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Mark Stoll, *Inherit the Holy Mountain: Religion and the Rise of American Environmentalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015). ISBN: 9780190230869

Contents

Introduction by Christopher F. Jones, Arizona State University	2
Comments by Lisa H. Sideris, Indiana University	4
Comments by Constance M. Furey, Indiana University	9
Comments by Joseph Kip Kosek, George Washington University	14
Comments by Mark Fiege, Montana State University	18
Response by Mark Stoll, Texas Tech University	21
About the Contributors	27

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Introduction by Christopher F. Jones, Arizona State University

Environmental historians have not, on the whole, turned a kind eye toward organized religion. Most of the field's scholarship has ignored religion, and when it is invoked, the connotations are typically negative. Following the pioneering work of Lynn White Jr., the Judeo-Christian tradition has been cast as an enabler of environmentally destructive behavior characterized by a zealous and aggressive interpretation of the Biblical passage in which God grants humans "dominion of the Earth." This view is too simplistic, **Mark Stoll** argues in *Inherit the Holy Mountain*. If we look beyond doctrine to moral formation and turn our attention to a particular group within the Reformed Protestant tradition, we can see a much more positive role for religion within the American past: one that was commonly shared by many environmental pioneers and helped give rise to an ethos of humble and sustainable stewardship for the planet.

At the center of *Inherit the Holy Mountain* is a surprising finding: a remarkable number of important members of the American environmental movement in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were raised within the Reformed Protestant tradition, and Calvinism in particular. Figures ranging from John Muir to Gifford Pinchot to Rachel Carson were not only raised Congregationalist or Presbyterian, but had an upbringing in which religious life was central to their moral formation as children and young adults. What emerged was a sense of "inner Presbyterianism" that was much less about religious doctrine, and much more about a cautious and humble attitude toward the world. Because humans were flawed and imperfect, they could never achieve such a grandiose notion as mastery over nature. Instead, more modest ideas such as improving or acting as steward over an imperfect world fit better with the Calvinist worldview, with the New England farming community an example of a carefully tended landscape. In this sense, the moral grounding of religious faith gave rise to a sense of stewardship among Calvinists that encouraged them to preserve the environments in which they lived.

Stoll's work suggests the helpful possibilities of a broader and more imaginative attitude towards religion and the environment. Not only can this help us better understand the past, it may be just as essential for the present day. It is clear in contemporary America that there are strong overlaps between fundamentalist Christianity, conservative political thought, fossil fuel extraction, and climate change denial. Yet environmentalists have perhaps been too quick to deny any positive role for religion, seeking only to counter the perceived failures of many religious traditions to encourage sustainability. Given the importance of religion in the lives of millions of Americans, those seeking to build support for environmental protections would be wise to adopt a more open and imaginative approach to the non-secular world.

This roundtable emerges out of a successful and well-attended panel discussion on *Inherit the Holy Mountain* at the 2017 American Society for Environmental History

meeting in Chicago, Illinois. I was pleased that each of the participants on that roundtable panel agreed to transfer their oral remarks into written comments so that the discussion could be shared more broadly.

Lisa Sideris opens the roundtable, placing Stoll's book in the context of scholarship on religion and the environment and asking questions about the links between Calvinist pessimism, managed landscapes, and wilderness. **Constance Furey** provides a compelling look at John Calvin and his thoughts on nature to situate the contribution of Stoll's work, concluding with an invitation to reflect on the influence of Pope Francis's 2015 papal encyclical *Laudato Si'*. In his remarks, **Joseph Kip Kosek** pushes Stoll to clarify the boundaries of what defines the Presbyterian ethos and how it may have shifted over the period of time his book covers. Finally, **Mark Fiege** lauds Stoll's insights about the religious roots of environmentalists while also asking questions about how to connect these findings with the recent wave of environmental history scholarship showing the uncomfortable co-existence of environmental protection with forcible removal and exclusion of non-white populations.

Before turning to the first set of comments, I would like to pause here and thank all the roundtable participants for taking part. In addition, I would like to remind readers that as an open-access forum, *H-Environment Roundtable Reviews* is available to scholars and non-scholars alike, around the world, free of charge. Please circulate.

Comments by Lisa H. Sideris, Indiana University

Much scholarship on religion and the environment—the field in which I work—was initially launched by an academic blame-game that exhibits surprising staying power even today. Blame for neglect and destruction of the natural environment is often apportioned to the Judeo-Christian tradition as chief environmental offender (though in reality, it is the *Christian* rather than the *Judeo* part that critics tend to assail).¹ Christianity, on an interpretation famously pioneered by Lynn White, devalues the earth while simultaneously exalting the human as the very image of God, the creature with a divine mandate to conquer and subdue. Within the Christian tradition, Protestantism is seen to harbor fewer resources than Catholicism for “greening” nature (White suggested St. Francis of Assisi as an ecological saint), owing to the Reformed tradition’s assumed affinity with capitalist impulses and its investment in a deity who transcends the natural world. The disenchanting natural world of Protestantism remains a background assumption in many discussions of environmentalism. To wit: a line from Bill McKibben’s book *Deep Economy* leapt out at me as I was preparing these comments: “The work begun by the Reformation was finished by fossil fuel.”² And if the Protestant worldview somehow paved the way for climate change, then it is particularly Calvinism, with its twin convictions of the absolute sovereignty of God and the utter fallenness of the created order and humans, that seems positioned to win this environmental race to the bottom. Calvinism, in other words, is particularly resistant to “greening.”

Mark Stoll’s *Inherit the Holy Mountain* turns this interpretation on its head. And it does so in ways that also speak to the legacy for environmental studies of Lynn White’s famous critique. A lapsed Presbyterian himself, Stoll discovered, even to his own apparent surprise, that conservation and environmental pioneers overwhelmingly had religious childhoods of some Calvinist variety. His study focuses on Congregationalists and Presbyterians, including lapsed Presbyterians who played prominent roles in the rise of modern environmentalism. Congregationalists and Presbyterians led the way in promoting and establishing forestry, parks, and agricultural stewardship. Their ranks included park designers such as Frederick Law Olmsted as well as landscape painters like Thomas Cole. Gifford Pinchot’s founding of the Forest Service, and Teddy Roosevelt’s National Parks initiative also had deep Presbyterian roots. By the 1960s, lapsed Presbyterian Rachel Carson would be crusading for nature in ways that drew directly on the stern and serious, but nature-reverencing milieu of her childhood. With the decline of Presbyterian dominance in recent decades, Stoll suggests, we have inherited a dissipated environmental movement that has lost its moral center.

¹ Lynn White Jr., “The Historical Roots of our Ecologic Crisis.” *Science* 155 (1967): 1203-7.

² Bill McKibben, *Deep Economy: The Wealth of Communities and the Durable Future* (New York: Henry Holt, 2007), 95.

Stoll doesn't exactly prescribe a remedy for this situation; as a historian, that is not his job. But his narrative offers some hints of where we might and might *not* want to look for religious sources of a future environmentalism. As I've suggested, Stoll's analysis of the environmental power of the Reformed tradition challenges White's legacy in some particular ways. White's thesis and those that toe the line, assume that a new religion—a *new cosmology* and set of propositional beliefs—must evolve, or be created, to replace the problematic, anthropocentric teachings of Judeo-Christianity and other (mostly western) traditions.³ Interestingly, Stoll's analysis suggests that Reformed Protestants' commitment to nature stemmed not from specific teachings—not a fixation with correct doctrine or dogma—but from something considerably more implicit and intangible: a denominational culture and milieu, a temperament, a certain *inner Presbyterianism*. After the “creed and dogma fell away,” he writes, there remained the “inner Presbyterian,” a moral map, a compulsion to right the wrongs of the world.⁴ Think of John Muir rhapsodizing in his forest cathedral or Rachel Carson's impassioned indictment of the chemical industry and you have some idea of how powerful the inner Presbyterian can be.

Stoll suggests a distinction between the inner Presbyterian mode of moral formation and preoccupation with conversion to some proper understanding of the world. The conversion-to-right-thinking approach, as he sees it, is evident, for example, in (non-Presbyterian) environmental pioneer Aldo Leopold's land ethic. Stoll similarly discerns the orthodoxy/conversion model among prominent modes of Catholic and Baptist environmentalism, both of which, interestingly, he sees as far more individualistic than their Presbyterian counterparts. While I have quibbles with Stoll's portrait of the land ethic as a personal ethic lacking public policy implications, I'm otherwise intrigued and persuaded by his analysis. Presbyterians were great sermonizers, not great theologians. In their knack for sermonizing, they didn't doubt that their views were right—and that many others were dead wrong—but their convictions were emboldened by love of something greater than themselves. Their sermons were therefore tempered by a deep sense of humility. Humility and earnest moral outrage at human avarice, pride, and idolatry, and a commitment to engaging the social-political order gave us conservation and environmentalism.

Stoll's suggestion (if I've got him right) that environmentalism preoccupied with conversion to right opinion or right teaching has historically been somewhat ineffective can be read as a challenge to Lynn White's thesis. Because White believed that the Genesis “dogma” of creation encouraged exploitation, anthropocentrism, and devaluation of nature, he assumed that a new set of doctrines must be found. If religion was the problem, then the solution must be a kind of new religion, “whether

³ See for example Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim, Series Forward, in *Buddhism and Ecology: The Interconnection of Dharma and Deeds*, Tucker M.E., and Williams, D.R. eds. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), xv-xxxiii.

⁴ Stoll, *Inherit the Holy Mountain: Religion and the Rise of American Environmentalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 2.

we call it that or not.”⁵ From White’s diagnosis, it follows that if we get our cosmology right, everything else will fall into place, and humans will fall in line.

Stoll suggests a more complex picture of moral formation. An abiding pessimism about humans’ ability to do the right thing—the legacy of Calvin’s doctrine of the depravity of humans—seems vital to effective environmental sermonizing. “Calvinism,” Stoll writes, “imbued the Reformed Protestant tradition with a thoroughgoing pessimism about the possibility that everyone would behave well if just given the freedom to do so.”⁶ Thus, as he also argues, “those who advocate converting everyone to the proper attitude toward the land community, or the earth, or the universe, in hopes of an environmental millennium, evince an optimism toward human possibility for which history supplies little supporting evidence.”⁷ This unfounded optimism is evident, I believe, among the vaguely laissez-faire, feel-good forms environmentalism of today that have created neoliberalist ecomodernist manifestos, and visions of a good Anthropocene. Presbyterians, lapsed or otherwise (I include myself here), have always been moved to correct such misguided optimism.

Stoll, as I’ve said, is not writing as an environmental ethicist or proselytizer himself, but his analysis does seem to suggest some normative conclusions. I conclude with a few of these and then raise a few questions his work prompted for me.

As I see it, a clear implication of Stoll’s work is that the humility that attends a view of humans as depraved is more important than ever if environmentalism is to retain, or recover, a moral compass. As a lapsed Presbyterian myself, let me reaffirm the central Calvinist belief that *humans are depraved*.⁸ We need more prophets to decry the sins of society, particularly sins that are destroying nature. Another normative upshot I see in Stoll’s work (though he doesn’t press the point) is that moral formation in *childhood* appears crucial to the development of an effective environmentalist. Researchers like Louise Chawla have looked into the childhood experiences of adult environmental pioneers and documented the importance of a moral temperament forged in childhood and cultivated by close encounters with nature.⁹ A third implication we can draw from Stoll’s analysis is the importance of dialogue across the disciplines and between scholars and the public on issues like environmentalism. The figures of the Reformed tradition that Stoll highlights come from a time and place before our current culture wars and entrenched partisan politics. Writers, scientists, artists, theologians were able to speak to one another, not just to their own ranks. Stoll himself, though he has no obvious theological commitments, embodies this ability to open lines of communication between

⁵ White, “The Historical Roots of our Ecologic Crisis,” 1207.

⁶ Stoll, *Inherit the Holy Mountain*, 273.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ This line was originally said aloud at the conference as a humorous aside. As with dark comedy, it is intended as a joke that also possesses a good deal of truth.

⁹ See for example, Louise Chawla, “Life Paths into Effective Environmental Action,” *The Journal of Environmental Education* 31(1), 1999, 15-26.

environmental history and religious studies, among other factions. Many scholars outside of religious studies seem wary of engaging with religious themes, for reasons that may have to do with poor understanding of what religion scholars do. At environmental history conferences that I attend, discussions of religion are rare. Stoll's keen interest in and detailed understanding of theological themes sets him apart from other environmental historians. His book deserves the attention it is receiving, in part because it speaks to many constituencies in ways that challenge widespread preconceptions about religion.

Finally—and here I may be reaching—Stoll's suggestion that the power or experience of religion—environmental or otherwise—is less about propositional beliefs or orthodoxy than about the formation of moral subjects, accords with some current trends in the study of religion. Religion scholars, including some in my own immediate area of research,¹⁰ are beginning to divest from a model of religions as defined first and foremost as cosmologies, worldviews, or propositional statements delivered in top-down fashion in the belief that adopters of the proffered new vision will realign their ethics accordingly. They are interested in exploring instead the complex, contextually-driven ways in which religious traditions bring their resources to bear on the wicked problems of the world.

In all of these ways, Stoll's book makes a number of important contributions to disciplines and debates far beyond environmental history.

I conclude by posing just three of the questions that occurred to me as I read this fascinating book. First: How is that Calvinism gave rise to *both* an imperative to improve nature—seen in Congregationalists for example and their neatly ordered little New England villages—and a deep pessimism and preoccupation with human flaws? It seems that the latter conviction might undermine the improvement imperative or render it baseless. What, in other words, explains Reformed thinkers' trust in their own ability to improve upon nature?

Second (and related to the first question): It seems a little counterintuitive that, as Stoll argues, the Wilderness Movement was a separate affair from Protestant involvement in parks. As Stoll argues, parks were "Reformed Protestant spaces. Wilderness was not."¹¹ One might expect that in their view of the human as insignificant, humble, or even depraved, Reformed Protestants would have inclined toward wilderness—a place often characterized (however problematically) as devoid of humans, an environment in which one can lose oneself and viscerally sense one's smallness—rather than to the mixed human and natural spaces they helped create. Why, given their "thoroughgoing pessimism," didn't the Reformed tradition produce more misanthropic wilderness-seekers in the style of (Presbyterian) Edward Abbey?

¹⁰ See for example Willis Jenkins, *The Future of Ethics: Sustainability, Social Justice, and Religious Creativity* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2013).

¹¹ Stoll, *Inherit the Holy Mountain*, 269.

And lastly: In distinguishing environmentalists who gravitated to parks from those who were drawn into the Wilderness Movement, Stoll remarks that the Wilderness Movement was “areligious”—not motivated by a recognizable religious impulse. Though not a significant point in his overall argument, this conclusion was, for me, was an unexpected one in a book that otherwise suggests a capacious definition of religion and its transformative (if implicit) power in the world. Weren’t wilderness proponents just differently religious? Was wilderness perhaps their religion? These remarks about areligiousness raise the question of how religion is defined in Stoll’s narrative and what its boundaries might be.¹² Needless to say, it is far from incumbent upon environmental historians to answer a question about which religion scholars will never agree—how to define religion—but I expect that Stoll’s responses to these and other questions are likely to be as thought-provoking as his book.

¹² Here I have in mind, for example, claims for the existence of nature religion or nature spirituality, such as those promoted by religion scholar Bron Taylor who identifies a form of “dark green religion” that does not adhere to standard definitions of religion but is expressed through a deep commitment to nature and a strong sense of kinship and interconnection (See Taylor, *Dark Green Religion: Nature Spirituality and the Planetary Future* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010).

Comments by Constance M. Furey, Indiana University

I may seem like an unlikely person to include in this roundtable on a work of American environmental history. I'm not an environmentalist; I'm not even an Americanist; and I've never researched or taught ecology. I'm a religionist, trained in Religious Studies and in the history and literature of early modern Christianity in particular. What I *have* written and taught about, often, are ideas and movements associated with one of the most theocratic and dogmatic thinkers in the history of Christianity: John Calvin. And what I can attest to is the originality and significance of *Inherit the Holy Mountain* as a work of religious as well as environmental history. Mark Stoll's book gives us a Calvinism most people have never imagined, much less learned about, and a view of religion that will surprise environmentalists and conservative Christians alike because so many people in both groups are accustomed to thinking that Christianity and environmentalism stand opposed.

To understand the significance of Mark's book, it is helpful to know something about the man considered the founder of Calvinism. Most people find John Calvin is hard to love or even like, for good reason. Trained as a lawyer and humanist (which in his day meant he was trained to read classical Greek and Latin texts), Calvin spent most of his life in his study or at the pulpit, writing theological treatises and delivering long and complicated sermons about almighty God and depraved humanity. Calvin is known for his personal austerity; his emphasis on communal discipline; his condemnation of religious images and distaste for any music but the singing of the psalms (on this score he differed from the earlier reformer, Martin Luther, who composed many lasting hymns); his willingness to execute heretics; and, perhaps above all, his extreme version of the doctrine of predestination. Those who teach Calvin often summarize his thought with the acrostic TULIP (Total depravity; Unconditional election; Limited atonement; Irresistible grace; and Perseverance of the saints).¹³ And more than any other religious thinker I teach, Calvin reliably provokes a strong reaction, usually a strongly negative reaction, from students outraged by his doctrine of predestination. Calvin was not willing to simply affirm the premise shared by most Christian theologians of his day, that an omnipotent God has the power to determine human destiny. Instead, Calvin insisted that God's judgment was wholly independent of even divine foresight, about whether people would do things to merit damnation or salvation, and, moreover, that instead of saving some and leaving others to the hell they had brought on themselves, God actively chose who should be damned and saved. So Calvin can be counted on to create lively discussions, but he's rarely popular with twenty-first century students, who are inclined to think about God—if they think about God at all—as merciful and loving.

I offer all this background on a sixteenth century Christian theologian to make this point: one thing Calvin is NOT known for is his interest in nature. My students tend

¹³ Those who want to know more about these five points can read about them here: <http://www.reformed.org/calvinism/>

to be surprised, and even uncomprehending, when I ask them to consider Calvin's eloquent passages about the beauty and grandeur of the created order. I have always emphasized this aspect of Calvin's thought, which I learned from my advisor Susan Schreiner, whose book about Calvin's view of nature and the natural order is called *The Theater of His Glory*, taking its title from a phrase Calvin used repeatedly in his *Institutes* to describe nature.¹⁴ I explain to my students why Calvin taught that sinful humans think nature was made for us to use as we see fit; that nature is instead intended to teach us to focus on God rather than ourselves; and this perspectival change—the shift from the idolatrous human tendency to think of everything in relation to ourselves rather than God to a reverent focus on God—changes how we see nature, enabling us to see it not as a resource for our use but as a manifestation of the divine. I teach all this, and I sometimes even succeed in convincing students Calvin might be a kind of naturalist. But until now, I've had only anecdotal evidence to suggest Calvinism might actually inspire environmentalism. Until now, because this is exactly what Mark's book demonstrates, decisively.

As Mark explains, *Inherit the Holy Mountain* was inspired by what many would consider a surprising discovery: "Especially before the 1960s, a very large majority of the figures of the standard histories of environmentalism grew up in just two denominations, Congregationalism and Presbyterianism, both in the Calvinist tradition" (2). In true Weberian fashion, Mark considers this a phenomenon worthy of explanation. Why denominations inspired by Calvinism? Why not others? And why were those influenced by Calvin so effective in establishing institutions, policies, and legislation and inspiring naturalist and conservationist movements?

In answering these questions, Mark has written a book that has the potential to change the way environmentalists think about religion and the way religious people think about environmentalism.

The story he tells is about the past, and like most stories about environmentalism it is more sobering than it is hopeful. The Calvinism that inspired conservationists and environmentalists in eighteenth-, nineteenth-, and early twentieth-century America was itself diverse, with significant differences between Congregationalists and Presbyterians in particular, and regional differences that significantly influenced the tenor and effect of the Calvinist message, but the historical, sociological, and theological tributaries that converged to make these diverse forms of Calvinism significant engines of environmental activism have been diverted and diminished. This Calvinism is no more. And yet, in describing how and why Calvinism was important in the past, Mark reminds believers and non-believers alike that current forms of Christianity are not the only forms of Christianity. He demonstrates, moreover, that thinkers most strongly aligned with the most socially and theologically conservative forms of Christianity—as Calvin is today—need not only inspire theologically and socially conservative movements.

¹⁴ Susan Schreiner, *The Theater of his Glory: Nature and the Natural Order in the Thought of John Calvin* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1997).

Calvin taught that nature was wondrous and essential not just because it was God's creation, but because it taught God's creatures to see God, to see the "glory veiled from vulgar eyes." Calvin described nature as a spectacle, and as "dazzling theater." "Nature," John Calvin wrote decisively in his *Institutes*, "is God." Already by 1560, Mark points out, the Book of Nature was seen as a second book, alongside the Bible, which supported not only natural theology but also the conviction that science could therefore proselytize for nature. This led to community and then political action, Mark explains, because the doctrine of total depravity or thorough and degrading sinfulness was a defining characteristic of Calvinism. The lesson that nature was God, combined with the emphasis on human depravity, had a twofold effect, encouraging regulation and the conviction that beauty prevailed where the effects of sin (and people) were absent. Mark illustrates the effect of this by detailing the theological lessons illustrated in a painting by the nineteenth century Hudson River School painter, Thomas Cole. In Cole's painting, popularly known as "The Oxbow," "the associations of wild nature were superior to those of humanized landscapes because they suggested the divine and not the human" (15).



Figure 1: Thomas Cole, "The Oxbow" 1836. Public domain image courtesy of Wikipedia Commons.

According to Mark's account, Calvinist environmentalism had two phases. The first, inspired by New England towns, gave us parks, forests, agricultural improvement, and ecology, with an emphasis on common land and stewardship. What it offered, in other words, was an alternative to the Emersonian individualism often understood as a singularly powerful source of American environmentalism. In lieu of the

mysticism associated with Emerson, Congregationalist naturalism had a practical influence on parks, suburbs, landscaping, and agriculture.

The second phase involves people Mark describes as Presbyterian progressives. These folks translated Congregationalist conservation into a national crusade (139). In this phase there was more focus on national politics than on the Congregationalist commonweal. The combination of natural theology and moral philosophy issued in people like John Muir and the push for national parks and conservation agencies that climaxed in the 1960s and 1970s, characterized by moral urgency, suspicion of human involvement, and an evangelizing fervor. The fact that so many of the people who led significant federal agencies were from Presbyterian backgrounds, Mark argues, demonstrates the Presbyterians' "elective affinity" for moral regulation of natural resources and the assumption that public land and landscape should serve the common good (151). What is lacking in this second phase, Mark observes, is a vision of a righteous community. This is true of activists raised as Presbyterians, such as William Douglas, Jane Jacobs, and Rachel Carson. And so we have Mark's regretful observation: "where there is no vision, the people perish" (201). The strength of both phases, of Congregationalist naturalism and the progressive Presbyterianism, was the energy and conviction both garnered from natural theology. The weakness was the corresponding preference for de-peopled landscapes.

Among the key virtues of Mark's book is his method of typologizing different religious views of nature, which underscores both the importance of religion and the significance of religious differences. This interest in differences extends, in later chapters, to comparative discussions of Catholics, Mormons, and African-American Baptists. Our country is now dominated by religions at ease in the consumer economy. However much the communal forms of religiosity Mark explores in some detail might have inspire environmental concern, these religions lack the righteous fervor and moralizing that inspired political action. There is, Mark concludes, no clear successor to the Reformed conservationists. Thus, he concludes, "Environmentalism is weak, divided, and wandering in the wilderness" (275).

Because Mark proved himself such a deft interpreter of Calvinist theology, offering a persuasive Weberian account of the elective affinity between a religious worldview and this-world behaviors, I would ask him to consider extending his comparative analysis to take account of Pope Francis's recent environmental encyclical, *Laudato Si'*. In particular, it could be illuminating to compare *Laudato Si'*'s emphasis on Trinitarianism—the claim that humans, God, and nature are all woven together in a web of relationships, and a sin against one is a sin against all—to Calvinism's natural theology. As it is, Mark argues, Catholicism's communitarianism does not motivate its adherents to change politics and policies. Here he makes an important point. Nevertheless, *Laudato Si'*'s trinitarianism does address what Mark rightly identifies as a weakness of Calvinist environmentalism: its purist vision of nature, as best when it is uninhabited. How would Mark assess the strengths and weaknesses of the current Pope's vision (which itself extends the environmental concerns articulated

by at least his two predecessors) compared to Calvinist worldviews? Is there anything in the message, or even the existence, of the encyclical that would lead him to alter his concluding assessment of the current state of environmentalism, and the potential for religions to inspire environmental activism?

Comments by Joseph Kip Kosek, George Washington University

Mark Stoll's *Inherit the Holy Mountain* interweaves two historical genealogies that are seldom considered together, those of religion and environmentalism. To be sure, some of the classic texts of modern environmental studies offered general hypotheses about religion. Lynn White's influential essay "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis" blamed Christianity for imposing a dualistic view of the cosmos that elevated the spiritual above the natural. William Cronon's "The Trouble With Wilderness" criticized environmentalists for freighting supposedly untouched landscapes with sacred significance while evading difficult questions of human impact.

These interpretations offered bird's-eye views, ranging across centuries and continents. One can acknowledge the brilliance of the essays and still wish for a little more detail. *Inherit the Holy Mountain* operates closer to the ground and gives us a more specific look at how religion shaped environmental thinking. For Stoll, the theology of Calvinism inspired an appreciation of the natural world, not via the direct activism of churches but through influence, usually in childhood, on the leaders of environmentalist initiatives.

To study this dynamic, the book cuts against the general methodological trends in environmental history writing. The most visible recent work in the field focuses on social history, economic geography, and public policy. Stoll's orientation is toward cultural history, the way that systems of value and meaning are produced and reproduced over time. He takes environmentalism as a way of seeing and a narrative style, one connected to art and literature. Indeed, one of the joys of the book is its creative reading of nineteenth-century landscape paintings by Thomas Cole, William Keith, and others. In this sense, *Inherit the Holy Mountain* looks back to older works such as Leo Marx's *The Machine in the Garden* and Roderick Nash's *Wilderness and the American Mind*.

Stoll invokes those earlier texts, too, in his focus on the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Historians often present environmental awareness as a fairly new phenomenon, noting the publication of *Silent Spring* in 1962 or the celebration of the first Earth Day in 1970. Stoll is having none of the assumption of moral progress that such a chronology can imply. For him, the heyday of environmentalist sensibility has long since passed us by. Like another recent cultural history, Aaron Sachs's *Arcadian America*, *Inherit the Holy Mountain* tells a story of decline. For Stoll, the period since the 1960s has "entailed a loss of the moral energy, urgency, and focus with which the children of Calvinism had infused the movement" (265). Given the presence of considerable environmentalist activity, from political pressure groups like Citizen's Climate Lobby to more radical protesters like Greenpeace, Stoll might have said a bit more about where, exactly, these recent endeavors are falling short.

What Stoll and Sachs also share is a claim that this earlier American environmentalism emerged from a contemplation of limits rather than a hope of transcendence. *Arcadian America* finds this humility coming out of classical and Renaissance humanist traditions and says little about Christianity. *Inherit the Holy Mountain* shows us that a parallel strain of Calvinism also contributed to this chastened sense of respect for nature.

“Hardly any” of his nineteenth-century environmentalists, Stoll notes, “said so much as one word about Emerson” (4). They did not share the Emersonian optimism that would celebrate nature as the place of freedom and fulfillment. The Calvinists and ex-Calvinists at the center of the book were much more cautious about human possibility, often looking to God’s magnificent creation as an implicit judgment on the sinfulness of fallen humans. They favored the concepts of “improvement” and “stewardship,” comparatively modest notions of doing the best one could in an imperfect world. Stoll, like Sachs, is interested in the environmentalism of the middle landscape, the one where people have an everyday presence. Could the sense of a humble, rather than confident, human encounter with nature reveal something not only about the nineteenth century, but also about the cultural mood of the early twenty-first?

Stoll convincingly shows that Calvinism, as expressed in Congregational and Presbyterian theology, played an important role in American environmentalist thought and reform. But how all-encompassing was it? In recent decades, scholars of American religion have decentered Calvinism in the story of the nation and emphasized the diversity of American religions. Yet *Inherit the Holy Mountain* largely adopts the older view that the United States is more or less a Puritan country. Chronology is often collapsed, so that the theology of seventeenth-century Puritans becomes pretty much the same as that of nineteenth-century Congregationalists. The result is a formidable synthesis that offers much insight but also obscures some of the breadth of the American religious menagerie.

Consider Theodore Parker. He was one of the leading voices *against* Calvinism in the first half of the nineteenth century, extolling a liberal Unitarianism influenced by Emerson and Transcendentalism. Stoll, however, adopts Parker for his cause, explaining that although he was “a strong foe of Calvinism as a theology,” he “still held the Calvinist doctrine of nature” (38). How Calvinist was that doctrine of nature if the nation’s leading Unitarian shared it?

These rhetorical conversions to Calvinism occur throughout *Inherit the Holy Mountain*. Henry A. Wallace is labeled a “preacherly Presbyterian,” with no attention given to his explorations of Theosophy and Spiritualism (which became embarrassing during his 1948 presidential campaign). Ansel Adams somehow “learned Reformed values and aesthetics by catching his father’s contagious enthusiasm for Ralph Waldo Emerson” (115), even though Emersonian and Reformed ideas are represented as opposing forces in much of the rest of the book. Georgia O’Keefe gets an odd kind of horoscope reading: she “had a strong Dutch-

New England Calvinist heritage that overwhelmed her warm, big-hearted Irish-Catholic and Hungarian paternal stock” (125). By the time the “American Presbyterian Jackson Pollock” (123) appears, the zigzags necessary to connect all of Stoll’s characters to a single Calvinist heritage have begun to resemble those in a drip painting. If the Reformed tradition includes everyone from Parker to Pollock, what exactly is holding it together? How should we understand its intellectual coherence and explanatory force?

A deeper engagement with trends in American religious history might have added some other voices to the Calvinist ones highlighted in *Inherit the Holy Mountain*. Books such as David Hall’s *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment*, Jon Butler’s *Awash in a Sea of Faith*, Ann Braude’s *Radical Spirits*, and Patricia Bonomi’s *Under the Cope of Heaven* (to name only a few influential texts) have emphasized the diversity of early American spirituality, summed up in Butler’s metaphor of a “spiritual hothouse.” These and other recent works have also unveiled the surprising variety of thought and practice within Calvinism, including many heterodox and syncretic strains.

Stoll’s effort to smooth over the diversity of American religion obscures a much richer panoply. To its credit, *Inherit the Holy Mountain* provides occasional hints of that panoply, offering some tantalizing leads that other scholars might pursue. What if we looked again at Stoll’s characters with more openness to American religious pluralism? We read, very briefly, about Joseph Worcester, an Arts and Crafts pioneer and “son of the founder of New England Swedenborgianism” (131), a faith that claimed to have new mystical visions of Jesus Christ. Ernest Thompson Seton, a writer of popular nature stories and a founder of the Boy Scouts, took his regard of the natural world in part from his understanding (however limited) of Native American spirituality (162). Sanford Gifford, whose haunting post-Civil War painting *Hunter Mountain, Twilight* figures prominently in both *Inherit the Holy Mountain* and *Arcadian America*, joined Octavius B. Frothingham’s ultra-liberal Free Religious Association (207). If we took this variety on its own terms rather than trying to fit it all into a Calvinist frame, we might get a fuller view of how religion influenced American environmentalism. So how can we balance the importance of Calvinism with an appreciation for the range of religious traditions that contributed to Americans’ ideas about nature?

These are big questions, and it is a testament to the success of *Inherit the Holy Mountain* that it provokes them. Stoll helps us to see that consideration of nature was not the result of progress toward secular rationalism; rather, it was a deeply ingrained part of religious worldviews. In our own time, environmentalists face a crisis of authority, as large numbers of citizens disbelieve the most basic facts about climate change and other ecological threats. The proposed solution, it often seems, is to shout the scientific data that much louder, presumably with the hope that one more study or one more hockey stick graph will convince the holdouts.

Mark Stoll's book may suggest a different approach, one that attends more carefully, as Calvinism did in previous centuries, to the realm of stories, emotions, and imagination. To quote the biblical proverb, "where there is no vision, the people perish." *Inherit the Holy Mountain* discovers a formidable environmentalist vision in America's past and, perhaps, offers clues for reconstructing one in the future.

Comments by Mark Fiege, Montana State University

Praising and Questioning Mark Stoll's *Inherit the Holy Mountain*

I have long admired and envied Mark Stoll and his work. He is deeply intelligent, exceptionally creative, and an unusually clear, elegant prose stylist. He is a meticulous researcher, and his intellectual breadth, measured by his reading, is impressive. In conversation, his words and personal bearing project thoughtfulness, serenity, and kindness, as if he is practicing the best features of the religious traditions that he studies. His qualities of character and intellect are manifest in his essays and books, which present so much knowledge and so many interpretive insights in such a light, engaging style that when I read them, I feel smarter than I deserve. To enter the past through Mark's pages is to undergo intellectual and spiritual enlargement.

Inherit the Holy Mountain is a field-altering book that compels the reader to confront the extent to which religion, especially Reformed Protestantism and Calvinism, shaped conservation and environmentalism. The idea of an active, egalitarian God always present in the world, continually creating, sustaining, improving, stewarding, and conserving it, is compelling. Humanity is not alone, this perspective suggests, and to engage in conservation not only is to protect and preserve the Earth, but also to advance and fulfill the Earth's inherent divine purpose or potential. Mark's biggest surprise—winnowed from the sources by much painstaking, time-consuming, no doubt agonizing research—is that Presbyterians disproportionately influenced conservation from the late nineteenth century through the 1960s, the golden years of land and resource protection. In Mark's interpretation, Presbyterianism fostered an activist, national political culture inclined to sermonizing and calling out sins against God and the Creation, attributes well suited to the politics of the progressive conservation movement. After reading this account, I started to see Presbyterians everywhere in the sources on conservation that I was studying, and I began forwarding citations to Mark.¹⁵ After the third or fourth email, he understandably stopped replying. But that is a measure of the significance of the history once hidden in plain sight and now revealed in the pages of his wonderful book.

As much as *Inherit the Holy Mountain* accomplishes, however, it cannot accomplish everything, as Mark's "inner Presbyterian" (p. 2) likely would admit. All of us, and all that we produce, are fallen and imperfect. All are incomplete, all are works in progress, and inevitably—and perhaps necessarily—all come up short. As I considered Mark's achievement, I remembered a story (likely apocryphal) about Paul Revere and the colonial silversmiths who made sure that their wares always carried a blemish, because only God was capable of getting it exactly right. More than that, Mark's work confirmed my belief—a belief that has grown stronger the

¹⁵ See, for example, Elers Koch, *Forty Years a Forester, 1903-1943*, ed. Peter Koch (Missoula, Montana: Mountain Press, 1998), 3, 9, 11, 15.

older, grayer, and world-wearier I have become—that the best things that people create not only will have flaws, but also *must* have them. Beauty and wonder only come through extraordinary struggle and accompanied by imperfections, which, in their own way, often are beautiful.¹⁶ Contemplating Mark’s work and the virtually impossible range of his ambition, I also thought of Homer’s *Illiad* and the character of Diomedes, who, in brave and noble defiance of his tragic earthly mortality, turns his weapons on the gods of love and war.¹⁷

Thus, what Mark’s book courageously achieves inevitably points to what it does not, to what stands in silence beyond the story that Mark brilliantly tells.¹⁸ Here is the issue. The proponents of the Calvinism, Reformed Protestantism, and Presbyterianism that gave rise to conservation and environmentalism also were involved in bitter wars against American Indians, in the removal of those Natives to reservations, and in the segregation of African Americans and other people on the American landscape. The implications of this history surely matter to Mark’s account of conservation.

Surely it matters, for example, that the New England society that yielded Congregationalism also helped foment the terrifying, painful, and destructive calamity of King Philip’s War.¹⁹ Or that Andrew Jackson, one of the chief architects of the Indian removal policy, was a Presbyterian, as Mark himself points out (p. 130). Or that the creation of national parks and other protected areas in the American West was premised on the elimination of Indians and coincided with the creation of the Jim Crow system.²⁰ Or that Gifford Pinchot, the first Chief of the U.S. Forest Service who “built American forestry on Connecticut Puritan values” (p. 91) was a good friend of eugenicist and conservationist Madison Grant and served on the Advisory Council of the Eugenics Committee of the USA.²¹ Or that Woodrow Wilson, the Presbyterian president who signed into law the National Park Act of 1916, also screened *Birth of a Nation* (1915) in the White House, oversaw the segregation the Capitol, and undercut a nascent African American middle class by removing its

¹⁶ Cf. the aesthetic of Japanese *Kintsugi* or *Kintsukuroi* artwork; see Elizabeth Rosner, *Survivor Café: The Legacy of Trauma and the Labyrinth of Memory* (Berkeley, California: Counterpoint, 2017), 165.

¹⁷ Caroline Alexander, *The War That Killed Achilles: The True Story of Homer’s Illiad and the Trojan War* (New York: Viking, 2009), 64-82.

¹⁸ Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon, 1997).

¹⁹ See, for example, Ann M. Little, *Abraham in Arms: War and Gender in Colonial New England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007); Jill Lepore, *The Name of War: King Philip’s War and the Origins of American Identity* (New York: Knopf, 1998); and Richard Slotkin, *Regeneration Through Violence: The Mythology of the American Frontier, 1600-1860* (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1973).

²⁰ Mark Spence, *Dispossessing the Wilderness: Indian Removal and the Making of the National Parks* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Carolyn Finney, *Black Faces, White Spaces: Reimagining the Relationship of African Americans to the Great Outdoors* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014).

²¹ Jonathan Peter Spiro, *Defending the Master Race: Conservation, Eugenics, and the Legacy of Madison Grant* (Burlington: University of Vermont Press, 2009), 181.

members from, or demoting them within, civil service positions in the federal government.²²

Certainly Mark did not set out to offer a comprehensive, warts-and-all explanation of conservation, and for that reason he should not be held accountable for the book he did not intend to write. Yet surely it is fair to wonder, for example, if the religious sources of the political movement that created the national parks also shaped the policies that removed Native peoples from the landscapes that became the parks. Surely it is fair to juxtapose *Inherit the Holy Mountain* and *Dispossessing the Wilderness* (a work missing from Mark's otherwise extensive bibliography) and wonder about their possible connections and how two such books, seemingly so very different from one another, describe some of the same events. Surely it is fair to invoke a range of recent work from a rising generation of young environmental historians such as Miles Powell and Mary Mendoza—and from senior scholars, too—demanding that historians address the social inequities and injustices to which conservation contributed.²³

Mark has produced a necessary, useful, surprising, superbly rendered history of conservation, but it seems fair to imagine ways to integrate the various strands of conservation history so that even when we recognize the injustice lurking behind the justice, the inhumanity at the heart of the humane, we still do not lose sight of the beauty of the overall project.²⁴ The challenge and responsibility is not Mark's alone; it belongs to all of us (me, too) who seek to imagine the past more fully so that we can rebuild conservation and more capably act on our faith that a better world is possible.

But since the work under consideration is Mark's, perhaps I might put some questions to him directly. How do your insights into religion and conservation relate to issues of conservation and race? Did the complicity of Calvinists, Reformed Protestants, and Presbyterians in the removal and elimination of Native people, the perpetuation of racist thought, and the construction of the color line complicate their conservation achievements? Or, are such critical questions unfair and miss the ways that inheritors of the holy mountain also worked—however imperfectly and haltingly—to accommodate and improve the lives of others?

²² Leon Litwack, *Trouble in Mind: Black Southerners in the Age of Jim Crow* (New York: Knopf, 1998), 373.

²³ See, for example, Miles A. Powell, *Vanishing America: Species Extinction, Racial Peril, and the Origins of Conservation* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016); Dorceta E. Taylor, *The Rise of the American Conservation Movement: Power, Privilege, and Environmental Protection* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), and the H-Environment Roundtable Vol. 7, No. 1 (2017) on recent provocative work by Carolyn Finney and Carl Zimring.

²⁴ Viet Thanh Nguyen, *Nothing Ever Dies: Vietnam and the Memory of War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016), 19.

Response by Mark Stoll, Texas Tech University

If we could make our society just and sustainable, what, exactly, would such a society look like? Has anyone in history undertaken to create such a society? Can we learn from their experience?

Such questions lie at the heart of *Inherit the Holy Mountain: Religion and the Rise of American Environmentalism*. With a little reframing, I might easily have named it something like *The American Quest for a Just and Sustainable Society*. It bears the title it has because religious belief inspired the goals of justice and sustainability from which an ecological consciousness and ecological politics grew in the United States.

You'll look in vain for these religious roots in the foundational histories of American environmentalism by Hans Huth, Samuel Hays, Roderick Nash, Stephen Fox, and others. Pervasively secular, aside from nods to the (unchurched and decidedly unorthodox) Transcendentalism of Emerson and Thoreau, they share that hostility to Puritans and Calvinism that Lynn White, Jr., expressed so influentially. In a perceptive chapter on "the religion of conservation," Fox noted that twentieth-century conservationists and environmentalists were just as unchurched and decidedly unorthodox as the Transcendentalists. Doesn't that mean that White was right? End of story, etc.?

After *Inherit the Holy Mountain*, no history of environmental thought and activism can be complete *without* taking religion into account. It documents how a tremendous proportion of leading figures and activists grew up in religious homes. Many had close relatives who were ministers or active in churchwork, or themselves once intended to be a minister or missionary. Even more surprising, an astonishing number were no further than one generation away from a church in a Reformed Protestant (i.e., Calvinist) denomination, especially the two Puritan traditions Congregationalism and Presbyterianism. I have often wondered how nobody had ever noticed this before! As Mark Fiege remarks, once you become aware of it, you see it everywhere. White himself was the son of a Presbyterian minister and a lifelong active Presbyterian. So, was White wrong, then? Perhaps the best answer is "none of the above."²⁵

These religious connections raise many other questions, though, so I am grateful to Chris Jones for arranging this H-Environment roundtable. The excellent comments by Lisa Sideris, Constance Furey, Kip Kosek, and Mark Fiege, both kind and critical, give me an opportunity to clarify and expand on some important points.

²⁵ For more on Lynn White and his thesis, see my "Sinners in the Hands of an Ecological Crisis: Lynn White's Environmental Jeremiad," in *Religion and Ecological Crisis: The "Lynn White Thesis" at Fifty*, ed. by Todd LeVasseur and Anna Peterson (New York: Routledge, 2016).

To begin with the opening questions, Puritans sought to create on the stony soil of New England a moral, equitable society, without poverty, in which everyone would use their (God-given) wealth and talents for the benefit of the community. Puritans had the people run their own towns and churches and thus set up the most democratic of all European colonies. Furthermore, as Brian Donahue showed me in *The Great Meadow: Farmers and the Land in Colonial Concord* (2004), they used convertible husbandry, a relatively sustainable agricultural system, partly because they knew it in England and partly because of religious duty to be stewards of the land for future generations. This intentionally-designed just, sustainable society (as opposed to a utopian or sectarian community) is the only one I know in history.

Still, the fabric of Puritan society began to fray within just a couple generations. Perhaps the old Transcendentalist narrative was correct after all? When I went to write a proposed chapter on New Englanders, I thought it would write itself, since surely everybody was reading Emerson and Thoreau. I can't tell you how nonplussed I was to find that the works of George Perkins Marsh, Frederick Law Olmsted, and all the other founders of the conservation and parks movements rarely or never mentioned either one. Their ideas and models came instead from the Congregationally-dominated New England town of the kind they all grew up in. The Puritan early days remained a Golden Age in the Congregational mind.

I would argue with Kip Kosek's contention that the book does not take change into account. The decay of the Puritan community inspired Marsh and others to save the New England town and to hold it up as a model for the growing nation. Change also subsequently led to the sudden decline of Congregational influence in American society. When, despite efforts to save it, the Puritan town died, traditional Congregationalism and its communal ethos died with it.

The disintegration of Puritan society in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries brings us face to face with the difficulty of maintaining any just, sustainable society over time. If I recall correctly, Robert Netting's *Balancing on an Alp* argued that sustainable communities must do two things: keep outsiders out and keep control of their resources. The isolation, homogeneity, and conservatism of western New England explains the Puritan town's long survival there. Diversity, religious freedom, and economic development (all values we uphold today) doomed the Puritan experiment. They world they created could not withstand constant in- and outmigration, the breakup of Congregational hegemony, and the arrival of railroads, urbanization, and industrialization.

The puzzle we today must solve is this: can we do any better than the Puritans? Is a just, sustainable society possible that is diverse, free, dynamic, and prosperous?

Lisa Sideris wonders how Calvinists, so darkly pessimistic about human nature, could optimistically build a new, improved society. This is an excellent point. Since depraved motives lay behind all human endeavors, Puritans turned to the Bible to find God's plan for society and all else. Such a society could only persist if every

member always kept an eye on everyone else to catch them when they inevitably put self ahead of community. What made Puritans hard to live with was also exactly what made their community work. Conversely, religions that focus on the salvation of individuals, from Baptists to Buddhists, preach optimism about human abilities that complements fatalism about social structures.

The Calvinist doctrine of human depravity means that there will always be bad actors whose self-centered actions threaten the common good. The righteous few must control their sinfulness. Early environmentalism implicitly embodied this tenet when it pushed regulation of resource use for future generations, preservation of natural spaces for public benefit, and control of individual and corporate avarice for the good of society. The history of environmental policy in the United States suggests that this has been a rather effective political mode for this country.

In a democratic society, leaders need to inspire the people to vote against the interests and power of concentrated wealth. Here again, I would argue against Kip to say that denominational change is the essence of the issue. The Presbyterian church during approximately the century after 1845 — when Calvinism was making its last stand and Scottish immigration (a major source of its vitality) peaked — trained its youth in evangelistic preaching that proved enormously effective in the larger, secular political arena. This era stretches from John Muir, Theodore Roosevelt, and Gifford Pinchot to Rachel Carson, David Brower, and Edward Abbey.

Constance Furey draws attention to Susan Schreiner's *Theater of His Glory*, which was a real eye-opening book for me. Schreiner left open a crucial point that I have long puzzled over: why did Calvin and Reformed Protestants so emphatically emphasize the presence of God in nature? This characteristic doctrine of Puritans, Congregationalists, and Presbyterians lived on unabated in Unitarianism and Transcendentalism. My provisional theory was that nature itself supported the truth of Protestantism, which lacked the authority of church tradition that supported Catholicism. I found evidence in Reformed confessions of faith, which begin with the evidence in nature of God's existence and attributes. A range of people, from educated Puritan poet Anne Bradstreet to unlettered Mormon prophet Joseph Smith, all began with awe at the natural world and reasoned their way from doubt back to faith.

Recently, however, I read Calvin's Swiss predecessor Zwingli's lengthy essay on the providence of God. It discussed God's radical presence in nature in terms so similar to Calvin that I wondered if Calvin borrowed from him. Zwingli's purpose, however, was not to support faith but to support the doctrine of predestination. That God was actively guiding every particle of the universe at all times supported the notion of his unfathomable decrees of salvation for the elect. Hence, Calvinism's Transcendentalistic view of the Spirit in nature had its original rationale in the darkest part of Calvinist theology.

Constance asks about *Laudato Si'*, the first papal encyclical on the environment, which Pope Francis (who deliberately chose this name for its environmentalist connotations) released to great acclaim in 2015. Like so many other faith traditions, Catholicism is optimistic about humans' ability to achieve salvation, offering many aids to faith, and is accommodated to the world. Without the support of rulers and states, it could hardly have erected the impressive structures that grace the landscape wherever Catholicism has been the state religion. *Laudato Si'* has no real political implications but recommends only that environmental values be taught by parents, churches, and schools. As I discuss in Chapter 7 about Baptists, this individualist, bottom-up model of environmentalism has few successes to show. To maximize effectiveness, an environmental ethic must be married to politics.

Kip feels I have kept too close to the old standard narrative of religious history which centers on the Puritan tradition. *Inherit the Holy Mountain* is a study of the leading figures in environmentalism, the vast majority of whom, until about 50 years ago, came out of the Puritan and Calvinist traditions. Since this is counterintuitive and contrary the dominant historiography, it demands explanation and justifies the focus.

The last two chapters explore the influence of other traditions. Those that I did not find influential I neglected. Kip points out the lack of attention to Swedenborgians, Unitarians, Theosophy, Spiritualism, and other such movements. The argument of the book is the centrality of religious upbringing, which leaves patterns no amount of adult spiritual wandering can erase. Most of these groups emerged out of the Puritan tradition, which left its mark for a couple generations. (You can take the boy out of Calvinism, but you can't take the Calvinism out of the boy.) Chapters 4 and 5 look closely at how values survive the death of the theology that gave them birth, with a strong elective affinity for some sort of spiritual relation to nature, rather than for atheism. I trace the spiritual development of Muir and his friend William Keith to set up a paradigm, which Henry Wallace for one follows closely. I give some space to explaining why people born into the Swedenborgian, Unitarian, Quaker, and other traditions are unexpectedly absent from environmental leadership.

The striking exception to the Reformed Protestant connection is the wilderness movement, as Lisa notes. No founder of the Wilderness Society in 1935 or Earth First! in 1980 was raised in a Reformed Protestant church. None framed wilderness in the Reformed moralistic way and few argued for wilderness primarily for as a spiritual resource. But if it's diversity you seek, you'll find it here. There are Jews, Catholics, Methodists, and a few others in profusion. (There's also Aldo Leopold, who, if he could be categorized, was culturally but never religiously Lutheran). From such diverse origins, wilderness advocacy had to be secular first, with no moral center. Many people today, of course, regard wilderness as a spiritual resource, but historically that's not what the movement has been all about. See, for example, Paul Sutter's *Driven Wild* (2002) on the origins of the Wilderness Society, which neglects religion and spirituality.

Mark Fiege's very complimentary review ends with questions about the grimmer aspects of American history, specifically regarding Indians and racial matters. I take his point to be that I paid little attention to concerns in recent historiography about conservation, parks, and environmentalism as elite enterprises that ignored the desires of the poor and marginal, as in the works of Mark Spence, Karl Jacoby, and others. Their valuable work has shone light on the darker corners of environmental history. For my part, I do not blame elites for doing what elites can do better than the powerless. I give them credit for acting for their view of the common good, often in opposition to others of their class. They clearly had their blind spots. But they used their influence in society to leave a priceless legacy of city, state, and national parks, national forests, and wilderness areas, all for public benefit and not private profit. If these had never been created, can we really believe that the poor and marginal would have done better at the hands of the wealthy and the corporations who wanted those areas for private purposes?

Moreover, one could easily argue that the American liberal tradition (and not just parks and conservation) was born of Puritanism. Despite King Philip's War, which was less "fomented" than exploded from accumulated grievances, the history of Indian-colonist relations in New England compares very favorably with the other English colonies. Today there are more Indian reservations in the small former Puritan colonies than all the large former plantation colonies together, where extermination and removal was widely practiced. Add western New York, with its heavy New England settlement, and the region contains more reservations than all the former slave South. (Quaker Pennsylvania has none at all.)

Later, it was Congregational missionaries who took resistance to Jackson's Indian removal all the way to the Supreme Court. Helen Hunt Jackson, author of *A Century of Dishonor*, was daughter of a Calvinist Congregational minister. Abolitionists were often Congregationalist (among many Quakers and Unitarians), from Arthur Tappan to Wendell Phillips to Harriet Beecher Stow. The same holds true for the woman's rights movement. Congregational ministers created the Social Gospel. The United Presbyterian Church, the little Presbyterian denomination from which many environmental figures emerged (Muir, Carson, and several others) combined Calvinist orthodoxy with abolitionism and a liberal social ethic. Six-time Socialist presidential candidate Norman Thomas was a Presbyterian minister. Every church has its scoundrels, but excepting Southern white churches in "cultural captivity," all of which supported slavery and segregation, Reformed churches as a group look pretty good on social issues.

Inherit the Holy Mountain concludes with some meditations on what the passing of Congregationalism's and Presbyterianism's historical moment means for contemporary environmentalism. The movement has been operating for the first time without the leadership of the heirs of Oliver Cromwell and John Knox. Politically, it is weaker than it has ever been while the crises we face grow ever more insistent. Corporate economic and political power have grown immensely.

Two years later, *Laudato Si'* is practically forgotten. It's very easy to grow discouraged.

About the Contributors

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