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GREENING AMERICA'S VIRTUES

The United States likes to present itself as a global leader, yet, when it comes to tackling what is arguably the greatest crisis facing humanity, global climate change, we have fallen woefully short of that idea. The nation's failure to adequately address the climate crisis is in part the product of an American vision of the good life predicated on endless cycles of consumption that drives environmental destruction and contributes to a changing climate. This vision, partnered with flat-out denial of environmental problems by some politicians, and the inability to cross ideological divides point to something profoundly amiss with America's values and politics. Stalemate, not reason, rules the day. Given the warnings by the international scientific community as well as the Department of Defense, the inability, or refusal, of the United States government to seriously address global climate change is both a political and moral failure. How can this be fixed? Can it be fixed?

It can be repaired. The answer lies in the republican tradition of virtue. The United States was founded as a republic. Republicanism was the ideology of the Enlightenment.<sup>1</sup> The term 'republic' derives from the Latin *res publica*, which Knud Haakonssen explains was the "public realm of affairs that people had in common outside their familial lives" and has traditionally been known as the common weal, or commonwealth. A republic also referred to the "institutional structures of public life" according to which the public would participate in the ways that government structures were organized.<sup>2</sup> With an emphasis on the common good and citizen participation, a republic was considered the most just form of government. Achieving justice, the virtue of the state, required virtue from the citizens and their representatives.

The republican form of government has its roots in Greek philosophy, particularly within the thought of Plato and

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<sup>1</sup> Wood, Gordon S. 1998. *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, viii.

<sup>2</sup> Haakonssen, Knud. 1995. "Republicanism." In *A Companion to Contemporary Political Philosophy*, edited by Robert Goodin and Philip Pettit, 568-74. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 569.

Aristotle. Central to their ideas of creating a just government was the concept of virtue, those qualities, traits and dispositions that contribute to the formation of an excellent character. According to Aristotle, virtue is a necessary condition for an individual to achieve a happy, flourishing life. Likewise, virtue is a necessary condition for a republic to achieve both justice and the common good.

Some philosophers have argued that virtues are an essential component of any environmental ethic, which Ronald Sandler defines as the norms of action or norms of character that govern our interaction with the environment, and have begun the work of forming an environmental virtue ethic.<sup>3</sup> Environmental virtues are the appropriate dispositions, qualities or character traits humans need to cultivate in order to have beneficial interactions and relationships with the environment and non-human animals.<sup>4</sup> As Sandler observes, any meaningful changes to environmental policies and practices will require a transformation in human habits towards the environment. As such, a virtuous character is necessary for progressing right action and behavior.<sup>5</sup> A complete environmental ethic must include virtue. Environmental virtue can provide the necessary wisdom in applying action-guiding rules and principles to particular situations. Environmental virtue may also aid in weighing conflicting moral demands or arbitrating between a plurality of value sources and justifications.<sup>6</sup>

In her book *Dirty Virtues*,<sup>7</sup> Louke Van Wensveen reviewed environmental literature, including works by social ecologists, deep ecologists, animal rights activists, creation theologians, ecofeminists and environmental philosophers published after 1970 and identified 189 virtues and 174 vices.<sup>8</sup> The virtues Van Wensveen discovered were largely drawn from the traditional Aristotelian concept of virtues. However, she claims that ecological virtue language differs from this tradition in that some of the traditional vices and virtues are reinterpreted and reversed. For example, mastery is a traditional virtue with positive connotations; in environmental literature mastery over nature is seen as a primary cause of environmental crises and as

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<sup>3</sup> Sandler, Ronald. 2005. "Introduction: Environmental Virtue Ethics." In *Environmental Virtue Ethics*, edited by Ronald Sandler and Philip Cafaro, 1-12. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, 2.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, 6.

<sup>7</sup> Van Wensveen, Louke. 2000. *Dirty Virtues: The Emergence of Ecological Virtue Ethics*. Amherst, NY: Humanity Books.

<sup>8</sup> Van Wensveen 2000, 163.

such is a vice.<sup>9</sup> The environmental virtue language unearthed by Van Wensveen is an emerging, diverse discourse in which different thinkers stress different virtues and vices. Yet, it is a distinct moral vocabulary in which certain virtues like benevolence, care, compassion, frugality, gratitude and vices such as anthropocentrism, arrogance, greed and ignorance, constitute the moral landscape.<sup>10</sup> She claimed that in her research she had yet to discover a work of “ecologically sensitive philosophy, theology, or ethics that does not in some way incorporate virtue language.”<sup>11</sup> Virtue, it would seem, is an inherent part of the language of environmental ethics.

Environmental virtue ethicists such as Geoffrey Frasz, Philip Cafaro and Ronald Sandler have largely focused on extending classical virtues such as benevolence, gratitude, compassion and moderation to environmental concerns. They have also examined the lives of persons who could be considered environmental exemplars and the virtues that they embodied. Environmental virtue ethicists have also investigated the ways in which the natural world informs human character. What has largely been missing is the possibility of deriving environmental virtues from civic virtues. In her review of some of the primary publications in the field of environmental virtue ethics, Marilyn Holly observed environmental virtue theory lacks an accompanying political theory.<sup>12</sup> John Barry commented the “language of civic republicanism has been largely absent from debates within green politics and theories of the politics and ethics of sustainability.”<sup>13</sup> Given that virtue is a necessary requirement for the success of a republic and that virtue is a primary component of environmental ethics, its absence in political and ethical debates is surprising.

A possible explanation for this is that modern, liberal governments like that of the United States have focused on rights rather than virtue. This tends to emphasize the democratic process, liberty, and freedom rather than the character of the citizen. Rights are essential in protecting the interests of minority communities from what Alexis de Tocqueville called “the tyranny of the majority.” Yet, de Tocqueville also recognized the importance of traditional customs and virtues, what he called

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 32.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 11.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, 5.

<sup>12</sup> Holly, Marilyn. 2006. "Environmental Virtue Ethics: A Review of Some Current Work." *Journal of Agriculture and Environmental Ethics* 19, no. 4 (August): 393.

<sup>13</sup> Barry, John. 1999. *Rethinking Green Politics: Nature, Virtue, and Progress*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 5.

"the habits of the heart," in tempering individualism and the tyranny of the majority. As such, rights are not free from virtue; rights are supported by virtue.

Brian Treanor notes much of the literature on environmental virtue ethics focuses on personal rather than public virtues. He suggests that the reason political virtues have largely been ignored is because it is easier to determine how an individual may act versus an entire citizenry. Furthermore, he notes there is a contemporary inclination to treat environmental virtues as private personal choices that may contribute to one's personal happiness but are "neither essential for flourishing nor social in scope."<sup>14</sup> However, Treanor argues that public virtues, in particular political virtues that he identifies as a subset of public virtues, are the "keystone" for environmental virtue ethics. Without these political virtues, Treanor claims, "the whole edifice of environmental virtue is doomed to fall."<sup>15</sup>

A few environmental virtue ethicists have taken steps to rectify the lack of political virtue in environmental virtue ethics. By using Plato's *Republic* as a model, Melissa Lane argues that we must recognize ourselves as citizens of eco-republics who take responsibility in creating a common good in which we all share.<sup>16</sup> Treanor also contributes by arguing the importance of recognizing that humans live in community, often in several overlapping communities at once, so the individual's flourishing cannot be isolated from the communities in which they live. Treanor argues "environmentalism must come to be thought of in terms that are explicitly and unavoidably political" because "in a commons, either we are all saved or none of us is saved."<sup>17</sup>

I believe we can develop a more comprehensive environmental virtue ethic that is informed by the civic virtues required of American citizens and which is also consistent with our religious past and spiritual present. In his 1984 book *After Virtue*. Alasdair MacIntyre argued that moral philosophy must begin in historical and social tradition. He wrote:

I inherit from the past of my family, my city, my tribe, my nation, a variety of debts, inheritances, rightful expectations and obligations. These

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<sup>14</sup> Treanor, Brian. 2010. "Environmentalism and Public Virtue." *Journal of Agriculture and Environmental Ethics* 23, no. 9 (March): 9-28.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid, 10.

<sup>16</sup> Lane, Melissa. 2012. *Eco-Republic: What the Ancients Can Teach Us about Ethics, Virtue, and Sustainable Living*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

<sup>17</sup> Treanor 2010, 21.

constitute the given of my life, my moral starting point. This is in part what gives my life its own moral particularity.<sup>18</sup>

Building on MacIntyre's idea of grounding an ethic in history and social tradition, it can be demonstrated that there is an American tradition of virtue that can be utilized to inform a uniquely American environmental virtue ethic. By examining the primary writings of American politicians, religious leaders, and intellectuals a set of core American virtues can be identified. After discovering these virtues within the American tradition, they can be compared with the virtues identified by Van Wensveen to see if they can also serve as environmental virtues, demonstrating that civic virtues can also be environmental virtues. My hope is that this will provide a path forward from the current political stalemate regarding environmental policy. Encouraging virtues in American citizens can both strengthen our government and lessen our impact on the natural world.

Perhaps the best place to begin exploring the tradition of American virtue is with Benjamin Franklin, the epitome of the self-made man. Franklin believed the key to his success, and therefore success for anyone, could be found in the practice of virtue. He devoted an entire chapter of his autobiography to his pursuit of virtue and identified thirteen virtues to be practiced in the pursuit of moral perfection including temperance, silence, order, resolution, frugality, industry, sincerity, justice, moderation, cleanliness, tranquility, chastity, and humility.<sup>19</sup>

Although he clearly identified as a deist who rejected the idea of divine revelation, Franklin believed that "religious practices were beneficial because they encouraged good behavior and a moral society."<sup>20</sup> Indeed, that was the role many of the founders believed churches served the fledgling republic – instilling virtues into the citizenry. This is the reason Franklin supported a religious revival, the First Great Awakening, which swept through the colonies in the 1730s and 40s. The Great Awakening would help set the stage for American democracy. At its center was the evangelical preacher Jonathan Edwards who, like Franklin, would teach the necessity of virtue.

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<sup>18</sup> MacIntyre, Alasdair. 1984. *After Virtue*. 2nd edition. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame, 220.

<sup>19</sup> Franklin, Benjamin. (1771) 1997. "Autobiography." In *Benjamin Franklin: Autobiography, Poor Richard, and Later Writings*, edited by J. A. Leo LeMay, 565–729. New York, NY: The Library of America., 664 - 665.

<sup>20</sup> Isaacson, Walter. 2004. *Benjamin Franklin: An American Life*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 46.

Although Edwards is more often than not associated with the hellfire and eternal damnation described in his sermon *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*, that is not entirely representative of his thought. Edwards viewed the natural world as evidence of God's eternal love and creativity. Since God's creation was good, the natural world could be a source of virtue. In his *The Nature of True Virtue*, Edwards wrote that true virtue "consists in benevolence to Being in general...it is that consent, propensity and union of heart to Being in general, that is immediately exercised in a general good will."<sup>21</sup> George Marsden explains that for Edwards, a loving God was at the center of creation who was constantly pouring forth His love to His creation so "the highest good is to return that love to God. If we truly love God, then we should also love what God loves, which is everything in creation, excepting evil or the negation of love."<sup>22</sup> According to Edwards then, to live virtuously is to love God's creation. We should love others, and the natural world, regardless of personal benefit or self-interest. Furthermore, in "Beauty of the World", Edwards suggests that the beauty of the natural world mirrored the beauty of virtue:

The fields and woods seem to rejoice, and how joyful do the birds seem to be in it. How much a resemblance is there of every grace in the fields covered with plants and flowers, when the sun shines serenely and undisturbedly upon them. How a resemblance, I say, of every grace and beautiful disposition of mind; of an inferior towards a superior cause, preserver, benevolent benefactor, and a fountain of happiness...How great a resemblance of a holy and virtuous soul in a calm serene day.<sup>23</sup>

By emphasizing the goodness of creation and that true virtue lies in benevolence towards the natural world, Edwards's theology can help inform an environmental virtue ethic that can appeal to American religious sentiments. Perhaps appealing to the founder of American evangelicalism and his theocentrism can help counter a strain of anti-environmentalism that runs through contemporary evangelical thought and help open a dialogue with the evangelical community.

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<sup>21</sup> Edwards, Jonathan. 1995. *A Jonathan Edwards Reader*. Edited by John Smith, Harry Stout, and Kenneth Minkema. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 245.

<sup>22</sup> Marsden, George M. 2008. *A Short Life of Jonathan Edwards*. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 129.

<sup>23</sup> (Edwards [1725] 2003,14-15).

Because Jonathan Edwards died in 1758, did not live to see the American Revolution. There is no denying, however, that he was influential in the creation during subsequent decades of the American character and culture. The Revolution was considered a moral as well as a political revolution. In the 1760s and 1770s, enormous attention was paid to the issue of virtue, which was seen as more political and historical than theological (Gaustad 1993, 54). However, the political and religious observance of virtue cannot be so easily separated. Perhaps due to their religious heritage, many colonists held the view that there was something uniquely virtuous about Americans. Some viewed the success of the revolution as evidence of divine favor. Given the opportunity to create a government, there was little question that Americans would attempt to construct a republic. All of the colonies had republican forms of government based on the republics of England.<sup>24</sup> The question was whether Americans were truly virtuous enough to maintain a republic. As such, virtue was on nearly every American mind even before the daunting task of creating a national government presented itself to a fledgling nation.

The writers of the constitution drew upon over 2,000 years of political philosophy that taught that for a republic to succeed, citizens and elected officials had to be persons of virtue. Many colonists held the view that there was something uniquely virtuous about Americans, evidenced by the success of the revolution. Given the opportunity to create a government, there was little question that Americans would attempt to construct a republic. Indeed, the founders believed they were creating a republic of virtue led by virtuous men chosen by virtuous people to represent them.

Most Americans know the apocryphal story of a six-year-old Washington telling his father that he could not tell a lie after admitting to using a hatchet that he received as a gift to hack at a cherry tree. It is a didactic tale used to demonstrate Washington's honesty, and also that virtue was an innate characteristic of the president. The tale is pure fiction though, invented by one of Washington's earliest biographers who wanted to portray Washington as a moral exemplar for Americans

Although the story of the cherry tree is an American myth, Washington's virtues are apparently based in reality. Gordon Woods writes that "Washington's genius, Washington's

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<sup>24</sup> Wood, Gordon S. 1998. *The Creation of the American Republic, 1776-1787*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 133.

greatness, lay in his character” and that it was his “moral character that set him off from other men.” Washington was praised as being the “living embodiment of all the classical republican virtues the age was eagerly striving to recover” which included “restraint, temperance, fortitude, dignity, and independence.”<sup>25</sup> These were also arguably on display when Washington declined a third term as president, thus initiating one of the most important of American traditions - the peaceful transfer of power between elected leaders. His surrender of power and the integrity of his character would lead to comparisons with Cincinnatus, a classical Roman politician who was known for his virtue.

Thomas Jefferson, elected president in 1800, idealized America as a pastoral republic with a virtually endless frontier where democracy was intimately connected to the land and the virtues of its agrarian citizens. Nature, virtue, and equality were all connected in Jefferson’s thought. He envisioned a pastoral America where independent farmers would tame wild nature by transforming it into cultivated farmland whereby, they would be instilled with the virtues necessary for the citizenry of a democratic republic. In his *Notes on the State of Virginia* he wrote that “those who labour in the earth are the chosen people of God, if ever he had a chosen people, whose breasts he has made his peculiar deposit for substantial and genuine virtue.”<sup>26</sup> Farming inculcates the virtues of independence and industry, along with “patience, resourcefulness, tranquility of mind, love of order, moderation in material expectations, as well as physical and spiritual well-being” which are all fortified by sustained contact with nature.<sup>27</sup>

While the president is to serve as a moral exemplar, the moral failings of the founding fathers, especially Jefferson ought to be acknowledged. The American dream of opportunity and self-sufficiency was largely made possible through slavery, stolen land and genocide. Jefferson consistently railed against the institution of slavery, although he owned slaves himself and impregnated one six times. He feared what the institution of slavery entailed for the nation’s future “I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just: that his justice cannot sleep for ever.”<sup>28</sup> He believed that attitudes towards slavery were

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid, 42.

<sup>26</sup> Jefferson [1787] 1984, 290.

<sup>27</sup> Yarbrough, Jean. 1998. *American Virtues: Thomas Jefferson on the Character of a Free People*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 88.

<sup>28</sup> Jefferson [1787] 1984, 289.



changing and hoped that eventually slaves would be emancipated by a change of consciousness rather than by force. Jefferson preferred harmony, not war, with the indigenous population; however, he prized their lands over peace. Despite the moral failings of the founders, I think it is important not to throw the virtuous baby out with the viscous bathwater. Virtue is not about perfection, but moral progress. The republic we were given is a more perfect union, not a perfect one, and we can still learn valuable moral lessons from flawed individuals.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, changes to the nation's land were so profound that American diplomat George Perkins Marsh warned that the unbridled exploitation of natural resources was having a devastating and permanent impact on the land. Fortunately, there were intimations of a fledgling environmental ethic, including, in addition to Marsh, the American Transcendentalist movement centered on Ralph Waldo Emerson that stressed a relationship to nature. Emerson's concern for nature was developed in the context of mystical insights grounded in the natural world. Sydney Ahlstrom described Emerson as a "new kind of romantic pagan" who abandoned his religious heritage and traditions for a "pantheistic view of man, nature and God."<sup>29</sup> Nature, God and mind were one for Emerson as well as the source of virtue.

Fellow Transcendentalist Henry David Thoreau, who was mentored by Emerson, remained grounded to the earth while hoeing beans during his two-year stay at Walden Pond. Thoreau observed nature with the eye of a scientist while writing as a prophet of the wild, pointing out the nation's moral failures and criticizing the turn towards industrialization. According to Philip Cafaro, Thoreau's sojourn at Walden Pond was an experiment to "become a better person defining this broadly to include increased knowledge, an enriched experience, character development, creative achievement, and greater personal integrity" making *Walden* a work of virtue ethics.<sup>30</sup> Cafaro identified over one hundred virtues lauded by Thoreau in *Walden* including bravery, civility, compassion, contentment, economy, gratitude, humility, independence, industry, justice, prudence, purity, self-knowledge, self-reliance, simplicity and wakefulness.<sup>31</sup> Although most think of Thoreau as separating

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<sup>29</sup> Ahlstrom, Sydney E. 2004. *A Religious History of the American People*. 2nd edition. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 604.

<sup>30</sup> Lineweaver, Tara T., Richard I. Naugle, Alyce M. Cafaro, William Bingham, and Hans O. Lüders. "Patients' perceptions of memory functioning before and after surgical intervention to treat medically refractory epilepsy." *Epilepsia* 45, no. 12 (2004): 45.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, 54-55.

himself from society to live on the shore of Walden Pond, he did not shy away from the political, having authored the influential essay *Civil Disobedience* which called on Americans to be persons of good character and conscience before being good citizens. A few decades after the publication of *Walden*, John Muir would write of the glory of the American wilderness. In terms of his spirituality, Muir has been identified as “a pantheist, a Transcendentalist, a mystic, an ecocentric evolutionist, an idiosyncratic Protestant Christian, or a post-Christian Romantic.”<sup>32</sup> While each representation has its merit, perhaps it is best to say that for Muir nature was his religion. For Muir, the canyons, mountains, and valleys of the American wilderness were sacred spaces where one could develop environmental virtues including reverence, awe, wonder, humility, respect and an ecological consciousness. Although these virtues are grounded in his religious experiences, Muir’s attempts to preserve the wilderness required the classical republican virtue of political participation and as such, Muir is a role model for environmental advocacy, perseverance, and preservation. But like the founders, his treatment of the indigenous populations who were on the land he wished to preserve was morally problematic, so nuance is required. Together, Emerson Thoreau, and Muir can provide an environmental virtue ethic that also informs civic virtues for Americans who may be spiritual, but less religiously inclined and particularly for those who find their spirituality rooted in nature.

If there was anyone who shaped American attitudes towards preservation and conservation more than Muir and Gifford Pinchot who served as the first head of the US Forest Service, it would be Theodore Roosevelt. Roosevelt was a naturalist and prolific writer who connected the health of the republic with the health of its environment. He was hard pressed to put pen to paper without invoking virtue. Roosevelt insisted that character, which he defined as the “assemblage of virtues, active and passive, of moral qualities,” was the true measure of nation and citizen.<sup>33</sup> The virtues that lead to national greatness included “sobriety, steadfastness, the sense of obligation toward one’s neighbor and one’s God, hard common-sense, and, combined with it, the gift of generous enthusiasm toward whatever is

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<sup>32</sup> Gatta, John. 2004. *Making Nature Sacred: Literature, Religion, and Environment in America from the Puritans to the Present*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 149-150.

<sup>33</sup> Roosevelt, Theodore. (1900) 2009. "Character and Success." In *The Strenuous Life: Essays and Addresses*, edited by Janet Baine Kopito, 53–57. Dover Thrift edition. Mineola, NY: Dover, 53.

right.”<sup>34</sup> In a 1910 speech titled “Citizenship in a Republic” Roosevelt identified “self-restraint, self-mastery, common sense, the power of accepting individual responsibility and yet of acting in conjunction with others, courage and resolution” as necessary republican virtues.<sup>35</sup> Other virtues extolled by Roosevelt include efficiency, honesty, altruism, justice, moderation, respect, self-reliance, patriotism, hope, frugality, strength, and courage, all of which appear on Van Wensveen’s list of environmental virtues. Roosevelt also demonstrated the environmental virtues of long-range thinking, prudence, ecological sensibility, clarity of vision, endurance, stewardship and collective action

Roosevelt is also responsible for beginning a Progressive Movement that sought reform in American politics. Contemporary with this was the Social Gospel, which was evangelicalism “awakened to the possibilities of a social salvation.”<sup>36</sup> There had long been a social aspect to evangelicalism in the United States, especially in the form of the Great Awakenings that always had “social, political, and economic overtones and results.”<sup>37</sup> However, this connection was made more explicit with the Social Gospel which had as its aim the remaking of society by gaining control of social forces and breaking the bonds of evil. The chief concern of the Social Gospel was the virtue of justice so the common good was emphasized in conjunction with the salvation of souls. With their deep concern of battling poverty, the ideas of Social Gospel can be especially pertinent to addressing environmental and social justice.

Virtues got Americans through the Great Depression and World War II. In his inaugural address, Franklin Delano Roosevelt explicitly called on the “old and precious moral values” to guide the recovery from the Depression. He invoked the virtues of honesty, boldness, hope, optimism, gratitude, courage, discipline and wisdom. “This is preeminently the time to speak the truth, the whole truth, frankly and boldly,” he told Americans. Although he claimed, “only a foolish optimist can deny the dark realities of the moment,” he assured Americans that the nation “will endure as it has endured, will revive and will prosper.”

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<sup>34</sup> Roosevelt, Theodore. (1900) 2009. "Grant." In *The Strenuous Life: Essays and Addresses*, edited by Janet Baine Kopito, 97-105. Dover Thrift edition. Mineola, NY: Dover, 102-103.

<sup>35</sup> Roosevelt, Theodore. (1910) 2004. "Citizenship in a Republic." In *Theodore Roosevelt: Letters and Speeches*, edited by Louis Auchincloss, 778-98. New York: Literary Classics of the United States, 783.

<sup>36</sup> White, Ronald, and C. Howard Hopkins. 1976. *The Social Gospel*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 3.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*, 5.

Because “nature still offers her bounty and human efforts have multiplied it,” he reminded Americans they “have still much to be thankful for.” No problem, he said, is unsolvable if faced “wisely and courageously.”<sup>38</sup>

In his fireside chats FDR invoked the virtues of honesty, boldness, hope, optimism, gratitude, courage, discipline, wisdom, patience, and cooperation. Likewise, during World War II it was believed that virtue at home would win the war abroad. Americans were urged to come together, to set aside individualism for the common good and embrace the virtues of determination, sacrifice, self-denial, industriousness, courage, endurance, loyalty, and cooperation. All of the virtues of the Great Depression and the Second World War can also serve as environmental virtues.

Much more can be said. My focus in this brief survey has been on prominent individuals, which has unfortunately excluded the voices of women and persons of color, though for a fuller exploration of a tradition of virtue in the United States, it is essential they not be ignored. No accounting of the moral tradition of the United States would be complete without including persons such as Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., George Washington Carver, sojourner truth, Jane Addams, and Rachel Carson. Recognizing the limitations inherent in a shorter work, the purpose of this essay was to demonstrate a tradition of virtue in the United States that is informed by politics, religion, and nature. Although it is easy to think that Americans have abandoned the republican virtues for the vices of consumerism, the importance of civic virtues have never been entirely lost on the majority of Americans. The language of virtue can cut across political divides and encourage interreligious dialogue. It is an integral ethic that connects individual, community, and environment. The American tradition of virtue can guide political and community engagement as well as environmental activism. I believe it is by reviving and greening the American tradition of virtue that has runs through the course of American history, that we can best meet the political, social and environmental challenges of the twenty-first century and beyond.

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<sup>38</sup> F. Roosevelt, *Inaugural Address*, [1933] 2001.

