

# Green religion as science

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For years now it's been fashionable to be a champion of the environment. But there's a much more dangerous groupthink bubbling beneath the surface of mere environmentalism, and that's what most know as radical environmentalism, or what I call "greenism."

The green movement should be taken very seriously, but there is room for skepticism about its beliefs and claims, from global warming to endangered suckerfish. Many of them blur the distinction between religious dogma and scientific theory. So, in the interests of precision, let's use the dictionary.

Webster's Unabridged says religion is "concern over what exists beyond the visible world, differentiated from philosophy in that it operates through faith or intuition rather than reason, and generally including the idea of the existence of a single being, group of beings, an eternal principle, or a transcendental spiritual entity that has created the world, that governs it, that controls its destiny, or that intervenes occasionally in the natural course of its history, as well as the idea that ritual, prayer, spiritual exercises, certain principles of every day conduct, etc., are expedient, due, or spiritually rewarding, or arise naturally out of an inner need as a human response to the belief in such principle, being, etc."

The same dictionary defines science as "a branch of knowledge or study dealing with a body of facts or truths systematically arranged and showing the operation of general laws." The facts and laws in question are arrived at via the scientific method, which is "a method of research in which the problem is identified, relevant data is gathered, a hypothesis is formulated from these data, and the hypothesis is empirically tested."

It's not unfair or inaccurate to say the green movement has most, if not all of the elements of a religion, and only a tenuous relationship with science. Of course, uttering such a heresy will outrage green warriors. Mother Nature has again, as in animist times, taken on the aspect of a goddess. She is seen as normally gentle, but capable of the vengefulness of Yahweh should mankind in general, and scientists in particular, dare try fooling her. As Gaia, she's ready to intervene in everyday conduct. While they have no proof these things have much real effect on the visible world, they do find these actions spiritually rewarding, and paying lip service to ecology does fulfill a human need. Traditional religions place Jehovah, God or Allah first. Greenism places the earth first.

Like most religions, greenism deals with matters of genuine importance. But just as some religions have proceeded from realism to extreme and arcane practices, so has this one. The greens have combined some intuitive concerns with a smattering of science, arrived at some conclusions, and made them articles of faith. Anyone who questions their usually alarmist projections for the fate of the earth is likely to be ostracized as a moral reprobate or a heretic.

The green movement has many structural similarities to Marxism, another secular religion. It assures adherents that history is on their side and rewards them with a sense of belonging and purpose. Both Marxism and greenism have diagnosed the world's problems and offer solutions that are not only psychologically appealing to many people, but also seem morally "right." Like Marxism, greenism pretends to be science but amounts to dogma.

Now that Marxism has been relegated to the scrap heap of history, its adherents have had to find a new centerpiece for their belief system. And just as the Marxists had a hidden agenda of controlling other people, it is arguable that most of the professional greens do also. After all, at least in the West, they are largely the very same people. Protecting the earth, as important as it unquestionably is, serves as an excellent pretext for almost any controls. This opens the door, as with the Marxists, to an end justifies the means approach: Absolutely nothing is more important than saving the earth.

The great mass of greens support the movement because they are concerned about real problems and not aware of any better solutions. In all fairness, therefore, it has to be said that the movement's roots are planted in ignorance as much as malevolence. The same was true of many socialist sympathizers, even after Stalin, Mao, Pol Pot and scores of other lesser children of the night unveiled the true nature of the beast. Especially toward the end, socialist beliefs had only a limited intellectual appeal, since the facts contradicted them everywhere. Their appeal was psychological and spiritual. In other words, religious and not susceptible to reason.

Most greens are nonviolent, but the movement is increasingly strident, and there is also a strain of malevolence and suppressed violence, at least within some factions. Long ago the equivalent of a Leninist wing arose as the followers of Edward Abbey ran around spiking trees and monkey wrenching bulldozers. The Greenpeace "Green Warrior" performs a similar role at sea.

The Marxist agenda succeeded in destroying the economy of half the world and a lot of its environment as a bonus. The green agenda promises to do the same for the environment, with the destruction of the economy as a perverse bonus.

You may be wondering whether I am insensitive to the fate of the earth and its creatures. Far from it. Protecting the earth as a pleasant place to live is critical. And clearly there are real problems that need to be dealt with. But the solutions proposed by almost all of the greens would aggravate the problems. Their books almost uniformly advocate political activism and socialist planning, positing a "kinder and gentler" Eastern Europe.

There are much more effective ways to address the problems: more economically effective and more scientifically effective. But not with green science or economics.