

Religion and the Environment

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Conservationism, Preservationism, and Environmentalism

Convergent and Divergent Theological Foundations

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Introduction

[1] Historically, conservationism has been a dominant force in American culture. Since its inception in the late nineteenth century, conservationism became a mainstay of natural resources management and agricultural practice and has been taught as a scientific methodology in schools of forestry and colleges of agriculture across the nation for many years. Moreover, conservationism as an ethic and practice was promoted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture through its agricultural extension services throughout the U.S., as was the case with the U.S. Forestry Service regarding the management of national and state forests.

[2] Conservationism as a value and practice has also been included in public school curriculums, particularly in rural school districts, and can be found readily within so called high school “Ag” classes, incorporated into after-school programs sponsored by 4-H Clubs, or introduced via initiatives of the Future Farmers of America. This emphasis upon “stewardship of the land” was a common feature of public school curriculum in many parts of the nation well before “environmentalism” emerged as a curricular emphasis. In fact, even today, (primarily in rural school districts) course offerings with a “conservationist” and

“environmentalist” perspective co-exist together, despite the fact that they have divergent intellectual histories and are based upon differing philosophical and theological premises.

[3] A similar observation can be made regarding the place of conservationism and environmentalism in the modern university. Conservation-oriented programs are commonplace among large historically land-grant institutions, and are typically housed in forestry and agricultural programs. Meanwhile, across campus “environmentalist” programs thrive in Colleges of Arts and Sciences. Indeed, faculty may teach and conduct research in a parallel fashion – concerning themselves with common interests and concerns – while approaching problems with a differing set of assumptions and beliefs.

[4] Sadly, there appears to be little dialogue across these two schools of thought, and in fact, from the perspective of some environmentalists, conservationism represents an outmoded and unfashionable approach to human interaction with the natural world (Davis) or, at minimum, an approach that needs to be radically “reconstructed” (Minteer and Manning). However, these divergent worldviews of environmentalism and conservationism continue to co-exist and even thrive intellectually. In fact, there may be some reason to believe that with the emergence of radical approaches to environmentalism, environmental conservationism may be making a philosophical comeback – perhaps assuming a more prominent role in the dialogue over how to protect the planet’s natural resources.

[5] Some critics of the new environmentalism, such as Walter Starck, refers to modern environmentalism as a “new vision of conservation” that has taken hold of some of the attributes of a religion and is in many respects disconnected from the natural world that it purports to protect. Starck asserts that the original vision of environmentalism was “outcome-oriented,” whereas now environmentalism is primarily “problem-oriented.” Accordingly, he asserts that within such environmentalism: “Little distinction is made between the real and apparent vs. the hypothetical. Invocation of the precautionary principle justifies all possibilities, so long as they are detrimental.”

[6] So characterized, he asserts this “new conservationism” assumes a pessimistic view toward human progress and the capacity of people to interact with the natural world without despoiling it. The conclusion that naturally flows from such a dour worldview is that humans are by definition harmful to the environment, and in the interest of protecting natural environments they should be physically segregated from nature and thwarted in their efforts to extract natural resources. This worldview stands in sharp contract to the dominant conservationist vision that is optimistic regarding the capacity of humans to interact with natural environments – buoyed as it is by a long history of scientific research and technological innovation.

[7] The contrast between these two worldviews is most clearly illustrated in Bjorn Lomborg’s *The Skeptical Environmentalist* where he systematically challenges a whole set of widely held beliefs that humans are progressively destroying the earth’s environment. Lomborg’s book generated a firestorm of criticism from environmentalists directed toward the book’s publisher, Princeton University Press (Harrison). In fact, so severe was the criticism that Princeton University Press’ publisher, Peter J. Dougherty, responded with an article of his own clarifying the editorial process that produced the book. However, Lomborg’s book was not an intellectual apparition or a unique divergence in ecological thought. In fact, *The*

Skeptical Environmentalist was consistent with a larger body of literature that critically contrasts the ecological worldviews of modern environmentalists with those of conservationists and others who are seeking to improve the human condition and the state of the world – to include nature (Bast, Hill, and Rue; Leal and Anderson; Huber 2000; Gottlieb; Kerr; Simon; Shellenberger and Nordhaus). Starck’s critique is likewise reflective of an emergent trend among some opinion makers, academics, policymakers, and politicians to distance themselves from the term “environmentalist” (Woiceshyn; Bonner), preferring instead to embrace the much older and more established moniker of “conservationist” (Huber 1998; Elder; Lapointe; Freyfogle; Mulder and Copolillo; Sanford; Thomas).

[8] Regardless of how the popularity of each approach may wax or wane in public discourse, the fact remains that both approaches to the environment persist. This paper explores the philosophical and theological foundations for each of these worldviews, as well as the “preservationist” philosophy that predated modern environmentalism, and seeks to clarify what assumptions and policies might logically emanate from each, as well as suggesting which groups of individuals may be most likely to adopt one perspective or the other. Finally, the paper provides a prognosis regarding the future of both philosophical schools of thought as each seeks to protect natural environments in different ways and for different reasons.

The Conservation Movement

[9] Arguably, the origins of the U.S. conservation movement began in the mid to late nineteenth century and were very much stimulated by President Abraham Lincoln’s endorsement of three acts that served to significantly shape subsequent events: An Act to Establish a Department of Agriculture (1861), the Morrill Act (1862) that established land-grant colleges in every state, and the Homestead Act (1862) that promoted the settlement of public lands. These important pieces of legislation were augmented with the passage of the Hatch Act (1887) that established a cooperative relationship between the USDA and the land-grant colleges, the Forest Service Act (1891) that established the national forest system and the U.S. Forest Service within the USDA, and the Smith-Lever Act of 1914 that provided for agricultural extension education via the USDA and the state land-grant institutions.

[10] However, despite the important legislative underpinnings for natural resource conservation, the official origins of the conservationist movement in the U.S. are generally linked to the efforts of George Perkins Marsh, a Vermont Congressman, who first called the nation’s attention to the destructive impact of human activity upon natural resources in two important books: *Man and Nature* (1864) and *The Earth As Modified by Human Action* (1882). Perkins, who is often cited as the “father of the conservation movement,” possessed a passion for nature that was shared by a number of other leaders historically associated with environmental conservationism, including Frederick Law Olmsted (who began the process of preserving Niagara Falls), photographer Thomas Moran, travelogue writer Clarence King, and nature essayist John Burroughs. Marsh died in 1882, and by 1893, the movement’s energy was fueled by the likes of historian Fredrick Jackson Turner with his monumental work, *The Significance of the Frontier in American History* (1893), as well as by the work of a young naturalist by the name of John Muir.

[11] By 1898, the undisputed leader of American conservationism was a forester by the name of Gifford Pinchot. Pinchot was appointed by President Theodore Roosevelt to the position of Chief of the U.S. Forest Service where he gained significant prominence as an advocate for the protection of the nation's natural environments. In fact, according to Roosevelt, "Gifford Pinchot is the man to whom the nation owes most for what has been accomplished as regards the preservation of the natural resources of our country" (20).

[12] Pinchot, who was an admirer of George Perkins Marsh – having studied Marsh's 1882 book – is widely credited for introducing Taylor-inspired "scientific management" principles into the profession of forestry, as well as ushering in the modern era of scientific conservation that would be embodied in the nation's land-grant universities and federal soil and forest services. Pinchot popularized the term "conservation of natural resources" – applying the utilitarian principles of scientific management to the nation's timber, land, and water resources for the benefit of humankind (Scheuering: 31-44). He also coined the concept of "wise use" of natural resources (Pinchot, 1905a), a concept that later would be associated with the anti-environmental sentiments of political and religious conservatives (Hendricks).

[13] The conservation movement was likewise influenced by soil conservationist W. J. (William John) McGee – deemed by many to be the conservation movement's "chief theoretician" (Helms). Like Pinchot, McGee also served in the administration of President Theodore Roosevelt. In fact, he was employed in the Bureau of Soils while Pinchot was Chief of the U.S. Forest Service. The two worked cooperatively to organize the first Conference of Governors on Conservation of Natural Resources in Washington, DC (1908).

[14] After collaborating with McGee on this conference, Pinchot described McGee as "the scientific brains of the conservation movement all through its early critical stages" (1947: 359). Alternately hailed as "the chief theorist of the conservation movement" (Hays: 102), McGee and Pinchot are generally credited with inventing the term "conservation" to address the collective utilization and preservation of forests, waters, soils, and minerals. In this regard, conservation pioneers like Pinchot and McGee shared a common interest in the preservation of natural resources with the so-called "preservationists" of that era who were more narrowly interested in resource preservation from human despoliation. What distinguished conservationists from this competing school is their interest in applying scientific management principles such as those developed by Frederick Taylor to the utilization of natural resource for human benefit.

[15] Throughout his career, McGee accomplished for the Bureau of Soil what Pinchot achieved for the Forestry Service – namely the introduction of scientific management techniques and approaches designed to insure soil fertility while minimizing wind and water erosion. McGee principally accomplished this goal via the introduction of improved soil management techniques and approaches to tilling and farming, and communicated these innovations via his bulletin *Soil Erosion*, as well as through a series of bulletins developed to assist farmers and landowners in managing groundwater resources (Helms).

[16] McGee, who was also an archeologist, hydrologist, and anthropologist, went on to head the U.S. Geological Society, where his scientific investigations helped document the movement of vast glacial ice sheets during the preceding ice age. He was also a founder and

President of the U.S. National Geographic Society. McGee's anthropological and soil research studies were also renowned, with the publication of his 1898 book, *The Seri Indians*, and with the publication of his diaries, *Trails of Tiburon* (1895).

Theological Foundations of Conservationism

[17] According to his biographer, F. W. Hodge, W. J. McGee was a brilliant though largely self-educated man who was never affiliated with any religious faith. He approached his life in a practical and analytical fashion. Consequently, nothing that is known about him to date allows for any investigation into the relationship between his conservation philosophy and any underlying religious or spiritual values. Quite frankly, it would appear as though he did not possess any of these sentiments.

[18] The values of Gifford Pinchot, on the other hand, were very much informed by religious beliefs and tenets. Pinchot was raised in a Huguenot-Presbyterian household. As a child he regularly attended the local Presbyterian Church, attended Sunday school, and participated in Bible study classes. These early religious experiences proved to be formative for Pinchot and resulted in a lifetime habit of Bible study, church worship, and stewardship – i.e., caring for and preserving the divine gift of nature.

[19] Philosophically, Pinchot assumed a decidedly anthropocentric perspective, believing that the world's natural resources were created for human use and for the purpose of alleviating human poverty and suffering (Naylor). These values are what most clearly distinguish Pinchot as a "conservationist." However, they also reflect theological values associated with Christian stewardship that likewise contribute to his conservationist values. Pinchot was the product of the social gospel movement that emerged at the end of the nineteenth century from a range of theologically disparate mainline Protestant denominations. Social gospel adherents were influenced by the parables and miracles of Jesus, believing that they had a Christian responsibility to improve social conditions for the poor, the sick, and the disenfranchised in society.

[20] A prominent advocate of the social gospel movement, economist Richard T. Ely asserted, "Christianity is primarily concerned with this world, and it is the mission of Christianity to bring to pass here a kingdom of righteousness" (53). To that end, he considered economics as a tool for mounting "a never-ceasing attack on every wrong institution, until the earth becomes a new earth, and all its cities, cities of God" (73), thereby eliminating misery in the world and restoring an egalitarian community consistent with the righteousness of God.

[21] Ely's influence paled by comparison to that of Baptist pastor Walter Rauschenbusch who served as the movement's principal theologian. Regarded as the "Father of the Social Gospel Movement," Rauschenbusch pastored German Baptist churches in Louisville, Kentucky and in the "Hell's Kitchen" community of New York before becoming a theology professor at Rochester Theological Seminary in 1902. Rauschenbusch is best remembered for his 1908 publication, *Christianity and the Social Crisis*, and his 1917 book, *A Theology for the Social Gospel* (Minus). Within this latter work, Rauschenbusch succinctly summarizes his vision of the social gospel and its importance for the nation:

The social gospel is the old message of salvation, but enlarged and intensified. The individualistic gospel has taught us to see the sinfulness of every human heart and has inspired us with faith in the willingness and power of God to save every soul that comes to him. But it has not given us an adequate understanding of the sinfulness of the social order and its share in the sins of all individuals within it. It has not evoked faith in the will and power of God to redeem the permanent institutions of human society from their inherited guilt of oppression and extortion. Both our sense of sin and our faith in salvation have fallen short of the realities under its teaching. The social gospel seeks to bring men under repentance for their collective sins and to create a more sensitive and more modern conscience. It calls on us for the faith of the old prophets who believed in the salvation of nations (5-6).

[22] Gifford Pinchot incorporated Ely's economics and Rauchenbush's theological values into his conservationist ethic – an ethic instilled in him since childhood by his millionaire lumberman father James Pinchot. The elder Pinchot experienced guilt in later life for having spoiled the forests to make his fortune. To that end, he encouraged his son to become a forester. Gifford openly embraced his father's conservationist ethics and enrolled in Yale University.

[23] While at Yale, the younger Pinchot continued the religious habits he had learned at home. He served as a Sunday school teacher and deacon for his class, and regularly led prayer meetings. Furthermore, he considered becoming a missionary and upon graduation nearly accepted a position with the YMCA (Naylor). Ultimately, he decided to accept his father's challenge to become a forester, and upon leaving Yale to pursue this vocation, Pinchot converted to the Episcopal Church and it is probably within this denomination that he became acquainted with the ideas of Walter Rauschenbusch and the social gospel movement.

[24] While eschewing the call to professional Christian ministry or service, Pinchot became one of what Robert Crunden referred to as "ministers of reform," who approached their secular professions with a religious zeal grounded in the social gospel movement and the progressive values of the era. This theological movement's influence upon Pinchot was reflected in a variety of ways, including his decision to open his New York forestry office in the United Charities Building, which also housed the nation's largest Christian tract supplier, several women's rights organizations, and a variety of other socially progressive organizations seeking to improve the plight of the nation's children and the poor (Naylor). It was also reflected in his regular attendance at worship and in his reading habits – particularly his daily Bible reading and his interest in such literary works as Henry Drummond's *Natural Law in the Spiritual World*. However, the imprint of the social gospel movement is most explicitly reflected in Pinchot's own words, such as those he penned in his famous book, *The Fight for Conservation*, where he pointedly asserted that the purpose of conservation is "to help in bringing the Kingdom of God on Earth" (1910: 95). In this regard, Pinchot served as one of the era's principal intellectual leaders who helped introduce scientific management as a new "secular religion" embodying the progressive agenda as reflected in the social gospel movement (Nelson).

[25] Pinchot's definition of conservation was clear and straightforward, seeking to promote "the greatest good for the greatest number for the longest time" (1910: 188). Moreover, he asserted, "natural resources must be developed and preserved for the benefit of the many and not merely for the profit of a few" (1909: 46). Pinchot espoused this ethic even in the face of entrenched property rights, asserting that the "people shall get their fair share of the benefit which comes from the development of the country which belongs to us all" (1909: 47). Such words belie the influence of the social gospel movement upon Pinchot's values and reflect an egalitarian worldview consistent with his theological mentor Walter Rauschenbusch, whose vision was "to redeem the permanent institutions of human society from their inherited guilt of oppression and extortion" (1917: 5).

[26] While Rauschenbusch and others associated with the social gospel movement derived their theology from a variety of New Testament sources, perhaps no scripture reflects their values more clearly than the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7). Of the many issues addressed in that sermon, none were more important to the theology of the social gospel movement than the following themes:

Salt and Light: denoting the need for the faithful to reflect their faith in their good actions (i.e. letting their "light shine") and to preserve (as salt preserves) their faith in God in the face of all provocations and hardships (Matthew 5:13-16).

Love One Another: calling believers to extend love and support to all people regardless of their worthiness to be loved (Matthew 5:43-48).

The Kingdom of God: exhorting the faithful to pursue the righteousness of God in all things and to work to achieve the "kingdom of God," and in so doing, inoculate oneself from fear of what tomorrow may bring (Matthew 6:33-34).

Dependency Upon God: encouraging believers to expect God to meet their needs and to be prepared to extend this generosity to others (Matthew 7:7-11).

The Golden Rule: commanding followers to extend themselves to others precisely as they would extend themselves to satisfy their own needs (Matthew 7:12).

Pinchot clearly reflects these theological values in his egalitarian conservation ethic.

[27] However, other theological values consistent with Pinchot's conservationism emanate from the Old Testament. For example, in Genesis humans are directed by God to be stewards of the world. In Genesis 1:28, humans are commanded to "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth," and in Genesis 2:15, God, "took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to till it and keep it."

[28] These verses have received mixed interpretations. The first verse has been interpreted to mean that humans are divinely ordained to rule the planet and thereby obtains the right to "subdue" and exercise "dominion" over nature's resources. This highly unpopular view of Christian stewardship has been criticized by Lynn White. In contrast, the second verse

suggests that humans were created to care for the world and its resources by tilling the soil and vouchsafing the earth's productivity. While the former theologically informed value has been widely deemed to be exploitative, the latter notion has historically been construed as protecting and sustaining nature and enhancing the welfare of human society. Moreover from a theological perspective, this "serve and keep" injunction is ultimately redemptive, since it serves to renew humankind's relationship with one another, nature, and the divine.

[29] The divine requirement to serve and keep the earth has become the theological foundation for the modern Christian concept of stewardship, and has served as a principle rationale supporting a number of traditional Jewish and Christian practices, including the weekly celebration of the Sabbath and the practice (derived from Deuteronomy 8:10 and Leviticus 25:3-5) of allowing fields to lie fallow every seventh and fiftieth year in recognition of God's bounty and in the interest of renewing the soil. Given his many years experience as a Sunday-School student and teacher, Pinchot was undoubtedly familiar with these theological expectations – expectations that can be readily identified in his philosophy and approach to natural resource management and conservation.

[30] These Old Testament inspired stewardship values were also shared by George P. Marsh in his important book, *The Earth as Modified by Human Action*, when he observes that it was only "recently" (the latter nineteenth century) that,

public attention has been half awakened to the necessity of restoring the disturbed harmonies of nature, whose well balanced influences are so propitious to all her organic offspring, and of repaying to our great mother the debt which the prodigality and the thriftlessness of former generations have imposed upon their successors – thus fulfilling the commands of religion [i.e. the Genesis injunctions] and of practical wisdom, to use this world as not abusing it (1882: 5).

Moreover, he seems to anticipate the "wise use" philosophy that Pinchot would articulate later when he uses theological metaphors to caution against hastily cutting forests to grow crops. According to Marsh,

he whose sympathies with nature have taught him to feel that there is a fellowship between all God's creatures; love the brilliant ore better than the dull ingot, iodic silver and crystallized red copper better than the shillings and the pennies from them by the coiner's cunning, a venerable oak-tree than the brandy-cask whose staves are split out from its heart-wood, a bed of anemones, hepaticas, or wood violets than the leeks and onions which he may grow on the soil they have enriched and in the air they made fragrant – he who has enjoyed that special training of the heart and intellect which can be acquired only in the unviolated sanctuaries of nature, "where man is distant, but God is near" – will not rashly assert his right to extirpate a tribe of harmless vegetables barely because their products neither tickle his palate or fill his pocket; and his regret at the dwindling area of the forest solitude will be augmented by the reflection that the nurselings of the woodland perish with the pines, the oaks and the beeches that sheltered them (1882: 173-74).

The telling difference between the theological orientations of Marsh and Pinchot is that while both share the Genesis derived value of divinely mandated stewardship and consider the world to be the product of a creative, omnipotent God, only Pinchot embraces the social gospel values of fairness and equity among human beings and the anticipation that through the application of scientific principles that the “kingdom of God” can be ultimately realized for all people.

[31] Even so, both conservationists agree that (1) human beings have the capacity to despoil the earth, (2) their actions in this regard are permanently reflected in nature, and (3) these sins against nature do not go unnoticed by God. As Marsh so eloquently observes:

Every human movement, every organic act, every volition, passion, or emotion, every intellectual process, is accompanied with atomic disturbance, and hence every such movement, every such act or process, affects all the atoms of universal matter. Though action and reaction are equal, yet reaction does not restore disturbed atoms to their former place and condition, and consequently the effects of the least material change are never cancelled, but in some way perpetuated, so that no action can take place in physical, moral, or intellectual nature, without leaving all matter in a different state from what it would have been if such action had not occurred. Hence, to use language which I have employed on another occasion: there exists, not alone in the human conscience or in the omniscience of the Creator, but in external nature, an ineffaceable, imperishable record, possibly legible even to created intelligence, of every act done, every word uttered, nay, of every wish and purpose and thought conceived, by mortal man, from the birth of our first parent to the final extinction of our race; so that the physical traces of our most secret sins shall last until time shall be merged in that eternity of which not science, but religion alone assumes to take cognizance (1882: 375-76).

The Preservationist Movement: Environmentalism’s Intellectual Predecessor

[32] Marsh and Pinchot’s ideological competitor was the naturalist John Muir who is popularly considered to be the founder of the “preservationist movement” that preceded the development of contemporary “environmentalism” (Wellock). Whereas conservationists generally believed that natural resources were to be rightfully employed in a scientifically efficient fashion for human benefit and pleasure, preservationists argued that natural places and their resources should generally be left unblemished and undisturbed by human contact or enterprise. While preservationism is construed by some as a movement that emerged along with or soon after the organization of the conservation movement, other observers have argued that preservationism as an American value actually preceded conservationism as the federal government made every effort to stymie private appropriation of the land (Oravec).

[33] John Muir and Pinchot’s student, Aldo Leopold, are often assigned to the preservationist camp. Some scholars, such as Samuel Hays, make a sharp distinction between these two environmental philosophies. Hays shares this author’s perspective that the conservation movement is rooted in strong spiritual values indicative of the strongest features of the national character. However, he goes on to assert that there is a marked

discrepancy between the moral rhetoric of the movement and its actions. While grounded in the social gospel movement, Hays suggests that what truly informs conservationism is “the gospel of efficiency” as reflected in Pinchot and McGee’s scientific management orientation. In effect, Hays argues that the conservation movement cynically employed the values of nationalism and the social gospel movement to influence the public regarding their political-economic agenda.

[34] While Hays considers conservationism of the early twentieth century as resource utilitarianism masquerading as a religiously-inspired moral movement, he perceives the preservationist movement of that era as diametrically in conflict with the conservationist agenda. Hays discerns an “unbridgeable gap” between the goals of dedicated preservationists, intolerant of any amount of environmental degradation, and those of conservationists who championed economic interests regardless of the cost to the environment. While there is widespread agreement that a significant philosophical difference existed between the two schools of thought, there are some who argue that in other respects, there may not have been a significant difference between the orientation of preservationists and conservationists. For instance, Charles Rubin observes that Muir and Leopold, who are generally recognized as being “preservationist” in their orientation, both referred to themselves as conservationists. Moreover, Rubin asserts that when the two camps are carefully compared, they actually have more in common with one another than one might expect. Consequently, these two philosophies may in fact constitute “two sides of the same coin” (x).

[35] Practically speaking, however, there were significant differences between the two schools of thought when it came to the business of extracting natural resources from protected wilderness lands that had been specifically sheltered from private ownership and use. On the one side stood the preservationists who wanted these lands maintained in their current state without further intrusion from humans. On the other side stood the conservationists who argued that it was possible to both maintain wilderness areas free of excessive human activity while simultaneously harnessing the natural resources to be found in wilderness areas for the benefit of the larger community. Nowhere did the differences between these two philosophical schools emerge more clearly than during the controversy over the damming of the Hetch Hetchy River to provide water for the citizens of San Francisco. It was this controversy that pitted the preservationist John Muir against the conservationist Gifford Pinchot.

[36] Pinchot’s position on the issue of using natural resources such as those in the Hetch Hetchy valley were clear: “timber, water, grass, minerals are all to be open to the conservative and continued use of the people. They must be used, but they must not be destroyed” (1905b: 4). Muir, on the other hand, argued that natural resources should remain inviolate to human interference. However, what is most remarkable about his defense of the Hetch Hetchy is how he uses theological language to repudiate the efforts of the conservationists to tap this river’s resources:

“Conservation, conservation, panutilization,” that man and beast may be fed and the dear Nation made great. Thus long ago a few enterprising merchants utilized the Jerusalem temple as a place of business instead of a place of

prayer, changing money, buying and selling cattle and sheep and doves; and earlier still; the first forest reservation, including only one tree, was likewise despoiled. Ever since the establishment of the Yosemite National Park, strife has been going on around its borders and I suppose this will go on as part of the universal battle between right and wrong, however much its boundaries may be shorn, or its wild beauty destroyed. . . That anyone would try to destroy [Hetch Hetchy Valley] seems, incredible; but sad experience shows that there are people good enough and bad enough for anything. The proponents of the dam scheme bring forward a lot of bad arguments to prove that the only righteous thing to do with the people's parks is to destroy them bit by bit as they are able. Their arguments are curiously like those of the devil, devised for the destruction of the first garden. . . These temple destroyers, devotees of ravaging commercialism, seem to have a perfect contempt for Nature, and, instead of lifting their eyes to the God of the mountains, lift them to the Almighty Dollar. Dam Hetch Hetchy! As well dam for water-tanks the people's cathedrals and churches, for no holier temple has ever been consecrated by the heart of man" (1912: 261-62).

[37] Such language refers to the New Testament stories of Jesus cleansing the temple of the money-changers as well as to the Genesis account of the first man and woman despoiling the Garden of Eden, thereby resulting in their banishment from paradise. From Muir's perspective, the conservationist practices in the early part of the twentieth century paralleled these biblical accounts of human avarice and irresponsibility. However, what is most interesting about Muir's use of these particularly biblical allusions is that Muir, unlike Pinchot, eschewed the traditional Christian worldview for a predominantly theistic and panentheistic worldview. Nevertheless, he uses traditional theological language to attack his ideological opponents. Then as now, theological language served a powerful role in influencing people's ecological ideas and actions.

Theological Foundations of Preservationism

[38] As noted earlier, Rubin suggests that despite the sharp differences to be observed between preservationists and conservationists regarding economically employing natural resources for the benefit of society, there may not be as much philosophical distance between the two orientations as may have been previously assumed. Perhaps a good example of Rubin's thesis can be observed when considering the different theological foundations of preservationism (as reflected in the work of Muir) versus conservationism (as reflected in the values of Pinchot and Marsh).

[39] Muir was reared in the Campbellite faith (the theological predecessor of today's Disciples of Christ denomination) that stressed a simple approach to faith designed to recreate the experience of the early church. He was compelled by his tyrannical father to attend church services and read the Bible in its entirety (R. Miller), and the failure to do so would result in the young Muir being whipped. Muir was also prohibited from reading anything other than books on the Christian faith. The inquisitive youngster, however, soon discovered that other families possessed libraries containing a variety of fiction and non-

fiction titles, so he began to make a habit of sneaking away to other families' homes to read, thereby broadening his intellectual horizons (Stoll).

[40] At length, Muir escaped his father's tyrannical influence entirely and attended the University of Wisconsin where he became fascinated with a variety of subjects, including science, literature, and philosophy. It was here that he began to read the works of Emerson, Thoreau, and Wordsworth. In fact, it was Emerson who introduced Muir to what would become a life-long habit of maintaining a journal of his thoughts and experiences. This habit would prove especially useful for his life-long vocation as a botanist.

[41] While in college, Muir was also introduced to the liberal Christian theology of William Ellery Channing, pastor of Boston's Federal Street church and one of America's early Unitarian Universalist leaders (Robinson). Throughout his college years, Muir remained a devout, though theologically more liberal, Christian even to the point of serving as president of the local YMCA in 1863 (Stoll). After leaving the university, Muir continued to develop intellectually, studying the works of geographer and naturalist Alexander von Humboldt, whose concepts regarding "cosmic unity" would later serve as the foundations upon which the Unity Christian movement would be established.

[42] As a young man, Muir experienced an event that served to shape his personal spirituality. He suffered an accidental injury to his right eye that left it permanently sightless and triggered an episode of temporary blindness in his other eye. This temporary loss of sight plunged Muir into a deep depression that was only relieved when the vision in his left eye returned. Muir interpreted his renewed sight as a gift from God, expressing his relief in a letter to a friend:

As soon as I got out into Heaven's light I started on another long excursion, making haste with all my heart to store my mind with the Lord's beauty and thus be ready for any fate, light or dark. And it was from this time that my long continuous wanderings may be said to have fairly commenced. I bade adieu to all my mechanical inventions, determined to devote the rest of my life to the study of the inventions of God" (1923: 155).

[43] Muir's experience of personal loss served to crystallize his sense of what had been missing in his previous religious experience. He became particularly concerned with how modern life and increasing American industrialization served to undermine the relationship of people with nature. Consequently, he championed the virtue of reconnecting people with nature as an antidote to the spiritual doldrums of his era, and characterized his own nature pilgrimages as being "carried of the spirit into the wilderness" – an expression which emanates from the book of Revelation (17:3).

[44] Given his academic and personal experiences, Muir steadily separated himself from his hard and demanding religious heritage, increasingly adopting a "spiritual" rather than a narrowly religious orientation. More specifically, he increasingly eschewed church sanctuaries as sites for his own personal worship, preferring instead the cathedral of nature. Moreover, he perceived that humans are embedded in the divine works of nature occupying "a small part of the one great unit of creation" (1923: 167). The following words from Muir, penned in a letter to friend Catharine Merrill, are illustrative of this orientation:

Rocks and waters, etc., are words of God and so are men. We all flow from one fountain Soul. All are expressions of one Love. God does not appear, and flow out, only from narrow chinks and round bored wells here and there in favored races and places, but He flows in grand undivided currents, shoreless and boundless over creeds and forms and all kinds of civilizations and peoples and beasts, saturating all and fountainizing all (1872).

[45] Muir's ideas reflected an interesting amalgam of "evangelical Protestantism, science, Romanticism and transcendentalism" (Stoll). This is clearly illustrated in Muir's choice of biblical allusions included in his attack on conservationists regarding the Hetch Hetchy dam. However, as his sense of spirituality developed and grew, he came to increasingly ground his experience of the divine in his direct encounters with nature and by comparison diminished the biblical foundations of his spirituality. This transition in orientation is beautifully illustrated in these words:

How little do we know of ourselves, of our profoundest attractions and repulsions, of our spiritual affinities! How interesting does man become considered in his relations to the spirit of this rock and water! How significant does every atom of our world become amid the influences of those beings unseen, spiritual, angelic mountaineers that so throng these pure mansions of crystal foam and purple granite (1938: 251-52).

The Spiritual Visions of Muir and Pinchot

[46] Comparing the spiritual visions of Muir and Pinchot is illustrative of differences between the theological foundations of preservationism and conservationism. Moreover, a comparison of the religious backgrounds of these two influential environmental leaders serves to reinforce Charles Rubin's assertion, "there is less than meets the eye to the distinction between preservationists and conservationists" (xi). Both men emerged from Protestant backgrounds steeped in traditional church worship and Bible study. However, a variety of factors served to engender the maturation of very different theological-spiritual orientations toward nature. For instance, Pinchot's spirituality was engendered within an affluent and nurturing home environment and his early professional endeavors as a forester – from schooling at Yale to service in the Roosevelt administration – were facilitated through the efforts of his father. Comparatively, Muir's family life occurred under conditions of financial stress on a subsistence farm. His father was tyrannical and often abusive of his son and failed to demonstrate any interest in his son's career development comparable to that exhibited by Pinchot's father.

[47] There were also significant theological differences between Pinchot and Muir's families. Pinchot's Presbyterian experience nurtured and facilitated his burgeoning vocational interests. By comparison Muir's strict Campbellite religious faith was an influence to be escaped rather than something to be incorporated into an adult spiritual sensibility. These differences in family faith experiences were reflected in profound differences in family nurture. Pinchot's family experience was nurturing and facilitative of his personal and intellectual development. When this family orientation was coupled with the family's optimistic and hopeful religious tradition, Gifford Pinchot's newly-acquired "social gospel" theology, and father James Pinchot's infectious commitment to environmental

conservationism, a redemptive theology of stewardship emerged in which conservationism was embraced as a means to redeem nature while realizing the Kingdom of God on earth. By comparison, Muir's dour and judgmental religious heritage produced a theology of retribution and punishment that did not lend itself to the development of a positive spiritual orientation toward nature and the world.

[48] Fortunately, Muir was to experience influences during his university and professional career that would serve as the foundations for a pro-environmental spirituality – though one that was largely independent of the church or organized religion. For Muir, redemption from his father's dour and pessimistic Christian faith would emerge from the works of Thoreau, Emerson, Channing, and Humboldt, as well as via his experiences exploring the forests, swamps, grasslands, and deserts of North America. The net effect was the emergence of a preservationist orientation toward nature – i.e., a desire to maintain wilderness areas and fully protect them from human interference or utilization – grounded in the pantheistic belief that the divine resided in nature and that all creatures (including humans) resided within the divine. This newly-found theological orientation was further reinforced and personalized for Muir by the experience of personal hardship. Having lost sight in his right eye following a mechanical accident and having overcome the temporary blindness in both eyes that followed this accident, Muir emerged with what he perceived to be a divine mandate to explore and celebrate the “inventions of God.”

[49] Pinchot, by comparison, also experienced a transformation in his faith, but in a fashion that rendered him more closely aligned to the theological foundations of his childhood. Pinchot's redemption-oriented reformed faith was influenced during young adulthood by Rauschenbusch and Ely to pursue the realization of the Kingdom of God on Earth rather than in eternity alone. Moreover, Pinchot was influenced by the philosophy of Henry Drummond whose work focused upon the importance of grace, truth, and most importantly love as universal spiritual laws to be incorporated into the lives of individuals. These philosophical and theological values were also tempered in Pinchot's life by hardship when his handicapped wife Laura died leaving him alone (C. Miller). It was during her illness and thereafter that Pinchot's faith became tempered by the spiritualist influences of theologian Emmanuel Swedenborg, noted philosopher Frederick Meyer, and the works of novelists James Lane Allen and Elizabeth Phelps, all of whom wrote about the persistence of the life of the spirit beyond death – an experience Pinchot reports having with his late wife thirty-eight days following her death (Bradley: 207).

[50] It is an irony that while these two environmental leaders emerged from Protestant Christian roots and by different circuitous routes both eventually embraced a spiritualist approach to their relationship with nature and the world, they eventually assumed divergent positions on the use of nature. Pinchot remained dedicated to a utilitarian stewardship orientation that was grounded in the social gospel movement, Taylorism (based on the work of Frederick Taylor), and the optimism of scientific and technological innovation and progress. Muir remained true to a spiritual and preservationist philosophy that called for a philosophical reorientation away from the trappings of urban life and the industrial revolution and toward the role and place of man and nature, as well as a pantheistic emphasis upon the presence of the divine in nature and the place of humankind within the natural world and within the divine.

[51] Ultimately, Pinchot remained Christian in orientation and practice – adhering to a biblically derived and reinforced philosophy of “tilling and keeping” that is consistent with an environmental conservationist philosophy. Muir, on the other hand, became theistic in his theological orientation and moved beyond any Christian derived sense of stewardship of the “till and keep” variety (Williams). Although he too called himself a conservationist and quoted scripture in defense of his values, he came to value natural places for their own sake and to question seriously the place of humans in nature. In the end, rather than adhering to a “till and keep” credo, he advocated that humans simply “keep” natural resources as they had found them and as God had created them.

From Preservationism to Environmentalism

[52] Aldo Leopold serves as a transitional figure in the emergence of modern environmentalism. Although some have identified Leopold as a conservationist (Cafro; Vaughn), I would argue that Leopold is effectively the first environmentalist. While he too referred to himself as a conservationist – defining conservation as “a state of harmony between men and land” (1949: 243) – his land ethic serves to distinguish his philosophy and values from his mentor, Gifford Pinchot, and from the preservationist philosophy of Muir. Those familiar with Leopold’s work recognize this well-known summary of the land ethic:

A thing is right only when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the community; and the community includes the soil, water, fauna and flora, as well as the people (1949: 225).

However, a less notable comment of Leopold’s may be equally important:

A land ethic, then, reflects the existence of an ecological conscience, and this in turn reflects a conviction of individual responsibility for the health of the land. Health is the capacity of the land for self-renewal. Conservation is our effort to understand and preserve this capacity (1949: 221).

[53] What is significant about this quote is how Leopold asserts “the existence of an ecological conscience” that would appear to exist independently from human beings and to require a human commitment to understand and assume responsibility for living in relationship to it. Arguably, from Leopold’s perspective this process of understanding and responsibility constitutes conservationism. However, this is a form of conservation that is philosophically different from that envisioned by Pinchot and McGee. While acknowledging that the land had an economic value, Leopold’s land ethic is essentially not utilitarian. In fact, Leopold was specific in clarifying his position on this issue:

It is inconceivable to me that an ethical relation to land can exist without love, respect, and admiration for land, and a high regard for its value. By value, I of course mean something far broader than mere economic value; I mean value in the philosophical sense (1949: 223).

Likewise, caring for the land is not a divine mandate – religion played no part whatsoever in Leopold’s life, despite the fact that he grew up in a nominally Lutheran home. Rather his ethic was grounded in the concept of the land itself (by which he metaphorically refers to nature-at-large) possessing a conscience independent of that possessed by humans.

[54] Theologically speaking, this is a very different vision than either that of Pinchot or Muir. For Leopold, there is *no* clear theological foundation for his “conservationism.” Leopold’s son, Luna, who speculated that perhaps his father was deistic in his values, observes that while his father was cognizant of “a mystical supreme power that guided the Universe,” such a power “was not a personalized God. It was more akin to the laws of nature. His religion came from nature” (Meine: 112).

[55] While there is no specific theological link between Leopold’s land ethic and Christian influenced conservationism, Leopold was influenced by a prominent conservationist and horticulturist of his time, Liberty Hyde Bailey, whose values were steeped in Christianity. Quotes from Bailey’s *Holy Earth* appeared in some of Leopold’s notebooks and were included in his *Game Management*. Bailey criticized religion that placed God beyond nature noting,

Our traditional idea of God as a ruler who sits on a distant throne and manages the universe is another expression of our unsympathy with nature, because we put God above, beyond and outside nature (1910: 26).

[56] Bailey’s conservation philosophy, which impressed Leopold sufficiently to warrant inclusion in his journals, includes the following assertion:

Man is given the image of the creator, even when formed from the dust of the earth, so complete is his power and so real his dominion: And God blessed them: and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. One cannot receive all these privileges without bearing the obligation to react and to partake, to keep, to cherish, and to co-operate (1915: 6).

[57] So conceived, Bailey provides a theologically derived ethic of obligation to the earth that Leopold would effectively incorporate into a “religion-free” statement of his land ethic. Based upon the notes and quotes from Bailey found in Leopold’s journals, it would appear that he also had reservations about the utility of Christian theology as applied to nature. This concern is well articulated by Bailey when he observes,

Our religion [i.e. Christianity] is detached. We come out of the earth and we have a right to the use of the materials; and there is no danger of crass materialism if we recognize the original materials as divine and if we understand our proper relation to the creation, for then will gross selfishness in the use of them be removed. This will necessarily mean a better conception of property and of one’s obligation in the use of it. We shall conceive of the earth, which is the common habitation, as inviolable. One does not act rightly toward one’s fellows if one does not know how to act rightly toward the earth (1915: 3).

[58] However, Bailey makes another assertion, part of which it would seem Leopold incorporated into his environmental philosophy. He alludes to the biblical book of Genesis

and its assertion that “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth” and suggests that because

. . . the formation of the created earth lies above and before man, and that therefore it is not man’s but God’s. Man finds himself upon it, with many other creatures, all parts in some system which, since it is beyond man and superior to him, is divine (1915: 5).

[59] Leopold’s land ethic reflects this idea that since humans and all other creatures belong to “some system” which is “beyond” and “superior” to humankind that this larger system is by definition “divine” – regardless of the presence of a sentient, purposeful, and all-powerful God. According to Luna Leopold, this characterizes his father’s spiritual orientation. It would seem that as far as Leopold was concerned nature itself was divine – grounded as it was in “a mystical supreme power that guided the Universe.”

[60] Leopold’s religion, if indeed he had one, emanated from the land itself – nature herself – which he perceived as being in possession of a conscience, and the process of understanding that conscience requires one to “think like a mountain” (1949: 129). In recent years increasing attention has been devoted to this portion of Leopold’s land ethic, particularly through the efforts of Bryan G. Norton, Steward Pickett, and Mary Cadenasso. “Thinking like a mountain” entailed adopting a scalar reference point that Leopold describes as involving human time, ecological time, and geological time. Consequently “thinking like a mountain” entailed setting human time scales to one side and imagining the environment from the perspective of a mountain that exists in geological time. The consequence of such a vantage point is a perspective in which near- or mid-term human gains are considered within the context (scale) of the elements of the ecosystem that exist over a much longer time frame. Only from such a perspective, Leopold believes, can humans imagine what is needed to maintain the health and well being of ecosystems.

[61] According to Norton, “learning to think like a mountain is learning to think pluralistically: it is not to stop thinking economically, but it is to start thinking in terms of long-term ecological *impacts in addition to economic impacts*. It is to adopt a more complex model of nature, and to learn to evaluate impacts on multiple scales” (Norton 2006: 13). This is the unique contribution of Leopold that distinguishes him from conservationists and preservationists of his time. He drew upon the value base of these philosophies that were grounded in Judaism, Christianity, and deist theology, interpreted nature as having a conscience and value independent of human beings, determined that this worth and conscience obligated humans to respect and preserve nature, and thereafter provided a practical philosophical and ethical paradigm for relating to nature. Leopold’s land ethic, stripped as it is of its theological intellectual heritage, calls upon humans to value nature for its own sake and to assume a scalar perspective that is more complex and far-sighted than might be dictated by short-term human desires.

[62] In the years since Leopold came upon the environmental scene, many other names have come to be associated with environmentalism, including Rachel Carson, Paul Ehrlich, J. Baird Callicot, Wendell Berry, Holmes Rolston, III, James Lovelock, Arne Naess, and George Sessions. Without exception these environmentalists have approached environmental philosophy from the perspective of Leopold’s land ethic, and each in their

own way demonstrates how to “think like a mountain.” Moreover, they have done so without specifically identifying their ideas with any specific organized religion (with the notable exception of Wendell Berry and Holmes Rolston, III whose deep philosophical linkages to traditional Christianity more nearly render them conservationists rather than environmentalists (Engler; Triggs; Pevear).

[63] That is not to say that, like Muir, some of these environmentalists (particularly Lovelock, Naess, and Sessions) are not deeply spiritual (though in a distinctly non-Judeo-Christian fashion). In fact, of the “environmentalist” schools popular today, Naess and Session’s “deep ecology” is most closely akin to Muir’s spiritually infused “preservationism.” However, with the exception of Berry and Rolston, not only do none of the contemporary environmentalists demonstrate any significant ideological or theological relationship to organized religion, they are generally indifferent if not hostile toward Western religion as an organized institutional entity that promulgates theological doctrines and behavioral expectations. In short, the overwhelming majority of those associated with “environmentalism” do so in a fashion not dissimilar to the manner that Leopold asserted with his land-ethic.

Diminishing Theological Influences among Environmental Ideological Groupings

[64] It would appear that modern environmental philosophy has evolved and progressively moved beyond its Judeo-Christian theological roots – transitioning through theism, spiritualism, mysticism, and other Eastern religious influences such as Buddhism. Today it is evolving into either a predominantly secular ethic stripped of any religious or theological baggage or a spiritual orientation that is independent of any organized religion.

[65] However, this is not to ignore the reality that “conservationism” has persisted as an environmental ideology, and that many conservationists arrive at this environmental ethic by way of their Christian adherence to environmental stewardship. In fact, the issue of global warming has stimulated the environmental sensibilities of countless Christian evangelicals. Subsequently, a number of environmental books have begun to appear on the shelves of evangelical Christian bookstores such as Dale and Sandy Larsen, *While Creation Waits: A Christian Response to the Environmental Challenge*, and Matthew J. Sleeth, *Serve God, Save the Planet: A Christian Call to Action*. Moreover, a voluminous eco-theology literature associated with mainstream Christian theology has also emerged since the late 1960s – spurred in great part by Lynn White’s seminal essay regarding “our ecological crisis.” Some of the prominent authors associated with this literature include scholars such as Leonardo Boff, John B. Cobb, Matthew Fox, John Haught, Sallie McFague, and Joseph Sittler.

[66] However, despite the growth of environmental awareness and scholarship within Christian circles, an ongoing antagonism continues between the values of environmentalists and the practitioners of organized Western religion. This antagonism appears to be based upon a sense of frustration with Christianity’s seeming incapacity to motivate humans to be more accommodating in their relationship with the environment – a frustration that has motivated many environmentalists to “repudiate completely their cultural roots and search among the Buddhists, Navajos, Gnostics, and pagans of the world for alternative ideas” (Worster: 188).

[67] The upshot of this philosophical evolution is the emergence of a number of modern environmental groupings grounded in a divergent set of theological, spiritual, or secular ideologies. The most visible group, the so-called *environmentalists*, essentially value the earth's resources for their own sake. There is no underlying theological or spiritual rationale behind their values. Granted that self-interest plays some significant part in people self-identifying themselves as "environmentalist" (as it does for everyone who cares about the earth), but their principle reason for engagement is their deep respect for the planet and its resources, an aesthetic appreciation for the beauty of the planet, and a strong sense that protecting the planet's resources is a rational and reasonable thing to do.

[68] The environmentalists are generally pessimistic regarding the capacity of humans to sustainably exist on the planet without utterly destroying its resources. Consequently, they generally favor limiting human access to natural places and resources – an orientation similar to that held by preservationists. Admittedly, they do favor scientific and technological developments that minimize human ecological impact, but they see these remedies as adjuncts to a primary focus upon attitude and behavior change. Environmentalists generally seek to avoid calamity by reducing the extent of humankind's "ecological footprint" through the process of changing minds, hearts, and behavior via the persuasive power of environmental education and policy change. However, environmentalists are not just pessimistic regarding the capacity of *any* Western religious belief to curtail an ecological calamity, they generally believe that such religious influences are responsible for "our ecological crisis."

[69] The second group includes those who view caring for the planet as a practical necessity in the interest of promoting the interest of humankind in the present and into the future. These are the *utilitarian-driven conservationists*, who value natural resources for their own sake, but who principally relate to them as something to be developed and utilized for society's benefit. These largely anthropocentric conservationists are generally optimistic about the capacity of humans to productively and sustainably utilize the planet's resources given continuing scientific advances and technological developments. They are also pro-market and comfortable with the application of economic principles to social and environmental problems. Simply put, while they acknowledge the presence of environmental problems in specific areas and regions and believe these problems can be remedied, utilitarian conservationists generally do not perceive that the planet is in ecological crisis. Such conservationists would generally oppose environmental education initiatives which seek to isolate humans from natural areas or which would call for significant economic or market change. However, they do favor conservation education that pursues the sustainable and cost-effective use of natural resources.

[70] Within this camp, however, there are a significant number of conservationists whose values principally emanate from the Jewish and Christian theological tradition – regardless of whether their religious orientation is Jewish, Christian, deist, or theist in form. These *religious conservationists* may also embrace utilitarian values and share a sense of optimism regarding the application of market incentives, scientific reasoning, and technological innovation to the environment. However, their principle motivation for caring for the earth is theologically grounded in the belief that the earth is a divine creation and that humans have a divine obligation to care for the planet to honor God, protect the planet, and to provide for the

current and future needs of humankind. In this regard it is likely that most Christians who are so-motivated could be deemed to be conservationists rather than environmentalists – who, as a group, are largely hostile or indifferent regarding the capacity of Jewish and Christian values to support environmental sustenance (Worster).

[71] The final environmental group is essentially a sub-grouping of the “environmentalists.” These activists go by the moniker of *deep ecologists* and distinguish themselves from other environmental groups by (1) their affinity for spirituality (as opposed to religion) as a rationale for their environmental values, and (2) their great pessimism for the future of the planet unless humans are essentially quarantined from protected wilderness areas. These are often the most radical of the environmentalists, and may be fiercely anti-capitalistic, anti-market, anarchist, and anti-religious (regarding especially Western religions).

[72] The values of these deep ecologists are, in many respects, quite similar to those of the traditional environmental preservationists – particularly regarding their desire to exclude humans from pristine wilderness areas and relative to their emphasis upon spirituality. However, there is a radical quality to the beliefs of many deep ecologists that would have been foreign to Muir and many of his ideological disciples. Likewise, while both schools of thought emphasize spirituality, Muir’s spirituality is heavily grounded in a Jewish and Christian form of theism, whereas the spirituality of Arne Naess and George Sessions has a more Eastern religious flavor and is actively antagonistic to Western religious traditions. Preservationism continues as philosophical value that is generally synonymous with the term “environmentalist.”

The Future of Environmentalism: A Prognostic Speculation

[73] Although the future of conservationism as a dominant ecological philosophy is still to be determined (Freyfogle 2006), it continues to play an important role in environmental policy and practice and may yet dominate modern environmentalism as an approach to living with nature. However, its ultimate future will be determined by how and whether conservationists are willing to delve into the ethical, spiritual, and theological roots of the movement and speak of protecting nature with the voice of moral authority. Without doubt, conservation and conservationism as the process of scientific management of soil, water, farmland, and forests will not only continue, but will evolve and prosper as the world demands more from the planet’s natural resources to meet the needs and desires of a burgeoning human population and culture. This is the utilitarian, scientific, and economic face of conservationism.

[74] At issue is whether this anthropogenic oriented facet of conservationism will be all that goes forward, or whether its moral mandate for ecological stewardship will also evolve and exert its influence. As Erick Freyfogle has so eloquently observed,

If conservationists are not preaching about duties to the community, if they are not overtly discussing land use in terms of right and wrong, who is going to do so? If conservationists are not proclaiming ecological interconnection, who is going to do so? If conservationists are not out to change people, can anything like Leopold’s land health ever be achieved? (2001).

[75] Judging by the works of modern day conservationists like Wendell Berry and Holmes Rolston III, there is good reason to believe that the benefits of scientific management, utilitarianism, and a land ethic grounded in a regard for an “ecological conscience” and a spiritual or divine consciousness may yet contribute to a practical, pragmatic, and moral advocacy for the sustained health and prosperity of nature.

[76] There is also little doubt that environmentalism as a largely secular and spiritually grounded ethic will also continue to grow and flourish. However, the effectiveness of this philosophy or collection of ecological philosophies will ultimately be dependent upon how well it goes about integrating the ecological needs of humans, societies, *and* natural ecosystems. To that end, its future is also linked to its use of the voice of moral authority. If this voice is to be effective, it must seriously contend with how to effectively promote moral change and conscience among people from many different cultures and societies. Moreover, it must seriously account for what is required of nature to preserve and promote human well being, even as humans are called upon with Leopold’s land ethic to consider the health of the land. Doing so will require that environmentalists realistically grapple with matters of economics, technology and innovation, politics, culture, and even religion.

[77] If the problem for conservationists is whether they will speak with a moral voice on behalf of nature, the problem for environmentalists is whether they will be willing to discard their hostility toward Western religion, their uneasiness with applying technological innovations to ecological problems, jettison their pessimism regarding the pursuit of “progress” and their antipathy for markets and market economics so that, as a movement, they can speak with many moral voices to many constituencies who must ultimately be incorporated into a larger effort to sustain the planet, its biotic forms, people, and ecosystems. Otherwise, environmental radicalism and environmental isolationism (as reflected among many deep ecologists) will succeed only in making adherents feel good about themselves while, practically speaking, failing to promote human and environmental sustainability.

[78] However, more important than any of these issues is the need for environmentalists and conservationists to close ranks and commit to ecological stability and sustainability despite their philosophical, political, and theological differences. This will mean retiring ongoing biases regarding the contributions that the Jewish and Christian traditions can make toward promoting the health of the earth and its inhabitants in the interest of enlisting a sizeable global religious constituency to the task of ecological protection. It will also mean recognizing that human existence and culture is also a component of natural ecosystems and that promoting all ecosystems will necessitate doing what is necessary to contribute to a sustainable human ecology.

[79] Likewise, a cooperative approach to promoting the health of the earth requires that conservationists recognize the important role environmentalism plays in advocating for the interests of the planet for its own sake, independent of human use or influence, and even independent of any theological or spiritual conceptual paradigm. Environmentalists, modern-day preservationists, and deep ecologists most creatively carry on the mandate of Aldo Leopold to “think like a mountain” and in so doing provide a needed and necessary

balance to what might otherwise be the conservationists excessive emphasis upon utilitarian, economic, political, and anthropocentric outcomes.

[80] This is particularly the case in regard to the theological and spiritual foundations of both movements. Conservationism's Jewish and Christian theological traditions make powerful contributions to such concepts as human and environmental justice and profoundly influence people to adhere to a moral code that transcends social and cultural bounds. Its "till and keep" ethic serves to quite literally "ground" human culture and experience in the land – in nature – thereby providing a powerful spiritually derived "sense of place" (Stegner). Comparatively, environmentalism's spiritualism, experienced as an aesthetic and moral imperative derived from direct contact with nature, provides a powerful antidote to excessively anthropocentric culture as it challenges humans and their societies to become increasingly eco-centric in orientation.

[81] These spiritual and theological foundations are the sources of the moral voices for both environmental contingents. Rather than disparage or deny the legitimacy, history, and importance of these voices, the time has come for all people interested in promoting the earth's habitats and communities to respect and listen to these disparate values and priorities. Such a dialogue is absolutely necessary if the minds and hearts of people are to be sensitized and employed in the larger ecological preservation enterprise. To paraphrase Freyfogle, "If *conservationists and environmentalists* are not out to change people, can anything like Leopold's land health ever be achieved?"

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