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Environmentalism as Religion

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Environmentalism as Religion

by [Joe Escobar](#) – Friday, May 20, 2016, 9:17 PM

This thread is for discussions on the Environmentalism as Religion topic.
To make your POSTS, click the reply link in this, MY post. To reply to another student's post, be sure to click the reply link within in THEIR post.

IMPORTANT – SUBJECT LINES

BE SURE to use an informative subject line for your post, something that describes which question(s) you are addressing . Do NOT simply leave it RE: Environmentalism as Religion

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Re: Environmentalism as Religion

by [Barry Peiskee](#) – Monday, May 23, 2016, 6:05 PM

First off I would like to say the commercial was pretty entertaining. The mans response about the light bulbs being so casual and it leading to an arrest was pretty entertaining, as well as the man pouring out water because it was being contained by plastics. Well done.

I would like to hope education would be the resolution, as legislation would easily lead to prosecution, assuming the laws would be enforced. I imagine a world with cameras at trash stations, much like ATM's today, catching harden criminals tossing something into the wrong bin. As a society, we have litter laws, as well as signs describing the type of punishment you can receive for doing so. It would seem we've already agreed on having a clean world is a better world.

The parallel of religion and environmentalism is neat to look at, and my favorite parallel is proselytizing. Personally, i'm not educated on statistics in how efficient recycling is, or if my carbon foot print would be the straw breaking the camels back, but in this ignorance I would assume current energy systems we use would be a much larger detriment. I however would like to advocate for carpooling, as it reduces the traffic I must go through in order to get from point A to point B.

Perhaps we could "heat up" the cold war by announcing nuclear power as a primary source of energy, to save the earth of course.

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2

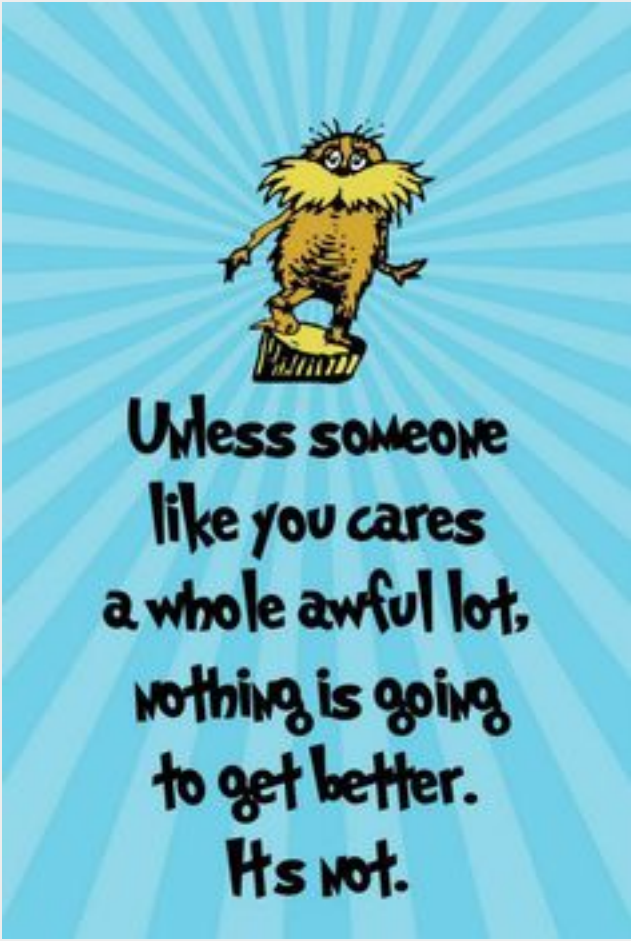
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Educating children about sustaining the world we live

by [Chloe Duryea](#) – Monday, May 23, 2016, 7:41 PM

I believe that we need to be educated about our environment starting when we are young because it is important to protect the health of our world that we live in. This can be done in a peaceful way, unlike how the commercial shows the police being forceful. I think there should be more activities done in elementary school that teach young children about sustaining our world for the future generations. Sustaining our environments should not have to be forced, it should be a natural thing that everyone wants to do. Why would someone want to hurt and destroy the beautiful planet that we live on? Therefore, we need to be educated at a young age that the choices we make will have an impact on our world.



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Re: Educating children about sustaining the world we live

by [Emily Phan](#) – Friday, May 27, 2016, 6:37 PM

In the article the teacher posted, the author showed how environmentalism pretty much qualifies as a religion. It has certain beliefs, they revere the earth, there are food taboos, and a sacred day... If environmentalism was pushed even more heavily in the public school system this would qualify as teaching a religion in the schools. I am sure many of the same people pushing for environmentalism to be taught in the schools would say that any sort of religion in the school system is a breach of the church and state taboo we have created. Perhaps you say it isn't a religion. How do you define religion and how does environmentalism not qualify?

Also look what has been done already in the name of the earth and environmentalism! In the Portland area public school teachers are not allowed to use textbooks that even hint that climate change isn't the big deal the media is always screaming about. Is this a step towards more awareness and knowledge, or simply forcing a single viewpoint on students? This is an example of environmentalism being taught in the public schools. When a child comes back from kindergarten do you want them talking about how they are learning to read or the newest political agenda Washington has dug up.

All this to say, perhaps this could be decided in a state by state basis or even better,

If you want your kid to know all about environmentalism, teach them yourself.

Private school is also a good option. Not everyone finds environmentalism a topic that the young need to be worrying about. When the government decides to put a party's political agenda into a school system, people complain.

Schools were made to help create intelligent people who could make the U.S. greater, not to be the means by which the government controls and manipulates the views of the people.

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Re: Educating children about sustaining the world we live

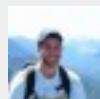


by [Ethan Borsak](#) – Saturday, May 28, 2016, 8:40 PM

I think education is highly important to environmental issues, and not only for children, but adults as well. The author was saying you *could* portray environmentalism as a religion, not that it is one without a doubt. I think similar arguments could be made for interpreting other fields, like Economics or Sports to name a few, as religions as well. Saying they shouldn't be taught in schools ignores the concept of learning about them to try to understand them better. I think we absolutely could learn about environmentalism in schools, without pushing it as a hard doctrine, in just the same way we learn about any other subject. Why not learn about the radical factions, and the moderate sides to the issues, and keep the conversation going?

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Re: Radical Environmentalism

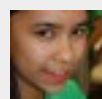
by [Ethan Borsak](#) – Monday, May 23, 2016, 7:53 PM

I think if we accept this position of environmentalism as a religion, then to me it's unlikely to be "resolved" through education, legislation, or prosecution. That isn't to say that much can't be achieved through those methods, but that I'm doubtful there won't be discord for many years going forward. I find Mr. Rubin correct about a few points, and off on several others. As one example, his anger regarding recycling and recycling bins. Really? Having different garbage cans is such a problem for you, Mr. Rubin? Saying we have "shrines to garbage" also seemed like a stretch.

As a general thesis, I would absolutely agree that environmentalism is close to a religious belief system in many ways. The tone I get from Rubin, however, is bitter & sarcastic regarding environmentalism. If you follow his environmentalism as religion position, I think his (seeming) scorn at the movement is with a more radical element, one far on the end of the scale we've been returning to all quarter. To me, he misguidedly paints all "environmentalists" with this brush. Is there not some middle ground? Do I want to blow up an oil refinery? Of course not. Do I think eating food grown/produced closer to where I live, rather than the other side of the globe is beneficial, yes I do. That being said, I think there absolutely are highly fanatical/radical people & groups under the "Environmentalism" banner, just as exist in many religions. Unfortunately, the extreme measures preached by these radical factions can cast a shadow over the rest of the cause, opening it up to derision, misunderstanding, and outrage by those in the opposing camp. Sure sounds like a religion to me.

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Re: Radical Environmentalism

by [Emily Phan](#) – Friday, May 27, 2016, 5:55 PM

I think Mr. Rubin's objection to using different garbage cans isn't because it is difficult to use different garbage cans but that the fact that people try and force us to recycle. In the Seattle area there is a newish rule that you have to compost. Now it is a good idea to put food in the compost or to recycle but we don't want to be forced to do so by rules and fines.

I believe Mr. Rubin is angry about recycling because people obsess over it. When I am constantly told to do something I get quite annoyed and my desire to do this thing goes down to about 1%.

Also realize, though some people find being green super important, others find topics such as kids who are taking drugs, or abortion, way more important. When they see others obsessing over things like recycling they can get mad. They see so much time and money put into what they see as a more minor issue in our society.

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(thing I don't like) is just some new religion

by [Theodore Pratten](#) – Monday, May 23, 2016, 11:50 PM

Although I think it is a good thing to step back and rationally analyze ideologies and political movements, the author of the WSJ article overstates things. More than anything, he seems to be annoyed by recycle bins.

Environmentalism may be annoying and hypocritical at times, but that doesn't mean what they are saying isn't true most of the time. The author obviously sees himself as a man of science, but there is nothing in the article that debunks environmentalism or green politics. The proof he offers up that environmentalism functions as a religion are a few analogies between traditional religious behavior and actions of environmentalists (certain rituals, taboos, etc.).

The author is a professor of economics. I wonder if he would object if [people started asking if economics is a religion?](#)

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Re: (thing I don't like) is just some new religion

by [Emily Phan](#) – Friday, May 27, 2016, 5:58 PM

This author wasn't trying to scientifically prove that environmentalism or it's politics was bad, he was simply trying to show how it could qualify as a religion.

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Re: (thing I don't like) is just some new religion

by [Theodore Pratten](#) – Saturday, May 28, 2016, 6:24 PM

Branding something as a religion is a way to denigrate it as irrational or not based on scientific evidence. The author is a professed skeptic, not a neutral observer: "Environmentalism is a proselytizing religion. Skeptics are not merely people unconvinced by the evidence: They are treated as evil sinners. I probably would not write this article if I did not have tenure."

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Informing vs. forcing

by [Chloe Duryea](#) – Tuesday, May 24, 2016, 9:30 PM

The commercial was comical and made some good points. However, I do not believe that “green police” are the way we should go about saving the environment. I do not think that it would make people truly care about making better choices, however, educating them on their choices would. Many people are not educated on the simple actions they can make to start and have a positive impact on our environment. For example, students that were in a sustainability class at the University of Oregon stood by the trash/recycling bins and simply observed where people put their cans and whatnot when they were done with them. Many people did not take the time to put their bottles, cans, etc. in the correct bin. Whenever someone put their items in the wrong bin, the students informed them about their choices. Whether they did it out of carelessness or because they were not educated on what items could go in each bin, I believe scenarios like these are small steps towards getting people educated about the choices they are making. (I witnessed this study because I am dual enrolling at the University)

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Re: Informing vs. forcing

by [Brooke Moriarty](#) – Saturday, May 28, 2016, 1:27 PM

I agree with you, that the better way to create changes is through education, however, the main problem with that method is it takes more time. A lot more. People are such creatures of habit and it takes more effort to change their habits. The most effective way to create change through education is to start with children, to teach them this new information so that they grow up knowing already, and as they grow up and become adults, they replace the ones who still behave in the "old ways." As more and more people take a serious look at their actions concerning the environment like which trash to use, it slowly becomes a social expectation and puts pressure on people to conform to it once that behavior takes hold of a majority.

Doing it this way, starting with younger kids, would work, but it would take years and years. I think this is a method that is actually taking place now, you can see it in colleges as some of the first generation that were exposed to this "global warming" education movement are graduating from high school.

**Don't force me**by [Emily Phan](#) – Wednesday, May 25, 2016, 6:32 PM

For me personally when ways are found to make green products more attractive then I shall not object to using these products. If the light bulbs sold now were as nice looking and turned on as readily and were a good price, then I wouldn't want to use incandescent light bulbs. But forcing me to use "green" products makes me dislike them. Cloth shopping bags are a good idea but when I am forced to use one or get charged, I feel insulted. I ought to make petty decisions of this type on my own and not have the hand of government forcing me to be good.

**Re: Don't force me**by [Ethan Borsak](#) – Thursday, May 26, 2016, 12:21 AM

To me, Emily's point with the forced switch in our light bulbs & grocery bags is a good example of a more localized version of the States vs Federal debate. With many issues, we want a more local reflection of how our area feels. In the specific case of plastic bags, it's become a city issue, not county/state/or national. It was voted into law by the City Council of Eugene, which ideally reflects the local interests fairly accurately. At some point, in a democracy, if the majority deems it so, don't we have to respect that decision, like it or not? For the record, it's a tough question, and I'm not sure I can answer that outside of a case-by-case basis. But when does the scale grow small enough where we feel comfortable having someone else make a decision for us in our "best interest", that we may not agree with, or take issue with? I don't really have a problem banning plastic bags, but I get the larger concern.

I have some issues, as Emily does, with the new-style light bulbs (CFL, LED, magnetic induction), but at least the supposed long-term financial savings make that an easier pill to swallow. Sure, it may not add up to much, but it's an additional benefit to point to, beyond the nebulous public health issue. In a different way, it kind made me think a bit of the Montgomery Bus Boycott, where the local officials were motivated not by a sense of right or wrong, but by the money. Perhaps mandatory recycling programs can be made more

appealing through financial incentives, and lessen the sting of forced policy decisions. Sure, people don't like being told what to do, but as we've seen, the promise of some money can ease concerns.

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Inaccuracies in Wall Street Journal article

by [David Huard](#) – Friday, May 27, 2016, 8:20 PM

"Recycling paper to save trees, for example, makes no sense since the effect will be to reduce the number of trees planted in the long run."

Planting less trees is not a negative if less trees are being cut down. Also, most forests in America are already hopelessly overgrown due to overzealous forest fire suppression in the last century, so forested areas already have too many trees.

“...environmentalists almost universally believe in the dangers of global warming but also reject the best solution to the problem, which is nuclear power. These two beliefs co-exist based on faith, not reason.”

People who are opposed to nuclear power for environmental reasons are concerned about nuclear waste, which is a long-term concern. This should be obvious to anyone who knows how nuclear power works.

“There are no temples, but there are sacred structures. As I walk around the Emory campus, I am continually confronted with recycling bins, and instead of one trash can I am faced with several for different sorts of trash.”

Recycling bins are not sacred structures, they are utilitarian. It's deeply concerning that someone who lacks the mental capacity to realize this writes for the Wall Street Journal.

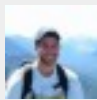
"Skeptics are not merely people unconvinced by the evidence: They are treated as evil sinners."

Skeptics are viewed negatively because environmentalists believe that the evidence proves that their behavior is harmful. If this makes environmentalism a religion then every philosophy and criminal justice system that has negative consequences for breaking rules is a religion.

In conclusion, this article is a fascinating journey into doublespeak and idiocy. I honestly can't tell if it's conservative or liberal, because it seems to be saying that both environmentalism and religion are bad.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Inaccuracies in Wall Street Journal article

by [Ethan Borsak](#) – Saturday, May 28, 2016, 12:52 PM

Great dissection of that piece by David, you definitely pointed out some issues with Mr. Rubin's positions. I would point out that it is an op-ed, and perhaps more reflective of the author's opinions, rather than a piece of hard journalism. That being said, I think you pointed out some positions he takes that, if not simply wrong, could be debated. Again, he just sounded a bit petty to me, and looking to criticize the Environmental movement. At the end, he just casually tosses in a First Amendment reference, without really expanding on that point, or at least showing examples. Wasn't his article in a major newspaper an example of 1st Amendment rights? I think there are ways to debate the more extreme parts of the Environmental movement without writing the whole thing off. Rhetoric doesn't help the conversation regarding environmentalism, and is one reason why I think even if there is legislation either way; people are pretty firmly entrenched in their views, and will be hard to sway. If people want to equate Environmentalism to a religion, which I can understand, does that make it a negative or a positive thing? And, given many people's belief that God created Earth, cannot religion to an extent incorporate environmentalism?



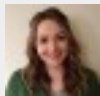
Greenists

by Christopher Burton - Friday, May 27, 2016, 8:30 PM

I feel that some of the statements made by Mr. Rubin are a bit far stretching. Although there may be some people that might feel the way he describes greenist. To me it's a bit like claiming that being a Jedi is your religion.

Can these types of conflicts be resolved? Of course, as with all most everything it takes time. It will most likely take some legislation and, mostly I feel, education. It will also take an overhaul of our current infrastructure. I see a lot of people, schools and other personal and government owned establishments that are putting enormous time any money into electric cars. In reality our storage of power in batteries is absolutely terrible. It's nice to have batteries for ever day life, and as far as I know there isn't a better way of storing electricity for phones, remotes, cameras,...ext, however we do have other ways of doing this with vehicles. Hydrogen cars can do that. The problem with electricity is that our current ways of producing it aren't that great. For the most part, combustion is only 50% efficient. On top of that batteries, depending on the type, range from around 50%- 90% efficiency. 90% doesn't seem that bad until you realize that it's only 90% of 50% of the original amount. I believe natural gas combustion may be up to 60% efficient.

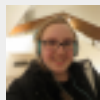
It just seems silly to me to treat something that inefficient as a religion. Believe in God or don't. You can't prove either way fine, but you sure can say that about electric cars, because we have and continue to "scientifically" test them.



Re: Greenist

by Chloe Duryea - Friday, May 27, 2016, 9:20 PM

I also feel that certain statements that Mr. Rubin made were a bit stretched. I agree completely that claiming that environmentalism is a religion is like claiming being a Jedi is a religion. I just personally find it kind of silly. However, I am not saying that I do not think that caring about our environment is not important, I just do not agree that it can be considered a religion. The claims Rubin made about environmentalism being a religion were just too far stretched for me.



Re: Environmentalism as Religion

by Miranda Metzger - Friday, May 27, 2016, 10:40 PM

It reminds me of the smoking point. If we compare it to smoking in the idea that its harming ourselves and the atmosphere, fishes etc. Then it's kinda the same we must stop the smokers who are ruining our lives or whatever and being filthy in public so lets put restrictions and laws around where they can be so that they are forced to either not smoke or be inconvenience. I feel like thats the direction we are heading with Environmentalism 50 different types of recycling bins but yet only one trash can, "While people have worshipped many things, we may be the first to build shrines to garbage." We're not going to sell bottled water but we are going to sell 75 different types of bottle sodas and fruit juices, which are worse for you, but hey! at least we're not using a plastic water bottle.

Eventually I think the Environmentalism will slowly be brainwashed into our society and there won't be as big of a struggle kind of like smoking which has gone down in it's over the years. I don't think it will ever go so far as prosecution but I don't know there are those no littering signs or face a fine maybe jail time will be down the road.

I suppose this is a bit contrary to the article but I feel like this environmental religion or attitude has kind of always been there in our culture or at least in this survey especially when it comes to our expression of conservation when it came to the war effort. We collected scrap metal, bottle caps, we were not supposed to consume sugar and the frills of life were kind of taken away. I understand it's a difference but I think that mindset of conserving has started from the great depression even of a "save anything and everything because you might need it some day."

I think the article was smart with it's layout of kind "What makes a Religion" and the points that this Environmentalism religion falls under that. I think its a little dramatized because again I think it's something that we have gone through for years and that there will always be something to fuss over when it comes to the environment or conserving. I don't know... I agree with the article but I also feel like it was a bit dramatic I grew up recycling and with my mom watching over us just in case we threw any small scrap piece of paper away that we could have recycled but it has never become a religion but it was stressed in her family from her parents and so the (RE)cycle goes on.

I think as the population with that mind set grows so too will the passion for Environmentalism grow and who knows what might happen when a lot of people get behind a certain movement. With faith as small as a mustard seed...

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Re: Environmentalism as Religion

by [Bryden Hastey](#) – Saturday, May 28, 2016, 11:11 PM

First thing that I want to say is Yes! This reminds me very much of the smoking scenario especially in the way that I always feel bad when someone sees me throw something away that could have been recycled. With that being said I feel that environmentalism is already a huge part of our society, at least in Oregon. All of the schools that I have been to and all of the places that I have worked have always tried to be as green as they could. Being green saves you money so who wouldn't want to do that? Not to mention the history that the United States has with being environmentally aware. I believe it is even a tax right off. Look at all of the programs that we have in place like the highway clean up that has been around since 1989. Also I don't know about you but I have never heard a bad thing about Yellow Stone or any of our national parks.

People love doing things that make them feel good, and preserving our environment is something that helps people feel optimistic about the future in addition to what there grandchildren will have to deal with. Just like with WWII nobody wants their children to know what could have been if things didn't fall in our favor. I suppose it could be said that this might be the one thing that unites all of us. I say this because it is hard to think of any one race or religion that doesn't care about the future of this planet. In that way I think that maybe being environmentally aware might be better then a religion. However I am not saying start composting and biking everywhere you go, but simply recycle every now and then, to look out for those who come after us.

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Strength of religious belief changing interpretation of materials.

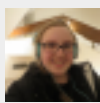
by [Bryden Hastey](#) – Friday, May 27, 2016, 11:20 PM

I do not have strong religious beliefs. I feel that the word "religion" is irrelevant and just hearing it gets people worked up. In my experience using the word religion will instantly close down a persons mind and they wont hear what you are trying to say. Beliefs are beliefs. I simply try to observe as much as I can, and then learn from it. When reading about this I could see the connections with what they had been saying in regards to Darwin in the schools. For example when mentioned what should or shouldn't be taught in schools it led me to think about one of my high school science classes. The teacher was going over global climate change and gave us the studies and charts to support the idea that global climate change exists. However there were still a few kids in the class that simply didn't want to hear it, and that bothered the teacher. Still later that week the teacher went over any and all things that could possibly help with global warming and the kids that wanted to help would go home and tell their parents all the things that they should start doing and they would do every last one of them. But you still go home and talk with the head of the household and if they say no then you don't. If they don't want to take the time then you probably wont. For me I find that when it comes to a belief being taught in school like recycling and doing all that you can for the environment kids will always go and ask there parent first, whether it is in regards to Darwin or recycling paper.

Sum of ratings:2 (1)

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Re: Strength of religious belief changing interpretation of materials.



by [Miranda Metzger](#) – Saturday, May 28, 2016, 10:46 PM

I agree that the use of Religion is a terrible way to start off any conversation just going to close all the ears around you. I think the author was using Environmentalism as a religion to almost bash it as a thing because of that reason of religion having an almost obsessive and bad connotation. He knows he will get the religious people to back his argument when he says that because he knows that if he labels it as a religion people will get all frustrated with it.

I like what you said people are going to believe what they believe in and all you can do is present them with all of the information and see what they do.

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Practice vs Belief
by [Brooke Moriarty](#) – Saturday, May 28, 2016, 12:32 PM

Well, that was a silly commercial. It was funny, because the first thing I thought when I was watching it was, "Hey, the progressives are back. Oh, wait, wrong half of term."

I have to say, considering environmentalism as being a religion is fascinating, and now I'm going to drag in some of my religion knowledge from last term. Overall, environmentalism is a religion from an eastern religion perspective. In western civilizations, like Europe and the U.S., religions are belief based. It's all about what you have faith in, the things that you think are true, whether it's physical or not. When you jump to eastern religions that are dominant in Asia, like Buddhism and Confucianism, the focus isn't on what you believe, but what you do. These religions are practice based, they are made up like guides on how to live one's life. It's all about what you do everyday, like if you follow Buddhism, you may chose to be vegetarian to practice "reverence for life."

In this eastern sense of religion, environmentalism is very much qualified as one.

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