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Thinking like a Watershed:
Spirituality, Ethics & Watershed Organizing

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Three, interrelated trends related also to watershed movements

1) Religious environmentalism or “green religion” ~ environmental action as a religious duty
Three trends related also to watershed movements

1) Religious environmentalism or “green religion” ~ environmental action as a religious duty to god(s)

2) Dark green religion: nature is sacred, intrinsically valuable, and worthy of reverent care
Charles Darwin

“If we choose to let conjecture run wild, then animals, our fellow brethren in pain, diseases, death, suffering and famine [all] partake [of] our origin in one common ancestor – we may be all netted together.”
Charles Darwin

“There is grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed into a few forms or into one; and that, whilst this planet has gone cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being, evolved.”
No important change in human conduct is ever accomplished without an internal change in our intellectual emphases, our loyalties, our affections, and our convictions. The proof that conservation has not yet touched these foundations of conduct lies in the fact that philosophy, ethics, and religion have not yet heard of it.
Aldo Leopold’s watershed *Land Ethic, 1949*

"All ethics rest upon a single premise: that the individual is a member of a community of interdependent parts."

The Land ethic “enlarges the boundaries of the community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land”
A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community.

Aldo Leopold’s Land Ethic, present in the exhibition, Voyage to Antarctica, at the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg (2002)
The Mattole watershed, south of Humboldt bay, in the Coast Range of Northern California.
Distribution of Old Growth Coniferous Forests in the Mattole River Watershed

1988 DISTRIBUTION BY OWNERSHIP

- Commercial Forest Companies: 6,300 acres, 46%
- RM or Other Government: 8,200 acres, 47%
- Other Private: 2,300 acres, 6%
- Managed by RM or National Forest: 2,300 acres, 20%

WHAT'S LEFT AND HOW IT IS MANAGED

- Remaining Old Growth: 16,000 acres, 18%
- Managed for Intensive Timber Harvest: 6,000 acres, 7%
- Possible Reserve: 4,000 acres, 3%

1947

- Continuous old growth

1988

- Government management
- Government ownership
- Managed as commercial
- Other private ownership
- County roads
- King Range National Conservation Area Boundaries
- Possible reserve status?
“Totem Salmon” in a mandala inspired by religions of the far east, and drawing on the Native American image of North America as “Turtle Island”
Talking Leaves

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ENDANGERED ANIMAL TEACHERS
Queen Salmon

Sept. 13 - Oct. 30

A Biologically Explicit Musical Comedy for People of Several Species

Tour Schedule
Three, related trends

1) Religious environmentalism or “green religion” ~ environmental action as a religious duty to god(s)
2) Dark green religion: nature is sacred, intrinsically valuable, and worthy of reverent care
3) Planetary, Civic Earth Religion arising
The Earth Charter

www.earthcharter.org

...urges “respect and care for the community of life in all of its diversity” and claims that protecting the earth is a “sacred trust,” inseparable from the quest for justice and peace.

... concludes, “let ours be a time remembered for the awakening of a new reverence for life.”
The Earth Charter — inscribed on Papyrus in the ‘Ark of Hope’, and filled with plaintive letters from children.
Africa is the Cradle of Humanity... and

... in the beginning, there was the wind!
“The Baobab Tree, the tree of wonder, prosperity, firmly rooted and majestic, tales and fortunes of greatness, ancient secrets, past, present, and future . . .”
Animals join the chorus of life at the waterhole . . .
. . . symbolizing a time of Eden-like harmony
Animals join the chorus of life at the waterhole . . .

. . . symbolizing a time of Eden-like harmony
There is hope, because the leaders of the world are gathering... the life and health of Mother Earth depends on their decisions.
The Apocalyptic State of the Earth
We are children of Mother Earth, who cares for us. . . . but through greed and foolishness we are failing to love and care for Mother Earth.
Child: “Is there anything we can do mommy?” Is there any hope?
Mother: “Yes... for as I speak, the leaders of the world are gathering... the life and health of Mother Earth depends on their decisions”
Children, who are the future, gather in solidarity with the Earth
From Japanese companies promoting nuclear power, at the WSSD
Findings/summary: increase of

1) “metaphysics of interconnection,” which consider not only individuals but the well-being of ecosystems and society

(2) kinship ethics viewing all life forms as related through participation in the same odyssey of evolution

(3) Spiritualities of Connection & Belonging

(4) convictions that the pursuit of environmental sustainability is a religious duty
Earthen spirituality and kinship ethics represented in the massive “tree of life,” where animal bodies are embedded in trees’ trunk and leaves: at Disney’s Animal Kingdom
This is not about getting back to nature. It is about understanding we’ve never left.

We are deep in our nature every day. We’re up to our ears in it. It’s under our feet, it’s in our lungs, it runs through our veins. We are not visitors here. We weren’t set down to enjoy the view. We were born here and we’re part of it. Trees, shrubs, rocks, all kinds of grass.

This connection is as personal as it is fundamental. It can’t be proved with theorems and diagrams. You either feel it or you don’t.

Sierra Club members feel it.

Maybe it comes to you on a mountain trail, or on a meadow, or at a window sill watching a sparrow’s underbelly unfurl. Simply put, it’s the sudden conviction that there is something out there, something wonderful. And it is much, much bigger than you.

A revelation like this could easily overwhelm a person. We choose to let it inspire us. Nature, vastly complex and infinitely subtle, is our perfect metaphor. Related to everything, signifying everything, it is the spring where we go to renew our spirit. And it, in turn, asks something of us.

It compels us to take responsibility and then to take action.

Look there is nothing negligible about the future of our environment. A forested stream can be whole, alive, the source of life. It depends largely on what we choose to do. That simple belief, honed by 100 years of work and commitment, underlies the Sierra Club.

So.Open the page about the welfare of everything else. When you accept your connections to nature, suddenly you can look at the world without seeing something very personal in it. You are part of it, and you work for the planet because it gives you joy to do so.

Joining for the planet is because you belong to it.
We are deep in our nature every day.
We’re up to our ears in it.
It’s under our feet, in our lungs, it runs through our veins.

We are not visitors here.
We were born here and we're part of it.
When you accept your connection to nature,

You work for the planet because you belong to it.
Or to summarize the connection between science & spirituality:

The Earth and its life processes are sacred – we belong to them and they to us – we must protect and treat them with love.

Daniel Quinn, *Ishmael*
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