
Editorial Introduction

After more than a decade of publication, readers of the *JSRNC* have hopefully come to see this journal as a central venue for ‘the presentation of diverse, transdisciplinary research, debate, and reflection... accessible to a wide audience—regarding the relationships among religion, nature, and culture’, as Founding Editor Bron Taylor noted in the inaugural issue (2007: 7). Taylor emphasized that this publication should remain ‘taboo free’, engaging in critical discussions of controversial subjects and continually challenging previously held scholarly assumptions and biases. Only with such a willingness to engage with controversial subjects, Taylor concluded, ‘can we ensure the field will develop in its most promising directions and quickly correct itself if it veers off course’ (2007: 8). This third issue of our eleventh volume continues in that tradition, presenting a wide array of new research on diverse subjects and demonstrating the many trajectories that scholarly research into the religion/nature/culture nexus continues to take in the early twenty-first century.

The issue begins with an article by Scot D. Yoder analyzing ecotourism as a form of religious tourism, framed by the ethical imperatives and ontological claims of religious naturalism. In this article, ‘Ecotourism, Religious Tourism, and Religious Naturalism’, Yoder brings scholarly literature on tourism and pilgrimage into conversation with voices advocating for religious naturalism. The article points to promising new avenues for future analysis of the intersections between religious values and environment-related practices and also suggests that such efforts could help to integrate the concerns of religious naturalists and environmental justice activists.

The next article, by David Feltmate, analyzes portrayals of environmentalists and environmentalism in the popular animated television shows *South Park* and *The Simpsons*. Feltmate attends to the representation of dark green religious themes in these programs and highlights the paradoxes involved in presenting environmentalist ideas through mainstream cultural avenues grounded in the very exploitative capitalist

structures that certain radical environmentalists critique. The result is an engaging analysis of environmental themes in popular Western culture.

The third article of this issue is Teya Brooks Pribac's investigation of animal spirituality, entitled, 'Spiritual Animal: A Journey into the Unspeakable'. In this study, Brooks Pribac challenges many of the human exceptionalist philosophical assumptions guiding previous scholarly rejections of the existence of spirituality in animals. Grounded in emerging evidence from animal brain sciences, Brooks Pribac offers new philosophical tools for understanding spirituality as a trans-species phenomenon.

Finally, in a concluding Field Note, Gerritt Lange presents ongoing ethnographic research on the veneration of serpent deities (or Nāgs) across the Himalayas. The work highlights how the spiritual ecology of Nāg veneration impacts water usage in the areas under investigation, but also questions if local appreciation of the Nāgs and other deities truly translates into sustainable behaviors, as understood by international conservation agencies. Lange suggests new avenues for future scholarly investigations into the lived religious and environmental experiences of rural communities, pointing to ways that conservation agencies might more effectively collaborate with rural communities across the Himalayas to promote mutually beneficial environmental goals.

This issue concludes with a set of book reviews reflecting the diverse set of approaches, topics, and perspectives engaged in this scholarly religion/nature/culture nexus. The lead review, while perhaps controversial, is particularly timely and demonstrates the ways that scholars of religion, nature, and culture might also intervene in troubling and dangerous contemporary intellectual and social movements. In this lengthy review, historian and skeptic author Jason Colavito engages the arguments of Jason Reza Jorjani's 2016 work, *Prometheus and Atlas*. Jorjani earned his PhD in Philosophy from the State University of New York at Stony Brook in 2013. This fact received increased attention after 2016, when Jorjani spoke at a rally sponsored by the North American white supremacist Richard Spencer. Jorjani, by then a humanities lecturer at the New Jersey Institute of Technology, expressed support for the methods and goals of Spencer's so-called 'alt-right' movement, a term encompassing the avowedly nationalist, racist, and anti-Semitic wing of the US political right. This 'alt-right' movement grew increasingly emboldened following the victory of Donald Trump in the US presidential race in late 2016, which they interpreted as evidence of growing public acceptance of their views (Flaherty 2016; Stack 2017). *JSRNC* readers who have studied the history of environmentalism in North America and Europe will be familiar with the occasional connections

that some scholars have noted between environmentalists and nationalist, fascist, and racist movements throughout the modern era. Some individuals associated with nineteenth- and early twentieth-century conservation advocacy in North America, for example, also promoted racist eugenics policies (Purdy 2015: 180-87), while other scholars have argued that certain environmental philosophies, such as Deep Ecology, retain problematically close resemblance to the political philosophies undergirding National Socialism and fascism in twentieth-century Europe (Bramwell 1985; Zimmerman 1995, 2000). While such views hardly describe all environmentalists, it is important that scholars of religion, nature, and culture not back away from these discussions but continue to wrestle with challenging claims and troubling histories in order to forge new perspectives that can address the serious challenges of the twenty-first century and beyond. As other like-minded writers before him, Jorjani draws upon diverse myths and philosophies to develop an argument against the forces that allegedly oppress individuals of European descent. Covalito's review thoroughly and systematically demonstrates that, beyond its troubling views toward race, Jorjani's work is also bad scholarship, misrepresenting the very data and source material that supposedly supports its core arguments. In an era when racist and xenophobic political forces have gained prominence in the West, it is vital that scholars confront and challenge the arguments that would bolster this troubling movement's worldview.

Following Covalito's review, the issue concludes with reviews of S. Zoreh Kermani's *Pagan Family Values* (2013) by Peter Versteeg, Kerry Mitchell's *Spirituality and the State* (2016) by Lynn Ross-Bryant, and Lucas Johnston's *Religion and Sustainability* (2013) by Graham Harvey. We hope that readers will enjoy this engaging and thought-provoking issue and will continue to consider the *JSRNC* as a primary venue for their scholarship related to the religion/nature/culture nexus.

Lucas Johnston, Lisa Sideris, and Joseph Witt
Co-Editors

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