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Introduction

This brochure identifies a significant body of recently published books and journals on religion and ecology. While by no means exhaustive, it highlights some of the best materials available to scholars and students, religious leaders and lay persons, environmentalists and journalists. In addition to this published material, the Forum on Religion and Ecology’s research website (http://environment.harvard.edu/religion) provides numerous resources regarding the topic of religion and ecology. Many sections also include extensive annotated bibliographies for individuals interested in furthering their knowledge of the field.

Revisioning Human-Earth Relations

The enormous challenges and multiple dimensions of our current environmental crisis have created seemingly insoluble problems of global proportions. In response to these challenges, there is a growing recognition of a need for major changes in human-Earth relations. Thus multireligious and multidisciplinary efforts are necessary for comprehensive resolutions to our environmental problems.

To this end, the Forum on Religion and Ecology (FORE) brings together religious studies with academic and activist discourses on the environment. The Forum recognizes that the engagement of the world’s religions is critical to effective environmental policies for two reasons: first, religions provide direction for developing mutually enhancing human-Earth relations and second, they present distinctive ethics of respect for nature and for future generations. The Forum thus proposes that religious perspectives and environmental ethics can make important contributions to the revisioning of human-Earth relations.

History of the Forum

The Forum arose out of a series of ten groundbreaking conferences on Religions of the World and Ecology that were held at the Harvard Divinity School Center for the Study of World Religions (CSWR) from May 1996 to July 1998. The series explored the diverse manner in which religious traditions view nature, construct symbol systems, and engage in ritual practices relating humans to nature.

Three culminating conferences in the autumn of 1998 brought the world’s religious traditions into dialogue with four other key disciplines concerned with the environment: science, economics, education, and public policy. At the request of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), a press conference and a symposium reporting the findings of the conferences were held at the United Nations (UN) in October of 1998. It was at the UN press conference that the ongoing Forum on Religion and Ecology was announced. Following this, the American Museum of Natural History hosted a conference that highlighted the need for religious involvement in environmental issues.

“The supreme need of our times brings about a healing of the Earth through a mutually enhancing human presence to the Earth community.”
—Thomas Berry, The Dream of the Earth
Introduction

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Forum Goals
Since the initial Harvard conference series, the Forum’s main goal is to establish religion and ecology as an academic area of study and research in universities, colleges, and seminaries. Such study can provide significant contributions to environmental policies in many parts of the world. In pursuit of these goals, the Forum is focusing on three key areas: research, education, and outreach.

Research
The Forum supports cutting-edge research in the field of religion and ecology by promoting publishing projects, organizing scholarly conferences, and expanding its network of international scholars.

Education
The Forum identifies curricular resources, disseminates print and video materials, hosts workshops for teachers, provides a speakers list, and develops innovative approaches to the topic of religion and ecology for congregations and local communities. Much of this information is available on the Forum’s website.

Outreach
The Forum has two types of outreach programs. The first is the ongoing dialogue it maintains with scholars, religious leaders, laypersons, environmentalists, and various international organizations so as to build effective networks for informing both environmental policies and practices. As part of this outreach effort, the Forum is working in conjunction with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Council for a Parliament of the World’s Religions, the Worldwatch Institute, the Earth Charter Initiative, and the Center for Respect of Life and Environment (CRLE).

The Forum’s second outreach program is its website (http://environment.harvard.edu/religion), hosted by the Harvard University Center for the Environment. This is the most comprehensive website in the world on religion and ecology. The site provides introductory essays, annotated bibliographies, and selected sacred texts for ten major world religions. In addition to various teaching materials, the site also provides major environmental statements and examples of religiously based environmental grassroots projects from around the world. In an effort to promote the interactive engagement between various disciplines, the site also provides sections on science, economics, ethics, education, and public policy.

Forum on Religion and Ecology Co-Directors:
Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim, Yale University

The Religions of the World and Ecology series, published by the Harvard Divinity School’s Center for the Study of World Religions (CSWR) and distributed by Harvard University Press, is the result of a three-year research project conducted at the Center between 1996–1998. The project, directed by Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim in cooperation with various area specialists, involved the direct participation and collaboration of some eight hundred scholars, religious leaders, and environmental specialists from around the world in a series of academic conferences at CSWR. Culminating conferences were held at the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the United Nations (UN), and the American Museum of Natural History.

The conferences upon which the series is based were cosponsored by the CSWR, Bucknell University, and the Center for Respect of Life and Environment (CRLE) of the Humane Society of the United States.

The conferences and the publication of the series have been made possible through the generous support of the following foundations and individuals: the V. Kann Rasmussen Foundation, Germeshausen Foundation, Aga Khan Trust for Culture, Association of Shinto Shrines, Nathan Cummings Foundation, Dharam Hinduja Indic Research Center at Columbia University, Harvard Buddhist Studies Forum, Harvard Divinity School Center for the Study of Values in Public Life, Jain Academic Foundation of North America, Laurence Rockefeller, Albert and Vera List Endowment, John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, Surdna Foundation, Theological Education to Meet the Environmental Challenge, and Winslow Foundation.

Further information on the Religions of the World and Ecology conference series may be found at: http://www.hds.harvard.edu/cswr/research/ ecology/

For more information on books in this series, see the publication section of the Forum’s website at: http://environment.harvard.edu/religion/publications/ books/book_series/cswr/index.html
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Indigenous Traditions and Ecology: The Interbeing of Cosmology and Community
Edited by John Grim

“The book contains excellent discussions of the continuing exploitation of indigenous peoples in terms of environmental racism as exemplified by the proposed disposal of nuclear wastes on indigenous reservations. It covers ecological, religious, and political issues in a striking way. Brilliant and exemplary!”
—David Kinsley, McMaster University

A new perspective on indigenous religions and the environment emerges from this collection. The authors, a diverse group of indigenous and non-native scholars and environmental activists, address compelling and urgent questions facing indigenous communities as they struggle with threats to their own sovereignty, increased market and media globalization, and the conservation of endangered bioregions. Drawing attention to the pressures threatening indigenous peoples and ways of life, this volume describes modes of resistance and regeneration by which communities maintain a spiritual balance with larger cosmological forces while creatively accommodating current environmental, social, economic, and political changes.

John Grim, Co-Director, Forum on Religion and Ecology, Yale University.

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Hinduism and Ecology: The Intersection of Earth, Sky, and Water
Edited by Christopher Key Chapple and Mary Evelyn Tucker

“The editors, Chapple and Tucker, and their authors have provided a magnificent book, with the summary message that reinforces the statement that spiritual living and ecological practice go together.”
—Anantanarayanan Raman, The University of Sydney

The role of the multifaceted Hindu tradition is explored with regard to the development of greater ecological awareness in India. The twenty-two contributors ask how traditional concepts of nature in the classical texts and traditions might inspire or impede an eco-friendly attitude among modern Hindus. Furthermore, they describe some grassroots approaches to environmental protection. They look to Gandhian principles of minimal consumption, self-reliance, simplicity, and sustainability. In addition, they explore forests and sacred groves in texts, traditions, and practices and review the political and religious controversies surrounding India’s sacred riverine systems.

Christopher Key Chapple is Professor of Theological Studies and Director of Asian and Pacific Studies at Loyola Marymount University.

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Jainism and Ecology: Nonviolence in the Web of Life
Edited by Christopher Key Chapple

“The contributors to Chapple’s elegantly edited volume lead pragmatically toward a defining light at the end of humanity’s common tunnel. This is an exhilarating book, a must read for all who are concerned about the fate of the Earth and the twenty-first century.”
—Michael Tobias, Ecologist, Author, Filmmaker

The 2500-year-old tradition of Jainism, which emphasizes nonviolence as the only true path leading to liberation, offers a worldview seemingly compatible with the goals of environmental activism. Can Jainism adopt a sociocentric environmentalism without compromising its own ascetic principles and spiritual tradition? How does traditional Jain cosmology view the natural world? How might a Jain ethical system respond to decisions regarding the development of dams, the proliferation of automobiles, overcrowding due to overpopulation, or the protection of individual animal species? Is it possible for Jain environmental activism to address traditional concerns for individual self-purification and the contemporary dilemmas regarding ecosystem degradation? Authors in this volume reflect the dynamic nature of the Jain faith and its willingness to engage modern social issues.

Christopher Key Chapple is Professor of Theological Studies and Director of Asian and Pacific Studies at Loyola Marymount University.

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Buddhism and Ecology: The Interconnection of Dharma and Deeds
Edited by Mary Evelyn Tucker and Duncan Ryuken Williams

“Buddhism and Ecology is a stimulating and challenging discussion of a vital topic. Its value to engaged Buddhism lies in the questions it raises, the thinking it provokes, and the light it sheds on the ecological aspects of diverse Buddhist traditions.”
—Lewis Woods, Turning Wheel

Buddhism’s teaching of the interrelatedness of all life forms may be critical to the recovery of human reciprocity with nature. In this work, twenty religionists and environmentalists examine Buddhism’s understanding of the intricate web of life. In noting the cultural diversity of Buddhism, the volume highlights aspects of the tradition that may help formulate an effective environmental ethics. Articles cite examples of socially engaged Buddhist projects to protect the environment in Asia and the United States. The authors also explore theoretical and methodological issues and analyze the prospects and problems of using Buddhism as an environmental resource in both theory and practice.

Mary Evelyn Tucker, Co-Director, Forum on Religion and Ecology, Yale University.

Duncan Ryuken Williams is Assistant Professor in East Asian Languages and Literature at University of California, Irvine.

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Confucianism and Ecology:
The Interrelation of Heaven, Earth, and Humans
Edited by Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Berthrong

“This book has enormous value. Confucianism is one of the richest but most neglected sources of ecological insight, and it should be as important to cross-cultural discussions of ecological thought as Buddhism and Native American religions.”

—David Landis Barnhill, University of Wisconsin

Confucianism demonstrates a remarkable wealth of resources for rethinking human-Earth relations. This volume includes sixteen essays that address the ecological crisis and the question of Confucianism from three perspectives: the historical perspective describes Confucianism’s views of nature, social ethics, and cosmology, which may shed light on contemporary problems; a dialogical approach links Confucianism to other philosophical and religious traditions; an examination of engaged Confucianism looks at its involvement in concrete ecological issues.

Mary Evelyn Tucker, Co-Director, Forum on Religion and Ecology, Yale University.

John Berthrong is Associate Dean for Academic and Administrative Affairs at Boston University School of Theology.

ISBN 0–945454–15–5 cloth out-of-print
ISBN 0–949454–16–3 paper $27.50

Daoism and Ecology:
Ways Within a Cosmic Landscape
Edited by N. J. Girardot, James Miller, and Liu Xiaogan

“A significant addition to the field of Daoist Studies, successfully educating readers in the richness and particularity of Daoist traditions and relating this to ecological concerns.”

—Judith A. Berling, Graduate Theological Union

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A powerful pro-environmental coalition may be emerging worldwide as religious people and institutions begin to partner with advocates of sustainable development. The past decade saw a small but growing number of meetings, advocacy initiatives, educational programs, and lobbying efforts by the two communities, who long had kept each other at arm’s length.

In Worldwatch Paper 164: Invoking the Spirit, Worldwatch Research Director, Gary Gardner, states that in learning to work together, the two groups must overcome mutual misperceptions and divergent worldviews that have historically kept them apart. He writes that secular environmentalists worry about the checkered history of religious involvement in societal affairs. Religious institutions, on the other hand, may have perspectives on the role of women, the nature of truth, and the moral place of human beings in the natural order that sometimes diverge from those of environmentalists.

Though misperceptions and misunderstandings between the two communities persist, engagement is growing. To further collaboration, religious people and institutions would do well to leverage their influence in favor of sustainability, and environmentalists would gain by appealing to the public at an emotional/spiritual level. With these steps, a new ethics encompassing humans, the divine, and nature can help usher in a just and sustainable civilization.

Gary Gardner is Director of Research at the The Worldwatch Institute.


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Earth’s Insights: A Multicultural Survey of Ecological Ethics from the Mediterranean Basin to the Australian Outback

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Richard Foltz is an Associate Professor of Religion, Concordia University, Montreal, Canada.

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