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Saving the Creation: Christian Environmentalism in the United States*

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In the mid 1980s, religious environmental activism in the United States increased dramatically. Based on field study of this emerging movement, this paper proposes three models or ethics of Christian-related eco-theology: Christian stewardship, eco-justice, and creation spirituality. As a portrait of the boundaries of this movement, the paper focuses in detail on Christian stewardship and creation spirituality. It then examines religious environmentalism through the cultural shift/change frameworks of McLoughlin, Swidler, Inglehart, Beckford, and Robertson.

"Christianity bears a huge burden of guilt" for the ecological crisis, historian Lynn White charged in an infamous (at least to religious ecologists) 1966 address to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (1967:1206). The response to this crisis, White went on to argue, must have a religious grounding since its roots were religious.

Despite the scholarly controversy over the validity of White's thesis (e.g., Dubos 1973), to many observers, White's verdict seemed to be empirically confirmed. In a period both of church declarations on social issues and of growing secular environmental concern, religious ecological voices were few. Thus it became common wisdom that the environment was a secular concern. The little sociological survey literature that exists on the subject seems to agree, arguing that the more "Christian" or biblically oriented one is, the less one is concerned about the environment (Hand and Van Liere 1984; Shaiko 1987; Eckberg and Blocker 1989). Certainly, the other-worldly environmental disregard displayed by Reagan's Secretary of the Interior James Watt and by religious conservatives awaiting the coming of a New Heaven and Earth has lent popular credence to the idea that there are only secular saviors of the earth.

Although there were scattered statements made in the 1970s, it was against the backdrop of the anti-environmentalism of the Reagan administration that church and religious organizational activity focused on the environment began to increase dramatically. Based on field study of the emerging Christian ecological movement at both the national and local levels over the period of 1987-1992, there are three broadly defined "ethics" or "models" emerging among or-

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ganizational proponents of Christian eco-theology in the United States. Using the language of each "group," these three models are "Christian stewardship," "eco-justice," and "creation spirituality."

TABLE 1

Christian-related Eco-theological Ethics among Organizational Proponents in the U.S.

Characteristic:	*Christian stewardship ethic*	*Eco-justice ethic*	*Creation spirituality ethic*
Starting Point	biblical mandate	social justice	cosmological physics
Theological Appeal	evangelical	mainline Christian social justice	liberal/unchurched ecumenical
Images of God	transcendent authoritative	transcendent God of liberation	immanent panentheistic
Images of Nature	Old Testament Land; fecundity; God's Creation	human environment natural resources	eco-system; creation as cosmos; universe
Human-Nature Relationship	gardener/caretaker aesthetic	sustainable use of natural resources for human betterment	proper human place in bio-system
Roots of Environmental Crisis	human sinfulness & disobedience to God	injustice/ inequality; economic systems	dualism; anthropocentrism; human alienation from nature
Environmental Issues	resource depletion; degradation of land & culture; agriculture	toxic/hazardous wastes; health; pollution; agriculture	wilderness preservation; species extinction
Prescribed Response	correct doctrine; restore Christianity as guide; balance Bible and biology	correct praxis; government regulation; grass-roots organizing	correct being/ spirituality; new worldview
Social Change Orientation	homocentric = change individuals	sociocentric = change society	homocentric = change individuals
Intellectual Tools R = religion S = science	R = Bible S = biology	R = libertation theology S = social sciences	R = medieval mysticism S = evolution; physics
Worldview	anthropocentric; pre-modern = religion as sacred canopy	anthropocentric; modern = most at home focus on rights & justice	biocentric; post-modern monism

Briefly described, these three eco-theologies reflect the differences and tensions among conservative, mainline, and liberal Christian theologies.[1] Christian stewardship focuses on an evangelical interpretation of the biblical mandate for humans to take care of the earth. The eco-justice position focuses on linking environmental concerns with church perspectives on justice issues such as the just sharing of limited resources and the real cost of environmental problems. It thus combines an already present Christian social justice framework with environmental concerns — particularly those that center on the effects of environmental degradation on peoples of color and the poor. Creation spirituality, broadly characterized, focuses on reorienting humans to see their place as one part of a larger, panentheistic creation. From this proper ecological place, humans must recognize the need to preserve the whole.

Ecofeminism is a significant perspective that represents a possible fourth category in that many of its proponents see themselves as Christian (Ruether 1992; Keller 1990). Many, however, explicitly reject Christianity (e.g., Spretnak 1986), while still others understand ecofeminism apart from any religious grounding (Diamond and Orenstein 1990). Furthermore, ecofeminist perspectives have influenced all three of the models proposed, and explicitly inform creation spirituality and eco-justice. For these reasons, I do not treat it as one of the models I am proposing; ecofeminism is both within and outside of the world of Christian ecological activism.

This paper focuses on Christian stewardship and creation spirituality, whose proponents work from para-church groups outside of potentially related denominations. As Wuthnow (1988) points out, religious influences in American life are increasingly channeled through such special purpose groups. By focusing on a specific issue or set of issues, these renewal and activist groups are often able to elicit stronger religious commitment from their members than do diverse and complex denominations, or even local churches. Eco-justice advocates, in contrast, are firmly located in the mainline denominations and denomination-specific special purpose groups. The following portraits of Christian stewardship and creation spirituality are based on participant observation, in-depth interviews, and extensive tape and literature review. These models are best seen as ideal descriptions, with much diversity and overlap found among adherents.

Christian stewardship and creation spirituality share a common focus. They concentrate most on changing ideas and thus share a homocentric view of change: The earth will be saved through the combined effects of converted individuals (Gelber and Cook 1990). In contrast, eco-justice places more emphasis on bringing about structural and institutional change, or a sociocentric view of change. Eco-justice advocates direct their energy toward correcting environmental injustices. By comparison, Christian stewardship and creation spirituality are thus more oriented toward recovering God in the creation than in realizing the

[1] What little survey literature exists indicates a similar division in attitudes (Hand and Van Liere 1984; Eckberg and Blocker 1989). However, adherence to a particular theological position cannot be predicted based solely on denominational belonging, even among those actively concerned about the environment (Greeley 1993).

kingdom of God on earth; more concerned with preaching the implications of science than those of economic and social injustice.

For both Christian stewardship and creation spirituality, this need to change ideas reflects their discontent with the secularization and differentiation of modern society. This critique, though, has quite different meanings: Proponents of Christian stewardship desire to return to an early modern world where they think biblical values were more central, and the proponents of Christian spirituality seek to create a post-modern world where the dualism and rationalism of the modern world are overcome through an integrated spirituality. Adherents of both ethics are particularly disturbed by the separation between religion and science. Neither rejects science, though both criticize the scientific worldview. Both seek to make aspects of what science has to teach us about the current situation more accessible, and to incorporate that knowledge within a religious worldview as a key way to address the environmental crisis.

In addition, both Christian stewardship and creation spirituality argue that a large part of the problem is the lack of a more immanent sense of God in creation, in part due to an over-emphasis on redemption in western Christianity. Creation, for both, is a key term and concept. As both McLoughlin (1978) and Albanese (1990) point out in their historical overviews of U.S. religion, divine transcendence is often problematic in times of cultural stress. God is seen as absent from the churches in particular and the human world in general. This absence is offset by searching for a spiritual presence in nature.

Finally, their common history and organizational tensions also provide a window into the process of cultural retooling, as Swidler (1986) would call it, or revitalization, in McLoughlin's and Wallace's (1956) theory. Proponents of both ethics initially tried to work together with the common goal of promoting an ecologically sensitive worldview among Christians, and formed the North American Conference on Christianity and Ecology (NACCE) in 1985. As we will see later, it was a coalition that lasted longer in concept than in practice.

THE CHRISTIAN STEWARDSHIP ETHIC

The Christian stewardship ethic begins with the Bible, especially the Genesis commandment (1:26-28) which gives humans dominion over the earth. They reinterpret it as a divine charge to be good stewards and to take care of and protect (but not rule or perfect, as in older interpretations of the passage) the Creator's creation. They point out that stewardship is one of the first commandments given to humans by God. Calvin DeWitt, a key spokesperson active in the leadership of related organizations, describes the ideal of Christian stewardship as

> a caring keeping of the Earth that works to preserve and restore the integrity of the created order, doing the will of the Creator, and seeking for the Creator's kingdom of integrity and peace — a kingdom devoid of human arrogance, ignorance, and greed. Christian Stewardship is so living on Earth that heaven will not be a shock to us (DeWitt 1987a:2).

The ecological crisis thus arises from human sinfulness. One advocate proclaims that it is the result of the "deadly sins of antiquity." Another author explains, "the ecological problem is not first a problem concerning the environment. It is a problem concerning the way we think. We are treating our planet in an anti-human, god-forsaken manner" (Sherrard 1990a:5). In this light, Christians are as guilty as "secularists." Nevertheless, secularism as a whole is especially at fault for reducing the impact of Christian values. The ecological crisis is not a problem brought about by Christianity as Lynn White suggested. DeWitt argues, "it is not the Judeo-Christian scriptures which lie at the root of this crisis, rather it is what these scriptures warn against: arrogance, ignorance, and greed" (1987b:1). In a variation of a familiar conservative refrain, the problem is that we have not been Christian enough; we have all sinned and not repented (Ammerman 1987). The problem is not with Christianity, but with not being true to Christianity.

Two organizations, the Au Sable Institute in northern Michigan and the North American Conference on Christianity and Ecology (NACCE), are representative of Christian stewardship.[2] Au Sable is an environmental biological training institute designed to teach the Bible and biology to Christian college students, whereas the goal of NACCE, a broad-based para-church organization for Christian ecology that began in 1985, is to "elucidate Christianity's ecological dimension."

The unofficial mottoes of Christian stewardship reflect its evangelical orientation: "to be Christian is to be ecologist" and "to be saved means saving the creation." This message of individual and earthly salvation is aimed at both Christians and environmentalists. It is particularly aimed at an evangelical world more focused on individual redemption than on redeeming the earth. Many of the initial proponents, however, did not come from high profile conservative groups.[3] Rather they came from the Reformed Church of America and a new religious movement group, the Holy Order of MANS (see Lucas 1995 for a detailed portrait of the HOOM) that converted to Eastern Orthodoxy (Eastern Orthodoxy has much less difficulty "elucidating" its ecological dimensions than western Christianity).[4] The Reformed and Orthodox influences combine to produce a heavy stress on asceticism. The Eleventh Commandment Fellowship (ECF) participants (the specifically ecological group within the HOOM that then merged into NACCE) tend to be more apocalyptic, and more nostalgic for

[2] In the mid-1990's, the Evangelical Environmental Network was formed. It works with the National Religious Partnership for the Environment, which also has Catholic, Jewish, and mainline Protestant components and was formed in the fall of 1993.

[3] Although this may be changing. Many individual Southern Baptists participate in local NACCE groups. In addition, several Assemblies of God churches and members have become involved with NACCE.

[4] Not all of the views expressed by Eleventh Commandment Fellowship members represent Eastern Orthodox thinking on ecology. Although the HOOM proclaimed themselves Eastern Orthodox, they were under no other Orthodox jurisdiction to substantiate those claims until 1991. However, two of the leaders, Vincent Rossi and Fred Krueger, were active participants in a 1990 Orthodox national conference on ecology, "For the Transfiguration of Nature," which leads me to interpret their positions as acceptable to other Eastern Orthodox thinkers.

a simpler time. It is the ECF component of NACCE that contributed a strong anti-modernity current within NACCE publications and some local affiliates (see Sherrard 1990b).

Christian stewards try to counter the heavy conservative emphasis on individual redemption and the other-worldliness of conservative Christians that has often led to a disdain for the physical world and a mastery-over-nature stance. Not surprisingly, for the Orthodox and Reformed traditions, Christian stewardship is not only a matter of reforming individuals and changing their hearts, but it is also a matter of ultimately bringing change through God's ordained presence on the earth — the church.[5] Christian stewards propose that churches should become "creation awareness centers" instead of barren edifices surrounded by parking lots. They are leery, though, of what they see as the new-age worship of creation (Campolo 1992), although they do not go as far as many fundamentalists, who suspect all environmentalism is paganism.

Christian stewards are just as leery of conservative creationism. They see the overcoming of the conservative religious bias against science as key to the success of Christian ecology. They fear that creationism has eroded the appeal of an environmental ethic to conservative Christians. They also worry that an anti-science bias means that well-meaning Christians do not have the scientific knowledge necessary to respond to the ecological crisis. Thus the Au Sable Institute has been quietly training environmental biology students from conservative Christian colleges since the early eighties while the current creation-versus-evolution debate has raged in the headlines. As their handbook states:

> [t]he mission of Au Sable Institute is the integration of knowledge of the creation with biblical principles for the purpose of bringing the Christian community and the general public to a better understanding of the Creator and the stewardship of God's creation (1989:1).

DeWitt sums up Christian stewardship nicely: "It is (only) when you give either science or the scriptures short shrift that you run into problems" (personal interview).

THE CREATION SPIRITUALITY ETHIC

Creation spirituality advocates also start with a genesis story — for them the awe-inspiring story of the evolution of the universe. According to Thomas Berry, a Passionist priest and a primary spokesperson, this "new story" (a key phrase for Berry) provides, for the first time, a common origin story for all peoples. The story tells us: We are all one, we all come from the same origins and are all a part of the same story (including its potential ending). The culturally specific story of Genesis, transformed by modern science, becomes a universal story. It is a new revelation.

[5] The lack of response from conservatives, especially the high profile New Christian Right, may be in part due to tensions between the individualism of many of the conservatives and the more churched tradition and orientation of both the Reformed and Eastern Orthodox. Neither of these denominations supplied many of the mobilized evangelicals of the late 1970's and 1980's.

One of the key elements of this "new story" is that it replaces the Genesis understanding of the privileged place of humans in the cosmos. We are just one part of a whole, different only in the potential for destruction which we have shown, and in our capacity for self-reflection. This forms the sixth of Berry's "Twelve Principles": "The human is that being in whom the universe activates, reflects upon and celebrates itself in conscious self-awareness" (Berry 1987c: 216). Thus, humanity should use that reflective capability to return to our rightful place in the overall scheme of things (Berry 1987c:217).

Whereas the stewardship model emphasizes the biblical basis for an ecological ethic and uses science as a tool to carry out the task, creation spirituality uses religion to understand the significance of the revelations of science as shaped by the evolutionary story of the universe. As Berry states in the first of his "Twelve Principles":

> the universe, the solar system, and the planet earth in themselves and in their evolutionary emergence constitute for the human community the primary revelation of that ultimate mystery whence all things emerge into being (Berry 1987c:216).

For creation spirituality, the chief obstacle to an ecological world is not human sin or injustice, but overcoming the dualisms of the western worldview so that we can see the creation as a whole. The tools for this task are the new physics and medieval mysticism, as suggested by the founder of creation spirituality, Matthew Fox.

This new "postmodern" spirituality is not necessarily only a Christian spirituality. Berry's criticism of Christianity is evident in his suggestion that since the new cosmology is a new revelation, the scriptures should be put on the shelf for ten years and the universe studied instead. After the magnificence of the universe is understood, then one can go back to the scriptures.

Creation spirituality is popularly associated with Fox, a former Dominican Catholic, and the Institute for Culture and Creation Spirituality (ICCS) at Holy Names College in Oakland, California. Fox's articulation of creation spirituality has received widespread attention due partly to his extensive writings and speaking tours, and partly to his notoriety for being silenced by the Vatican (McDonagh 1990), and subsequently leaving the Catholic Church.[6] Many of the more ecologically-oriented adherents of creation spirituality, such as the local group that I studied, say that while Fox introduced them to thinking differently, it is the thought of Thomas Berry and his advocates, such as Sister Miriam MacGillis of Genesis Farm in New Jersey, that, for them, has stimulated real ecological theology.

Similar to Christian stewardship, there is a special purpose group associated with creation spirituality, the North American Coalition (formerly "Conference") on Religion and Ecology (NACRE). As the names indicate, the NACRE and the NACCE are similar and related, but their approaches are very different. When NACRE split from NACCE, they initially replaced only one

[6] Sean McDonagh, in *The Greening of the Church* (1990), states that the result of the Vatican silencing of Fox was to increase his audience and to give him more prominence.

word in the name — Christianity. NACRE sees its task as encouraging not only the formation of a spirituality freed from the shackles of recalcitrant Christianity, but as facilitating the needed ecumenical action based on this perspective. NACCE, on the other hand, sees itself as a specifically Christian response to the environmental crisis.

After shedding NACCE's focus on convincing Christians, NACRE has focused on giving religious ecology high profile exposure. Their initial conference was a "star-studded" event at the National Cathedral, including among the speakers Prince Philip, Carl Sagan, Jurgen Moltmann, and then Senator Al Gore, along with representatives of all the major religions. NACRE is not interested in working solely within the established boundaries of Christianity (though it does have considerable ties with Catholicism) nor particularly in grassroots organizing. Rather, its mission, in their own terms, is to facilitate dialogue between "ecumenicists, ecologists, and economists," the "Eco-3 Trialog." They are interested in cross-disciplinary, inter-religious dialogue at high levels.

NACRE's emphasis reflects the social location of creation spirituality. It appeals primarily to liberal Protestants, Catholics who are disaffected in varying degrees, and the unchurched. Like much of liberal religion, creation spirituality is eclectic and left open to individual interpretation. Without an emphasis on correct belief it can appeal to a wide audience that is overwhelmingly "knowledge class" — educated, middle class information consumers — and tired of trying to change social structures, both ecclesial and societal. Fox's message of creativity, mysticism, and psychic wholeness is an attractive message to liberals too accustomed to a diet of guilt and preoccupation with the wrongs of the world. Berry's message, heavily intellectual and grounded in science, counters any nagging relativism of eclectic ecumenism. The two complement each other — the authority and seriousness of complex scientific theories and the subjectivism and playfulness of Fox. It is a message to those who, like Christian stewards, are discontented with the secularization of the modern world. In a much different way, they too advocate a sacralization of science.

DISPUTES AND DIFFERENCES

Toward the end of his essay, White concluded that "(m)ore science and more technology are not going to get us out of the present ecologic crisis until we find a new religion, or re-think our old one" (1967:1206). This summary statement describes the differences between creation spirituality and Christian stewardship — one more oriented to a possible new religion, the other toward rethinking the old. Not surprisingly, there is conflict between the two visions of ecological salvation, as Matthew Fox comments:

> There are some who think that an ecological perspective can be addressed from the theological tradition of stewardship — we just have to become good stewards in this garden. I say that's nonsense. The stewardship model is a model of an absentee landlord. It's a theology that God's off someplace in the sky behind a cloud with an oil can — Newton's God — and

> we're here doing the work like serfs and slaves. That's not real inviting to people. Ecology isn't going to happen through a stewardship model.[7]

The words of some advocates of Christian stewardship can be equally adamant. Thomas Berry is said to be not "interested in bearing a Christian witness on environmental abuses. Berry . . . teach[es] a new religion, but let us not call it 'improved Christianity' . . . it covers itself like a wolf in sheep's clothing with the name 'Christian' " (Muratore 1988:9). Local creation spirituality advocates sum up their opponents by describing the stewardship position as "the same old stuff" and eco-justice activists as "still being hung up on the same old liberal agenda."

The tensions between advocates of the different ethics were immediately evident at the initial NACCE conference. The controversy focused on redemption-centered versus creation-centered theology, specifically Berry's. Some NACCE-ECF participants claimed that Berry's views were not Christian, while Berry's supporters demanded that a creation-centered disclaimer be attached to the conference document.

The tensions between the two factions within the organization grew, exacerbated by financial and personality problems, until the break-away formation of the competing organization, NACRE. Founded by Donald Conroy (a Catholic priest and one of the founding three of NACCE) along with several other NACCE board members, NACRE declared itself to be an inter-faith organization and accused NACCE of not accepting the theory of evolution. The ECF component of NACCE responded by charging that creation-spirituality is "neo-pagan," "full of hubris," substitutes "evolution for repentance," and is "anti-Christian in nature and intent" (Muratore 1988).

After the split of NACCE and NACRE, NACCE was eventually reorganized, the influence of the ECF block diminished, and both organizations returned to their different tasks. But the tensions between the two cannot be written off to the sectarianism of the ECF block. As a popular evangelical writer warned: "Matthew Fox is a blatant example of how easy it is to cross the line from Christianity into paganism" (Campolo 1992). Despite their similarities in form and focus, Christian stewardship and creation spirituality are often miles apart ideologically.

The heart of the differences between the two lies in the question of the extent to which the Christian tradition is redeemable. DeWitt and NACCE obviously think it is, and work hard to make the tradition relevant without significantly changing it. Creation spirituality disagrees. Fox does direct his efforts to uncovering/recovering the elements of the tradition that may be workable, but many evangelical Christians would reject Fox as no longer Christian. Fox's "Cosmic Christ" is not the Redemptive Christ that saves souls during an altar call. Nor are the Christian stewardship sins of "arrogance, ignorance, and greed" the same ignorance and arrogance that Thomas Berry sees as the problem.

Ultimately, for Christian stewardship, what is needed is orthodoxy and orthopraxy — a new understanding of right belief and subsequently, right practice.

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[7] Tape of talk given by Matthew Fox, belonging to a local group member. No date or title available.

They have not, however, departed from many of the theological tenets that critics of Christianity's view of nature often cite. Christian stewardship's God is still transcendent, their view of human nature pessimistic, and their worldview anthropocentric — of course humans are privileged since they are made in God's image and are commanded to be God's stewards. This message is too conservative for many mainline Christians, and too "secular" for conservative Christians used to viewing science as irrelevant or even hostile to religion (Wuthnow 1988). Christian stewardship is thus hampered by the variety of Christians that it needs to convince.

For creation spirituality, what is needed is a new understanding of humanity and an organicist cosmology that leads to an ethic of harmony. They try to address the ecological criticisms of Christianity by conceptualizing God in panentheistic terms, by denouncing sin and guilt for a more optimistic view of humanity as the earth's consciousness, and by trying to rethink the place of humanity in a greater order in biocentric terms. They are accused, though, of a naive anthropology, new age narcissism, a romanticized view of nature, and an unrealistic vision of the problems that must be overcome (Ruether 1990). Creation spirituality's "converts" are often unchurched and have little sense of community except that implied by the magazines, tapes, and newsletters that arrive in their mailboxes. Its impact is also restrained by the sometimes esoteric nature of its message

Bringing eco-justice back into the picture, it contrasts to both of these perspectives in its overtly political focus. From this viewpoint what is needed is correct praxis and the true embodiment of Christian community. In response to ecological critics of Christianity, eco-justice advocates assert that being in right relation to each other is part of being in right relation to the natural world. Their critics maintain, however, that they just add the environment to a long litany of societal ills without an adequate ecological understanding. The eco-justice position is heir to the problems of the mainline: too secular and political for those searching for spirituality and too religious for those seeking political and social change.

The differences among the three groups are not just in theological or ideological orientation, however, but reflect the differences among the sectors of the religious world that they represent. The decline in the societal influence of the mainline denominations has left room for a variety of religious responses to public concerns, including those from conservatives and the unchurched (Roof and McKinney 1987).

RELIGIOUS REVITALIZATION

The purpose of pointing out the tensions between Christian stewardship and creation spirituality is not to suggest an ideological or culture war within eco-theological circles. Rather, it is to recognize that there are competing religious frameworks jockeying for position. In short, as a culture we are searching for how to respond to our intensifying sense of ecological crisis. In pointing to religion as part of the solution, White recognized the centrality of religion in shaping our

worldview and ethos. As Clifford Geertz points out, religion can fuse together ethos and worldview so that they "are mere reflexes of one another" (1968:97).

The tensions between proffered solutions reflect the process of cultural revitalization described by Wallace and McLoughlin.[8] When our cultural mazeways no longer work because conditions have changed, religious awakenings or revitalization movements arise that try to provide new mazeways. McLoughlin describes awakenings as "periods when the cultural system has had to be revitalized in order to overcome jarring disjunctions between norms and experience, old beliefs and new realities, dying patterns and emerging patterns of behavior" (1978:10). According to McLoughlin, the process of revitalization or religious awakening involves the two types of responses called for by White. The traditionalist response searches for minor adjustments to fix things, as in Christian stewardship; the other searches for a complete new synthesis and new symbols, as in creation spirituality.

Ann Swidler (1986) suggests a similar understanding. Swidler describes how it is primarily in "unsettled times" that we become aware of the connection between values and action. In such periods, cultures find, to use her metaphor, that their "tool kits" don't work; in other words, a "retooling" is needed (Swidler 1986:273). This retooling involves the articulation of "highly organized meaning systems" that "establish new strategies of action" (1986:278). Thus, "bursts of ideological activism" occur during periods "when competing ways of organizing action are developing" (1986:279). It is a fitting description of contemporary eco-theological activism.

Ecological ideological activism aimed at reworking our cultural tool kit is certainly not new. Initially, the contemporary environmental movement was concerned with knitting ecological values and action together. For religious ecologists, however, the tool kit now offered by the environmental movement will not do the job. The mainstream environmental movement, embodied in organizations such as the Sierra Club or National Audubon Society, is largely oriented toward government-related activity (and self-perpetuation)(Dowie 1992). As it has become more technocratic, the movement has become less concerned with changing our cultural worldview. This is in part due to their close connections with the center spheres of government and corporations (Douglas and Wildavsky 1982), and in part because of their dependency on mass memberships and corporate donations (Dowie 1992; Dunlap and Mertig 1992). As a result, many explicitly religious, such as those discussed here, or quasi-spiritual groups, such as Earth First! (Taylor 1993), have arisen that are more willing to address worldview issues.

CULTURE SHIFT

Religious ecology, not just in its Christian formulations, is part of a larger cultural shift, as documented by Ronald Inglehart (1990). Inglehart argues that

[8] Finke and Stark (1992) challenge McLoughlin's reading of Great Awakenings, stating that these periods were not necessarily anymore religious than others. I do not think their challenge undermines McLoughlin's use of Wallace, and hence the usage here.

there is a general growth of "post-materialist" values that emphasize quality of life issues such as ecology. Dunlap (1992) traces a similar widening of ecological concern that has occurred over the last thirty years toward what he describes as the "new environmental paradigm." Inglehart goes on to comment that this emerging postmaterialist worldview "shows a relatively great concern for the meaning of life, and places renewed emphasis on the sacred — though it tends to see the sacred in nature rather than in churches" (Inglehart 1990:433).

Emerging religious ecological perspectives are also part of the changing role of religion in advanced industrial society (Beckford 1989; Robertson 1985; Beyer 1994). James Beckford focuses on the role of religious responses to the problems generated by advanced industrial society (Beckford 1989, 1990). As Beckford argues, "conditions of advanced industrial societies actually favor the production of types of discourse that are particularly sensitive to cultural, and therefore religious, considerations" (1990:5). Following Habermas's (1981) analysis of the new social movements as "concern for the grammar of forms of life" and reactions to the "colonization of the lifeworld," Beckford describes a shift in the general perception of social problems toward "concerns about the fundamental purposes and direction of all human life" (1990:5). In light of the changed nature of these concerns, religious responses are more salient than would be predicted in secularized modern society because of their ability to link practical responses with holistic, ideological frameworks.

Beckford goes on to point out the qualitative difference in religious involvement in the new social movements. He describes it as an emphasis on "characteristically non-doctrinal and unconventional spirituality" rather than formal doctrinal issues that favor "synoptic, holistic, and global perspectives on issues transcending the privatized self and the individual state" (1990:9). This emphasis involves an eclectic use of symbols borrowed from both religious and secular sources, often with a stress on the oneness of humanity, or, since Beckford's analysis most suggests creation spirituality, the oneness of the planet.

Beckford, Inglehart, Habermas (and many others) argue that it is the conditions of advanced industrial society that are behind these new perceptions of problems and the appropriate responses. As the industrial economy spread, so that it is more accurate to state that there is a world (as opposed to national) economy or system, its expansion brought environmental problems that are global in scope and effect. Global threats such as nuclear weapons and overpopulation also reinforce the sense of global interdependence. The environmental theme of the World Council of Churches, "Justice, Peace, and the Integrity of the Creation," recognizes the coalescence of these issues.

It is this growing global consciousness that is a crucial new factor behind the increasing religious recognition of the integral relationship between humanity and nature. With this dawning recognition that "the world is a single place" (Robertson 1987:36), what Roland Robertson terms globalization, has come the search for adequate religious formulations. Globalization, in its implicit holism, evokes religious responses (Robertson 1985; Beyer 1994). The combining of religious and ecological perspectives forces adherents to think more globally and to extend the boundaries of their religious worldviews in an effort to grapple with the enormous implications of ecological problems.

CONCLUSION

Within the U.S., three models of Christian-oriented ecology are competing for adherents. Their jockeying for position reflects not only the changed arena of U.S. religion, but the sense of uncertainty and cultural crisis brought on by ecological concerns. Although this paper has focused on the U.S., the emergence of religious ecological ethics is not limited to the U.S., nor is their audience. The categories of creation (or eco) spirituality, eco-justice, and stewardship can be helpful in understanding the emergence of religious ecological perspectives globally (Beyer 1994). They are part of the cultural responses to the global nature of advanced industrial society — a response that can be understood in terms of cultural revitalization (McLoughlin 1978) or cultural retooling (Swidler 1986). As Beckford suggests (1990), as religious responses they may be more salient than are secular responses to environmental concerns, for ultimately, environmental problems are cultural as well as technical. Swidler's (1986) analysis reminds us that the search for new cultural tool kits involves both the articulation of meaning systems and strategies of action. What it means for adherents to act upon religiously grounded ecological values is also the research task ahead as sociologists continue to observe the evolution of religious ecology.

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