for 'extended facts' from non-scientific experts . . . . In post-normal science, the maintenance and enhancement of quality, rather than the establishment of factual knowledge, is the key task of scientists . . . . Involved social actors must agree on the definition of perceptions, narratives, interpretation of models, data and indicators . . . . scientists have to contribute to society by learning as quickly as possible about different perceptions . . . instead of seeking deep ultimate knowledge.

People right at the top of the pecking order of alarmist climate-change “scientists” know exactly what they’re doing—post-normal science, not real science. Consider self-professed socialist Mike Hulme, founding director of the Tyndall Centre and Professor of Climate Change (note that title—not of climate, but of climate change) at the University of East Anglia, home of the Climatic Research Unit, of Climategate infamy. ([Climategate](#) was the release of thousands of emails, computer codes, and other documents among leading climate alarmist scientists that revealed that they were fabricating, exaggerating, cherry picking, and suppressing data, intimidating dissenting scientists, blackballing journal editors willing to publish the dissenters, corrupting the peer review process, refusing to share data and code with fellow scientists on request even when required to by the journals in which they published, and violating American and British Freedom of Information Acts. Climategate has contributed considerably to the decline in public belief in dangerous manmade global warming.) The author of [Why We Disagree About Climate Change: Understanding Controversy, Inaction, and Opportunity](#), Hulme prepared climate-change scenarios and reports for the British government, the European Commission, the United Nations Environment Program, the United Nations Population Division, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) (as a lead author for the chapter on “Climate scenario development” for the 2001 Assessment Report and a contributing author on several other chapters), and the World Wildlife Fund. [Says Hulme](#) of “post-normal” science:

Climate change seems to fall in this category. . . . The IPCC is a classic example of a post-normal scientific activity.

Within a capitalist world order [which Hulme wants to replace with socialism], climate change is actually a convenient phenomenon to come along.

The danger of a “normal” reading of science is that it assumes science can first find truth, then speak truth to power, and that truth-based policy will then follow. . . . exchanges often reduce to ones about scientific truth rather than about values, perspectives and political preferences.

. . . “self-evidently” dangerous climate change will not emerge from a normal scientific process of truth-seeking. . . . [S]cientists—and politicians—must trade truth for influence. What matters about climate change is not whether we can predict the future with some desired level of certainty and accuracy. . . .

The function of climate change I suggest, is not as a lower-case environmental phenomenon to be solved. . . . It really is not about stopping climate chaos. Instead, we need to see how we can use the idea of climate change—the matrix of ecological functions, power relationships, cultural discourses and materials flows that climate change reveals—to rethink how we take forward our political, social, economic and personal projects over the decades to come.

Climate change also teaches us to rethink what we really want for ourselves. . . . [M]ythical ways of thinking about climate change reflect back to us truths about the human condition.

. . .

The idea of climate change should be seen as an intellectual resource around which our collective and personal identifies and projects can form and take shape. We need to ask not what we can do for climate change, but to ask what climate change can do for us. . . . Because the idea of climate change is so plastic, it can be deployed across many of our human projects and can serve many of our psychological, ethical, and spiritual needs.

. . . climate change has become an idea that now travels well beyond its origins in the natural sciences. . . . climate change takes on new meanings and serves new purposes. . . . climate change has become “the mother of all issues,” the key narrative within which all environmental politics—from global to local—is now framed. . . . Rather than asking “how do we solve climate change?” we need to turn the question around and ask: “how does the idea of climate change alter the way we arrive at and achieve our personal aspirations . . . ?”

In other words, “post-normal science,” shorn of the commitments of “normal science” to transparency, disinterestedness, falsifiability, and skepticism, is the guise under which climate change and any other issue can become the vehicle for promoting predetermined social and political goals. The warfare between post-normal science and real science is important not just in the debate over “climate change,” but in all kinds of issues in which science interfaces with policy. Like the pseudo-Christian cults that borrow vocabulary from Christianity but redefine all the terms, post-normal science is simply the application of rhetoric borrowed from the sciences to policy debates, cloaking one particular policy preference with the authority of “science,” and successful at doing so only to the extent that policy makers and the public are ignorant of the fact that post-normal science isn’t science at all. In the final analysis it is no different from what physicist Richard Feynman in 1974 called “cargo cult science,” that is, “work that has the semblance of being scientific, but is missing ‘a kind of scientific integrity, a principle of scientific thought that corresponds to a kind of utter honesty.’”

This technical foray into the unmaking of science by post-normal science concludes this rather quick sketch of the environmentalist world view and its view of God, creation, humanity, sin, and salvation. Now consider the Biblical, Christian understanding in contrast.

### **The Biblical World View: God, Creation, Humanity, Sin, Salvation, and Ethics**

For Biblical Christianity, God is the infinite, eternal, and unchangeable personal Spirit

6. who created all other things out of nothing (Hebrews 11:3) and man in His image (Genesis 1:26–28), all for His own glory (Psalm 19:1–6; Revelation 4:11; Ephesians 1:11–12);
7. who by making man in His image, equipping him with logos, the “light that lightens everyone who comes into the world” (John 1:9), set him apart from all the rest of nature by making him—not mountains or oceans or plants or animals or microbes—capable of reason;
8. who stipulated that man should, and would, multiply, fill the Earth, subdue it, and rule over it as His representative and steward (Genesis 1:28);

9. whose Logos not only is the Light that lightens everyone who comes into the world (John 1:1, 9) but also instilled order into creation that reflects the orderliness of His mind and so can be understood and controlled for their benefit by those who bear His image (Proverbs 8:22–36);
10. who on completing His creation declared it all “very good” (Genesis 1:31);
11. who judged all mankind in the person of its covenant head, Adam, for Adam’s disobedience (Romans 5:12–19), cursed the ground over which He had given Adam authority (Genesis 3:17–19), and yet also provided an atonement for sin for all who trust in His promised Anointed One (Genesis 3:21; John 1:29);
12. who promised to sustain His the Earth and all its cycles on which life depends by His own power (Genesis 8:22) until the Day when He will judge all mankind by His law, a law written not only on stones at Sinai but also in the heart of every man, and by His gospel (Acts 17:30–31; Romans 2:16; Revelation 20:11–15);
13. who revealed that gospel first in His warning to Satan in the Garden of Eden that the Seed of the woman would crush his head (Genesis 3:15), and then again and again through His covenant promises to Adam and Eve, to Noah, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, to Moses and the people of Israel at the exodus and again on their entry to the Promised Land with Joshua, to David and Solomon, and ultimately “in these last days . . . in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world” (Hebrews 1:1–2).

Neither Earth nor the whole universe is God, or [\(as feminist eco-theologian Sally McFague thinks\), the body of God](#). Nature not only doesn’t know best; nature doesn’t know—anything. Earth is not best untouched by human hands but subdued and ruled by them—particularly when those human hands are guided by rational thought based on Biblical world view, theology, and ethics. Land and seas, lakes and rivers, mountains and prairies, forests and wetlands, coral reefs and deep ocean trenches, mammals and reptiles and amphibians and fish and birds, all these things are wonderful, but they are not all equal, and none of them is equal to men and women, boys and girls, who alone are the image and glory of God. Charged by environmentalists with anthropocentrism—as if there were something *obviously* wrong with that!—Christians respond by embracing, but clarifying, the charge: Yes, we are anthropocentric, but an even deeper center is God Himself, who made all things for Himself. We recognize concentric circles of priority: God at the very center, human beings next, sentient life next, non-sentient life next, and nonliving things next. Reminded that the “Earth is Jahweh’s, and all it contains” (Psalm 24:1), we say “Amen” and add what God said through another psalmist: “The heavens are the heavens of Jahweh, but the Earth He has given to the sons of men” (Psalm 115:16).

We find our ethics spelled out in God’s moral law, written by His own finger on the tablets at Sinai (Deuteronomy 4:13) and on the heart of every man (Romans 2:14–15). We define sin not by the shifting standards of cultural and scientific relativism but by the law of God, for “sin is lawlessness”(1 John 3:4). And we find salvation not in recycling or buying carbon offsets (the indulgences of our day) but in trusting Christ, and Him alone, and thus having our sins imputed to Him and His righteousness imputed to us (Romans 3:19–28; 4:1–8).

As God’s representatives charged to subdue and rule the Earth and everything in it (Genesis 1:28), we recognize that we are accountable to our Creator and Lord, and that our subduing and



ruling should reflect His creative work recorded in Genesis 1:1–25, displaying wisdom and righteousness and holiness. Dominion is no license for *abuse*, but neither is stewardship a barrier to lawful *use*—lawful being defined, as we have said in [The Cornwall Declaration on Environmental Stewardship](#), not by environmentalists’ whims but by God’s moral revelation in the Ten Commandments and their amplification throughout Scripture.

Indeed, taking note of the difference between the Garden of Eden, a specific and restricted locale in which God put Adam and told Him to cultivate and guard it (Genesis 2:1–15) and the rest of the Earth, outside the Garden, which He told Adam and Eve to fill, subdue, and rule (Genesis 1:28), and, taking seriously also God’s curse on the ground and His expulsion of our first parents from the Garden, we recognize that, after the Fall and the Curse our original mandate to cultivate and guard the Garden and to subdue and rule the Earth continues, with this clarification: that we are, by subduing and ruling, to be bringing more and more of the Earth into greater and greater similarity to the Garden, knowing all along that perfection will come only with the New Heaven and New Earth brought in by the return of Christ to receive His perfected Bride, the Church, when “He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain,” for “He who sits on the throne [says], ‘Behold, I am making all things new’” (Revelation 21:1–5).

We do not embrace the over-realized eschatology of utopianism that thinks we can achieve perfection now (for example, by being able to drill for oil or mine for coal with zero risk of accidents). Neither do we embrace the view that because God will eventually judge this world and make the New Heaven and New Earth, we are free to abuse the present Earth now. We are answerable to Him for how we use it. We recognize that we shall never live in a risk-free world. But we embrace the freedom, and the responsibility, to use the Earth and all that is in it for God’s glory and mankind’s benefit, and we believe that so far as we fulfill the *Great Commission* to make disciples of all nations and teach them to obey all that God has commanded we will thereby enhance mankind’s ability to fulfill the *Dominion Commission* to subdue and rule the Earth—a connection that the Cornwall Alliance is promoting with what we call [Project 128 to 28](#), linking Genesis 1:28 with Matthew 28:19.

In light of these and other Biblical teachings, as the [The Cornwall Declaration on Environmental Stewardship](#) puts it, we aspire to a world in which

- Human beings care wisely and humbly for all creatures, first and foremost for their fellow human beings, recognizing their proper place in the created order.
- Objective moral principles—not personal prejudices—guide moral action.
- Right reason (including sound theology and the careful use of scientific methods) guides the stewardship of human and ecological relationships.
- Liberty as a condition of moral action is preferred over government-initiated management of the environment as a means to common goals.
- The relationships between stewardship and private property are fully appreciated, allowing people’s natural incentive to care for their own property to reduce the need for collective ownership and control of resources and enterprises, and in which collective action, when deemed

necessary, takes place at the most local level possible.

- Widespread economic freedom—which is integral to private, market economies—makes sound ecological stewardship available to ever greater numbers.
- Advancements in agriculture, industry, and commerce not only minimize pollution and transform most waste products into efficiently used resources but also improve the material conditions of life for people everywhere.

None of these aspirations can be fulfilled, however, apart from the gospel of Jesus Christ, whose righteous life and sacrificial death reconcile to God all who trust in Him, and who renews the minds of believers to understand God's Word and God's world, enabling them to become good stewards of God's abundant gifts. To that end, we commit ourselves to the two great mandates of Scripture: the Dominion Mandate of Genesis 1:28 to multiply and fill the Earth and to subdue and rule over it, and the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19 to make disciples of all nations, teaching them to obey all that God has commanded.