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Edited by

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See also: Islam; Religious Studies and Environmental Concern; White, Lynn - Thesis of.

National Council of Churches, Eco-Justice Working Group (USA)

The Eco-Justice Working Group (EJWG) of the National Council of Churches (NCC) provides a mechanism for NCC-member Protestant and Orthodox denominations to work together on issues affecting care of the Earth. The Group began in 1983 when the Joint Strategy and Action Coalition (JSAC) merged into the NCC. The Responsible Lifestyle Task Force of JSAC, which had begun work on issues of energy, organic food and food sufficiency with the participation of American Baptists, Presbyterians, Methodists and Lutherans, formed the core for the EJWG.

Early discussion in the group and a report from the United Church of Christ formulated the term environmental justice, denoting the impact on poor and minority communities in regards to environmental issues. Environmental justice includes a broader set of social and economic issues than the word environmental used alone.

In 1986 the EJWG sponsored a seminal conference at Stony Point, New York. The "Eco-Justice Agenda: Loving the Earth and People" brought together 150 people including denominational representatives, clergy, lay and a wide variety of community groups. The conference was a major turning point for increased activity that included a wider justice agenda with environmental issues. Discussions that began at the conference sparked denominations to take action that included the adoption of policy statements. Concerns from community groups at the conference led to a reorganization in 1988 that included full participation by a wide variety of groups not affiliated directly with a religious group. The wider membership continued until the late 1990s when another reorganization brought in Orthodox participation, but excluded community groups. Stories of environmental poisoning in local communities told at the conference led to the production of an early video on the topic, *For Our Children*.

In 1992 several representatives from the EJWG participated in the United Nations' conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, leading to increased awareness of eco-justice in congregations. From 1985 until 1995 the EJWG published the *EGG*, a journal of eco-justice, in cooperation with the Eco-Justice Project

at Cornell. Its articles provide a good summary of major eco-justice issues of the day.

The production of resources and the generation of program ideas to help local congregations focus on ecological issues has been a major part of the work of the EJWG in recent years. Present programs include the Environmental Justice Covenant Program and the Interfaith Global Climate Change Program. A biennial national conference held in 1997, 1999 and 2001 brought together persons working on the local level. The EJWG also sponsors a resource center where a wide variety of materials are available for local congregations.

The EJWG is a partner in the National Religious Partnership for the Environment. The other partners are: The U.S. Catholic Conference, the Evangelical Environmental Network and the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life. As part of the Partnership, the group produced *God's Earth: Our Home*, Shantilal Bhagat (Eco-Justice Work Group, NCC, 1995) as a resource for local congregations.

J. Andy Smith, III

See also: World Council of Churches and Ecumenical Thought.

National Parks and Monuments (United States)

Travelers in the hundreds of millions make the national parks and monuments spread across the modern American map focal points of their annual journeys. By 2002 these public centers of recreation, education and inspiration numbered more than 350 and covered some 84 million acres. During the last several decades they have been exported abroad as a conservation ideal, but threatened continually at home by conflicts over their meaning and purpose, as well as over more mundane concerns such as funding, boundaries and maintenance. Frequently heralded as sacred places and deployed globally as evocative images of a unique American nature and history through works of art and the mass media, the national parks and monuments remain embedded deep within the nation's culture.

Prior to war with Mexico in 1846, Americans more cultivated than the ones who French traveler Alexis de Tocqueville found hacking down Ohio River valley forests in 1831 - or those who Emerson in *Nature* (1836) chastised as blind to the beauty of their own fields and farms - voiced a frequent note of doom as they reflected on the nation's prospects. The sweeping floods of early nineteenth-century religious and social reform had tangled together conflicting cultural anxieties over matters of race, capital, technology, the body, and women's role in

society. These anxieties, as historian Robert Abzug has shown, also centered around competing views of what was sacred, and what profane, to a people bent on constructing a distinctly new nation. In the midst of the continent's rapid transformation, Emerson's poetic sort of American – if few others, initially – found in the vanishing form of landscape “something more dear and connate than in streets or villages” (1836: 13), and thus came to seek in wilderness a sacred antidote to the young republic's many ills.

Although Americans turned forests into woodlots at a remarkable rate, by the 1830s those who saw in still-uncivilized land something greater than profit or utility were sufficient in number to support the preservation from resource development of various natural prominences – such as New York's Niagara Falls or Kentucky's Mammoth Cave – and to embrace scenic wilderness travel as a form of cultural education and spiritual renewal. Nevertheless, as is evident in such paintings as Thomas Cole's “The Oxbow” (1836) – with its stormy change on the horizon – and most especially in his five-panel “The Course of Empire” (1834–1836), the wilderness available to eastern travelers often proved melancholic in inspiration, and they worried along with Cole that an empire devoted to nature could not help but decay over the ages. By far a better painter than poet, Cole still gave this melancholy a pointed gloss, writing “Each hill and every valley is become / An altar unto Mammon, and the gods / Of man's idolatry – its victims we” (in Hughes 1997: 146). To be expected, perhaps, eastern efforts at preservation quickly succumbed to commercial impulses, so much so that Tocqueville in 1831 was urging that friends hurry to Niagara Falls, since he wouldn't “give the Americans ten years to establish a saw or flour mill at the base of the cataract” (in Runte 1987: 6).

Western lands obtained from Mexico under the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848) thus offered America's cultural elite a distinct solution to the vexing problem of the new nation's identity. For those who, with Cole, felt a post-revolutionary inadequacy in relation to Europe, no amount of light irradiating an eastern scene, nor the steady bragging of politicians Jefferson and Jackson or novelist James Fenimore Cooper about the virtues of the eastern countryside, could obscure what America lacked: a storied past, an aristocratic imprint on the land and spirit of the people, great cathedrals connecting the generations to heaven and Earth, and the Alps.

In the west, description also outran the reality of the landscape, but the landscape ran close enough. Journalist Horace Greeley, for instance, traveling in the Sierra Nevada in 1859, wrote his eastern readers, after a walk among the Mariposa Grove sequoias, that they were “of substantial size when David danced before the ark, when Solomon laid the foundations of the Temple, when Theseus ruled in Athens, when Aeneas fled from the

burning wreck of vanquished Troy” (Greeley 1860: 311–12). No matter their precise age, the giant sequoias did constitute a living antiquity – one would not even need to read to absorb their wisdom of ages. The western scale of nature's architecture provided sources of culture and the sacred that Europeans themselves would envy. At times, Americans were even able to acknowledge the antiquity of the west's first people, as when they flocked in the late 1830s and 1840s to see George Catlin's traveling “Indian Gallery” of portraits from the upper Missouri – his Mandans, Arikaras and Pawnees so vivid in their ceremonial garments and paint that they looked at times realer than real, and rather similar in pose to noble Romans.

The raw western topography – all granite peaks, basalt outcrops, red oxide soils and sedimentary gashes – seemed specially made for those who sought a visual and natural embodiment of powerful, nation-forming divinity at work, an embodiment that easily surpassed the achievements of European culture and the sublimity of its landscape. Admittedly, no one besides George Catlin imagined that the complex of tribes, herds and open spaces might be significant as whole: “a *nation's Park*, containing man and beast, in all the freshness of nature's beauty” (in Chittenden 1895: 78). Instead, what seemed most worth preserving were nature's monumental artifacts. The earliest parks – Yosemite, which Congress granted to the state of California in 1864, and Yellowstone, established as the first truly national park in 1872 – were both preserved because the landscape contained gigantic wonders, challenges to the American imagination, whether orthodox, scientific or aesthetic, and natural testimonies to Providential purpose. Each park seemed to call forth different poetic impulses from their proponents and publicists – Yosemite most often glossed as “nature's cathedral,” and Yellowstone (“Colter's Hell,” originally) framed less comfortably as a “wonderland” of the grotesque. In both cases, however, Americans could find in the extravagant creations of wild nature confirmation of their world-historical destiny.

American proponents of national parks drew on available social and cultural resources in order to persuade the public and Congress that preservation was in the national interest. Their strategic efforts helped Americans define national parks as sacred environments, and created the paradigmatic practices of veneration and recreation that have since been employed within them.

Common to the presentation of Yosemite and Yellowstone as centers of sublime nature was the reliance upon both verbal and visual prompters, as early interpreters made use of traditional religious language and the Romantic practice of landscape painting to promote interest among Easterners and Europeans. Lafayette Bunnell, physician to the Mariposa Battalion – the white militia that first came upon the Yosemite Valley while chasing Tenaya's band of Ahwaneechee Miwoks in 1851 –

enthused on his first descent into the secret valley while worrying about his scalp: "If my hair is now required, I can depart in peace, for I have here seen the power and glory of a Supreme being, the majesty of His handy-work is in that 'Testimony of the Rocks'" (Bunnell 1880: 56). With less regard to orthodoxy: "Granite is great, and the Yo-Semite is its prophet," wrote Unitarian minister Thomas Starr King in 1861 (in Sears 1989: 127), several years before John Muir himself began placing the template of gospel metaphor over his mystical wanderings through California's mountains.

Muir was perhaps at heart a pagan pantheist. "We are now in the mountains, and they in us, kindling enthusiasm, making every nerve quiver, filling every pore and cell of us," he wrote of his first view of the high country approaching Yosemite (Muir 1911: 20). Nevertheless, he drew incessantly on biblical religion to marshal support for the preservation of Yosemite (1890), Mt. Rainier (1899), Glacier (1910) and other western parks, and styled himself as the gospel of beauty's John the Baptist. To the "business-tangled," so "burdened with duty that only weeks can be got out of the heavy-laden year," he preached seemingly-easy sermons. A month in wilderness, such as at Montana's Lake MacDonald, and "never more will time seem short or long, and cares never again fall heavily on you, but kindly and gently as gifts from heaven" (Muir 1901: 17, 19).

Visual art played a crucial role in disseminating iconic presentations of the early parks' overwhelming and varied landscapes. Thomas Ayres went into Yosemite with San Francisco editor – and shortly thereafter Yosemite innkeeper – James Mason Hutchings in 1855, four years after its discovery by whites. Within less than a decade, painters such as Albert Bierstadt and Thomas Hill, and photographers Carleton Watkins and Eadward Muybridge, were exhibiting to audiences as far from California as New York and London. Yellowstone's most famous artists, Thomas Moran and photographer William Henry Jackson, accompanied F.V. Hayden – director of the U.S. Geological Survey – on the first scientific expedition into Yellowstone, in 1870. The work of these artists, widely viewed in exhibits and in the press, emphasized a transcendent – and at times imaginary – landscape absent the human presence, and certainly absent the evidence of Civil War carnage that had recently so weighted the landscape familiar to Americans back east.

Not all subscribed to the sublime notion that God was granite, however. Mark Twain, for instance, poked at Bierstadt's 1867 "The Domes of the Yosemite," saying that while the various components of the picture looked natural enough, the atmosphere was "altogether too gorgeous," more "the atmosphere of Kingdom-Come than California" (in Anderson 1990: 91). Working-class squatters and homesteaders, as well as tribal members living near the parks, were also particularly uninterested

in public administration and religious veneration of country that held necessities of survival. The only reason for Indians even to be in Yellowstone, wrote Superintendent Philetus Norris in 1878, was "for the purposes of plunder, or of concealment after bloody raids upon the ranchmen, pilgrims, or tourists" (in Jacoby 2001: 90).

Others failed to accept that nature was best understood in Romantic terms. Muir's evangel that preserved wilderness as "full of charming company, full of God's thoughts . . ." (Muir 1901: 78) sounded a false note to some, such as Truman Everts – Yellowstone survivor of 39-days' separation from the 1870 Washburn party. For Everts, who relayed his experience to readers of *Scribners* in 1871, the terror of wilderness, especially as part of a divine order, was only too real. Forced by circumstance to endure as much of nature's rawness as Muir chose to, Everts could only gloss the harrow of his experience with a Ben Franklin-ish admonition. "Put your trust in Heaven. Help yourself and God will help you" (Everts 1871: 11).

Parks might have remained the preserve of cultural elites under the influence of Muir, but for his use of publisher Robert Underwood Johnson's *The Century* to spread his message, and but for the interests of the railroads, who were early supporters of both Yellowstone and Yosemite. To underscore the irony – Muir was adamant in seeing the parks as antidotes to capitalist civilization. They would preserve divine nature from forces bent on its destruction in the name of profit. On the other hand, railroads such as the Northern Pacific took on the task of promoting Yellowstone with all the sophistication and resources of a modern advertising campaign. A wide range of brochures, lecture tours and artwork portrayed an American future in which rail-accessible nature functioned just as Muir hoped wild nature would, to restore the souls of citizens. Northern Pacific director Colgate Hoyt confessed a vision for his railroad, in 1878: a West filled with homes, wheat-fields and cattle.

And I thanked God that right in the middle of all this noise and wrestless [sic] life of millions a wise Government had forever set apart that marvelous region as a National Park . . . where the worn, the sick, and jaded could even find rest, and refreshment, and opportunity to study the Master's hand in nature (in Magoc 1999: 21).

Another NP executive, Olin Dunbar Wheeler, played up the importance of scenic wilderness to a democratic populace by linking Yellowstone's redemptive promise with that of the Hebrew prophet Isaiah:

the common run of humanity, the *hoi polloi*, will see a vision – a picture that causes them to stand in awe and silence, and caring less as to the why and wherefore of such amazing results, "shall see of the

travail of their souls and be satisfied" (in Magoc 1999: 102).

Although Muir certainly took opportunity to lambaste the railroads in *Our National Parks*, he also had to acknowledge that the mobility they provided made possible for others their own mystical immersions in nature.

Thus from their inception national parks as nature's emblems of high national purpose, or as wild antidotes to the baseness of capitalist civilization, were not only dependent upon capitalist energies, but were also embodiments of capitalist achievement. This irony complicates any effort to understand the preservationist impulse in American conservation by means of easy distinctions drawn between public and private, or sacred and secular intentions regarding wilderness. Although – as Tocqueville's 1831 reaction to Niagara Falls demonstrates – Romantic devotees of wild nature have long complained about the inappropriate reach of commercial culture into sacred sites supposedly preserved from just that sort of reach, the outrage of a Muir, Thoreau, or a Cole, let alone a European aristocrat like Tocqueville, is not evidence of a broader public consensus. In opening the parks up to Wheeler's *hoi polloi* – the democratic masses – park creators had to contend with the broad range of readings Americans brought to the term "sacred."

Perhaps the best way to assess the religious role of the national parks in American life is to follow the lead of historian Lawrence Moore, who in *Selling God: Religion in the Marketplace of American Culture* (1994) captured the peculiar dynamic between sacred (religion) and profane (economy) that permeates American history – including the history of American conservation. For Moore, the religious and the economic are not contradictory impulses. As he shows, commercial culture emerged in the nineteenth century largely through the agency of Protestant religious leaders attempting to retain control of a society reinventing itself. Crucial features of nineteenth- and twentieth-century American economic life: the rise of consumption, the growth of leisure, the birth of advertising and mass media, all carried sacred meanings and practices for the majority of Americans, and all affected their use and appreciation of the parks. Furthermore, the capitalist culture that so dominated post-Civil War American life gained its sway by absorbing those movements or values that first appeared as countercultural alternatives. For Moore then, the Protestant ethic that really triumphed was not one of work alone, but also of play.

By the early twentieth century administration of the parks was piecemeal, but development of the infrastructure to sustain travelers within America's "Playgrounds for the People" was in full surge. Rail lines, hotels and inns, some – such as Yellowstone's Old Faithful Inn (1903) – quite regal, and – most fatefully – roads, were all constructed under private leases or with inadequate Con-

gressional appropriations. In 1916, Congress authorized the Interior Department to create the National Park Service (NPS), to coordinate administration at all parks and national monuments – which first were established under the 1906 Antiquities Act, as well as battlefields and other historic sites administered originally by the War Department. The Park Service Organic Act mandated that the NPS "conserve the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein" and "provide for the enjoyment of the same in such manner and by such means as will leave them unimpaired for future generations" (in Runte 1987: 104). The latitude of this mandate appears in a 1916 proposal regarding Yellowstone from the first NPS director, Stephen T. Mather. "Golf links, tennis courts, swimming pools and other equipment for outdoor pastime and exercise should be provided by concessions, and the park should be extensively advertised as a place to spend the summer instead of five or six days of hurried sight seeing" (in Ise 1961: 198). As many have noted, the service has often struggled to balance "conserve the scenery" with "provide for the enjoyment." Nevertheless, reading them as opposites stems from overlooking how deeply the democratic and sacred pursuit of leisure has shaped all aspects of modern American life.

Perhaps nothing symbolizes and ritualizes that pursuit more than the automobile, which was first permitted at Mount Rainier in 1908 and in Yosemite in 1913, where within five years it was bringing in five times as many visitors as the recently completed railroad, which itself, according to one correspondent, was chastised by "the athletic rich" as degenerating the valley into "a mere picnic-ground with dancing platforms, beery choruses and couples contorting in the two-step" (in Runte 1987: 156). The railroad did remain an elite institution though, while the automobile exploded across the national parks by the 1920s.

Early proponents of roads through the parks emphasized the automobile's role in instilling an appropriate American spirit in travelers, as *The American Motorist* in "A Motorist's Creed" put it in 1917:

I believe that travel, familiarity with the sights and scenes of other parts of the country, first hand knowledge of how my fellow-men live, is of inestimable value to me and will do more to make me patriotic and public spirited than daily intimacy with the Declaration of Independence (in Shaffer 2001: 1917).

Groups such as the Daughters of the American Revolution lobbied relentlessly for the construction of highways linking sights of historic or scenic interest, in the process providing a high-brow justification for auto travel as a necessary ritual for inculcating patriotic spirit and civic virtue. Others emphasized the fun of free-wheeling travel

to the parks, as “sagebrushing” – automobile camping – brought waves of independent visitors, each prepared to “cut loose from all effeteness” and let “his adventurous, pioneering spirit riot here in the mountain air” (in Runte 1987: 157).

In either case, twentieth-century parks visitors took on the role of pilgrims inherited from early wonder-struck travelers, but augmented this with a recapturing of the true American spirit. The auto tourist used modern technology not simply to witness the divine stamp on the Grand Canyon or Crater Lake, but to claim the purifying effects of immersion in the frontier experience – which historian Frederick Jackson Turner in 1893 had said was defining of the American character – as his or her own. Thus while Americans across the board responded to automotive technology as a mythical power, in the national parks, as sacred preserves of a nearly vanished era, they were able to use the automobile to propel themselves into the primordial past, and to return home inspired in ways that would assist them in creating the urban, industrial future.

For campers this reimmersion in Paradise or Eden meant a temporary life of physical exertion on a par with that of their ancestors, which reformers such as President Theodore Roosevelt, Boy Scouts of America founders Ernest Thompson Seton and William D. West, or organizations such as the Young Man’s Christian Association (YMCA), had for some time been urging on urban Americans as their bodies’ and even spirits’ means of redemption from the debilitating effects of office and factory life. Campers slept under the stars or in canvas tents, cooked over open fires, endured primitive means of sanitation, as well as exercised on steep mountain trails or swam in bracing waters. Some parks proponents, such as U.S. Geological Survey chief topographer Robert Marshall, even saw the parks as martial training ground for modern warriors, where young men could

forget something of the rush and jam of modern life . . . and build up their bodies by being next to nature. Then, should there be a general call to arms, the dwellers of the city canyons will be able to meet the physical needs of a strenuous field service (in Runte 1987: 96).

As a symbolically powerful means of personal freedom, and as the provider of ritualized immersion in nature, automobiles had a drastic effect on the parks. By 1919 nearly 98,000 were reported to have passed through park boundaries. Even in the early years, some foresaw with alarm their ultimate impact, though officials such as NPS Director Stephen Mather regarded their presence as inevitable and positive, claiming in 1924 that auto touring eroded “sectional prejudice through the bringing together of tourists from all sections of the country.” Only through

the “the medium of an automobile, and camping out in the open” could “people learn what America is” (in Shaffer 2001: 119). British ambassador to the U.S. and lover of Yosemite, James Bryce, however, cautioned as early as 1912 that

If Adam had known what harm the serpent was going to work, he would have tried to prevent him from finding lodgment in Eden; and if you were to realize what the result of the automobile will be in that incomparable valley, you will keep it out (in Runte 1987: 159).

Even during the Depression, visitation continued to climb dramatically, declining briefly during World War II, with only one to two percent of visitors relying upon public transportation. In the aftermath of the war – with union jobs turning the two-week vacation into an American right – park use doubled every ten to fifteen years, a trend continuing through the 1990s. In these decades the system as a whole also expanded, more than tripling in acreage between 1960 and the century’s end. At the same time, debates over the purpose of the national parks also increased, often in terms consistent with the contradiction inherited from the Park Service’s original 1916 mandate: enjoyment versus preservation – each functioning for its devotees as a principle for constructing the parks as sacred environments. The most notable of these debates was the one surrounding Mission 66, the Eisenhower-era infusion of capital into park infrastructures, already overburdened in 1955 by twice as many visitors than the system could accommodate. The resulting construction of visitor centers, campgrounds and improved roads – enthusiastically supported by the American Automobile Association – seemed to post-war preservationists proof that the NPS gave priority to providing for visitor enjoyment. For naturalist Joseph Wood Krutch, Mission 66 placed a fundamental value on technology over nature. Instead of “valuing the automobile because it may take one to a national park, the park comes to be valued because it is a place the automobile may be used to reach” (in Runte 1987: 175).

Preservationist concerns over Mission 66, and even more long-standing management choices, received an influential voice in 1963, when the research team of zoologist A. Starker Leopold (son of Aldo Leopold) released their *Wildlife Management in the National Parks*, a scathing survey of ecological situation in the parks. The officially commissioned report urged the NPS to adopt an environmentally based management philosophy, informed by scientific principles regarding biotic communities, habitat, and plant succession, and to restore park environments to their pre-nineteenth-century conditions. Given the shifts in cultural values that occurred in the 1960s, preservationist goals finally found significant

NPS support. Over the next 25 years park management moved often toward an ecological model, as seen in the prescribed- and let-burn policies adopted first for Yosemite sequoias and then in the fire-based plant communities of other parks, in the reintroduction of predators, and in the development of such concepts as the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. Though these policies, and their advocacy by environmentalists, were framed in scientific language, they also invoked Muir-like expressions of how to understand the sacred within the national parks.

Unfortunately for wilderness preservationists, long-range ecological management policies had a difficult time surviving when Americans rejected the 1960s resurgence of Romanticism with the election of Ronald Reagan in 1981. The urge to privatize based on increasing distrust of federal bureaucracy and to focus on facilities over habitat increasingly shaped executive branch goals for the NPS. Perhaps the most fitting symbol of the era is the 1988 Yellowstone fire – which engulfed some 40 percent of the park in what *Time* called an “environmental Armageddon” (Magoc 1999: 174), and about which many Americans expressed their sense that environmentalists had defiled the “crown jewel” of the nation’s parks through their misguided let-burn policies. Wyoming Senator Malcolm Wallop catalyzed this anti-bureaucrat sentiment by angrily calling for Park Service director William Penn Mott’s resignation.

In the same years the NPS found itself in the middle of the widely spread culture wars, as its historic battlefields were subjected to competing efforts to commemorate ground “hallowed,” as President Lincoln put it, by the shedding of blood. At Gettysburg, the Little Big Horn, Pearl Harbor and many other parks’ various parties challenged the nation’s legacy on race, westward expansion, the conduct of its wars, or the presence of commercial interests at such sites. Others, such as veterans groups, military reenactors, and Custer buffs, objected to the historical “revisionism” they saw influencing shifts in Park Service site management and interpretation. Just as American wilderness sparked apparently competing conceptions of the sacred within park boundaries, American history yielded lasting conflicts over appropriate commemoration of significant events, a limitless possible “affront to the living as well as the dead,” as columnist George F. Will complained regarding construction of Gettysburg’s observation tower (in Linenthal 1993: 115). In the 1990s, concerns over desecration of historic grounds culminated in controversy surrounding Walt Disney Corporation’s plans to build an American history theme park in rural Virginia, near Manassass, Antietam and several other Civil War battlefields.

Common to the parks as a whole has been the desire to retain the unsullied past, whether in the wonder-evoking beauty of the natural landscape or in the sense of historical immediacy that led a young General George S.

Patton in 1909 to recall a Gettysburg sunset moment at the site of Pickett’s charge when “I could almost see them coming, growing fewer and fewer while around and behind me stood calmly the very cannons which had so punished them” (in Linenthal 1993: 117). The “objective of every national park and monument” claimed Leopold in his 1963 report, should be the creation of a “reasonable illusion of primitive America” (Leopold et al. 1963). What makes these “reasonable illusions” of virgin land or the presence of the past obtainable – what gives them value and form, is the culture of leisure consumption that has so shaped American society over the last century. Parks are simply one more option available to those engaged in leisure pursuits, as a 1995 issue of *Glamour* suggested: “Everyone should see Manhattan, the Grand Canyon, Walt Disney World . . . Yellowstone National Park, Beverly Hills . . .” (in Magoc 1999: 168). Whether one sees Mt. Rainier on a brief pass through the park on the way to somewhere else, stays several days at the volcano’s base in a motor home, pumps up the road on a touring bike, or camps near the summit in a four-season tent, the park functions as a set of nature-options available for consumers to enjoy. And whether consumption entails a rejection of the search for sacred, or its transformation, it has certainly taken on the forms and language of traditional American religion.

Although some commentators have argued that contemporary tourist experience has abandoned the sacred visions of nature and nation sought by earlier generations of travelers, the intensity of conflict over the meanings, means of administration, and practices of the sacred available at national parks, and their steady increase in use, suggests that they do still retain a great hold on American imaginations as democratic hallmarks of both nature and nationhood.

Matthew Glass

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- See also: Biosphere Reserves and World Heritage Sites; Disney Worlds at War; Earth First! and the Earth Liberation Front; Holy Land in Native North America; G-O Road; Krutch, Joseph Wood; Law, Religion, and Native American Lands; Marshall, Robert; Miwok People; Muir, John; Nature Religion in the United States; Pinchot, Gifford; The Sacred and the Modern World; Sacred Geography in Native North America; Sierra Club; Wilderness Society; Wise Use Movement; World Heritage Sites and Religion in Japan.

National Religious Partnership for the Environment

The National Religious Partnership for the Environment (NRPE) advocates for the environment within national Christian and Jewish organizations and through individual congregations in the United States. An "umbrella" organization, NRPE has four component groups, the National Council of Churches' Eco-Justice Working Group (EJWC), the eco-justice program at the United States

Catholic Conference (USCC), the Evangelical Environmental Network (EEN), and the Coalition on the Environment and Jewish Life (COEJL). Their purpose is to promote environmental causes in church and temple teaching, in management practices, and in public policy. They argue for religious protection of the environment as part of reverence for God and God's works, an outlook some participants have labeled environmental stewardship (invoking the fiscal stewardship that has long been part of church process).

NRPE grew out of ideas formulated in the 1960s and 1970s by numerous commentators, some religious, some not. Professor Lynn White's 1967 paper on ecology and Christianity, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis," was a starting point cited by many involved. Others tried to integrate ideas from Eastern thinking, particularly Zen Buddhism, or from Celtic and other "minority" traditions in Christianity. Early leaders in this movement included California State Senator Tom Hayden, members of the Lindisfarne Association, Dr. James Parks Morton (now-retired Dean of St. John the Divine Cathedral (Episcopalian), New York City), Catholic priest Thomas Berry, and evangelical professor of biology, Dr. Calvin DeWitt. These figures and others pressured religious authorities to take up environmental issues and tried to get ordinary Americans to think religiously about environmental issues. By the early 1980s, a number of religious environmental organizations had formed, most notably the Eco-Justice Working Committee of the National Council of Churches.

NRPE emerged to coordinate official religious environmentalism in the US during the years 1991–1993. It was not founded (as has often been claimed) as a result of the 1990 exchange of "official" letters between clerics and scientists on the global environmental "crisis" organized by James Parks Morton, Paul Gorman, and, surprisingly, the outspoken atheist scientist Carl Sagan. The letter exchange marked instead a turning point after which church and temple hierarchies publicly recognized the crisis. Much of the credit goes to Gorman, then a staff member working for Morton at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, now director of the organization. The component groups were at different levels of development. Gorman organized them under one umbrella using the carrot of funding. Initial and subsequent funding came from liberal foundations such as Ford and Pew. The NRPE agreed to disseminate money on an equal basis to each component group.

The NRPE quickly organized and disseminated information to congregations that represented each group's understanding of the relevant Jewish and Christian teachings on justice, social ethics, and the creation. In the mid-1990s, over 125,000 literature packets were distributed to churches and temples. Numerous conferences and other kinds of meetings were held. The NRPE's teachings