WATER, ECOLOGY, AND THE JORDAN RIVER IN THE CHRISTIAN TRADITION

A sourcebook for educators and community leaders

ECOPEACE / FRIENDS OF THE EARTH MIDDLE EAST (FoEME)
FIRST EDITION, OCTOBER 2013

And he said to me, ‘Son of man, have you seen this?’ Then he led me back to the bank of the river.

Ezekiel 47:6
WATER, ECOLOGY, AND THE JORDAN RIVER IN THE CHRISTIAN TRADITION
Dear Friends,

This is a compilation of writings about the Jordan River in the Christian tradition, about the sacredness of water, and about the connection between spiritual faith and care for the natural world.

We hope that you will use these materials to create inspiring talks, sermons, or lessons, and to engage your congregation or class in the campaign to revive the Jordan River.

At the beginning of the booklet you will find two specially commissioned pieces of writing about the state of the river and about the role of the Christian community in its rehabilitation. You are welcome to use these as the basis for your own presentations or sermons, or to adapt them to suit your audience. You will also find scriptural texts, prayers, poems, and essays.

We encourage you to treat this as a working document: to annotate it, to select what is most illuminating for your own teaching, and to enrich it through your own knowledge and insight. We’ve left some pages blank for you to add notes and cuttings. For the next edition, we’re planning to develop a section of questions and discussion topics that educators can use to engage their students and communities. We would welcome your contributions as we develop this sourcebook.

With gratitude,

EcoPeace / Friends of the Earth Middle East
October 2013
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Every year since the earliest centuries of the Church, Christians in both east and west have celebrated the dramatic event, (recorded in the three “Synoptic Gospels”, Matthew, Mark and Luke), with which the ministry of Jesus began: his baptism in the river Jordan.

It is one of the great moments in the Christian understanding of salvation history. Jesus had been living an ordinary life, indeed a hidden life, as a carpenter in the obscure village of Nazareth. Suddenly he appears at the banks of the Jordan. He comes into contact with the strange, outlandish figure of John the Baptist, a wild man, a desert dweller, a prophet, who has been preaching an austere message of conversion, calling on people to change their lives and accept baptism for the forgiveness of their sins because the kingdom of God is drawing near.

Suddenly Jesus appears. Although sinless, he voluntarily joins the row of repentant sinners and consents to receive the purifying waters administered by the Baptist’s hand. It is a profound gesture of divine solidarity with sinful and suffering humankind. Suddenly there is a dramatic manifestation. The heavens are opened and the voice of God the Father is heard declaring that Jesus is his beloved Son. A further level of symbolism is added in the descending dove, representing the Holy Spirit’s. This signifies Jesus’ anointing, the act by which he is manifested not only as God’s unique and eternal Son-made-flesh but as the long-awaited Messiah, Christos in Greek, the One who will bring in the kingdom of God. St. Luke in his account adds a small but highly significant detail, typical of his interest in the more intimate, private aspects of Jesus’ relationship with his heavenly Father – he tells us that Jesus received the Holy Spirit while he was at prayer.

The whole scene is a tremendous epiphany, or more precisely a theophany a manifestation of God, who, for Christians, is understood to be the Most Holy Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In a hymn from the Byzantine liturgy, the three are identified as such. The Son appears as a servant the unique suffering servant of God prophesied by Isaiah; the voice of the Father is heard, bearing witness to his only Son; the Holy Spirits form recalls the dove which signaled the end of the great flood, appearing at Noah’s ark with the leaf of the olive tree in its beak. But water has always been a massively important symbol.
in the Judeo-Christian tradition, whether it was the original waters over the face of which God’s Spirit hovered at the dawn of creation, or the great river which Ezekiel in his vision saw issuing from the restored Temple in Jerusalem and flowing down towards the desert places of the Holy land, giving them new life and fertility.

None of that is entirely unique to the Judeo-Christian tradition. After all, water is, as the Swiss psychologist C. G Jung so often noted, a basic archetypal symbol for new life, fertility, rebirth and rejuvenation. It functions as such in every religion and in every major belief system. It is small wonder then that the Jewish tradition (so associated in its geographical location with the preservation of water as a precious commodity) should frequently employ it as a metaphor for God’s saving presence, or that the ministry of Jesus – who promised to give his followers a water that would quench every thirst – should have begun on the banks of the Jordan, the river that Joshua had crossed to bring the people of God into the promised land. To this day, the waters of the Jordan are associated with the sacrament of baptism. Many people still travel there to be baptized in the same river as Jesus and some of its water is still brought to England for the baptism of royal babies.

Yet if one stands today on Jordan’s banks one does indeed hear a cry, but it is not that of the Baptist: rather, nature herself is crying! She is weeping hard and long. It is difficult not to feel that one is witnessing a very different miracle from the great revelation at Jesus’ baptism. The miracle is that the sad, depressing, depleted trickle of water, oozing along where this mighty river once flowed has not simply given up the ghost and died long ago! For this great river, so rich in symbolic associations for Jews and Christians, is but a poor shadow of itself: it has become a standing testimony to what we grasping humans are capable of doing to God’s beautiful creation, when our actions are inspired largely by political and economic pragmatism and uninspired by any larger sense of cosmic vision.

“This great river...has become a standing testimony to what we are capable of doing to God’s creation when our actions are uninspired by any larger sense of cosmic vision”

In the liturgies of the eastern churches, the feast of the baptism of Jesus on 6 January includes a great blessing of whatever waters are present in the vicinity of the celebration – rivers, lakes or streams. The texts used often echo ancient beliefs that water, the primal source of life, has become the abode of demons. The blessing of the waters is therefore a kind of exorcism which expels the power of evil from them. Syrian liturgical texts also speak of the fire of Christ’s divinity going down into the water to bless and purify it. It is a powerful prophecy of his future descent into the Underworld on Holy Saturday, where he goes to destroy death by his death before rising in glory to the new life of the resurrection.

But nowadays it is hard to avoid a powerful feeling: it is not the waters which need exorcism. Rather it is we ourselves! It is we, we
who so disastrously project our own negativity out of ourselves and on to the world of nature – we are the ones who need to ask for cleansing from the demonic powers of evil, sin and death!

Nature itself is God’s primal sacrament, his first great self-manifestation to us. In its cosmic structures, in its order and harmony, in its rhythm of light and darkness and above all in its overwhelming beauty, it is meant to awaken us to the presence of the divine. It is meant to remind us, as St. Augustine saw, that the lovely things of the earth all point to their even lovelier Source, the Creator God; and as the English Jesuit and nature poet Gerard Manley Hopkins stressed, to God’s even better beauty – grace!

“Nature itself is God’s primal sacrament...in its order and harmony, in its rhythm of light and darkness, and above all in its overwhelming beauty, it is meant to awaken us to the presence of the divine”

But it is hard for today’s Jordan to do that, hard for it to be a sacrament of cosmic beauty, hard for it to remind us of the grace that flowed in the mystery of Jesus’ baptism. For it to do that again, concerted action is needed – action by the governments through whose territories it flows, action enabling it to become a source of life-giving water once again. And we need to act on ourselves – to root out of our hearts all those impulses of negligence and laziness, or worse still of active exploitation, which damage nature, obscure God’s manifestation in and through his beautiful world and deprive our fellow human beings of this inestimable source of life and vitality. But we also need to take practical action such as supporting groups like Friends of the Earth Middle East and others, who work to cherish and protect the environment.

May the Creator God, the Source of all beings, who wishes to make his presence known through the beauty of his works and who in Christian belief, saved and re-consecrated the earth in Christ’s incarnation death and resurrection, purify us, so that we too can purify the earth and liberate this once great river to become again what it is meant to be: a cosmic sacrament of God’s overflowing life and grace.

Amen.
An Orthodox Christian Reflection on Creation Care

Rev. Dr. John Chryssavgis, Archdeacon of the Ecumenical Throne

The cleansing and conservation of the Jordan River is a critical project from an ecological, but also from a religious – indeed, an interfaith – perspective. The rehabilitation of the lower Jordan River valley is an invaluable enterprise to promote the health and welfare of the people in the surrounding region as well as an admirable initiative to foster inter-religious dialogue and peace among Jews, Christians and Muslims, all of whom venerate the historical and religious significance of the Jordan River.

i. Water, Nature, and Spirit

Water is as fundamental in the natural life as it is in the spiritual world. As the Book of Genesis says: “In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was a formless void, there was darkness over the deep, and God’s spirit hovered over the water” (Gen. 1.1-2). Just as water is the essence of all life, water is also the primary element in the life of a Christian, where the sacrament of Baptism marks the sacred source of the spiritual life.

The striking connection between the natural world and the world of the Spirit is indicated in the ceremony of the Great Blessing of the Waters, performed in the Orthodox Church on January 6th, the Feast of Theophany, when Orthodox Christians commemorate Christ’s Baptism in the Jordan River. The service contains the same prayers and hymns used in the baptism of every Orthodox Christian.

The Great Blessing begins with a hymn of praise to God for the beauty and harmony of creation:

Great art You, O Lord, and marvelous are Your works: no words suffice to sing the praise of Your wonders. . . . The sun sings Your praises; the moon glorifies You; the stars supplicate before You; the light obeys You; the deeps are afraid at Your presence; the fountains are Your servants; You have stretched out the heavens like a curtain; You have established the earth upon the waters; You have walled about the sea with sand; You have poured forth the air that living things may breathe.

Water, then, signifies the depth of life and the calling to cosmic transfiguration. It can never be regarded or treated as private property or become the means and end of individual interest. Indifference towards the vitality of water constitutes both a blasphemy to God the Creator and a crime against humanity. Through the pollution or contamination of the world’s waters, the destruction is procured of the planet’s entire ecosystem, which receives its life from unceasing communication, like communicating vessels, of the watery subterranean or supraterranean arteries of the earth.
The Sacredness of Water...

ii. The Blessing of the Jordan

In the Orthodox Church, the commemoration of the Baptism of our Lord in the waters of the Jordan River constitutes the second most significant feast of the liturgical cycle after the celebration of the Resurrection. The hymns of that day, on January the 6th, proclaim:

The nature of waters is sanctified, the earth is blessed, and the heavens are enlightened . . . so that by the elements of creation, and by the angels, and by human beings, by things both visible and invisible, God’s most holy name may be glorified.

The implication is that Jesus Christ assumed human flesh in order to redeem and sanctify every aspect and detail of this world. The direct manifestation of this was his baptism in the Jordan River, which is in fact the consequence and culmination of God becoming human. This is why, on that day each year, Orthodox Christians will reserve and bottle a portion of the blessed water, with which they subsequently return and bless their homes and families, offices and spaces, gardens and animals.

The breadth and depth, therefore, of the Orthodox cosmic vision implies that humanity is a part of this magnificent epiphany, an interconnected and interdependent piece of what St. Maximus the Confessor in the 7th century called “a cosmic liturgy”. Thus, the future of this planet assumes critical importance for the kingdom of heaven.

One of the early symbols of Christ, whereby Christians recognized one another, was the fish – the Greek word being an acronym for “Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior.” The fish, then, is a soteriological statement of faith. Christ has been intimately and integrally identified with fish. Any pollution of water or over-fishing relates in a personal and intimate way to Christ himself.

Until we can perceive in the pollution of our planet – and especially the contamination of its waters, which constitutes and covers such a critical part of our bodies and of our world – the portrait of our brother and sister, then we cannot hope to resolve the inequalities of our world. Indeed, until we discern in the pollution of our planet the face of our children, we will not comprehend the irreversible consequences of our actions.

iii. The Spiritual Web of Life

In acknowledging the sacredness of the waters, we are proclaiming our belief that environmental protection is a profoundly moral and spiritual problem that concerns all of us. The initial and crucial response to the environmental crisis is for each of us to bear personal responsibility for the way that we live and for the values that we treasure and the priorities that we pursue. To persist in the current path of ecological destruction is not only folly. It is a sin against God and creation.

It also constitutes a matter of social and economic justice. As we mentioned in our opening address, there is a close link between the living conditions of the poor or vulnerable and the ecology of the planet. Those of us living in more affluent nations either consume or corrupt far too much of the earth’s resources. Conservation and compassion are intimately
The Sacredness of Water...

connected. The web of life is a sacred gift of God – so very precious and so very delicate. We must honor our neighbor and preserve our world with both humility and generosity, in a perspective of frugality and solidarity. The footprint that we leave on our world must become lighter, much lighter.

When we understand the intimate connection and inter-dependence of all persons and all things in the "cosmic liturgy," then we can begin to resolve issues of ecology and economy. Then our generation will properly consider and dignify the welfare of future generations.

There would be a code of ethics to determine behavior and trade, and a clear sense of this world as our common responsibility, with us as its caretakers.

This world was created by a loving God, who is – according to the foremost and traditional symbol of faith in the early Church – "maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible." The Judaeo-Christian Scriptures state, in the opening book of the Pentateuch: "God saw everything that was created good and, indeed, it was very good" (Genesis 1.31).

How can we possibly stand before the unique significance and awesome beauty of the Jordan River without recalling this original plan of God?

May God continue to bless this river and all those who work for its preservation and who long to be immersed in its sanctifying waters.

May we all long celebrate the sacredness, safekeeping and sanctification of the waters of this magnificent river.

How can we not rejoice at the cleansing and conservation of this sacred river, which God himself once deemed worthy of revealing himself as Holy Trinity and of plunging his incarnate Word, Jesus Christ?
The Garden of the Lord...

8 Then Abram said to Lot, “Let there be no strife between you and me, and between your herdsmen and my herdsmen, for we are kinsmen.

9 Is not the whole land before you? Separate yourself from me. If you take the left hand, then I will go to the right, or if you take the right hand, then I will go to the left.”

10 And Lot lifted up his eyes and saw that the Jordan Valley was well watered everywhere like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, in the direction of Zoar. (This was before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.)

11 So Lot chose for himself all the Jordan Valley, and Lot journeyed east. Thus they separated from each other.

12 Abram settled in the land of Canaan, while Lot settled among the cities of the valley and moved his tent as far as Sodom.

Genesis 13

The earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof...

1 The earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.

2 For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods.

3 Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand in his holy place?

4 He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.

5 He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.

6 This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob. Selah.

7 Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.

8 Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle.

9 Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.

10 Who is this King of glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory. Selah.

Psalm 24

The work of thy fingers...

10 LORD, our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens.

2 Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings
The Jordan River and the Natural World in the Old Testament...

hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.

3 When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained;

4 What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?

5 For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour.

6 Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet:

7 All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field;

8 The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.

9 O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!

Psalm 8

Into a good land...

7 For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land—a land with brooks, streams, and deep springs gushing out into the valleys and hills;

8 a land with wheat and barley, vines and fig trees, pomegranates, olive oil and honey;

9 a land where bread will not be scarce and you will lack nothing; a land where the rocks are iron and you can dig copper out of the hills.

10 When you have eaten and are satisfied, praise the LORD your God for the good land he has given you.

11 Be careful that you do not forget the LORD your God, failing to observe his commands, his laws and his decrees that I am giving you this day.

Deuteronomy 8
The baptism of Jesus

John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, "I am the voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way for the Lord.'"

*John, 1:23*

As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

*Matthew 3:16-17*

Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased.

*Luke 3:21-22*
Praised be you my Lord, through Sister Water...

Most High, all-powerful, all-good Lord,
All praise is Yours, all glory, all honour and all blessings.
To you alone, Most High, do they belong,
and no mortal lips are worthy to pronounce Your Name.
Praised be You my Lord with all Your creatures,
especially Sir Brother Sun,
Who is the day through whom You give us light.
And he is beautiful and radiant with great splendour,
Of You Most High, he bears the likeness.
Praised be You, my Lord, through Sister Moon and the stars,
In the heavens you have made them bright, precious and fair.
Praised be You, my Lord, through Brothers Wind and Air,
And fair and stormy, all weather’s moods,
by which You cherish all that You have made.
Praised be You my Lord through Sister Water,
So useful, humble, precious and pure.
Praised be You my Lord through Brother Fire,
through whom You light the night
and he is beautiful and playful and robust and strong.
Praised be You my Lord through our Sister, Mother Earth
who sustains and governs us,
producing varied fruits with coloured flowers and herbs.
Praise be You my Lord through those who grant pardon
for love of You and bear sickness and trial.
Blessed are those who endure in peace,
By You Most High, they will be crowned.
Praised be You, my Lord through Sister Death,
from whom no-one living can escape.
Woe to those who die in mortal sin!
Blessed are they She finds doing Your Will.
No second death can do them harm.
Praise and bless my Lord and give Him thanks,
And serve Him with great humility.

Saint Francis of Assisi (1181 – 1226), Canticle of the Sun
From the Great Blessing of the Water (part of the feast of Epiphany / Theophany)...

The voice of the Lord cries over the waters, saying: Come all ye, receive the Spirit of wisdom, the Spirit of understanding, the Spirit of the fear of God, even Christ who is made manifest. Today the nature of water is sanctified. Jordan is divided in two, and turns back the stream of its waters, beholding the Master being baptized. As a man Thou didst come to that river, O Christ our King, and dost hasten O Good One, to receive the baptism of a servant at the hands of the Forerunner (John), because of our sins, O Lover of Man.

To injure the natural world is a sin...

To commit a crime against the natural world is a sin. For humans to cause species to become extinct and to destroy the biological diversity of God’s creation, for humans to degrade the integrity of the Earth by causing changes in its climate, stripping the Earth of its natural forests, or destroying its wetlands; for human beings to injure other human beings by contaminating the earth’s waters, its land, its air, and its life with poisonous substances—these are sins.**

Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I

On the hand of God in the natural world...

I raised my eyes aloft, and I beheld
The scattered chapters of the Universe
Gathered and bound into a single book
By the austere and tender hand of God.

Dante Alighieri (1265 – 1321)

Prayers, Poems, and Other Writings...

Apprehend God in all things, for God is in all things.
Every creature is full of God and is a book about God.
Every creature is a word of God.
If I spent enough time with the tiniest creature— even a caterpillar—
I would never have to prepare a sermon
So full of God is every creature.

Meister Eckhart (1260 – 1327)

On man’s ‘dominion’...

...man’s dominion cannot be understood as licence to abuse, spoil, squander or destroy what God has made to manifest his glory. That dominion cannot be anything other than a stewardship in symbiosis with all creatures...
At the risk of destroying himself, man may not reduce to chaos or disorder, or, worse still, destroy God’s bountiful treasures.

Father Lanfranco Serrini, Minister General of the Franciscan Order

Water, mirror of the human spirit...

In planning our Festival of Faiths, we learned that before the first mirror was ever fashioned, water served as the original, primordial mirror... one member of the community responded, “The notion of water as the first mirror makes me think that even today, a community’s values are reflected in its water. What are our polluted rivers and streams saying about us?”

Elena Lloyd-Sidle Water: Its Spiritual Significance
A prayer from the edge of the abyss...
Almighty and merciful God, Father of all, Creator and Ruler of the Universe, Lord of History, whose designs are inscrutable, whose glory is without blemish, whose compassion is inexhaustible, in your will is our peace...
In this fatal moment of choice in which we might begin the patient architecture of peace (and sustainability) we may also take the last step across the rim of chaos. Save us then from our obsessions! Open our eyes, dissipate confusions, teach us to understand ourselves.
*Thomas Merton - Passion for Peace*

Wendell Berry on the urgency of this work...
To cherish what remains of the Earth and to foster its renewal is our only legitimate hope of survival.
*Wendell Berry The Art of the Commonplace*

Thomas Merton on the loss of wisdom...
But man has lost his “sight” and is blundering about aimlessly in the midst of the wonderful works of God. It is in thinking that he sees, in gaining his power and technical know-how, that he has lost his wisdom and his cosmic perspective.
*Thomas Merton - Letter to Rachel Carson*

Thomas Berry on the sense of wonder...
I look forward to a renewal of a world of wonder. As children the truly great moments in our lives were those moments when we watched the evening sky or wandered across a meadow to wade in a nearby creek, the moments when we were outside playing games or learning the languages of the flowers and trees, the birds, the insects, the butterflies.

In this way we learned something of the numinous world present throughout our natural surroundings, the world beyond human explanation, the world that we can express only in our mythic stories of spirit presences.

This was the world of play and delight and laughter, the world of poetry and storytelling, of music and dance and freedom. It was the world of heroic tales, of Cinderella, of her slipper and the Prince, of Robin Hood—his taking from the rich and giving to the poor. It was a sacred world, a world that could not be bought or sold, could not be made by humans. It was the world that brought us into being, nourished, educated us, guided and healed us, and in the end brought us safely through the turmoil and struggle of this earthly existence into an abiding and serene world beyond what we could find here.

The main difficulty in human affairs in these opening years of the twenty-first century seems to be the loss of our sense of wonder, our sense of the sacred, our sense of play and laughter, our inability to respond to the dawn or sunset, the loss of our vision of the stars. One of the most exquisite words in the human vocabulary is wonderful, the word we use when we speak of those we love or when we describe an exciting moment in our lives. So now my hope is that the wonder we experienced in childhood will return to quiet our restless souls in this new age of anxiety that has descended upon us.
*Thomas Berry, Wonder*
The Jordan River has a particular place in the Christian songbook, and especially in the spiritual and gospel music of the American south. ‘Crossing the Jordan’ is a metaphor for passing over the threshold that divides this life from the heavenly paradise beyond. Again and again, it is used as a symbol of home-coming and peace at the end of life’s journey. But for the slaves who first sang these songs, ‘going over Jordan’ had another, more subversive meaning: escaping into freedom, just as the Israelites had crossed the river and gained the promised land after long years of slavery in Egypt and wandering in the wilderness.

**Swing Low Sweet Chariot**

Swing low, sweet chariot  
Coming for to carry me home...  
I looked over Jordan and what did I see  
Coming for to carry me home  
A band of angels coming after me  
Coming for to carry me home  
If you get there before I do  
Coming for to carry me home  
Tell all my friends I’m coming to  
Coming for to carry me home

**Deep River**

Deep river, my home is over Jordan,  
Deep river, Lord, I want to cross over into camp ground.  
My Lord, he calls me  
He calls me by the thunder.  
The trumpet sounds within my soul:  
I ain’t got long to stay here.  
Deep river, my home is over Jordan,  
Deep river, Lord, I’m gonna cross over into campground.
Hymns & Songs...

**Michael, Row the Boat Ashore**

There are many versions of this song, which was first published in Slave Songs of the United States in 1867. This is one of the versions that names the Jordan River.

Michael row the boat ashore, hallelujah  
Michael row the boat ashore, hallelujah  
My brothers and sisters are all aboard, hallelujah  
My brothers and sisters are all aboard, hallelujah  
Michael row the boat ashore, hallelujah  
Michael row the boat ashore, hallelujah  

The river is deep and the river is wide, hallelujah  
Milk and honey on the other side, hallelujah  
Michael row the boat ashore, hallelujah  
Michael row the boat ashore, hallelujah  

Jordan’s river is chilly and cold, hallelujah  
Chills the body but warms the soul, hallelujah  
Michael row the boat ashore, hallelujah  
Michael row the boat ashore, hallelujah  

Michael row the boat ashore, hallelujah  
Michael row the boat ashore, hallelujah  
My brothers and sisters are all aboard, hallelujah  
My brothers and sisters are all aboard, hallelujah  
Michael row the boat ashore, hallelujah  
Michael row the boat ashore, hallelujah  

The river is deep and the river is wide, hallelujah  
Milk and honey on the other side, hallelujah  
Michael row the boat ashore, hallelujah  
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Jordan’s river is chilly and cold, hallelujah  
Chills the body but warms the soul, hallelujah  
Michael row the boat ashore, hallelujah  
Michael row the boat ashore, halleluja
Hymns & Songs...

Roll Jordan Roll
Roll Jordan, roll  
I wanter go to heav’n when I die  
To hear ol’ Jordan roll  
O brethern  
Roll Jordan, roll  
Roll Jordan, roll  
I wanter go to heav’n when I die  
To hear ol’ Jordan roll  
Oh, brothers you oughter been dere  
Yes my Lord  
A-sittin’ in the Kingdom  
To hear ol’ Jordan roll  
Sing it over  
Oh, sinner you oughter been dere  
Yes my Lord  
A-sittin’ in the Kingdom  
To hear ol’ Jordan roll

March down to Jordan
You gotta march down, march down  
You gotta march down to Jordan  
Hallelujah  
You gotta march down, march down  
You gotta march down to Jordan  
Hallelujah  
Where are you goin’ my sisters?  
Where are you goin’ now?  
Oh well we’re goin’ on down  
to the river Jordan  
Gonna wash our sins away  
Have you heard of-a that city  
They say it’s built four square  
He said He wanted you people  
To meet Him over there
River of Jordan

by Hazel Houser

To the river of Jordan our Savior went one day,
And we read that John the Baptist met him there.
When John baptised Jesus in Jordan’s rushing water,
The mighty power of God filled the air

I’m on my way, (to the river of Jordan,)
Gonna walk right in, (in the rushing waters)
I’m goin there, (I’m goin down to the river of Jordan)
And let the cool waters cleanse my soul.

King Naïmen was stricken with dreaded leprosy,
And he sent for the man of God to pray,
But Elijah said to Naïmen, go dip yourself in Jordan,
And let the cool water wash your spots away.

So he went right down (to the river of Jordan),
He went right in (in the rushing water)
He dipped himself (He dipped himself in river of Jordan)
And the cool waters made him whole.

The River of Jordan is many miles away,
This mighty river I may never see,
But I’ll find myself an altar in an old fashioned church.
My river of Jordan that will be.
Wayfaring Stranger

I’m just a poor wayfaring stranger
I’m traveling through this world of woe
Yet there’s no sickness, toil nor danger
In that bright land to which I go

I’m going there to see my mother/father
I’m going there no more to roam
I’m only going over Jordan
I’m only going over home

I know dark clouds will gather ’round me
I know my way is rough and steep
Yet golden fields lie just before me
Where God’s redeemed their vigils keep

I’m going there to see my father/mother
S/he said he’d/she’d meet me when I come
I’m only going over Jordan
I’m only going over home

I want to wear a crown of glory
When I get home to that good land
I want to shout salvation’s story
In concert with the blood-washed band

I’m going there to meet my Saviour
To sing his praise forever more
I’m just a-going over Jordan
I’m just a-going over home
January - The Feast of Epiphany (Theophany) and the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord.

At the close of the great Christmas liturgy comes the feast of Epiphany (also known as Theophany). In the Eastern churches, this feast is primarily a celebration of the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan, and its liturgy includes the blessing of the waters. In the Western church, Epiphany came to be primarily a celebration of the coming of the Magi, and Roman Catholics now celebrate the baptism of Jesus on a separate day, usually on the first Sunday after Epiphany.

There is no more appropriate season in which to reflect on the story of the baptism and on the state of the river today.

Christian leaders will, of course, be familiar with the significance and liturgy of this feast. Laymen and laywomen may be interested in the following excerpts from the Orthodox service, including the prayers for the blessing of water.

From the Troparion of the feast –

When in the Jordan Thou wast baptised, O Lord, the worship of the Trinity was made manifest. For the voice of the Father bare witness unto Thee, calling Thee His beloved Son, and the Spirit, in the form of a Dove, confirmed the steadfastness of that word. O Christ our God, who didst manifest Thyself and dost enlighten the world: glory to Thee.

From the priest’s prayer at the blessing of the waters

Great art Thou, O Lord, and marvellous are Thy works, and speech sufficeth not to sing the praises of Thy wonders. For Thou, by Thy will, from nothingness hast brought all things into being; by Thy majesty Thou dost uphold all creation, and by Thy providence Thou dost direct the world. When Thou hadst framed the universe out of four elements, Thou didst crown the circle of the year with four seasons. All the reason-endowed powers tremble before Thee.

The sun singeth Thy praises, and the moon glorifieth Thee; the stars, also, stand before Thy presence. The light obeyeth Thee. The deeps shudder with awe before Thee; the water-springs do Thy bidding. Thou hast spread out the heavens like a curtain. Thou hast established the earth upon the waters. With sand hast Thou walled in the sea. Thou hast shed abroad the air for breathing. The Angelic powers serve Thee. The Archangelic hosts adore Thee. The many-eyed Cherubim and the six-winged Seraphim, as they stand round about and do fly, veil their faces with awe before Thine unapproachable glory. For Thou, the God which cannot be circumscribed, who art from everlasting and ineffable, didst come down upon earth, taking on the form of a servant and
Times and Seasons...

being made in the likeness of men. For Thou couldst not endure, O Master, because of Thy tender hearted mercy, to behold the children of men tormented by the devil; but Thou didst come, and didst save us. We confess Thy grace; we proclaim Thy mercy; we conceal not Thy gracious deeds. Thou hast set at liberty the generations of our race; by Thy birth Thou hast sanctified a Virgin’s womb. All creation singeth praises unto Thee, who didst reveal Thyself; for Thou, our God, didst manifest Thyself upon earth, and didst dwell among men. Thou didst hallow, also, the streams of Jordan, in that Thou didst send down from heaven Thy Holy Spirit, and didst crush the heads of the serpents which lurked there. Wherefore do Thou, O King who lovest mankind, come down now also through the descent of Thy Holy Spirit, and sanctify this water.

The voice of the Lord cries over the waters, saying: Come all ye, receive the Spirit of wisdom, the Spirit of understanding, the Spirit of the fear of God, even Christ who is made manifest. Today the nature of water is sanctified. Jordan is divided in two, and turns back the stream of its waters, beholding the Master being baptized. As a man Thou didst come to that river, O Christ our King, and dost hasten O Good One, to receive the baptism of a servant at the hands of the Forerunner (John), because of our sins, O Lover of Man.
Nelson Mandela on seeing beyond our own lifetime...

“Our clean flowing rivers must be known by my grandchildren’s grandchildren, many years from now, just as I knew them as a child, many years ago.”

_Nelson Mandela_

‘Now the waters are poisoned’

We have forgotten who we are.
We have forgotten who we are.
We have alienated ourselves from the unfolding of the cosmos.
We have become estranged from the movements of the earth.
We have turned our backs on the cycles of life.
We have forgotten who we are.
We have sought only our own security.
We have exploited simply for our own ends.
We have distorted our knowledge.
We have abused our power.
We have forgotten who we are.
Now the land is barren.
And the waters are poisoned.
And the air is polluted.
We have forgotten who we are.
Now the forests are dying,
And the creatures are disappearing,
And the humans are despairing.
We have forgotten who we are.
We ask for forgiveness.
We ask for the gift of remembering.
We ask for the strength to change.
We have forgotten who we are.

_UN Environmental Sabbath Program_
Other Reflections & Insights...

To restore the waters...

We join with the earth and each other.
To bring new life to the land
To restore the waters
To refresh the air.
We join with the earth and each other.
To renew the forests
To care for the plants
To protect the creatures.
We join with the earth and each other.
To celebrate the seas
To rejoice in the sunlight
To sing the song of the stars.
We join with the earth and each other.
To recreate the human community
To promote justice and peace
To remember our children.
We join with the earth and each other.
We join together as many and diverse expressions
Of one loving mystery: for the healing of the
Earth and the renewal of all life.

UN Environmental Sabbath Program
On spiritual insight and environmental action...

Religious experience involves an encounter with the sacred, an intuition of the awesome and wondrous mystery in the power of being. The experience of the sacred is of critical importance in the transformation of human attitudes towards nature and the awakening of a new moral faith. An appreciation of the miracle of life and of the beauty and mystery in the being of animals, plants, and the earth as a whole must become so intense as to generate a keen sense of the natural world’s sacredness. Dostoevsky’s Father Zossima speaks about a religious appreciation of nature: “Love all God’s creation, the whole earth and every grain of sand in it. Love every leaf, every ray of God’s light. Love the animals, love the plants, love everything. If you love everything, you will perceive the divine mystery in things. Once you begin to perceive it, you will begin to comprehend it better every day.” A fresh awareness of the sacred values in nature fosters respect and moral responsibility.

Steven C Rockefeller, Spirit and Nature

On our inter-depending with the natural world...

Humans have become so numerous and our tools so powerful that we have driven fellow creatures to extinction, dammed the great rivers, torn down ancient forests, poisoned the earth, rain and wind, and ripped holes in the sky. Our science has brought pain as well as joy; our comfort is paid for by the suffering of millions.

We are learning from our mistakes, we are mourning our vanished kin, and we now build a new politics of hope.

We respect and uphold the absolute need for clean air, water and soil.

We see that economic activities that benefit the few while shrinking the inheritance of many are wrong.

And since environmental degradation erodes biological capital forever, full ecological and social cost must enter all equations of development.

We are one brief generation in the long march of time; the future is not ours to erase.

So where knowledge is limited, we will remember all those who will walk after us, and err on the side of caution.

The Declaration of Inter-dependence, David Suzuki Foundation

Václav Havel on spiritual intuition and ecology...

As a boy, I lived for a time in the country and I clearly remember an experience from those days: I used to walk school in a nearby village along a cart track through the fields and, on the way, see on the horizon a huge smokestack of war. It spewed dense brown smoke and scattered it across the sky. Each time I saw it, I had an intense sense of something profoundly wrong, of humans soiling the heavens. I have no idea whether there was something like a science of ecology in those days; if there was,
I certainly knew nothing of it. It seemed to me that, in it, humans are guilty of something, that they destroy something important, arbitrarily disrupting the natural order of things, and that such things cannot go unpunished.

Václav Havel Politics and Conscience

**John Ruskin on the sacred signature in the natural world...**

There is religion in everything around us—a calm and holy religion in the unbreathing things of nature, which man would do well to imitate. It is a meek and blessed influence, stealing in, as it were, unawares upon the heart; it comes quietly, and without excitement; it has no terror, no gloom, in its approaches; it does not rouse up the passions; it is untrammelled by the creeds, and unshadowed by the superstitions, of man; it is fresh from the hands of its Author, glowing from the immediate presence of the Great Spirit, which pervades and quickens it; it is written on the arched sky; it looks out from every star; it is on the sailing cloud and in the invisible wind; it is among the hills and valleys of the earth, where the shrubless mountain-top pierces the thin atmosphere of eternal winter, or where the mighty forest fluctuates before the strong wind with its dark waves of green foliage; it is spread out, like a legible language, upon the broad face of the unsleeping ocean; it is the poetry of nature; it is this which uplifts the spirit within us until it is strong enough to overlook the shadows of our place of probation; which breaks, link after link, the chain that binds us to materiality; and which opens to our imagination a world of spiritual beauty and holiness.

*John Ruskin*
"PRAISE THE LORD ... Praise him, sun and moon, praise him, all you shining stars! For he commanded and they were created...Praise the Lord from the earth, you sea monsters and all deeps, fire and hail, snow and frost, stormy wind fulfilling his commands!" (Psalm 148)

To praise the Lord for his creation is to confess that God the Father made all things visible and invisible; it is to thank him for the many gifts he bestows on all his children.

God created everything that exists, freely, by his word, and out of nothing. He alone is totally other, transcendent and immutable, whereas all creatures are contingent, mutable and wholly dependent on him for their existence. No creature can claim to be part of his nature or a “spark” of his Being; but, by reason of its created origin, each according to its species and all together in the harmonious unity of the universe manifest God’s infinite truth and beauty, love and goodness, wisdom and majesty, glory and power.

God declared everything to be good, indeed, very good. He created nothing unnecessarily and has omitted nothing that is necessary. Thus, even in the mutual opposition of the various elements of the universe, there exists a divinely willed harmony because creatures have received their mode of existence by the will of their Creator, whose purpose is that through their interdependence they should bring to perfection the beauty of the universe. It is the very nature of things considered in itself, without regard to man’s convenience or inconvenience, that gives glory to the Creator.

But it is especially through man and woman, made in the image and likeness of God and entrusted with a unique dominion over all visible creatures, that the Lord’s goodness and providence are to be manifested. This is how the Psalmist sings of man’s nobility: “When I look at the heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars which you have established; what is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you care for him? Yet, you have made him little less than God, and you crown him with glory and honour. You have given him dominion over the works of your hands.”

The Fathers of the Church understood well the marvel of man’s dual citizenship and the responsibilities it placed upon him. In the words of St Gregory of Nazianzen, "God set man upon earth as a kind of second world, a microcosm; another kind of angel, a worshipper of blended nature... He was a king of all upon earth, but subject to heaven; earthly and heavenly; transient, yet immortal; belonging both to the visible and to the intelligible order; midway between greatness and lowness".

The Christian Declaration on Nature
Father Lanfranco Serrini.

This declaration forms part of the original Assisi Declarations on Nature which were created in 1986, at a meeting held in Assisi at which five leaders of the five major world religions – Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism – were invited to come and discuss how their faiths could help save the natural world.
Most certainly, then, because of the responsibilities which flow from his dual citizenship, man’s dominion cannot be understood as licence to abuse, spoil, squander or destroy what God has made to manifest his glory. That dominion cannot be anything other than a stewardship in symbiosis with all creatures. On the one hand, man’s position verges on a viceregal partnership with God; on the other, his self-mastery in symbiosis with creation must manifest the Lord’s exclusive and absolute dominion over everything, over man and over his stewardship. At the risk of destroying himself, man may not reduce to chaos or disorder, or, worse still, destroy God’s bountiful treasures.

Every human act of irresponsibility towards creatures is an abomination. According to its gravity, it is an offence against that divine wisdom which sustains and gives purpose to the interdependent harmony of the universe. Christians believe that the first man’s refusal to live according to divine wisdom introduced disharmony into his relationship with God and creatures, and this rebellion has perpetuated itself in history in various forms of social and personal injustice, domination and exploitation, making it impossible for men and women to live in concord with one another and with the rest of creation.

But the heart of Christian faith resides in its proclamation of God’s merciful fidelity to himself and to the works of his hands. Christians believe that God the Father has not abandoned men and women to their sinful ways but has sent the Saviour to bring redemption and healing to everyone and to all things. Indeed, they firmly confess that Jesus of Nazareth is the Son of God made man, that he is the fulfillment of his Father’s covenant with Abraham for the salvation of all peoples and with Noah on behalf of all creation. They maintain that, risen from the dead and ascended into heaven in his glorified humanity, he reconciles all things visible and invisible, and that all creation is therefore purposefully orientated, in and through him, towards the future revelation of the glorious liberty of God’s children, when, in the new heavens and the new earth, there will no longer be death, mourning, sadness or pain. Through Christ and through his life-giving Spirit, the Father creates and sanctifies, gives life, blesses and bestows all good things.

Christians therefore cannot be pessimistic about the future of the world, nor believe in its periodic disintegration and renewal, both of which would deny Christ’s future coming to judge the living and the dead, when he shall bring his recompense to repay everyone for what he has done. The God of the living will not destroy what he has created, but, in the future transformation of the world, he will reward the just and punish the evil.

This Gospel influenced the relationship of men and women to the environment through monastic institutions. Benedictine monks, especially inspired by their founder’s evangelical sense of the stewardship of natural resources, advocated a harmonious union between prayer and work, between intellectual and physical effort, and between theoretical and practical skills.
This Good News produced a unique example of man’s reconciliation with all creatures in St Francis of Assisi, admired and invoked as the patron of ecologists and of those who are dedicated to the establishment of harmonious relations with the environment. Since God can express his will through all of his works, Francis was submissive to all creatures and scanned creation attentively, listening to its mysterious voices.

In his ‘Canticle of Brother Sun’ the saint called all creatures his brothers and sisters because they are God’s gifts and signs of his providential and reconciling love. To God alone do they belong, to him they bear a likeness, and in his name Mother Earth, our sister, feeds us. In his personalized relationship with all creatures, St Francis recognised his duty to reciprocate divine love with love and praise, not only in the name of creatures, but in, with and through them.

For St. Francis, work was a God-given grace to be exercised in that spirit of faith and devotion to which every temporal consideration must be subordinate. All human effort in the world must therefore lead to a mutual enrichment of man and creatures.

Many are the causes of the ecological disaster which mankind faces today. Without pretending to be complete, the following should be singled out: uncontrolled use of technology for immediate economic growth, with little or no consideration for the planet’s resources and their possible renewal; disregard for just and peaceful relations among peoples; destruction of cultures and environments during war; ill-considered exploitation of natural resources by consumer-orientated societies; unmastered and unregulated urbanization; and the exclusive preoccupation with the present without any regard for the future quality of life.

Therefore, in the name of Christ, who will come to judge the living and the dead, Christians repudiate:

- All forms of human activity wars, discrimination, and destruction of cultures which do not respect the authentic interests of the human race, in accordance with God’s will and design, and do not enable men as individuals and as members of society to pursue and fulfill their total vocation within the harmony of the universe;

- All ill-considered exploitation of nature which threatens to destroy it and, in turn, to make man the victim of degradation.

In the name of Christ, who will repay everyone for good works, Christians call upon all men and women to pursue:

- A synthesis between culture and faith;

- Ecumenical dialogue on the goals of scientific research and on the environmental consequences of the use of its findings;

- The priority of moral values over technological advances;

- Truth, justice and the peaceful coexistence of all peoples.
TO COMMIT A CRIME AGAINST THE NATURAL WORLD IS A SIN

Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I of Constantinople

His All Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew ascended to the Apostolic and First Throne of the Orthodox Christian World in 1991. He is a spiritual leader to 300 million Orthodox Christians around the world and has earned the title “Green Patriarch” for his efforts to raise environmental awareness.

The Ecumenical Throne of Orthodoxy, as a preserver and herald of the ancient Patristic tradition and of the rich liturgical experience of the Orthodox Church, today renews its long-standing commitment to healing the environment.

We have followed with great interest and sincere concern the efforts to curb the destructive effects that human beings have wrought upon the natural world. We view with alarm the dangerous consequences of humanity’s disregard for the survival of God’s creation.

We believe that Orthodox liturgy and life hold tangible answers to the ultimate questions concerning salvation from corruptibility and death. The Eucharist is at the very center of our worship. And our sin toward the world, or the spiritual root of all our pollution, lies in our refusal to view life and the world as a sacrament of thanksgiving, and as a gift of constant communion with God on a global scale.

We envision a new awareness that is not mere philosophical posturing, but a tangible experience of a mystical nature. We believe that our first task is to raise the consciousness of adults who most use the resources and gifts of the planet. Ultimately, it is for our children that we must perceive our every action in the world as having a direct effect upon the future of the environment.

At the heart of the relationship between man and environment is the relationship between human beings. As individuals, we live not only in vertical relationships to God and horizontal relationships to one another, but also in a complex web of relationships that extend throughout our lives, our cultures, and the material world. Human beings and the environment form a seamless garment of existence, a complex fabric that we believe is fashioned by God.

People of all faith traditions praise the Divine, for they seek to understand their relationship to the cosmos. The entire universe participates in a celebration of life, which St. Maximos the Confessor described as a “cosmic liturgy.” We see this cosmic liturgy in the symbiosis of life’s rich biological complexities. These complex relationships draw attention to themselves in humanity’s self-conscious awareness of the cosmos. As human beings, created “in the image and likeness of God” (Genesis 1:26), we are called to recognize this interdependence between our environment and ourselves. In the bread and the wine of the Eucharist, as priests standing before the altar of the world, we offer the Creation back to the Creator in relationship to Him and to each other.

Indeed, in our liturgical life, we realize by anticipation the final state of the cosmos in the Kingdom of Heaven. We celebrate the beauty
of creation and consecrate the life of the world, returning it to God with thanks. We share the world in joy as a living mystical communion with the Divine. Thus it is that we celebrate the beauty of creation, and consecrate the life of the world, returning it to God with thanks. We share the world in joy as a living mystical communion with the Divine.

Thus it is that we offer the fullness of creation at the Eucharist, and receive it back as a blessing, as the living presence of God. Moreover, there is also an ascetic element in our responsibility toward God’s creation. This asceticism requires from us a voluntary restraint in order for us to live in harmony with our environment.

Asceticism offers practical examples of conservation. By reducing our consumption—in Orthodox theology, en克拉提亚, or self-control—we come to ensure that resources are also left for others in the world. As we shift our will, we demonstrate a concern for the Third World and developing nations. Our abundance of resources will be extended to include an abundance of equitable concern for others.

We must challenge ourselves to see our personal, spiritual attitudes in continuity with public policy. Encratia frees us of our self-centered neediness, that we may do good works for others. We do this out of a personal love for the natural world around us. We are called to work in humble harmony with creation and not in arrogant supremacy against it. Asceticism provides an example whereby we may live simply.

Asceticism is not a flight from society and the world, but a communal attitude of mind and way of life that leads to the respectful use, and not the abuse, of material goods. Excessive consumption may be understood to issue from a worldview of estrangement from self, from land, from life, and from God. Consuming the fruits of the Earth unrestrained, we become consumed ourselves, by avarice and greed. Excessive consumption leaves us emptied, out of touch with our deepest self. Asceticism is a corrective practice, a vision of repentance. Such a vision will lead us from repentance to return, the return to a world in which we give to as well as take from creation.

We are called to be stewards, and reflections of God’s love by example. Therefore, we proclaim the sanctity of all life, the entire creation being God’s and reflecting His continuing will that life abound. We must love life so that others may see and know that it belongs to God. We must leave the judgment of our success to our Creator.

We lovingly suggest, to all the people of the Earth, that they seek to help one another to understand the myriad ways in which we are related to the Earth and to one another. In this way, we may begin to repair the dislocation many people experience in relation to creation. If human beings treated one another’s personal property the way they treat their environment, we would view that behavior as antisocial. We would impose the judicial measures necessary to restore wrongly appropriated personal possessions. It is therefore appropriate for us to seek ethical, legal recourse where possible, in matters of ecological crimes. It follows that to commit a crime against the natural world is a sin.
To Commit a Crime Against the Natural World Is a Sin...

For humans to cause species to become extinct and to destroy the biological diversity of God’s creation, for humans to degrade the integrity of Earth by causing changes in its climate, by stripping the Earth of its natural forests or destroying its wetlands, for humans to injure other humans with disease, for humans to contaminate the Earth’s waters, its land, its air, and its life with poisonous substances—these are sins. In prayer, we ask for the forgiveness of sins committed both willingly and unwillingly. And it is certainly God’s forgiveness which we must ask, for causing harm to His own creation.

Thus we begin the process of healing our worldly environment, which was blessed with beauty and created by God. Then we may also begin to participate responsibly, as persons making informed choices, both in the integrated whole of creation and within our own souls.

We are urging a different and, we believe, a more satisfactory ecological ethic. This ethic is shared with many of the religious traditions. All of us hold the Earth to be God’s creation, where He placed the newly created human “in the Garden of Eden to cultivate it and to guard it” (Genesis 2:15). He imposed on humanity a stewardship role in relationship to the Earth. How we treat the Earth and all of creation defines the relationship that each of us has with God. It is also a barometer of how we view one another. For if we truly value a person, we are careful as to our behavior toward that person. The dominion that God has given humankind over the Earth does not extend to human relationships. We must be spokespeople for an ecological ethic that reminds the world that it is not ours to use for our own convenience. It is God’s gift of love to us, and we must return His love by protecting it and all that is in it.

The Lord suffuses all of creation with His divine presence in one continuous legato from the substance of atoms to the Mind of God. Let us renew the harmony between heaven and Earth and transfigure every detail, every particle of life. Let us love one another, and lovingly learn from one another, for the edification of God’s people, for the sanctification of God’s creation, and for the glorification of God’s most holy Name.

Amen.
OTHER CHRISTIAN STATEMENTS ON ECOLOGY

There are many powerful Christian declarations about the ecological crisis and the relationship between faith and environmentalism that might be useful for engaging church groups. Among them are the following:

**Peace with god the creator, peace with all of creation**
Message of His Holiness Pope John Paul II
World Day of Peace, 1 January 1990
Available at: www.vatican.va

**God’s earth is sacred**
An Open Letter to Church and Society in the US
From the National Council of Churches
Available at: www.creationjustice.org

**Message on the day of prayer for creation**
His All-Holiness the Ecumenical Patriarch
Dimitrios
September 1989
Available at: www.goarch.org

**On the care of creation**
An Evangelical Declaration on Ecology
By the Evangelical Environmental Network
Available at: www.creationcare.org

**The American Baptist policy statement on ecology**
An Ecological Situational Analysis
Available at: www.abc-usa.org

**Minute of care for God’s creation**
By the Friends United Meeting (Quakers)
Available at: www.creationjustice.org
TROUBLING WATERS: THE JORDAN RIVER BETWEEN RELIGIOUS IMAGINATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION.

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Abstract

Rivers are essential, environmental circulatory systems. They are also polyvalent repositories for religious and cultural meanings. This essay wades into the murky waters of the Jordan River and charts its shape from sociopolitical, environmental, and religious perspectives. Hovering in the Jordan’s polysemic eddies, we find quandaries that are epistemic as well as ethical. This essay orients ethical reflection on the disjuncture between the symbolic stature of the Jordan River and its materially degraded status.

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Notes, additions, and reflections...
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