
**Introduction: 15.4 and Fifteen Years Exploring
the Religion, Nature, and Culture Nexus**

This issue concludes the publication of the fifteenth volume of the *Journal for the Study of Religion, Nature and Culture*, which has been published quarterly since its founding in 2007.

Our lead article is by Jean Chamel, who provides a fascinating study of forms of apocalypticism that fuses science-informed expectation of a looming collapse of industrial civilization with New Age spiritualities. Chamel shows that such perspectives and expectations lead to a concomitant set of spiritual and lifeways practices, which provide hope for an eventual, this-worldly restoration of harmony between humankind and the rest of the living world. Those, like me, who have found persuasive Colin Campbell's (1972) theory of the cultic milieu, as well as those who are unfamiliar with it, will see in this study how actors within Western countercultures tend to be receptive to one another's ideas and practices, in an ongoing, global bricolage of ecospiritual production and practice. As one who has studied such movements outside of French-speaking Europe, I found it especially interesting to see these processes unfolding there. Those new to this milieu will find Chamel's article to be a valuable introduction to many of the key figures within it. What I would add to this, as I have on other occasions, is that the cultic milieu is increasingly nested within a *global environmental milieu*, and within it, the bricolage of ecological and spiritual perceptions, values, and practices continues to mutate and cross fertilize, as they seek paths beyond biocultural collapse and toward an ecotopian future (Taylor 2002).

Our next two articles focus on phenomena in North America.

As one who has studied cultural struggles over mountains considered sacred in the Southwestern United States (Taylor 1995, 1997), I found nuanced and compelling Adam Dunstan's analysis of contention over

the expansion of a ski resort on mountain peaks near Flagstaff, Arizona. In it, he documented the ways indigenous activists and their allies have fused spiritual and scientific understandings to argue, in a novel way, that spreading wastewater on a mountain, which they consider sacred, is a desecrating act and a violation of their religious freedom. Dunstan also astutely observed something I have also discovered through my own ethnographic work, that through their engagements with indigenous activists, some Euro-American environmentalists have come to share the spiritual perceptions, including about the sacredness of mountains and the spiritual forces present there, which are held by the indigenous activists with whom they are allied. Thereby, Dunstan's analysis shows the ways actors from very different walks of life influence one another when engaged in a common cause to halt what they consider to be (sometimes at least initially in very different ways) desecrating acts.

Although she is analyzing a context about which I am entirely ignorant, in its own way the article by Saille Caia Murray hits home. She provides a complex portrait of the ways that African and Afro-Caribbean Diaspora communities in New York City's historically black Harlem district have been using their environments, including botanical shops, public parks, and cemeteries, as resources for adapting their spiritual practices to their urban habitat. As one whose first career was with California State Parks, and who has long valued and studied protected area reserves (while also recognizing their often fraught and unjust histories), I appreciate one of her central contentions. Citing Frederick Law Olmstead, she argues that these public places are democratic spaces, providing opportunities for diverse publics to express their values, spiritualities, and identities. Indeed, at their best, that is precisely what such places do.

It is no exaggeration to say that it was a pleasure to learn from these scholars. Indeed, for more than 15 years, the opportunity to roam the world in diverse times and places, learning about the complex ways that our species' affective and spiritual experiences and perceptions are both influenced by and influence Earth's diverse organisms and ever-changing environments, is one of the main reasons that I am still involved in producing the *JSRNC*. It has been not only a fascinating journey, but it might even illuminate pathways toward more sustainable and equitable futures.

Acknowledgements and Gratitude

This hope (in addition to curiosity itself) has clearly been a central rationale for creating not only this journal but the International Society for the Study of Religion and Nature, with which it is affiliated. As we complete our 15th *JSRNC* issue, my mind has turned to all of those who have made it possible.

My acknowledgements begin with Janet Joyce. In 1997, when she was an editor with Continuum International Publishers, she arranged a significant advance and agreed to publish the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature* (Taylor 2005). When I pitched the project to her, including the idea of breaking the traditional mold by inviting contributions by activists and practitioners rather than scholars alone, she was enthusiastic (unlike the other publishers I approached). This encyclopedia, which took about seven years from conception to publication, became the seedbed for the *JSRNC*. The innovations, which she welcomed, I think helped to account for the awards that it won.

By the time the encyclopedia went into production, it was clear that we had begun a critical enquiry that was rich and ought to continue. Indeed, I originally envisioned the encyclopedia to be published at 350,000 words, but it ballooned to a million words and a thousand entries upon publication. By this time, Joyce had established her own publishing company, and when I pitched the idea of this journal to her, she was not only enthusiastic, but she foresaw, despite my uncertainty, that we could make this work as a quarterly publication. From the beginning of our collaboration, she has been a visionary. And none of this would have occurred without her.

The *JSRNC* initiative went hand in hand with creating the ISSRNC, which has helped to build scholarly interest in this emerging field. The Society has thus helped ensure we would have quality research to fill its pages. In that effort, the three most important initial leaders were Kocku von Stuckrad, Kristina Tiedje, and Lucas Johnston (then a new graduate student with me); Laura Hobgood, Joseph Witt, and Bridget O'Brien soon joined them. All those who have led this organization, including and especially the succession of its presidents—Laura Hobgood, Kocku von Stuckrad, Sarah Pike, Mark Peterson, and Evan Berry—by continuing to develop the society, have helped to ensure the *JSRNC*'s viability.

No group has been more important to this publication than the graduate students in the Religion and Nature program at the University of Florida, who have helped me to orchestrate it. Indeed, the journal was

launched with a team that was largely constituted by them: Gavin Van Horn (our first Assistant Editor), Joseph Witt (our first Managing Editor), and Luke Johnson (who initially worked under our first book review editor, John Baumann, but became our longest serving book review editor beginning with volume 3, while also taking a turn as Managing Editor). Witt, meanwhile, assumed an Assistant Editor role with volume 3. A year later, Robin Globus Veldman joined the team as Managing Editor. From this point in time, Witt and Johnston began, for more than a decade, their leadership roles as Assistant Editors. It was also during volume 4 that then graduate student Joseph A.P. Wilson joined the book review team, eventually becoming our lead book review editor. Midway through volume 5, anthropology graduate student Reyda Taylor took over the Managing Editor responsibilities.

With volume 6, I established a new category of editors for well-established scholars willing to take on significant editorial responsibilities. Our commitment to disciplinary diversity was reflected in these moves as ethnobiologist J. Richard Stepp, environmental humanities scholar Adrian Ivakhiv, and ethicist and religion and science specialist Lisa Sideris joined our team.

At the beginning of volume 8, another graduate student, Sarah Stokes took on Managing Editor responsibilities for a year. She was followed by an independent scholar, Joy Greenberg, in volume 9, and Equinox Publishing staff member Sarah Hussell in volume 11. UF graduate student, Amanda Nichols, was next. She has not only managed the journal since volume 12, but also completed her dissertation in 2021. Happily, she has continued in this critically important role since earning her PhD.

Having read, edited, and approved every article published during the first decade, with the 11th volume, I felt we had the capacity for a major change. Beginning with this volume Luke Johnston and Joseph Witt, by then well established at Wake Forest University and Mississippi State University, along with Lisa Sideris, agreed to become co-editors. They were empowered to approve articles for publication without my sign-off. Sideris served in this capacity during the production of volume 11, while Johnston and Witt continued until the middle of 2020 (volume 14). I have elsewhere gratefully acknowledged how, without Johnston and Witt, the journal would not have been a success (Taylor 2020).

Upon the departure of Johnston and Witt, from mid-2020, Joseph Wilson (who had been doing a terrific job as our lead book review editor) and Mark Peterson (who was then wrapping up his exceptional service

to the ISSRNC including as President) agreed to assume co-editorship responsibilities. Sarah Werner, who had already been making substantial contributions on our book review team, agreed to step up and become our book review editor. She has been doing a first-rate job in that role ever since.

Along the way in addition to Stepp, Ivakhiv, and Sideris, several others have made significant long-term contributions as Associate Editors, especially Robin Veldman and Sarah Fredericks. Many others, too many to mention here, have made significant contributions to the journal as assistant editors, special issue editors, editorial assistants, and book review coordinators.

Please consider looking at the masthead now and then to see our current editorial team, and when the possibility emerges, thank them for their service.

Of course, those who serve as anonymous reviewers are critically important to this publication. Those who have served in this capacity are gratefully acknowledged at the end of this issue, as is our custom.

As we wrap up our fifteenth year, I wanted to express my profound appreciation to everyone who has made the *JSRNC* a success, regardless of whether, due to space constraints and imperfect memory, I have been unable to mention every contributor by name. I look forward to working with and learning from many if not most of you in the coming years.

Bron Taylor
Editor-in-Chief

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