

HST 203: History of the United States Sp17 (Escobar Meta 41054 41053)

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Forum 4

Environmentalism as Religion

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Environmentalism as Religion

by Joe Escobar - Saturday, May 27, 2017, 12:18 AM

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 issues: Will they ever end?

by Katie Fuller - Saturday, May 27, 2017, 6:12 PM

I don't see the issue of conflict between those in environmentalism and those against or suggesting a source that the environmentalists disagree with, as in the case of nuclear power as an alternate source, will ever completely end as people still have concerns and grudges against nuclear power, or simply oppose or are against environmentalism as it is, in a sense, an expanding religion that some may disagree with. When it comes to trees, people may argue that recycling is senseless, as it would reduce the amount of trees planted since we use trees to produce paper (Paul H. Rubin article). And when it comes to solutions for people to be more environmentally friendly, I think that

these solutions will always be a little of both: people will try to set up sites to recycle, or state the harm that materials such as plastic, and styrofoam does to the environment, but that the government will also become involved to set out laws or fines against their use.

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My views of Environmentalism and Paul H. Rubin's claims

by Katie Fuller - Saturday, May 27, 2017, 6:13 PM

The article done by Paul H. Rubin is surprisingly accurate at describing environmentalism as a religion, as people can refer to themselves as being green, the celebration of Earth Day, their beliefs of global warming and the structures built for recycling as "sacred" which is a very interesting viewpoint and though I agree there are some aspects towards religion, I do not think that all environmentalism should be paired to this mindset. Essentially, what environmentalism focuses on is the conserving of waste and improvement of life on earth, which though has some relations to religion, is mostly to encourage people to consider what they throw away and where it goes, in a sense.

The images below show mostly towards an extreme sense of what I considered to be environmentalism, as a sign says "save the planet kill yourself", which seems very far left as it claims that to help earth, there should be less people harming the environment, or even in general. Most of these (Green Bible, Christian Environmentalism and Environmentalism as Religion, primarily) support Rubin's tying environmentalism to religion, as these books bring the concept of the christian religion together with the need of environment.

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Recycling Worth It?

by Cameron Wray - Sunday, May 28, 2017, 4:21 PM

I thought the commercial was pretty funny and after thinking more about it I thought that it could be a realistic depiction of where we end up, maybe not too literal of an interpretation but a similar one. I thought the end scene with the police really sold the idea of environmentalism as a religion because it represented the environmentalism as a separate entity from government. The article by Paul Rubin brought up some very great points that I never thought of about how environmentalism has become a religion but I did think some things were a bit of a stretch specifically how recycling bins are like churches. I for one don't draw that parallel each time I pass by one but maybe I'm not thinking of it in the same context as he is. The article had me curious because I remember hearing once that recycling wasn't worth the effort and ended up hurting the environment in some ways so I tried to research if recycling was worth it. The results weren't very convincing, with most of the articles leaning towards recycling as not being worth it but I believe that comes from how my question was phrased. I believe for these conflicts to ever be resolved we would need a definitive answer.

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Re: Recycling Worth It?

by Kate Weiss - Saturday, June 3, 2017, 9:29 PM

Yes, recycling is worth it! It takes much less energy to make paper, aluminum, plastic, and glass from recycled materials than it does extracting raw materials. According to a study by environmental consultant Jeffrey Morris, "aluminum requires 96 percent less energy to make from recycled cans, recycled glass uses only about 21 percent less energy, recycled plastic bottles use 76 percent less energy, and newsprint about 45 percent less" (PopMech article). Environmentally, there is no question that recycling is a good thing. The real controversy lies on the economic side since it is slightly more expensive to run a recycling plant than it does dumping or burning the load. There have also been cases where cities aren't equipped enough to handle large amounts of recycling, so they end up dumping it instead, which is a total bummer.

<http://www.popularmechanics.com/science/environment/a3752/4291566/>

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2



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Re: Environmentalism as Religion - conflicts and solutions

by Giselle Flores - Sunday, May 28, 2017, 8:23 PM

I do not think these conflicts can ever be resolved, especially not through persecution. People get persecuted all the time, yet there are still people out there doing the same thing, even though they know what the consequences can be. The study of events in our nations history in the post-WWII era has informed me by showing me how all of these events led us to where we are today. Sadly, I truly don't think that solutions can be enacted peacefully. They would most definitely be coercive and punitively like shown in the commercial by the "green police". Also, even if it were to be a law, there's still a matter of how many police would actually enforce it. Like we've talked about in class, there is rarely anyone that gets in trouble for texting and driving, even though it is illegal. If it were to be enforced though, it would definitely be in a pushy manner.

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2



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Shunning non-believers

by Abigail Gierut - Monday, May 29, 2017, 6:16 PM

I think this article has some good points and some not so good points. However, there was one particular point that stood out to me and rang true in a way. In the article Mr. Rubin lists some ways that environmentalism can be seen as a religious practice. In the very last point he says "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" (Mr. Rubin article, 6th point, page 3). When I was reading this article I was having a hard time understanding where the writer was coming from and not quite understanding how someone could relate environmentalism to religion. As a read this last point, it was like a light bulb going off in my head and it finally clicked with me. The way that non-believers (people who don't recycle, don't believe in global warming,, etc) are treated is so similar to how non-believers in relation to a religion are treated. Those who do not practice environmentalism are shunned and outcast and in some cases publicly humiliated. I have personally experienced this when I moved from a Midwestern rural town with no care for recycling to Oregon, where environmentalism is almost a statewide practice. I moved here while I was still in highschool and the high school that I attended had recycling bins around

every corner. Prior to moving here I had no experience with recycling and as you can imagine had no idea what I was doing. I either never remembered to throw away stuff in the recycling bin or I couldn't even figure out which bin to put each item in. And to my shock, when I made some friends and was invited to their homes I found out that people practice recycling in their homes as well! I quickly learned that if I threw away something that could be recycled in the trash bin that people would be outraged and I would be treated like an uneducated heathen and lectured on the importance of recycling and going "green". This is exactly how people can be treated if they don't practice a certain religion. Growing up in my intensely Christian family, if I brought a friend over and didn't have a talk with them prior to entering my house, they would experience the same exact thing. For example if someone were to start eating before saying a prayer over the food, or at least closing their eyes and holding hands across the table in respect, my family would be outraged and I probably wouldn't be able to have them over again without them receiving a long talk with my parents about religion. In this sense I think that environmentalism CAN be seen as similar to a religion. The only reasoning holding this argument back is that this can be said about any large practice or opinion: vegetarian vs. meat eater, democrat vs. republican, black lives matter vs. all lives matter, Xbox vs. Playstation, pineapple pizza eaters vs. non-pineapple pizza eaters... the list could go on and on.



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Re: Save the Salmon please

by Jason Pickens - Monday, May 29, 2017, 10:36 PM

Can solutions be enacted peacefully/voluntarily, or will it end up being done coercively/punitively, as was done to the plastic, incandescent bulb, and styrofoam users depicted in the commercial?

I am starting to believe that solutions will have to come coercively/punitively. I see this to be the case, as I see certain issues here in the Pacific Northwest have laws and regulations connected to them. This is especially true with two certain subjects that will raise a lot of emotions with us here. 1) wild Salmon and Steelhead 2)Logging of old growth forests such as the Elliott State forest in Southwest Oregon. Many regulations had to be put in place to protect the environment because of excessive logging. For example, too much logging contributed to poor water quality for salmon hatchlings nearly ending Salmon runs in certain rivers in Oregon.

Laws had to be enacted to protect our other natural resources here in Oregon. I think it is good that we have protected the environment by placing more strict laws on our logging companies while not putting people out of jobs. I am a believer that if no regulations are put in place, people will not always do the right thing.

-Jason P.

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Re: Save the Salmon please

by Katie Fuller - Tuesday, May 30, 2017, 9:00 PM

I agree with you, people don't always do the right thing. That's why enforcement for laws is taken up, but I wonder how much would actually be put into helping the environment, and considering how far in debt this country is, if the nation is willing to pay for that. But yes, there are some laws that helped preserve our land, as the National Parks and instituting of EPA and against the excess use of certain pesticides on agriculture during Nixon's time.

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Re: Save the Salmon please

by Katie Fuller - Tuesday, May 30, 2017, 9:03 PM

Also, there is the new Green Party and pro environmentalist candidates that are seen as a Third Party today, which not only shows the rising importance of the environment that people are now noticing or looking more into, that also shows the progression of this concept of helping to save the planet and "going Green". And, if this were really to be considered like a religion, wouldn't that make this party a religious party that people could vote for? Just an interesting thought.

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Church is just a trashcan?

by Jordan Okoniewski - Monday, May 29, 2017, 11:32 PM

It's very popular these days to pronounce things as "the next religion." I've seen articles describing Harry Potter that way, the Jedi belief system from Star Wars, and now, thanks to Prof Paul Rubin and the Wall Street Journal - environmentalism. This article is completely ridiculous, to the degree where I'm not entirely convinced it's not satire (though I get that it's lighthearted and kind of humorous). Environmentalism is simply not a religion though. For starters- who do you know that follows two religions? I'm don't mean "My mom was Baptist and my dad was Presbyterian so I'm kind of in the middle." I'm talking "I'm both a Christian AND a Hindu, and I believe whole heartedly in both things." I've never seen that before, but it is completely possible to be a staunch environmentalist and devoutly religious (I'm often surprised more Christians aren't environmentalists - the Bible already has a precedent for sea levels rising disastrously). Second of all, what are these environmental "creation stories" he alludes to when discussing the "eerie similarities?" The Big Bang? Evolution? Those are

really just basic scientific theories, and doesn't really have anything to do with environmentalism (other than the fact that it's also almost ubiquitously accepted in the scientific community). The third thing I'll bring up here is that he compares churches to trash cans, based on the fact that there are lots of options. Does that mean fast food menus are churches too? What about an aisle of paint chips? Is that a church?

Rubin's argument is completely absurd, and more than anything I feel like it just stands so that he can stereotype environmentalists. I'm honestly kind of surprised he's not more understanding, as a lot of environmentalists I know think about their practices very economically - weighing the opportunity costs of doing what they believe is the right thing for our world. Maybe he should investigate that and leave journalism for the pros.

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Re: Church is just a trashcan?

by Jordan Okoniewski - Monday, May 29, 2017, 11:43 PM

That being said, there are some things he writes here that I, as an environmentalist, do agree with him on.

A) Nuclear power is a very clean energy source, that is statistically much safer than public perception makes it out to be. I'm still very down to work on still safer energy sources such as wind and solar, but the perceptions of nuclear power need to be addressed on a large scale.

B) Recycling isn't that effective. It's water and petroleum intensive, and it's a gain of highly diminishing returns. But it IS better than just landfilling aluminum and glass. Also, this isn't a secret, this is environmentalism 101. Remember the three R's? Reduce, Reuse, Recycle? The first two of these are easily the most important. Recycling is the one that just gets talked about the most because it's the easiest to do.

So there we go. I don't think he's an evil sinner. I just think Rubin had an interesting premise and kind of a weak argument. Or, as Marcello Truzzi used to say, "An extraordinary claim requires extraordinary proof."

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Environmentalism

by Kate Weiss - Monday, May 29, 2017, 11:44 PM

It would be far-fetched to think that these environmental conflicts would be completely resolved or eradicated because there is a big opposing party with considerable government influence denouncing environmentalist's claims. Small changes have been made, like the plastic bag ban and SF extra trash/recycling/compost separation rules (SF Gate article), both requiring local government intervention. In 1962 Rachel Carson wrote about the cancerous properties of DDT in her critically acclaimed book Silent Spring, which ultimately led to a ban on the chemical's use (textbook pg 807). Describing environmentalism as having religious undertones makes it easier to denounce their claims as unscientific and biased. I believe in being nice to the Earth, recycle, compost, don't use pesticides, and all that green stuff. I also

think the Audi commercial is hilarious and also effective because it's targeting an environmental-friendly, Silicon Valley male (notice how all the green police offenders were also male) demographic who want clean emission vehicles, without the rounded Prius look.

San Francisco mayor, Gavin Newsom, took the commercial a little personally though...



Gavin Newsom ✓
@GavinNewsom

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Ok .. That "green police" Audi commercial hits home..

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6:36 PM - 7 Feb 2010



40



1

<http://www.sfgate.com/green/article/S-F-OKs-toughest-recycling-law-in-U-S-3295664.php>

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Re: Environmentalism as Religion - point of view

by Giselle Flores - Thursday, June 1, 2017, 12:27 PM

Although this article brings up some good points, I don't think we should consider environmentalism a religion. The Merriam-Webster dictionary describes religion as, "The service and worship of God or the supernatural. The belief in and worship of God or Gods." I just do not see how there could be a God being worshiped in environmentalism. Personally, I think it's quite funny how anything these days can be seen as a "religion". Again, I don't see how this can be a religion, however, I do believe environmentalism is important. The best point they made in trying to make this seem as a religion is the fact that Earth day can be considered a holy day to environmentalists. My knowledge of religion through study and personal experience impacts my interpretation of this by knowing what an actual religion is, and this is not it, at least to me. The images do clarify the issue, but they just seem ridiculing and some people may even see them as offensive to their religion and beliefs.

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environmentalism and early exposure

by Bailey Koffler - Thursday, June 1, 2017, 11:56 PM

When I was young my parents would have us swim across rivers to collect the can floating downstream and if we were on a walk you better believe we had to pick up every little piece of garbage we saw. When we left our river spot my dad always said "We need to leave it better than we found it". It was our responsibility to respect the Earth and clean up after those who didn't. As I got older I thought it was strange that my friends weren't the same way. My friends would leave an empty coffee cup on the ground in order to free up a cupholder in their cars. I would trail behind them always picking up the gum wrappers they dropped on the ground.

This being said, I don't think my religious belief has anything to do with my feelings regarding the environmentalism materials provided. I think my feelings regarding environmentalism were integrated into my childhood, taking care of the environment was a must in my household, where it wasn't in others. Many of my friends have the same religious beliefs I do but don't feel the need to care for the environment.

I think that solutions could be enacted peacefully, for example LCC has diagrams on each garbage/recycle bin so people may be willing to recycle more if they know what items need to be recycled. When people voluntarily carry out solutions, it's most likely because they have been raised that way. I'm not sure authorities would "trust" people enough to make solutions voluntary, if they truly want to make a difference. Usually when a solution is being enforced they try to "convince" people to do it with some sort of punishment.

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Solutions to environmentalism: Coercive or Voluntary?

by Marco Leon-Cobian - Thursday, June 1, 2017, 11:57 PM

For many people of the younger generation who may abstain from traditional religious practices, environmentalism acts as a religion, meaning a system of beliefs and practices based on a higher moral philosophy. A major difficulty facing environmentalism is encouraging participation in those who may not be inclined or otherwise motivated to take part in the movement. The two primary ways to encourage participation in environmentalism are through voluntary action or through corrective action. The Green Police Audi commercial was a parody of the potential use of punishment as a way of enforcing principles of environmentalism. The green police shown in the commercial were using punishment as a way of correcting anti-environmentalist behaviors such as the use of plastic or Styrofoam. Although the commercial exaggerates the use of punitive measures, it still sends the important message of the effectiveness of using punishment as a motivator for participation in environmentalism. One example of a possible coercive technique for encouraging green practices is the charge of paper bags in grocery stores and the ban of plastic bags in Eugene. This policy was intended to encourage the use of reusable bags in grocery and reduce waste from plastic bags. Initially, when the exchange of plastic bags for reusable paper bags took place, some people did not know about the charge they had applied to them and therefore their participation was not necessarily voluntarily. Overtime, people started getting informed about the purpose of using reusable bags and therefore may have voluntarily changed their mindset about the real reason they were getting charged for single use bags. This example illustrates how at first coercive techniques may be needed to put pressure on people who are not informed or concerned about participating in going green practices. Later on, once they are informed about environmentalism they are more likely to voluntarily participate in environmentally friendly behavior.

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Re: Environmentalism as Religion

by Nick Coleman - Friday, June 2, 2017, 1:48 AM

I think many issues can be resolved by education. But the conflict between environmentalism resembling a religion is a tricky subject. I don't necessarily agree with everything Paul R. Ruben says in his essay, but I see where he is coming from. I don't agree that recycling is a "self-sacrificing ritual that is not particularly useful." I'm not an Environmentalist, but also don't agree with Ruben that their belief systems are "embraced with no logical basis" nor that nuclear power is the best solution to the issue of global warming. I'm not sure if this conflict of ideas can be resolved with education. He has a point that forcing these ideals down somebody's throat is religion like in a sense. I think I may have a bias, but I don't think it's too hard to think about the trash you are creating and throw it in a separate container. Sometimes legislation is what is inevitably the first step in making a change in practice. It forces people to realize that maybe there is a better way to do something other than what you are accustomed to. And if what somebody is doing is detrimental to your environment and therefore health, there should be things to prevent it. I think we live in a reckless society/generation and a few suggestions wouldn't hurt too bad.

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Can these conflicts be solved? And describing environmentalism as a religion.

by Katlyn Smelcer - Friday, June 2, 2017, 8:15 AM

I don't think these problems can ever be solved through education, legislation, or prosecution because I feel like most people are very opinionated when it comes to their religion especially if that religion traditionally runs in the family. I really don't know a whole lot on the subject of religion simply because my family has never been religious but in my opinion it's a way of life. So I don't see why environmentalism can't be a religion. I understand that scientists are uninterested in religion because they can't test it or "does not meet the basic criterion for science" (Paul H. Rubin, paragraph two). But just because religion has seemed to follow a certain pattern in the past doesn't mean there can't be a different kind of religion which is what they explain next in the article. "But scientists, particularly evolutionary psychologists, have identified another function of religion in addition to its function of explaining the world" (Paul H. Rubin, paragraph three). What I think the author is saying is that psychologists have found an older way of religion that involves evidence. In this way everyone has a tribe with their own gods and the evidence is basically whoever has the stronger tribe has the stronger god or gods. Makes sense to me. I also love in the article when the author is giving us connections to other religions and he uses this great example, "Belief systems are embraced with no logical basis. For example, environmentalists almost universally believe in the dangers of global warming but also reject the best solution to the problem, which is nuclear power" (bullet point four). For some reason it didn't seem like environmentalism could be illogical in any way so I love this example. As far as the images, I think the "Green, It's the New Red!" and "Environmentalism is recycled communism" ones are a little extreme but completely prove why environmentalism is being considered a religion.



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Science and Faith

by William Mc Mahon - Saturday, June 3, 2017, 11:36 AM

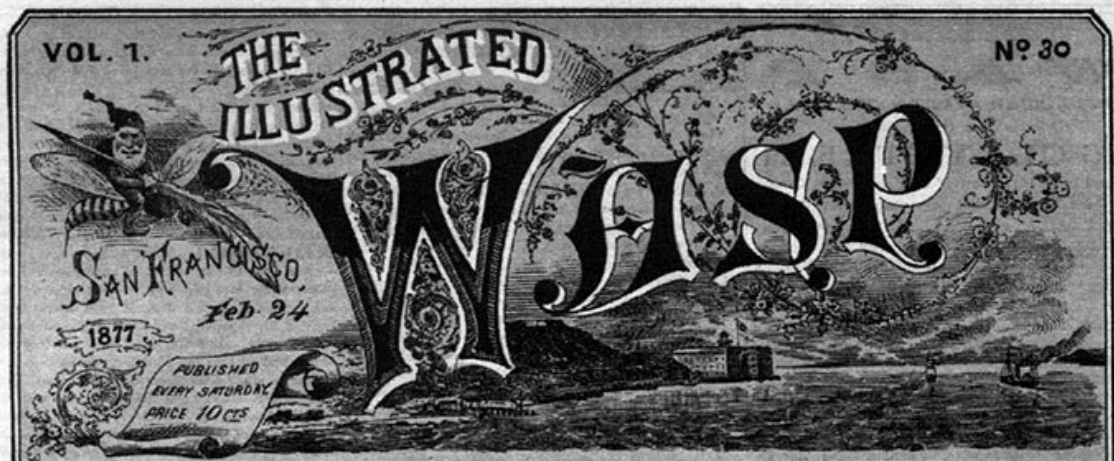
One of the ways in which Environmentalism is like a religion is that it requires faith on the part of the recipient.

There is a lot of science showing that human beings are affecting the health of the plane and yet, most people don't actually understand this science. I, personally, accept it as being true just because science says so but there is a problem with this. Science can, and has, been misused to propogate political issues.

During the 19th century scientists "proved" that African Americans were a different species than white people. This was done as a way of rationalizing slavery. Running on the heels of Darwin, they used science in an attempt to ease their consciounses reassuring themselves that African Americans were not only sub-human, but in their appropriate social standing living and working as slaves.

White people focused on exaggerated physical features (See Cartoon) and skin color as evidence of a seperation between species.

I'm not saying the science on climate change is wrong, but I do think it's worth noting that many of us just accept it without much critical thinking or research on our part.



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3



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Inaccuracy in describing enviromentalism as a religion

by Marco Leon-Cobian - Saturday, June 3, 2017, 4:52 PM

For some individuals and cultures, the role of religion seems to be filled by environmentalism and has become the “religion” of choice for urban non-believers. It came to me as a surprise that the article by Paul H. Rubin mentions some of the ways environmental behaviors echo religious behaviors and rituals for the greens. In my opinion, the examples Paul states in his article about the relation of religion and environmentalism are inaccurate and should not be compared in that way due to the fact that they both have two totally different meanings. Religion being the worship of God and environmentalism being the act of protecting the planet. I came across one bulletin point in the article that mentions, “There are food taboos, instead of eating fish on Friday, or avoiding pork, greens now eat organic foods and many are moving towards eating towards locally grown foods.” Food taboos are different for every culture I believe. I know one similar practice of this called Lent where for forty days starting from ash Wednesday extending to Easter day you devote something and fast in certain days due to the belief that Jesus fasted and suffered in the desert for 40 days, before he started his ministry. Now when you compare this belief to people eating organic foods or locally owned grown foods, you find that you cannot compare these two subjects at all. People eat locally owned grown foods because they believe it helps the environment. The practice of both subjects have a completely different purpose and that is how this part of the article is inaccurate.

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"Save the planet, kill yourself"

by Marco Leon-Cobian - Saturday, June 3, 2017, 5:42 PM

How to the images below help to address and clarify the issue and do they support or oppose your position?

The images displayed, all had a different meaning individually but one that stood out to me the most was the one that states, “Save the planet, kill yourself”. It is quite disturbing to read such a vile sign addressed to the people of this world but it surprisingly helps to clarify the problem we are all facing. Humans are slowly eating away our own life support systems due to their everyday actions. Emitting greenhouse gases and releasing vast amounts of chemicals into the environment are some of many factors the planet is being affected. The message that is being addressed on the image, does not support my position because I do not like the idea of it. I would say that people should be informed about the solutions we can take to make and keep this planet healthy.

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"States" (People) Behaving Badly

by Andrew Erkert - Saturday, June 3, 2017, 7:42 PM

I don't think that these solutions will ever be accepted by the majority public voluntarily. I relate it to the 'state's rights' debate that we have seen throughout U.S. history since its founding. As Escobar puts it, they are “states behaving badly.” I think that is how the federal government will have to perceive this 'Green Movement'. Similar to the states being able to establish their own voting restrictions or segregation conditions, the federal government will feel that it is necessary to force their mission onto the people. Personally, I don't mind them forcing things that are beneficial to the environment but I understand its

implications constitutionally. I believe that because of our history of states acting “immorally”, the likely outcome will be forced intervention. It is far more complex of an issue that most perceive it. The “bumper sticker mentality” on both ends of the spectrum certainly doesn’t help the Feds make decisions. One end believes that we need to completely convert to green immediately, ignoring the economic and social obstacles contrary to the other end that believes that the Earth’s climate isn’t in a manmade crisis and that the Earth’s resources aren’t going to be an issue.

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How definitions affect the "accuracy" of the article

by Bailey Koffler - Saturday, June 3, 2017, 10:45 PM

In regards to the topic “environmentalism as religion” it’s first important to understand what the words “religion” and “environmentalism” mean. As stated on wikipedia, “the definition of religion is a controversial subject in religious studies”. Some scholars in the field say religion is a “cultural system of behaviors and practices” and other scholars say religion is a “comprehensive worldview” or a “moral community called a church” (wikipedia). That being said there is not a single definition for the word thus creating confusion. “Environmentalism” is defined as a “broad philosophy, ideology, and social movement regarding concerns for the environmental protection” (wikipedia). Depending on the way a person defines “religion” they may or may not consider environmentalism a religion. As for the scholars who define religion as a “cultural system of behaviors and practices” they may feel that “self-sacrificing rituals... such as recycling” (Rubin) are behaviors and practices of environmentalism. One’s “cultural system” may be developed from philosophies and ideologies regarding a topic, such as environmentalism. Judging by the definitions explained above it appears that Rubin may be accurate in his claim, “environmentalism is eerily close to a religious belief system” (Rubin). As I stated above, it all depends on one’s definition of “religion”.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Religion>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Environmentalism>

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