

# Introduction

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*The mother of us all,  
The oldest of all,  
Hard,*

*Splendid as rock  
Whatever there is that is of the land  
It is she  
Who nourished it,  
It is the Earth  
That I sing.*

-Homer, "Hymn to the Earth"

*The indescribable innocence and beneficence of nature – of sun and wind and rain, of summer and winter – such health, such cheer, they afford forever... Shall I not have intelligence with the earth? Am I not partly leaves and vegetable mold myself?"*

- Henry David Thoreau, "Walden"

Creation inspires awe, mystery, and intrigue. Regardless of the time you live in history, your place on the planet, your culture, or your religion, you have likely experienced moments, when the sheer beauty and awesome mystery of creation have come to a point beyond explanation or words. Have you experienced such a time?

While all religions have creation at the beginning and core of their understanding of God and God's work in the world, the environment too often has become neglected in our practices. The environmental crisis wages and we often become complicit in our abuse of the earth and its resources. It is the hope of this guide that you become more aware of the environmental hazards today and how your faith can transform and renew the planet.

It has been said that the world's great religions all began as revolutions that soon got sidetracked. The inevitable danger is the tendency to focus on a human centered universe and not look beyond our own race or tribe; however, ecology demands the interdependence of all of life. By studying other world religions outside of your own, may you find the revolutionary understanding of your own tradition and how it might be reformed. While you will gain new perspectives and insights from studying other traditions, the hope of this guide is that your own tradition and faith convictions will be strengthened and renewed.

This guide is intended to facilitate a series of adult forum education hours with one unit given for each of the world's major religions. Resources abound in the area of religion and ecology. Visit your local library to find out more about the various religions and their ecological practices. A bibliography is

provided at the end of this guide, and additional resources are given for each religion. Some websites you may want to research include the Forum on Religion and Ecology at Harvard University ([environment.harvard.edu/religion](http://environment.harvard.edu/religion)), The Alliance of Religion and Conservation ([www.arcworld.org](http://www.arcworld.org)) or the Web of Creation ([www.webofcreation.org](http://www.webofcreation.org)) sponsored by the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago. This guide is comprised as a collaborative student project for the course "Future of Creation" taught at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago by Dr. David Rhoades (New Testament instructor) and Dr. Gayle Woloshak (Molecular Biology instructor).

You and your faith community play a tremendous political role in the shaping of planet earth each day; by your study and conversation may you be challenged to be better stewards of creation.

# Hinduism

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*By Jason Bense*

*Oh King, the rivers are the veins of the Cosmic Person and the trees are the hairs of His body. The air is His breath, the ocean is His waist, the hills and mountains are the stacks of His bones the passing ages are His movements.*

*-Srimad Bhagavatam 2.1.32-33*

## Basic Teaching

Hinduism is the third largest world religion today behind Islam and Christianity practiced by 14% of the world's religions (Encyclopedia Britannia, 1999). While Hindus can today be found in Sri Lanka, Singapore, Britain and the United States, Hindu religion begins in India where the vast majority of the countries identify with Hinduism as much as with Indian culture. Hinduism is the likely the oldest religious tradition still practiced today. The term "Hindu" was coined by the Persians for those living on the other side of the Indus River from them.

Hinduism has no set doctrine of belief, and the teachings and beliefs of the religion are as broad and diverse as the number of Hindus. There are sixteen official languages in India. Each follower creates and follows their own set of beliefs drawing upon the tradition; some suggest that Hinduism is better described as a confederation of varied religions. Often adherents identify as a follower of a deity of *Devi* such as Viu, Siva. Many Hindus concede that Jesus and Buddha are incarnations of God. The sacred texts for Hindus are the Vedas or oral texts (Rg Veda).

The religion also has its downfalls. Hindu tradition has a horrible tradition called Sati or widow burning. If a widow to be married is unable to provide enough dowries, she is burned at the stake. Still today there are roughly two burnings a day in New Delhi. Hinduism also is based on a strong caste or class system. The four castes are Brahmins (priests), Kshatriyas (warriors), Vaishyas (peasants/ merchants), Shudras (serfs), and Harijans (outcasts/untouchables). An outstanding Hindu hero of our time is Gandhi who is known to intentionally clean toilets with the outcast and untouchable class.

## On the Environment

The Hindu epic "Mahabharata" (500 BC) provides a prophetic portrayal of what humans can do to the earth. Hinduism sees the natural world through the lens of "The Five Elements" which are earth (pr thivi), water (ap), fire (agni), air (vayu), and space (akasa). An example of the use of the elements comes from the sacred texts *Vamanu Purana (12.26)*: *Let all the great elements bless the dawning day: Earth with its smell, water with its taste, fire with its radiance, air with its touch, and sky with its sound.*

The city of Banaras and the Ganges River on which the city is located are considered most sacred in India. Many Hindus bathe in the Ganges River. Hindus have a close symbolic relationship with animals, plants and trees. The cow is a sacred deity and an incarnation of the God, Vishnu. Cows wander most cities and provide food (milk) and fuel; however, no meat is served in the temple, and Hindus are considered vegetarians because of the sacred relationship with the animals. Other gods and goddesses include: Siva the bull, Durga and the lion, Kartikeya and Saravati riding on a peacock and swan. Other sacred animals are the goat, buffalo, tiger, snake, rat and owl. Some temples are dedicated to certain animals. At Karni Ma in Bikanir the temple is dedicated to the rat.

Hindu calendar reserves special days for certain plants including bodhi (*Ficus religiosa*); the hibiscus is associated with Kali and Durga, and the lotus with Lakshmi. Plants are a huge part of the Ayurvedic medicines and 110 plants are named in texts for various medical uses.

Hinduism teachers do not look first to books to teach but most often use art, dance, rituals, and drama. Hinduism has many powerful religious concepts:

*Ahimsa*: “non-violence”. Non-malice to all beings in thought, word and deed, compassion and grieving are said to be the duty of the good.

*Artha*: Greed for affluence, power, and recognition. (Sought by all.)

*Kama*: Greed for sensual pleasures. (Sought by all.)

*Dharma*: “justice” or “moral duty”. The Hindu Laws of Manu say that observing and protecting Dharma protects us.

*Karma*: “work”. Good work produces good results and bad actions produce bad. Every action or thought leaves traces on our character.

The Hindu principles of Kama and Karma led Professor Huston Smith, a historian of world religion to note in Hinduism: “each thought and deed delivers an unseen chisel blow that sculpts one’s destiny.” By poisoning our water, air, and soil, we, too, are poisoned. The flutter of a butterfly’s wings has an impact on the universe, and our flutters are no less significant.

## Ecological Practices

Over 14,000 sacred groves are found in India. The sacred groves provide various Ayurvedic medicines, fruits and honey, provide local water, and recharge aquifers. Tree planting is considered a holy communion for Hindus, and sacred law prohibit chopping or damaging trees in most groves. Sacred groves often contain plant and animal species that have become extinct in neighboring areas.

Current threats to the grove include urbanization, over-exploitation of resources and environmental destruction due to some religious practices. While many of the groves are looked upon as abode of Hindu gods, in the recent past a number of them have been partially cleared for construction of shrines and temples.

Art forms and folk traditions are associated with the deities of sacred groves, and ritualistic dances and dramatizations based on the local deities that protect the groves are called Theyyam in Kerala and Nagmandalam, among other names, in Karnataka. Often, elaborate rituals and traditions are associated with sacred groves, as are associated folk tales and folk mythology.

India today has a growing population problem, and hunger is rising. The average consumption of grain in India is 180 kg per person per year compared to 974 kg in Canada and 860 kg in the United States. The life expectancy in India is rising. Compared to a life expectancy of 32 years in 1947, today the expectancy is 62.

## **A Major issue and How an Adherent Might Respond – Water Harvesting**

A water system throughout India allows human life to flourish in otherwise arid parts of the country. The system comes from ancient texts, inscriptions, and traditions to harvest every possible form of water: rainwater, stream water, floodwater, and ground water. During the British colonial period, a large number of traditional water catchment systems were destroyed. The British called the funds for the systems “religious allowances” and discontinued them and many systems fell into disrepair. Huge water projects in India have been destructive to the local society and economy. Some argue that progress is inevitable; however, from a religious point of view, a sense of connectedness with the land and the water is lost in the large-scale development of water. The World Bank has presently placed the massive Narmada Dam project on hold.

You are a Hindu living in India and have the option of bathing in the local river or receiving plumbing from hundreds of miles away, which option do you choose? Why?

The rising urban life seems to threaten the very embedded Hindu ecological sensibility. The rich in India can surpass others in opulent life-style and unbridled greed reigns.

One Hindu writes:

We do not know why we do the Kolam (household threshold artistry) anymore. We have forgotten. If we had not, we would not make the kolam out of plastic or white stone powder. Now everything is modern, modern, modern. Before, we would make it with rice, and feed a thousand souls. How ungenerous we are becoming!”

Hindu ecology can be affirmed through reflection on traditional texts, ritual activities and meditation that foster relationship with the five elements and deities.

## **Discussion Questions**

1. In the early hours of the morning of December 3, 1984, in the heart of the city of Bhopal in the Indian state of Madhya Pradesh, a Union Carbide subsidiary pesticide plant released 40 tones of methyl isocyanate gas, killing approximately 3,800 people. Bhopal is frequently cited as one of the world's worst industrial disasters. Lack of political willpower has led to a stalemate on the issue of

cleaning up the plant and its environs of hundreds of tones of toxic waste, which has been left untouched. How might Hindus respond to clean up the toxic waste?

2. Why might some religious practices actually endanger the sacred groves? What might be necessary to help preserve the groves?
3. What are present threats on the environment caused by Hindus? How can a Hindu ecology be affirmed?

## **Additional Resources**

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# Sikhism

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*By Jason Bense*

*The One Universal Creation created the entire Universe. All the plays and dramas are to Your glory and greatness. For thirty-six ages, God remained in utter darkness, as He pleased. The vast expanse of water swirled around. The Creator of all is Infinite, Endless and Inaccessible. He formed fire and conflict, hunger and thirst.*

*- Page 1282, Line 10, Raag: Malaar by Guru Amar Das*

## Basic Teaching

Sikhism began in the Punjab area of India by Guru Nanak Shah (1469-1538) as reform movement from Hinduism. Guru Nanak was born a Hindu and is said to have died as a Hindu, yet he was a reformer and a part of a sect within Hinduism. Sikhism rejects Hinduism's caste system and approaches a more monotheistic religion. There are about 22.5 million Hindus in the world today including in the USA, Canada and Britain. Hindus are disciples of the ten gurus (great teachers) from Nanak Shah to Gibeed Sing (1666-1708). The Punjab region is 66% Sikhs and is the highest per capita income region in India. Agriculture, fruit, and vegetables are very important in the region that has undergone a 'green revolution' in the past half-century. Strict Sikhs carry the "five k's": kesa (long hair), kanga (comb), kacha (short pants), kara (metal bracelets) and kirpan (ceremonial dagger). Overall Sikhism has produced hard-working, progressive communities that use the land and their political power well.

## On the Environment

Sikhs confess a Creator God. Akal Purakh is the Almighty Creator and Sustainer of the universe who is beyond form and reason and accessible in devotion. The Creator is revealed in the "divine Name" of Akal Purakh. Sikhism follows three hundred year cycles. The most recent cycle ended in 1999. The next cycle will end in 2299 and is called the Cycle of Creation with a focus on environmental concerns.

Sikh religion sees little distance between science and religion, and modern Hindus boast of the connection and marvel of the ancient religion relating connecting in astonishing fashion with the ancient tradition. Sikh teaching understands modern evolution well and incorporated a rotating round earth and moon from its earliest understandings. Many Sikhs view Guru Nanak as the first scholar to describe ecological problems in the world. The difference is that modern scientists are mostly concerned with the physical ecology, and Guru Nanak described cultural and spiritual ecological crises as well in a holistic fashion. Guru Nanak said: "The earth is your mother. Respect for 'mother earth' is the only solution."

## Ecological Practices

Sikh culture has its own distinct ecological culture and habits. Believing that every particle is alive, the teaching focuses on a harmonic balance of the whole of nature. For the Sikh, physical ecology is tied with the culture and spirituality of a person.

Sikhs reject religious intolerance and believe that the Creator's light is in every being and all are alive due to that light. Sikhs will go as far as to suggest that current ecological crisis including deforestation, depletion of the ozone layer, and global warming are contributed by discrimination, economic exploitation, the caste system, colonization, and religious fundamentalism. Sikhs believe that humans create their environment as a reflection of their inner state; the increasing barrenness of the earth reflects a spiritual emptiness within humans. The solution can be found in prayer and the spirit of humility before the divine will of God. Sikhs seek to reform against the divisive aspects of the Hindu caste system and discrimination between women and men. Sikhs confess a Divine Grace that having brought life into being, God will also protect life. From the Divine Grace, Sikhs work towards a liberation of those who are in the lower castes of society.

Sikhism emphasis on equality and service is exemplified in food. Sikhs practice a communal sacred feeding meal where all sit equally on the floor and food is provided in a community kitchen by donated labor and food. This meal is called the langar and is central to Sikh life and practice

Water is seen as a source of life and celebrated by the teaching and writings. Access to clean water is a focus for the community, and the Gurdwara (temple) is often found to be beside a water body or river.

The inversion of ecology is proportional to grace for the Creator's power. Gurus describe the proportional inversion to grace by suggesting, "tigers, hawks, kestrels and meat eaters are compelled to take grass instead of meat and those who eat grass may take meat. ... The Creator can create land out of water bodies and may create water bodies where there was land (Guru Nanak and Ecology, 332-333). Guru Nanak favored "possibilism" over environmentalism and determinism suggests that he in Divine Grace likes the possibility of possibilism to mold the universe.

## A Major issue and How an Adherent Might Respond

India is a country rich in biodiversity and natural wealth. Forests cover 19% of the country. India is home to over 350 mammals, 200 birds and 300 reptiles. India is the only country home to all five of the major vertebrates: tigers, lions, panthers, elephants and the rhinos.

Although law protects many areas of India, the country's biodiversity is under threat today. A major threat is a loss of forests. Market trade makes higher demands for the deforestation.

Many Sikhs have established nature and camping programs for youth to spread awareness about environment concerns and protection for nature.

As in Hinduism, trees are a major religious symbol and are highly regarding. A threat to trees is a threat to God. On certain religious days, Sikhs are encouraged to plant a tree such as Guru Angad Dev ji or Sahibzadas.

In the holistic and interconnected view of ecology, Sikhs connect deforestation with all forms of oppression and the whole of life. Liberating the poor, outcasts and working towards great understanding between those different from one another as well as liberation of the self all contribute towards stopping deforestation.

## Discussion Questions

1. Sikhism connects the physical and social sciences to suggest our physical ecology is directly connected with our spiritual and cultural ecology. Do you agree with this idea? Why or why not? In what way is environmental racism connected with other oppressions in society?
2. Sikhs believe that humans create an environment that reflects their inner spiritual life. What environment would your inner spiritual life create? How would you alter or change that inner spiritual life?
3. What are the differences between determinism, environmentalism and possibilism? In which category do you identify?

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# Daoism

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*By William Judd*

*“Humanity follows the Earth, the Earth follows Heaven, Heaven follows the Dao, and the Dao follows what is natural.” Dao De Jing*

## Origins and Basic Teachings

The history of Daoism points to the period of 500-200 BCE as the time of its origins, and is considered to be contemporaneous with Confucius. Daoists considered the teachings of Confucians to be problematic because of the imposition of laws and practices, which were thought to be contrary to the natural desires of humanity. The major teachings of Daoism are found in the classic texts, Dao De Jing and Zhuang Zi. Both texts are anonymous but are ascribed to famous scribes within the tradition. Each of these texts is filled with parables, poetry, and seemingly paradoxical statements used to explain the nature of Dao or “the Way” which is considered to be the origin of all things.

There are two major tenants within Daoism, respect for the Dao above all else and all of life is of great value. Dao is considered not only to be the source of all that is, but it is the ultimate aim of all. In order to live in harmony with Dao, one must embrace a path of no action and selflessness, or to live with modesty and simplicity. To struggle against others for personal gain in the physical realm runs contrary to the Daoist belief. Life is placed as the highest good with Daoist thought. Zhang Daoling said that life is merely one more expression of the Dao.

## On The Environment

The Dao De Jing states that all things follow a natural pattern, humanity follows the earth, the earth follows heaven, heaven follows the Dao, and the Dao follows what is natural. It is then the responsibility of humanity to ensure that things follow their own natural course without external manipulation.

One of the central beliefs of Daoism is that everything is composed of two competing and opposite forces now as Yin and Yang. It is when these conflicting forces reach harmony that life energy is produced. It is then humanity's responsibility to look for ways to protect this balance and to help restore it when this balance is lost.

Daoism teaches that to live in harmony with nature one must observe the ways of nature, which is but another way of reminding us that we do not save that which we do not love and we can only love that which we have contact with. It is from an incomplete understanding of humanity's relationship with nature that causes destruction and exploitation of the natural world.

In living in harmony with nature one has to give consideration to nature's sustainability. In determining one's understanding of proper lifestyle consideration should be given to the balance of nature, which when

upset will have drastic consequences to all involved. The path to successful living comes not from accumulation of wealth, but from living within the balance provided by nature.

## **A Major issue and How an Adherent Might Respond – Urban Expansion and Ecological Impact**

As a Daoist is central to belief that one should live in harmony with the natural ordering of life. As urban centers continue to expand they also destroy the landscapes and ecosystems that surround the cities. This problem is common in China where Daoism is one of the five recognized religions of the country. More people are coming to the cities in hopes of finding a better life than what they had in the country. How then you as a Daoist make the distinction between what is natural and in harmony with nature and what is artificial and not in harmony with nature?

### **Discussion Questions**

1. How do the teaching of Daoism inform how we should live? How should Daoism inform our ecological perspectives?
2. Within Daoism, as with all major world religions, a premium is given to life and living things, how might one reconcile the conflicting demands between two forms of life? How might one reconcile the conflict between living things and nonliving things? For example, how could one speak of the value of glaciers, which are disappearing on a global scale because of rising temperatures?

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- Alliance of Religions and Conservation <http://www.arcworld.org/>

# Islam

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*By William Judd*

“No creature is there crawling on the earth, no bird flying with its wings, but they are nations like unto yourselves. We have neglected nothing in the Book; then to their Lord they shall be mustered.” *Qur’an* 6: 38

## Origins and Basic Teachings

Islam belongs to the Abrahamic traditions of monotheism that also includes Judaism and Christianity. Like the other members of this tradition, Islam links the importance of the message with messenger. Jews look to Moses and the Torah, Christians look to Jesus and the New Testament, and Muslims look to Muhammad and The Qur’an. Muhammad received his first revelation in 610 CE at the age of forty; his death came in 632 CE. However, in the Islamic calendar the first year is tied to neither of these dates, but to when Muhammad left Mecca to escape the persecution he faced there and settled in Medina in 622CE.

Islam’s faith is based on five pillars: profession of faith, prayer, almsgiving, fasting, and the pilgrimage to Mecca. The most simple and common profession of faith in Islam is, “There is no God, but Allah and Muhammad is his prophet.” This statement reflects the adherent monotheism of Islam and the belief that Muhammad is God’s final prophet. It is from these convictions that the other four pillars are derived.

Each days Muslims are called to pray towards Mecca five times (dawn, noon, midday, sunset, and evening). Muslims face Mecca because it is Muhammad’s birthplace and where he received God’s revelation. Prayers are always said in Arabic regardless of the national origin of the one who prays. Almsgiving is considered a duty and as such it is not as seen as charity. The giving of alms is performed to develop a sense of community. The fast of Ramadan, the fourth pillar, takes place during the ninth month of the lunar calendar. During the period from dawn until dusk, Muslims refrain from food, drink, and sex. However, this is not considered an act of asceticism but rather providing a space for reflections and good works. The ending of Ramadan marks the beginning of the time for pilgrimage. The expectation is that every Muslim who is financially and physically able will make the pilgrimage to Mecca at least once in their lifetime.

## On The Environment

The ecological principles of Islam are first and foremost rooted in its monotheism. Much like the opening of Decalogue, Islam believes nothing must come before or in place of Allah. It is because of this preeminent place that is given to Allah that humanity is to then live in total dependence upon Allah for all things. Humanity can depend on Allah for all things, because it is believed that all things belong to Allah. These principles run counter to the consumerist model which place all things in humanity’s grasp

and that it is in the mere act of consumption that humanity's happiness is found, not in any kind of transcendent being.

Second, humans have been placed in creation by Allah to be its guardians. Humans therefore are to govern with reason and justice. Humans are called to use creation properly and to not abuse it for we are seen as interconnected with the natural world and to misuse it is to jeopardize our lives as well as all other forms of life.

Third, in addition to the Qur'an, there are the Islamic legal codes, which comprise an interpretive tradition. Their concerns are that uses of resources be sustainable and in harmony with principals of justice. For example, needs that is of crucial importance is placed of higher importance than those of a more trivial nature. The needs of the poor are given greater importance than those of the rich. The causing of harm to create a benefit for oneself is prohibited. These are often considered to be the ideals, but they are to influence the actions people take, so that they might live with justice and minimal ecological impact.

## **A Major issue and How an Adherent Might Respond –Deforestation**

When most people think Islam one imagines the vast deserts of North Africa and the Middle East, however the many states of the former Soviet Union, the Balkans, and Indonesia have significant Muslim populations. How then might Islam respond to the question of deforestation in light of the concern for interrelatedness of nature? How might the principals of justice in which needs are addressed in order of importance and the prohibition of harm lead to a response to vast deforestation of the world, which is occurring to meet the demands of the affluent rather than the poor. Additionally how would Muslims respond to the fact that ecological destruction hits the poor much harder than the rich?

## **Discussion Questions**

1. What teachings within Islam can help create bridges with Judaism and Christianity to work for environmental protection?
2. How might the concept of almsgiving be expanded to encompass care for the natural world, as well as those who are materially poor?

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# Christianity

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*By Laura Hauptman*

## Basic Teaching

Christianity is a monotheistic religion whose origins lie in Judaism, and the two share sacred texts. The Hebrew Bible or Old Testament are the texts shared with the Jewish faith. The New Testament scriptures are sacred texts only in Christianity. Christians are people of word and sacrament. The word refers to the gospel, or good news found in the New Testament scriptures. The good news refers to the redeeming works of Jesus Christ's life, death and resurrection. Christians' anthropology is one that says humans are sinful, which separates them from God. Human beings, through their own actions cannot reconcile this brokenness. Christians have an incarnational theology. They believe that God took on human flesh in the man Jesus of Nazareth to reconcile this brokenness. This man ministered and spoke words of good news to the poor and oppressed of his time, and performed miracles of healing. He was crucified by the Roman Empire, died, and buried in a tomb. Christians believe that Jesus was raised from the dead three days after his burial. Through Jesus' unflinching obedience to God, death and resurrection the world has been reconciled to God. Therefore, Jesus is called the Savior and Messiah. Through Jesus humans receive salvation and blessings, which is unmerited because they are sinners. This unmerited salvation and blessings from God is called grace. God promises that through the sacraments of baptism and the Eucharist, Christians receive grace. Sacraments are defined as the means of grace. Christians believe that God promises grace through the sacraments, and belief in these promises is called faith. They are the means through which God chooses to work in the world. Baptism is commonly seen as an initiation into the Christian community, and usually only happens once in a person's life. Christians believe that they receive grace through the bread and wine of the Eucharist sacrament. In the New Testament, Jesus shares bread and wine with his disciples, saying that it is his body and blood given for them. Christian's beliefs about the bread and wine vary. Some say it is truly the body and blood of Jesus, others say it is a symbol of his body and blood, and others believe that he is present in the bread and wine. The way communities participate in the sacraments varies greatly among the diverse communities of the church and is shaped by social context and doctrinal beliefs. Some communities practice infant baptism, some practice re-baptism, some have the Eucharist weekly, others only once a year. The sacramental practices, and preaching styles vary greatly among the Christian churches. A basic definition of a Christian church is a community gathered in the name of Jesus Christ.

## On the Environment

Through their baptism, Christians are called to a life of service to others following the example of Jesus Christ. One component of this mission is to strive for justice and peace in all the earth. Eco-theologians have come to understand that this call goes beyond social justice, and the vision must be expanded to include all creation. Christians are a community centered in Jesus Christ. The gospel proclaims Jesus to

be the Savior of the world. Throughout much of Christian history this gospel message has been extremely anthropocentric, and pertaining to the salvation of human beings. However, in light of the current ecological crisis, scholars are engaging the biblical texts with greater sensitivity and awareness to nature. Many Christian denominations have been challenged to expand their vision of the gospel through social justice issues. Voices from people of oppressed and marginalized communities enhance and enrich our understanding of Christian theology and ethics. As a church centered in Jesus, Christians are called to seek out the oppressed and listen. Today, many identify nature as a neglected and marginalized. The Christian communities understanding of Jesus' salvific actions must be expanded to include creation. This can be expressed in the ritual of the Eucharist. As the person receives the bread and wine, it is common for the person administering the sacramental elements to say "the body of Christ, given for you" or "the blood of Christ, shed for you." Cynthia Moe-Loebada, a Lutheran scholar, notes that the 'you' in this phrase is both singular and plural meaning 'all'. It is a sign of the active and unmerited love of God received by those participating in the sacrament, and also God's love for all the world. This is not a new idea, but one that must be rediscovered. It already exists in Christian scripture.

## **Sacred Texts Related to Ecology**

The Bible has been criticized as encouraging ecological exploitation because of its anthropocentrism and the theme of human domination of nature. The creation account in Genesis 1 and the story of Noah in Genesis 9 (found in the resource section), have been interpreted to say that the world is created primarily for human use, and that God has delegated humans to be masters over creation. The Bible is also said to be a story of human history and salvation, and centered around human ethics, human morality and human salvation. Christian theologians have recognized these criticisms as valid, and created ecologically responsible responses. First, the idea that humans are masters of nature can be countered using the support of Biblical texts. In the Bible, there are no passages that suggest that nature was viewed as dead matter easily manipulated by human beings. The natural world is very much alive and responds to God. This is best seen in the Psalms. Psalm 148 and 96 (found in the resource section) are two examples. The natural world is sensitive, alive, responsive, and reacts to good and evil. Richard Cameron Wybrow, an Old Testament scholar, notes that nature enters into moral relations by being obedient or disobedient to God. This means that humans are capable of abusing and offending nature and nature reacts. Humans are also restricted in what they can do to nature by biblical texts such as Deuteronomy 20:19-20, which restricts cutting down fruit trees and Leviticus 25:1-7, which commands humans to let the land lie fallow every seventh year. God cares about the welfare of human beings as well as the animals because they are good in themselves. Over time, scholars have revealed that the Old Testament world view integrated human history and nature history as one history. The history of creation is a history of salvation for all creation. Revealing this in the New Testament writings is more difficult due to the lack of material pertaining to nature that can be found in the Old Testament. However, biblical scholars have pointed out that this same world view concerning God's concern for all creation is in the New Testament. Romans 8:21 says that Christ offers redemption for the whole earth. This and other texts show that humans have a moral obligation towards non-human creation. Through Christ all things were made is stated in John 1:3. In Colossians (found in resource section) the language

used to describe Christ's reconciling actions never refers to humans, but instead talks about Christ reconciling all things to God. The righteousness of human beings is not independent of the rest of creation. Human beings are a part of creation. Christian theologians are drawing on texts that connect human righteousness with care of creation. David Rhoads, a New Testament scholar, comments on Romans 8:19-23 (found in resource section), which says that creation waits for the time when humans will be made righteous, because then creation will be restored. When humans become righteous they treat creation in such a way that allows creation to flourish.

## **A Major Issue and How an Adherent Might Respond**

Integrating care for our environment with academics is a growing emphasis at Christian campuses across the United States. Several church organizations have taken action by raising environmental awareness, discussing environmental justice issues and how these issues relate to the Christian faith, and teaching students how to change their consumption patterns. These programs center around connecting environmental issues to other justice issues important to the Christian faith such as poverty and hunger. The Evangelical Youth Climate Initiative, is an organization to provides education about environmental issues to youth, and fosters leadership among young adults in areas of the ecological crisis. Christian churches and organizations are also working closely with environmental groups. The World Council of Churches has organized tropical forest conservation workshops in Costa Rica, Indonesia and Ecuador. In 1990, the Greek Orthodox Church issued a statement called "Orthodoxy and the Ecological Crisis," which talks about human responsibility towards and understanding of creation. Out of this document arose the Ormylia project, which is directed towards farming and recycling on monastery's land. The project recruits a team of conservation experts to advise on organic agriculture on the monastery's land- its farm, herds of sheep, cows and chicken, and the project also spreads information about conservation.

## **Discussion Questions**

1. What specific efforts to deal with the ecological crisis are you aware of? How many of them have a Christian basis?
2. The Roman Catholic Pope Benedict XVI announced that there are ecological sins, which are human actions that harm the environment such as pollution. Is this a fair assessment, and does our culture reflect this idea? What does this say about human beings in relation to the rest of creation?
3. Many Christian denominations now have special worship liturgies that focus on celebrating God's creation. What do you want to celebrate in your environment?

## **Additional Resources**

### **BIBLICAL TEXTS:**

Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.' So God created humankind in his image, in the image of

God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them, and God said to them, '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.'

(Gen 1:26-29, NRSV)

God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth. The fear and dread of you shall rest on every animal of the earth, and on every bird of the air, on everything that creeps on the ground, and on all the fish of the sea; into your hand they are delivered. Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you; and just as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything.'

(Gen 9:1-3, NRSV)

Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice;  
let the sea roar, and all that fills it;  
let the field exult, and everything in it.  
Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy before the LORD;  
for he is coming,  
for he is coming to judge the earth.  
He will judge the world with righteousness,  
and the peoples with his trust.

(Psalm 96:11-13, NRSV)

Praise the Lord! Praise the Lord from the heavens; praise him in the heights!  
Praise him, all his angels; praise him, all his host!  
Praise him, sun and moon; praise him, all you shining stars!  
Praise him, you highest heavens, and you waters above the heavens!  
Let them praise the name of the Lord, for he commanded and they were created.  
He established them forever and ever; he fixed their bounds, which cannot be passed.  
Praise the Lord from the earth, you sea monsters and all deeps,  
fire and hail, snow and frost, stormy wind fulfilling his command!  
Mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars!  
Wild animals and all cattle, creeping things and flying birds!  
Kings of the earth and all peoples, princes and all rulers of the earth!  
Young men and women alike, old and young together!  
Let them praise the name of the Lord, for his name alone is exalted;  
his glory is above earth and heaven.

(Psalm 148:1-13, NRSV)

For in Christ all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross.  
(Colossians 1:19-20)

For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the

creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and will obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. (Romans 8:19-23)

**INTERNET:**

-Evangelical Youth Climate Initiative website, [www.christiansandclimate.org/youth](http://www.christiansandclimate.org/youth)

-Lutheran social statement on Caring for Creation, [www.elca.org/What-We-Believe/Social-Issues/Social-Statements/Environment.aspx](http://www.elca.org/What-We-Believe/Social-Issues/Social-Statements/Environment.aspx)

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# Judaism

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*By Laura Hauptman*

## Basic Teaching

The basic contribution of Judaism is monotheism. The Hebrews broke with the cosmology and beliefs of ancient Middle Eastern cultures, by conceptualizing God as a single, supreme, nature transcending being. For their neighbors, which included the Egyptians, Babylonians and Syrians, individual aspects of nature were distinct gods. For these ancient Middle Eastern cultures, the gods were nature. However, the Jews broke with this concept of God and nature. For the Jewish people, nature is an expression of a single Lord of all being. God transcends nature. Judaism also ascribed a characteristic to God that was radical and new. Before, the gods in the early Middle Eastern region were seen as amoral and indifferent to human beings and their actions. However, Judaism ascribed righteousness to God. Throughout history, God reveals his love and mercy.

Judaism affirms the world's goodness. God is a God of righteousness, whose will is good. God created the world and pronounced that it was good. The question of the world's creation is not merely a cosmological question of origin. In Judaism, the agent of creation has implications for morality. If it were merely a philosophical question of first cause, it would have no bearing on how we live. The assertion speaks not to the way the earth originated but to the character of its agent. Affirming that God created the world, affirms its inherent and unquestionable worth. This affirmation of the God-created world leads to the concept of hope. God created the world and declares that it is good. God's goodness endures, and there is no reason to despair in life itself. Human beings are not totally helpless in their troubles because their problems do not stem from the character of existence itself. The cause of problems lies partly within ourselves. This means there is hope for something new and better. This causes human beings to respond creatively to the world, by searching for causes of problems and effecting change.

Time is seen as a spiral in the Jewish faith. This image means that we are always drawing on the past in order to move into the future. This spiral approach is encoded in four practices of the Jewish faith; midrash (interpreting biblical texts for current times), periods of rest called Shabbat, which include the sabbath day, *shmitah* (sabbatical year) and *yovel* (Jubilee year). This is a sacred cycle. These are periods set aside for rest and reflection. This spiral image is reflected in Jewish teaching and thought through the practice of midrash. Ancient texts are interpreted and retold in ways that cast new light upon the present and the future. There is a sacred rhythm of freedom and equality for human beings during the times of rest. God orders that people be freed from slavery and return to their homelands. These periods command rest, which allows time for reflection on the past and present to move into the future with renewed awareness so that we do not become slaves to structures and systems. Rest is needed for humans, earth and, the creation story tells us God rests.

## On the Environment

The Jewish affirmation that the world is God created allows for a constructive response to the environmental crisis. Nothing in creation is useless or expendable. The name for God in Jewish biblical text is four letter, unvoiced Hebrew YHWH. This word sounded out with no vowels is simply a breathing, and can be translated as “Breath of Life”. Eco-Judaism notes that this provides a particularly important insight into understanding the Divine. The “Breath of Life” means that God is immanent in the world, not only present in us but in all other life forms.

For Ellen Bernstein, a Jewish environmental activist, religion-particularly the Jewish faith- and ecology teach the same thing. The underlying principles are interdependence and cycles. The periods of rest; sabbath day, sabbatical year, and Jubilee year integrate the spiritual, political and ecological. These periods in the sacred cycle are marked by ceremonies and holy days in the Jewish faith. These aspects are all interwoven, and are one in the same. The sabbatical year and Jubilee demands radical social and economic changes. Release from debt, release from work, release of the land, and liberation from slavery and return to homelands are demanded. The biblical texts reminds humans that the land should not be permanently sold, for it is God’s land (Leviticus 25:23). Built into their calendar are periods of rest for the earth. The sabbath day, sabbatical year and Jubilee year call for human beings to recognize the interdependence of all life forms and the self-regulating system of the earth. Shabbat is the sign of the covenant between God and God’s people. People who observe these periods of rest, enter a covenant with God. These are also times when humans can live in peace with the earth. As a consequence of Adam and Eve’s rebellious eating of the fruit in the Garden of Eden, eating will come hard for humans. Until the coming of periods of Shabbat or rest. Shabbat is the aftertaste of Eden and the foretaste of messianic time. These are times of renewal and reflection for all of creation, both the earth and human beings.

## Sacred Texts Related to Ecology

The creation accounts of Genesis (chapter 1:1 to 2:4 and 2:5 to 3:24) tells us that the created world is testimony to God’s goodness and greatness. English translations of the Genesis creation accounts do not show the connection between human beings and earth. In Hebrew, the world for earth is *adamah* and *adam* means human beings. Therefore, the two are intertwined, one cannot say one without thinking of the other. The *ah* sound is a breathing sound. Human beings lose the unconscious breathing that connects them with the earth and receive a more conscious breath from YHWH, the Breath of Life. This story does not speak of only of human beings birth, but is a story of how throughout history the human race has separated and continues to separate itself from the earth. This separation has had devastating consequences on the environment, and in turn devastating effects on human beings. These negative consequences alert human beings of their interdependence on the earth and the need to build an new awareness and relationship with the earth. This is a crisis of the spiral. The human race has alienated itself more deeply, then realized more deeply its need for connection and built some new sense of community with the earth.

The Mishnah summarizes biblical laws. The Talmud is a compilation of rabbinical commentaries and views enlarging on the basic laws. These laws cover all aspects of human activity and life. Particularly important to ecology is the doctrine of *bal tashchit*, which translates as *you shall not destroy*. This is based on Deuteronomy 20:19. Human beings are created to preserve and guard nature, not to destroy it. This doctrine shapes the Jewish approach to the environment. Human beings are called to not be destructive and wasteful with their resources. This has many implications for the human life. Stopping up a fountain, killing animals for purposes other than self-preservation, wasting our wealth or talents, and wasting food in a destructive way are implied in this doctrine.

## Ecological Practices

Shomrei Adamah is an organization that focuses on providing ecological information and materials for rabbis to use in their congregations. One current project of Shomrei Adamah is to revive an ancient Jewish holiday that has not been widely celebrated. Tu Bi Shevat is a minor Jewish holiday in honor of trees. This is an opportunity to celebrate nature. A ceremony has been created for modern day, that includes a collection of readings and prayers that focus on nature, and a tree-planting ceremony. The time between Tu Bi Shevat and Earth Day has been designated as a time to focus on raising environmental awareness in the Jewish community. Shomrei Adamah also encourages synagogues to make their place of worship truly sacred by 'greening' them in such ways as using organic lawn products, banning styrofoam, setting up recycling centers, etc.

## A Major Issue and How an Adherent Might Respond- Climate Change

Many Jewish social organizations geared to advocacy and human justice problems have expanded their missions to include eco-justice issues. The Green Menorah Covenant is one response by Jewish communities in the United States to the global climate crisis. In the Jewish faith, the promises from God are given to God's people in the form of a covenant. The Green Menorah is the symbol of a covenant among Jewish communities and congregations to renew the miracle of Hanukkah in our own generation: Using one day's oil to meet eight days' needs. By 2020, cutting US oil consumption by seven-eighths. There are three aspects of the Covenant: hands-on action by congregations and congregants to reduce CO2 emissions on their own; infusion of Jewish festivals, life-cycle events, prayers, and education with eco-consciousness; and advocacy for change in public policy. More information can be found on The Shalom Center website which is listed under the "Additional Resources" section.

## Discussion Questions

1. Read Leviticus 25:8-25, which describes the year of the Jubilee. Identify the social, political, and economic, and environmental transformations demanded in the text. Discuss the year of the Jubilee in light of your current social context.
2. How can the Jewish image of time as a spiral be helpful in changing how humans understand their relationship to nature?

3. Do you think human's would have a different understanding of themselves and their identity if the term 'earthling' was commonly used instead of human?

## Additional Resources

### ORGANIZATIONS:

-The Shalom Center, [www.shalomctr.org](http://www.shalomctr.org)

-Environment and Jewish Life, [www.coejl.org](http://www.coejl.org), produced a handbook for action for Jewish communities called *To Till and to Tend*.

### BIBLICAL TEXTS:

#### Genesis 1:1-2:4, NRSV

In the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, the earth was a formless void and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day. And God said, "Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters." So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day. And God said, "Let the waters under the sky be gathered together into one place, and let the dry land appear." And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good. Then God said, "Let the earth put forth vegetation: plants yielding seed, and fruit trees of every kind on earth that bear fruit with the seed in it." And it was so. The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the third day. And God said, "Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years, and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth." And it was so. God made the two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night—and the stars. God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day. And God said, "Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky." So God created the great sea monsters and every living creature that moves, of every kind, with which the waters swarm, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. God blessed them, saying, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth." And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day. And God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle and creeping things and wild animals of the earth of every kind." And it was so. God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good. Then

God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them, and God said to them, "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." God said, "See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food." And it was so. God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day. Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation. These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created. In the day that the Lord God made the earth and the heavens,

#### **Deuteronomy 20:19, NRSV**

If you besiege a town for a long time, making war against it in order to take it, you must not destroy its trees by wielding an ax against them. Although you may take food from them, you must not cut them down. Are trees in the field human beings that they should come under siege from you?

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# Buddhism

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By Josh Herzfeldt-Kamprath

## Basic Teachings

The core of all Buddhist traditions is the acceptance and concession to what are referred to as the Three Jewels. These Three Jewels are the Buddha (the Enlightened One), the Dhamma (the Teachings), and the Sangha (the Community).

The Buddha, or the Enlightened One, is the central figure and founder of Buddhism. As with the life of Christ, the life of the Buddha is documented only in “the canonical Buddhist writings which are clearly biased in favour [sic.] of Buddhist tradition.”<sup>1</sup> The purpose of these writings is not necessarily to present an accurate (read: factual) historical description but rather to reinforce Buddhist tradition and teaching.

The life of the Buddha is taught as the story of the young Gotama Siddattha and his quest for enlightenment. Becoming an ascetic at the age of 29, leaving behind the life of a prince, Gotama sought to learn all he could from a series of sages and teachers. Having mastered various techniques and practices, Gotama found he was no closer to achieving enlightenment and sought more.

Gotama decided to go extreme by depriving himself of food and water and being entirely removed from any contact with other people. This of course did not work and he began to care for himself again. Eventually, so resolved to achieve enlightenment, he sat himself “under an Asvattha tree, later to be called the Bodhi tree.”<sup>2</sup> Here, after being tempted and tested by the god of life, Mara, Gotama achieved enlightenment. It came “while he was sitting under the Bodhi tree, the tree of enlightenment. The enlightenment did not consist in achieving the kind of transcendental self-consciousness that the Upanisads speak of, but in understanding the concatenation of causes and effects responsible for the fetters that keep a person in *samsara*,<sup>3</sup> thus enabling him to snap that bond and become free.”<sup>4</sup> From this moment on, the Buddha traveled and taught, forming and strengthening the Buddhist community by teaching the ‘middle-way’ between extreme asceticism and extreme indulgence. The teachings of the Buddha in his various sermons was remembered and recorded by his followers and eventually formed into what is now known as the Pali Canon and which serves as the primary scriptures of the Buddhist tradition.

The scriptures contained within the Pali Canon consist of the teachings of the Buddha which make up the second of the Three Jewels, the Dhamma. The major components of the Dhamma, with relevance to this study, are *karma* and *samsara*, *dharma*, the Noble Eightfold Path, and the Four Noble Truths.

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<sup>1</sup> Klaus K. Klostermaier, *Buddhism: A Short Introduction* (Oxford, England: Oneworld, 1999), 13.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>3</sup> See *Ibid.*, 30, where Klostermaier writes about *samsara*: “The endless cycle of birth, old age and death... a necessity, a fact which no one can change”

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

*Karma* and *samsara* are the underlying assumptions to how Buddhists view the world. *Samsara*, is the cycle of life in which one progresses from birth, through life, and into death. This cycle assumes the understanding of reincarnation. Each person has been, and will continue to be, reincarnated in this world. *Karma*, then, serves as the law dictating how one moves from one life to the next. "What we are is the fruit of what we have thought and done."<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, "the law of karma encourages us to take responsibility for our present situation as well as for how our lives will unfold in the future."<sup>6</sup> Thus whatever is done in one's life has repercussions for one's life in the future. The laws of *karma* have implications to how one is reincarnated. Buddhists believe there are ten realms of existence: Buddha, "Bodhisattva (an enlightened being destined to be a Buddha, but purposely remaining on earth to teach others), Pratyeka Buddha (a Buddha for himself), Sravka (direct disciple of Buddha), heavenly beings (superhuman [angels?]), human beings, Asura (fighting spirits), beasts, Preta (hungry ghosts), and depraved men (hellish beings)."<sup>7</sup> Thus what one does affects where one will wind up in the next life.

The next part of the Dhamma is the concept of *dharma*. "In Buddhism it is used to describe the teachings of the Buddha, the *Buddha-dhamma*, as well as specific Buddhist teaching about the nature of reality. The most basic way to describe *dharma*, which only touches the surface of this complex idea, is described as *anatta*, or No-Self. Buddhists deny the existence of a 'self' as western philosophy would understand. Instead, each person<sup>8</sup> is not an individual, but rather part of a 'network' of existence in which that person shares their existence with the rest of existence. This existence is made up of *dharmas*, each "defined as a 'carrier of its qualities', a 'factor of existence', a component of so-called reality."<sup>9</sup> "*Dharmas* are colours, sounds, sense faculties, breath, feelings, states of consciousness, good and bad luck, birth, death and so on."<sup>10</sup> All aspects of what we deem 'existence' is intimately related to all other aspects. No one piece is separate from this interpenetration of existence and all are part of the rest. Thus the concept of 'I' does not exist in Buddhist thought.

Once these above groundings of Buddhist thought are understood and lived, one is able to reflect and meditate and begin the path toward enlightenment. This path, deemed the 'middle-way', is a path which takes one between the extremes of indulgence and self-mortification. This path is known as the Noble Eightfold Path. It consists of eight aspects which fall under three categories: wisdom, ethical conduct, and mental discipline. The path is this: 1. Right views, 2. Right aspirations, 3. Right speech, 4. Right conduct, 5. Right livelihood, 6. Right effort, 7. Right mindfulness, and 8. Right contemplation.<sup>11</sup> One and two fall under the category of wisdom, three through five under ethical conduct, and six through eight under mental discipline. These are all requirements of achieving enlightenment, and indeed, this path is the only path to do so.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid., 31.

<sup>6</sup> Martine Batchelor and Kerry Brown, eds., *Buddhism and Ecology* (London: Cassell Publishers Limited, 1992), 9.

<sup>7</sup> Takashi Tsuji, "On Reincarnation," BuddhaNet Basic Buddhism Guide, <http://www.buddhanet.net/e-learning/reincarnation.htm>, (last accessed 4/14/08).

<sup>8</sup> Even referring to the concept of personhood is problematic within this structure of reality, but for the sake of simplicity and understanding, the term will remain.

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

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 35.

In understanding the reason for this path, one must look toward the Four Noble Truths. These four realities dictate all of Buddhist thought and practice as underlying principles on which are built the remainder of the tradition. The first is that suffering exists. Life is dictated by suffering; from the moment of birth, one is in a constant decay toward death. Indeed all of reality is defined by suffering. The second Truth regards the origin of suffering. Suffering comes from delusion and craving in one's life. The seeking of satisfaction and the craving for success, and the delusion that this is easily accessible, form the origin of suffering. The third Truth is that there is an end of suffering. And the fourth Truth is that the Noble Eightfold Path is the only way to the end of suffering. Thus for Buddhists, enlightenment is the process of ending one's suffering in the world, ending one's cycle of *samsara*, and becoming aware of everything.

These teachings of the Buddha—*karma* and *samsara*, *dharma*, the Noble Eightfold Path, and the Four Noble Truths—form the central core for all Buddhist traditions. While each separate movement within Buddhism understands these in different lights according to their own context and needs, they still remain central. The teachings of these core beliefs lead us to the third Jewel, the Sangha.

The Sangha is, simply put, the Buddhist community in general. It is divided into four groups known as 'assemblies': "the *bhikkhus* (monks), the *bhikkhunis* (nuns), *upasakas* (male lay followers) and *upasikas* (female lay followers)."<sup>12</sup> Of course, the overarching Buddhist community is divided up into smaller communities around the world which are able to interpret the teachings and practices to fit with their immediate context. With these four groups, however, all who wish to participate, may, if they desire, each person able to become as involved as they feel fit. For instance, people seeking for the ultimate enlightenment of nirvana would travel down the path of the monk or the nun, adhering to the strictest of the Buddha's teachings. Those who are content to offer support, and "are satisfied with lay status, hope through good deeds to merit a rebirth that will bring them closer to *nibbana*."<sup>13</sup> Thus the recognition exists that not all are able or ready to seek enlightenment. Some must wait lifetimes of building up good *karma*, consistently being reincarnated in a higher realm.

## On the Environment

Buddhism is inherently environmental. One of the most exemplary teachings is that of interpenetration explained in the myth of Indra's Jeweled Net. Imagine a net which is made of jewels. When you look in one jewel, you see reflected all other jewels, each reflecting all other jewels, and so on. In each jewel, then every other jewel is present. This is a representation of life. Within each of us, everything exists; conversely, within everything, we exist. I am the same as a blade of grass, a rock, a seagull, a redwood, the ground, sky, space, everything.

The doctrine of interpenetration has implications, then, on how Buddhists view the world around them. Every action taken has direct consequences from all aspects of life. This can also be expressed by the adage that when a butterfly flutters its wings in Kansas, it starts a hurricane on the other side of the

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 89.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

world. Thus, in order to achieve enlightenment, to be removed from the cycle of samsara, an environmental ethic is not only recommended but required.

This ethic is lived out daily by all Buddhists, monks and lay-people alike, and is expressed in the Five Precepts which dictate Buddhist life. They are “commitments to abstain from killing, stealing, sexual misconduct, lying and intoxication.”<sup>14</sup> The first precept, not killing, is typically rendered as not taking a life, which has far reaching implications beyond only human-human relationship. Not taking a life means not taking *any* life but what little is needed to sustain one’s own life. Under these precepts is a general loving-kindness which pervades all Buddhist thought.

## Ecological Practices

A great example of ecological practice and life is expressed by Helena Norberg-Hodge<sup>15</sup> regarding her experience traveling around the region of Ladakh (just north of India) to various villages, as well as the capital, Leh. The main thrust of Norberg-Hodge’s discussion revolves around the clashing of modern technology and thought with the once isolated village communities of the Ladakh region. She describes in detail how each of these villages survived for many, many generations at the extremely high altitudes, entirely self-sustained. They developed methods and practices which worked with nature and the environment, destroying nothing in the process, allowing them to live in harmony for many generations. Norberg-Hodge describes their lifestyle: “For the Ladakhis there are no great distinctions or separations between work and festivity, between human spirituality and attendance to the natural environment” (45). She describes certain festivals of harvest which seem less like work in the fields purely for sustenance and more like worship and communion with each other and nature. Furthermore, as primarily Tibetan Buddhist communities, “the Ladakhi sense of self is based on a complex web of interconnection and constant change, rather than a notion of static isolated individuality” (51). This and other Buddhist principles permeate the way of life of these simple people.

Things changed however, as the region became overrun with tourists after it came to be under the control of India. The small mountain communities, once self-sufficient, could no longer support themselves *and* the growing tourist economy and were thus forced into giving up many of their old ways in favor of conforming and attempting to catch up with the rest of the modernized world. Norberg-Hodge finishes her essay by briefly discussing the more recent attempts to synthesize the old ways with the new in an effort not to shun ‘modernization’ but accept it and work within it while holding on to the most important values of living with and caring for the world around you.

## Major Issue and a Buddhist Response – Deforestation in Thailand

Ajahn Pongsak, a Thai monk, has emerged as an opponent of various legislations which have been detrimental to the efforts to preserve and rebuild the forests in Thailand. Pongsak works primarily in northern Thailand where he is the abbot of a monastery which serves as the center of the efforts to

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<sup>14</sup> The Five Precepts, Wikipedia, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Five\\_precepts](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Five_precepts) (accessed 5/4/08).

<sup>15</sup> In Martine Batchelor and Kerry Brown, eds., *Buddhism and Ecology* (London: Cassell Publishers Limited, 1992), 41-54.

reevaluate the situations in the country which continually get worse as the forests and the environment are disregarded. He practices what is known as 'engaged Buddhism,' which is not content to simply meditate on issues but rather put the Buddhist ideals to use in the service to others and the environment. His rationale is summed up in this quote from an interview with him: "Dharma, the Buddhist word for truth and the teachings, is also the word for nature. That is because they are the same. Nature is the manifestation of the truth and of the teachings. When we destroy nature we destroy the truth and the teachings. When we protect nature, we protect the truth and the teachings."<sup>16</sup> This method of engaged Buddhism allows for action on the part of Buddhists to live out the teachings which inherently respect and protect the world.

## Questions

1. What aspects of interpenetration or interconnectedness do you see at play in your life? What systems are at work at the world today that mirror these doctrines?
2. How might a Buddhist lifestyle benefit you in your life?
3. Describe or reflect upon your own *sangha*. How conscious is your community about its actions and the impact it has upon the world around it? What changes can be made that reflect a Buddhist way of life?

## Additional Resources

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- Tucker, Mary E., and Duncan R. Williams, eds. *Buddhism and Ecology: The Interconnection of Dharma and Deeds*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997.

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid., 99

# Jainism

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By Josh Herzfeldt-Kamprath

## Basic Teachings

Jainism, like other Indian religions, seeks to provide a path toward enlightenment. Similar to the Buddhist concept of nirvana, Jains believe in a state of being which transcends the world as we know and experience it. This enlightenment is expressed as omniscience. The idea then, is to move “from a state of inadequate perception of the world to the attainment of certain higher forms of knowledge,”<sup>17</sup> by means of various teachings and practices. Furthermore, it is the “release from all karma,”<sup>18</sup> allowing for spiritual deliverance and the awakening of the consciousness to its inherent omniscience, a state known as *kevala*.

Karma in Jainism differs from that of Buddhism in that it is not a concept or state of mind but an actual substance. As an illustration, the process of acquiring karma can be expressed in a simple analogy: “the *jiva* [soul] which experiences the passions attracts karma like a damp clot does dust.”<sup>19</sup> The ability to remove this karma from oneself is the process through which Jains attain *kevala*. This is done through adherence to the Three Gems of Jainism.

For Jains, every action has an immediate consequence, thus every action is followed by a direct reaction. In order to achieve enlightenment, then, a Jain must practice a life of goodness. This life is describe in the Three Gems of Jainism (similar to the Noble Eightfold Path in Buddhism), and provide a path down which one can achieve enlightenment. These Gems are right view, right knowledge, and right conduct. Keeping these as central to an adherent’s mindset is the first step toward enlightenment.

At the center of all Jain teachings is a belief in non-violence (*ahimsa*). It is describe as being “the basis of right View, the condition of right Knowledge and the kernel of right Conduct.”<sup>20</sup> This non-violence extends not only to other humans, but to all life, a truly universal belief. Non-violence is a means by which Jains achieve *kevala*, or enlightenment; “without the abandonment of violent activity, all religious behavior, no matter how correct, is worthless.”<sup>21</sup> Thus one must adhere to a non-violent lifestyle in order to live by the Three Gems and begin the process of achieving the knowledge involved in enlightenment. Non-violence is the underlying state in all Jain thought and action, leading to an inherent ecological ethic.

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<sup>17</sup> Paul Dundas, *The Jains* (London: Routledge, 1992), 76.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 83.

<sup>20</sup> Jainism, “Main Points in Jainism,” Wikipedia, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jainism> (accessed 5/3/08).

<sup>21</sup> Dundas, 138.

## On the Environment

Through the process of reincarnation experienced by the soul (*jiva*), one can be reborn in another form. The human form, for Jainism, is the only form which can attain *kevala*. Animals possess consciousness, as humans do, but require to be reborn into human form in order to become enlightened. However, “of all the lowest categories of life, it is plants alone which are deemed to share certain characteristics with human beings..., they are regarded by Jainism as possessing a form of consciousness and awareness of their surroundings in common with those of animals and humans.”<sup>22</sup> This leads to an incredibly caring outlook toward not only other humans and animals, but to plants as well, as they too possess consciousness.

The doctrine of *ahimsa*, or non-violence, which pervades all of Jainism, serves as its prime moral belief. As a result of adherence to non-violence, “for Jain laypeople, this generally means keeping to a vegetarian diet and pursuing livelihoods deemed to inflict a minimum of harm,”<sup>23</sup> not only to other people, but to all life. Furthermore, *ahimsa* has implications when understood in light of Jain understanding of the interconnectedness of all things, similar to that of Buddhism. A verse from a Jain *sutra*, or text, states that,

You are the one whom you intend to kill, you are the one you intend to tyrannize, you are the one whom you intend to torment, you are the one you intend to punish and drive away. The enlightened one who lives up to this dictum neither kills nor causes others to kill.<sup>24</sup>

No violence, with this understanding, will be beneficial as it is self-destructive as much as it is externally destructive. Again, a central understanding that all life is sacred is understood in this passage.

## Ecological Practices

At the most basic level, all Jain practices are ecological. This is because of the overarching mindset, rooted in non-violence, which holds all life to be important and even sacred. Mahavira, the founder of Jainism, serves as the prime example of the Jain lifestyle and its ecological awareness. Everywhere he went, he walked, believing that it was not right to make an animal serve a human. He “walked barefoot, treading lightly on the earth. He kept his eyes on the ground to avoid stepping on any living creature. If, by mistake, he stepped on any form of life, he would cause less harm because he walked barefoot.”<sup>25</sup> He ate only what he needed, teaching that “the earth has soul, water has soul, fire has soul, air has soul, and of course all plants and animals have souls.”<sup>26</sup> Because these all have souls, they deserve respect and care.

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 90.

<sup>23</sup> Christopher Key Chapple, ed., *Jainism and Ecology: Nonviolence in the Web of Life*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), xxxiv.

<sup>24</sup> *Acaranga Sutra* as quoted in Chapple, *Jainism and Ecology*, 7.

<sup>25</sup> Satish Kumar, “Jain Ecology,” in *Jainism and Ecology*, 183.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 184.

Above all, Mahavira practiced non-violence toward everything. Satish Kumar, a Jain monk, describes his experience growing up and how his family, as well as others in the town in which he grew up, would collect rainwater from the monsoons into storage tanks. This water served as their drinking water for the entire year. Jains believe that “wasting water [is] a serious infraction.”<sup>27</sup> He quotes a Jain water sutra:

Waste no water  
Don't ever spill it  
Water is precious  
Water is sacred  
The way you use water is the measure of you  
Water is witness  
Water is the judge  
Your wisdom rests on your careful use of water<sup>28</sup>

The sacredness of water, as well as the inherent care for all life, are only two examples of Jain ecological practice. To do justice to the extent of Jain ecological practice, one would have to witness how carefully every action is weighed against the greater consequences in every aspect of Jain life.

## Major Issue and a Jain Response

The answer to how Jainism would respond to any ecological issue would be the same in every circumstance and would in fact mirror all that has already been outlined above. As everything is interconnected, and all life is sacred, a Jain would evaluate any given crisis from the standpoint: how can this be dealt with non-violently, keeping in mind all near- and far-reaching consequences?

## Questions

1. What practices, actions, or decisions do you make subconsciously that could be considered violent?
2. How might you adjust your lifestyle to become more non-violent? Eating habits? Consumerism?
3. What parallels, if any, do you see between Jainism and other religions? How can Jain teachings influence or inform your beliefs, morals and actions?

## Additional Resources

- Chapple, Christopher Key, ed. *Jainism and Ecology: Nonviolence in the Web of Life*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002.
- Dundas, Paul. *The Jains*. London: Routledge, 1992.
- Schweitzer, Albert. *Indian Thought and its Development*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1936.
- Stevenson, J. (ed. and trans.). *The Kalpa Sutra and Nava Tatva: Two Works Illustrative of the Jain Religion and Philosophy*. London: Oriental Translation Fund, 1848.

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 187.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

- Stevenson, Sinclair. *The Religious Quest of India: The Heart of Jainism*. London: Oxford University Press, 1915.
- Wikipedia. *Jainism*. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jainism>. (4 May 2008).
- <http://www.jainuniversity.org/>
- [http://www.tourismtravelindia.com/pilgrimages\\_tour/jainism/jainism.html](http://www.tourismtravelindia.com/pilgrimages_tour/jainism/jainism.html)

# Atheism\Humanism\NeoPaganism

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*By Paul Busekist*

Though these religions are in many ways very separate, their overall view of the environment shares many basic core tenets. Here are the religions, their differences and similarities.

## Basic Teaching

**Atheism:** Atheists have an explicit position [that] either affirms the [nonexistence](#) of [gods](#) or rejects [theism](#).<sup>29</sup> It has evolved from its origins in 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE (when it was defined as “godlessness”); now it is more broadly defined by some as the lack of belief in just one God (i.e. atheist as polytheist) or more narrowly defined by others who believe that neither the spiritual nor supernatural\transcendental exists no matter which deities are believed (hence, not including Hinduism or Buddhist, either.)<sup>30</sup> Even more recently, in Western civilization, there is a view that children are born atheist because they must be *taught* religion.<sup>31</sup> Atheism appears to be an umbrella belief structure for secular humanism, naturalism, scientific skepticism, and others; atheism also contains agnosticism, which is alternatively described as “weak atheism” or an atheism which appears to mean an undeeply-discerned atheism [my emphasis].<sup>32</sup>

**Secular Humanism:** One of many branches of *humanism* (i.e. secular, Greek, Islamic, Renaissance, etc) whereby the core tenets are as follows: “(1) affirms the dignity and worth of all people based on the ability to determine right and wrong by appeal to universal human qualities — particularly [rationality](#);<sup>33</sup> (2) a component of a variety of more specific [philosophical](#) systems and incorporated into several religious schools of thought; (3) entails a commitment to the search for truth and morality through human means in support of human interests; (4) in focusing on the capacity for self-determination, humanism rejects the validity of transcendental justifications, such as a dependence on [belief without reason](#), the [supernatural](#), or texts of allegedly divine origin; and finally, (5) humanists endorse [universal morality](#) based on the commonality of the [human condition](#), suggesting that solutions to human social and cultural problems cannot be [parochial](#).”<sup>34</sup>

**NeoPaganism:** “an [umbrella term](#) used to identify a wide variety of modern religious movements, particularly those influenced by historical pre-Christian European [Pagan](#) religions. Neo-Pagan religious movements are extremely diverse, with beliefs that range widely from [polytheism](#) to [animism](#), to [pantheism](#) and other paradigms. Many Neopagans practice a spirituality that is entirely modern in origin, while others attempt to accurately [reconstruct](#) or revive indigenous, ethnic religions as found in

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<sup>29</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atheism>

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humanism>

<sup>34</sup> Ibid

historical and folkloric sources.”<sup>35</sup> [Wicca](#) is the largest Neopagan religion in the [USA](#). Wicca is a modern religion first publicized in 1954 by [Gerald Gardner](#). Gardner claimed that the religion was a modern survival of an old [witch](#) cult, originating in the pre-Christian Paganism of Europe and existing in secret for centuries.<sup>36</sup>

## On the Environment

**Atheists, as well as the other two religions, seem to have a stake in what is called “deep ecology”**

Deep ecology an ecosophy (i.e. “ecological philosophy) that considers humankind an integral part of its environment. Deep ecology “places greater value on non-human species, ecosystems and processes in nature than established environmental and green movements.”<sup>37</sup> Deep ecology has led to a new system of environmental ethics. The core principle of deep ecology as originally developed is Arne Næss's doctrine of [biospheric egalitarianism](#) — the claim that, like humanity, the living environment as a whole has the same right to live and flourish. Deep ecology has been described as “deep” because it “persists in asking deeper questions concerning “why” and “how” and thus is concerned with the fundamental philosophical questions about the impacts of human life as one part of the ecosphere, rather than with a narrow view of ecology as a branch of biological science, and aims to avoid merely utilitarian environmentalism, which it argues is concerned with resource management of the environment for human purposes.”<sup>38</sup>

**Secular humanists** add to this definition by defending and re-defining its name in the context of [deep ecology]: “Because of its name, some people think that humanism must be completely human-centered, concerned only with human welfare. Humanists are concerned with human welfare and happiness, but because of this concern, humanists also care about the natural world, which we all depend on and which will have to sustain our descendants.” In my opinion, this is a thinly disguised focus on humanity being the most important of the species. However, they do have a point when it comes to who really has the *agency* in our crisis situation: “Because humanists have no belief in a god or supernatural force that will solve our problems for us, they know that human beings must take sole responsibility for sorting out environmental problems. We are the only ones capable of finding the solutions that can lead to a sustainable existence.”<sup>39</sup>

**NeoPagans** add to the deep ecological tenet of *all* creation’s importance because most of their branches “hold the Earth as sacred and deity as immanent.” Goddess spirituality is typical, and there is a mutual influence with some branches of ecofeminism, though some of my readings pointed to a rift within Paganism whereby feminists claimed that focusing too much on the *general* welfare of creation

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<sup>35</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neo\\_paganism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neo_paganism)

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

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[http://groups.google.com/group/alt.atheism/browse\\_thread/thread/d169da1c1449fc5a/7ab2227baf7e92fb?lnk=ao](http://groups.google.com/group/alt.atheism/browse_thread/thread/d169da1c1449fc5a/7ab2227baf7e92fb?lnk=ao) and [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deep\\_ecology](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deep_ecology)

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Excerpt from article “A humanist discussion of... ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES” by Dr Jonathan Newman, ecologist, Oxford University Department of Zoology at <http://www.humanism.org.uk/site/cms/contentViewArticle.asp?article=1231>

neglected women and other marginalized voices. Trying to sum up contemporary Paganism in paragraph is difficult because its branches are so diverse: from druidism, to Wiccan, or simply Pagan or Neo-Pagan, there is much variation. Also, while it is fair to say the Paganism is a 'nature religion' (Pearson, Roberts and Samuel, 1998: 1), most Pagans "don't often think about the ethical and political implications of what they are doing" (Adler 1986: 397). In fact "some Pagans affirm a transcendence of nature" and "believe in a sort of divinity that is not of this world" (Davy, 2007: 7). In fact environmentally active Pagans are in "a minority" (Davy, 2002: 90). We can usefully identify those who are explicitly environmentally active as Eco-Pagans."<sup>40</sup>

## Ecological Practices

It is fair to say that neither of the three religions discussed have much in the way of ritual practice when it comes to the environment, or otherwise. However, many books on the environment (those on Deep Ecology, specifically) have been written with the idea that ceremony, theology and supernaturalism are all outdated and ineffective means of looking at the environment and the impending ecological crises. Instead, science and action pervade the ecological practices of these religions.

## A Major Issue and How an Adherent Might Respond – Worship with Theists

On this topic, I am realizing that I have approached ritual with non-theists from my *own* vantage point: that is, what *I* would do if welcoming atheists, secular humanists, and Neo Pagans in worship. I have concrete examples of coordinating, preaching and administering a secular humanist's funeral, based on the fruitful discussions on humanism and Christianity I had with the patient before he passed away. Also, I led an interfaith service a few weeks ago, which attempted to create an a-religious – or at least, inclusive – "psalm" based on the secular Dr. Seuss children's story called *The Lorax* below.

## A Pseussian Psalm (from the desk of Lorax)

I lift up my eyes, to the hills by and by,

Wonderin' where does my help come from...up in the sky?

Guess again, says our Allah, our God or Yahweh.

You know very well what you're sent here to say.

Help comes from th'Creator, of heaven and earth.

Who made you with breath, and a handful of dirt.

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<sup>40</sup> <http://www.thegreenfuse.org/paganism.htm>

Spending all of your time looking up, and not down,  
Makes you miss all the waste that's been going around.

But I warned them, Creator, of things that would be,  
If we smogged up the skies, chopped down all of our trees.  
I said, "Once-lers, I'm Lorax. I speak for the trees,  
Which you seem to be chopping down, 'fast as you please.  
And lots of our neighbors, who ate the trees' fruits.  
They've all got the crummies, and have no more food!"

We, the Once-lers, felt sad , as we watched them all go.  
BUT... business is business , and business must grow.  
Regardless of crummies in tummies, you know.

The supply you are making is beyond the demand,  
Beyond the capacity of all of this land.  
Yet the factories kept fact'ring,  
And the trees disappeared...  
It was the moment the Once-lers reluctantly feared.

And the Creator whispered in the prophet's ear:

"Their lives must be followed by real change, Lorax.  
Once-lers' habits, and spending. Just look at the facts.  
The rest of the world does not live like they do.

If they all did...well...there'd just be NO ROOM!"

"But NOW," says the Once-ler, "Now that YOU'RE here, the word of the Lorax seems perfectly clear.

UNLESS someone like you cares a whole awful lot, nothing is going to get better. It's not."

...Let us look to the future, and plant a new seed.

The Creator will help us, to find what we need.

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Finally, I realized that I had not been thinking about how an atheist \ humanist \ neo-pagan would welcome *me* to worship, but that I was looking at things from my perspective...But I think in some way that reminds me how we typically cannot avoid looking at things from our own vantage point. At any rate, the attempt was made to meet a non-theist in the middle.

## Discussion Questions

1. How does a belief in a deity change one's view of the environment?
2. Is it necessary to believe in life after death to look after creation in ways that preserve it for future generations?
3. What key passages in both scripture and secular and religious literature create fertile ground for dialogue between theists and non-theists?
4. Does popular culture make a case for, or against, non-theism?

## Additional Resources

- Wikipedia: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neo\\_paganism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neo_paganism)
- Greenfuse: <http://www.thegreenfuse.org>
- Article "Ecofeminism, Neopaganism, and theGaia Movement in the Postmodern Age" by Michael Werner: <http://www.humanismtoday.org/vol7/werner.pdf>
- Wikipedia: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atheism>
- Positive Atheism: <http://www.positiveatheism.org/crt/versluys1.htm>
- American Atheists: <http://www.atheists.org/>
- Atheist Alliance International: <http://www.atheistalliance.org/>
- Wikipedia: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Humanism>
- The Zygon Center: <http://www.zygoncenter.org/> see also <http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/action/showPdf?submitPDF=Full+Text+PDF+%281%2C156+KB%29&doi=10.1111%2Fj.1467-9744.1977.tb00310.x&cookieSet=1>

- The British Humanist Association: <http://www.humanism.org.uk/site/cms/>
- Atheist Alliance International: <http://www.atheistalliance.org/>
- [Doreen Valiente](#)'s text *The Charge of the Goddess* used materials from *The Gospel of Aradia* by Charles G. Leland (1899), as well as material from Aleister Crowley's writings.<sup>41</sup>
- Bill McKibben's *Deep Economy: The Wealth of Communities and the Durable Future* (2007)
- J.P. Moreland and Kai Nelson's *Does God Exist: The Debate Between Theists and Atheists* (1993)

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<sup>41</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neo\\_paganism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Neo_paganism)