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"Environmentalism, a Secular Faith"

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Dunlap, Thomas R. "Environmentalism, a Secular Faith." *Environmental Values* 15, no. 3 (2006): 321–30.
[doi:10.3197/096327106778226284](https://doi.org/10.3197/096327106778226284).

Much of American environmentalism's passion and political power, as well as shortcomings and tactical failures, have their origin in the movement's demands for new attitudes toward nature as well as new laws and policies. A full understanding of environmentalism requires seeing it as a secular faith, movement concerned with ultimate questions of humans' place and purpose in the world. This perspective explains much about its development, its emphasis on individual action, the vehemence of its opposition, and its political failure in the last generation. Comparisons with other national environmental movements, not considered here, constitute an important topic for further research.

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