

# Waste Paper

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*Green Rage*, by Christopher Manes, (Little, Brown)

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Angels and ministers of grace defend us!  
Be thou a spirit of health or goblin damn'd,  
Bring with thee airs from heaven or blasts from hell,  
Be thy intents wicked or charitable,  
Thou com'st in such questionable shape  
That I will speak to thee...

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Everyone loves the out of doors. I do not know of anyone who hates woods, streams, or snow-capped mountains. Even those who suffer from debilitating allergies and do not like to be outside, have never wanted to damn the out-or-doors for everybody else. The two camps are easily identified: those who love to be out of doors hunting, fishing, camping, hiking or enjoying some other activity, and those who like to witness such events on film, vicariously. I have yet to meet anyone who looked at a Sierra Club calendar of a wooded path purling with aconite or hawthorne and said, "I wish I could strip mine that place", or "Wouldn't it be nice if we could just cement all this and put up a parking lot?"

But we live in excessive times, and the two groups no longer obtain. Intruding into these groups is now a third, and it can only be described as maniacal. This group measures love of earth by one's willingness to die for it, as if a religious cult. Gaia as messiah and godhead, all in one.

The "as if a religious cult" is a misleading prepositional phrase, however, indicating ephetic conditions. Rather, the preposition "because" would be more accurate. Ecoanity, as it might be called, is a religion of cultists, wherein the Godhead has been reduced to: God, i.e., the earth; Jesus, i.e. the government and its far-reaching tentacles; and, the Holy Spirit, i.e. the EPA or attendant or pending legislation. The "Scriptures" in this scenario, are Marxist ideologies with a Liberation Theosophist slant. True Believers are those who are green on the outside and red on the inside.

True Believers are called upon, not only to express myrmidonic faith in God (the Environment, remember), but also lockstep adherence to the “call”. This is not limited to Saracenic or kamakazean execution of “justice” in this irrational milieu of thought, though it certainly includes it. It also includes Nazi gas chambers and ash heaps—all for the sake of the cause. The ends justify the means because the ends rid us of mean people who have no understanding about the importance of the environment or its care.

Should all this sound alarmist and over-wrought, consider *Green Rage* as exhibit A. It's hard to figure out why this book was written. Imagine for a moment Stalin at the end of 1932, surveying his work in the Ukraine. He examines the nine million or so dead, more than half of whom were women and children. He then leans over to, say, Trotsky, and says, “Now we need a writer with the detail and accuracy of Malcolm Muggeridge and the allegiance of Walter Duranty to describe this horror and we'll have it made.” One could understand having the one, but not the other.

Eco-terrorists have found such a follower in Christopher Manes. *Green Rage* is a fire-breathing diatribe about the inner-workings of the eco-terrorist movement, written from an adoring perspective. It is a description of the gory and unsightly manufacture of sausage, told with lilting delight. Manes chronicles the tactics of the eco-terrorists: their infiltration of American business, destruction of property and/or people, and insouciance to law—all couched in the language of a love letter. “The radicals had no choice”, the book reads again and again. It reminds one of those Hollywood movies where some poor working mom has only two choices. She can raise her five children and provide for her invalid mother either by being a waitress in the Greasy Spoon making seventy-five cents an hour plus tips, or she can hook on Rodeo Drive, at \$1,750 an hour, plus tips.

But make no mistake. This is *radical* environmentalism. Throughout the book, Manes speaks in the language of liturgy when he solumnizes about the movement. On the other hand, when he dares to speak about Christianity, it is always in the same sentence with the word 'myth'. God, as in the Judeo-Christian one, is written "God", in quotes, making sure readers will know that such figures are mythopoetic, *and* that Menes and his radical rascals know this only too well.

Moses in Ecoanity is Edward Abbey, “writer, raconteur, misanthrope and eminence grise” of the eco-terrorist movement. His 1975 *The Monkey Wrench Gang* inspired like-minded fanatics, among whom were Mike Roselle, Howie Wolke, Bart Koehler and Ron Kezar. These all-for-one and none-for-all formed Earth First!, the first radical eco-terrorist group responsible for more than a little property destruction. Taking a page out of Abbey's holy writ, their first act of defeatism occurred at Glen Canyon Dam in Colorado. Without permits or permission, they out-aped apes in occupying the dam's parking lot and calling for the dam's destruction. Six members of this group raced to the dam's centerpoint and unfurled a 300-foot black polyethylene banner, making the dam look like it had incurred a huge crack.

Police behaved amiably while Abbey himself expatiated in high dungeon, calling the

man-made structure one that had never been "hated so much, by so many, for so long, with such good reason." Speaking from the back of a pick-up truck, Abbey acted the prophet. Earth First! had made history, or so its founders thought, and a new movement was born. "A movement", Mike Roselle said, "all of us felt *had* to be born if the natural world was going to survive." [emphasis in the original] Here, of course, we move from the merely proptetic or hortatory, to the apocalyptic.

The Glen Canyon Dam incident kicked off a flurry of monkeywrenching that carried over into the eighties. Eco-terrorists destroyed seismographic equipment, pulled up stakes for oil drilling, tore up roads leading into timber forrests, spiked trees and more. The upshot of these activities was to try to make the damage such that it would prove too costly to go ahead with whatever entrepreneurial activity had been planned. In most cases, the eco-terrorist won, hand down. Take for example the scare over nuclear energy. U.S. usage is so far below European usage that the two cannot compare. While cleaner and safer, eco-terrorists continue to bedevil any attempt on the part of the nuclear industry to improve its share of the pie. Ted Kennedy's car has killed more people than those dying from nuclear energy in this country, but that's unimportant. Millions *could* be killed if something went wrong. And the sky could fall.

While eco-terrorists exulted in every monkeywrenching scheme, some episodes did not turn out too well in the press. In Coverdale, California, for example, one logger was badly injured when his saw hit tree spiking nails. Earth First! claime it had to have been done by another group because they always call their victims first. Whatever the truth, Earth First! got a black eye. As it turned out, however, Earth First! would blacken the other other and shoot off both feet when one of its co-founders called for the death of millions in major American cities with an AIDS-like outbreak.

Tree spiking gave way to tree sitting. Eco-terrorists now lodge in trees, tying up time, money, and law enforcement agencies. And they exult in their efforts even when unsuccessful. Said one sitter, "I figure I've done about a million dollars worth of damage.... They can sue me—I don't care, I don't have any money!" By the late eighties, timber companies had had enough and began cutting trees down with sitters in them. Some sitters were, of course, injured and claimed cruel and unusual punishment. Do doubt they will be awarded millions by some California jury.

"Ecotage", what monkeywrenching has come to be called, is, however, not the exclusive calling card of eco-terrorists. Animal rights activists and other radical environmentalists have joined forces, or acted alone, to create havoc in the shipping and fishing industries, and even in medical reserach. What amazes one about these proceedings is not that they occur, but rather what occurs afterwards.

Oil companies, mining industries, timber mills and the like are never accorded the benefit of the doubt. They are always cast as villains in the diabolarchy. The eco-terrorists, however, are cast as Green Berets, or Apostles of Light. But where is the logic? When pro-life activists stage a sit-in in front of an abortion clinic, Congress goes ballistic and

hurls the Rico case at them, along with the full force of Janet "Firebomb 'em" Reno. But let a dozen long-haired radical eco-terrorists shut down a saw mill with bombs or sabotage of some kind, and Congress along with the courts, says virtually nothing. In most cases, if any negative statement is issued, it is first couched in admiring language about the higher mission of these criminals.

Not every environmental group agrees with the radicals, of course. National Wildlife Federation officials have denounced Earth First! and its ilk, but the denouncements have come too late. Most environmental groups have indicated a drop in contributions over the last few years. But *Green Rage* does not accord these groups with anything less than contempt. On nearly every page, those who are not for them are against them. Every case is Black or Green, and it's always easy to tell which side the author is on.

In retelling the story of Wilderness Society's co-founder, Aldo Leopold, Manes writes,

Leopold's intellectual journey presented twentieth-century industrial society with a choice: either to practice environmental humility and cultivate a richer, more egalitarian relationship with the natural world, or to pursue short-term affluence at the cost of impoverishing nature and raising the specter of ecological collapse. Predictably, our culture chose the latter.

Of course we did. We all want to die, but we want to scorch the earth first before we go. If we can't take it with us, we reason, then we may as well not leave it for anyone else. Honey, fire up my chain saw. I see an orchard that needs tending.

If, on the other hand, you feel Manes has overstated his case, then you will probably find, as I did, *Green Rage* to be one noxious gasbag. From his cry for help for hundreds of species that are extinct or soon be, to his threats of "biological meltdown", *Green Rage* well, rages. But it is outrageous, and nothing more.

In defending the monkeywrenchers, Manes argues that environmental policy makers do not know what we face. Their solutions are hardly solutions at all, but postponements of certain death. But how so? Empirical evidence is not one of this book's strong points. The rehabilitation of Lake Erie, the drop in acid levels in lakes nationwide, the plummeting levels of pollutants in the air, the bogus claims against Love Canal and the silliness of various chemical scares - all of these things remain meaningless to Manes and his cohorts.

Consider for the moment the following chemicals: cyclamates in soft drinks, saccharin in sweeteners, DES in beef, safrole in beer and alar in apples. In order for humans to match the carcinogenic intake of cyclamates that rats ingested, they would have to consume 138-152 12-ounce bottles of soda daily (about 80 - 240 times the typical intake); 500 times the typical human consumption of sweeteners to match saccharin; 5 million pounds of beef liver for fifty years to ante up to DES; 613 12-ounce bottles of beer daily

during a lifetime (even men who beat their wives on Superbowl Sunday can't match this!) for safrole; and 28,000 pounds of apples daily for a decade for alar (but if this would keep Dr. Hillary and Mr. Bill out of healthcare, it might be worth a try!)<sup>1</sup> How can anyone get upset by such Chicken Little nonsense when the sky is not only not falling, but there aren't even any low clouds?

Yet *Green Rage* doesn't end its inanities. Lots of fringe groups are long on rage and short on reason. But *Green Rage* must have all other groups green with envy. Manes cites as apocalyptic the astonishing news that Michael Soule, founder of the Society of Conservation Biologists, uncovered. Soule has stumbled upon this profundity: "Vertebrate evolution may be at an end." Apparently this should come as a huge surprise. But it only exceeds in naivete Co-president Hillary's "politics of meaning" discourse earlier this year. Doesn't the second law of thermodynamics make such statements inevitable? The world is not getting better and better, but older and older. Call me old fashioned, but Keynes may have been right, once: In the end we're all dead, aren't we? Manes closes his excoriation of western civilization by pointing out that conventional environmentalism *a la* Teddy Roosevelt is dead. Mainstream environmental religion has to be expurgated. Audobon, Sierra Club, the Wilderness Society and others are laughed at, mocked, or held up to ridicule. The diasym Manes writes is, however, shrewd. He does not come right out with firebrands. Rather, he tells a story, sets up a straw dog, and then has one of these clubs walk over and try to feed it. The reader is left with only one conclusion: These groups aren't helping at all. They may be worse than doing nothing. Someone needs to do something, either by infiltrating them, or removing them.

The attempt to infiltrate these groups has been partly successful. More often these groups can be seen to side with more and more radical legislation. And their individual tactics are typically unmerciful. One young acquaintance of mine worked for the Sierra Club this summer. After promising her hundreds of dollars a week, she ended up, after five weeks, making only about \$80 for a fifty hour week. When she resigned, she was attacked not only as uncaring about the environment, but also as an aider and abettor of those destroying it. This is hardly atypical of true believers. Manes calls Earth Day April 22, 1970 as "one of the most remarkable public events in American political history."

Should readers get the idea, however, that these are quicksalvers who can be ignored, be forewarned. In a recent communique to the library where I work, a State of Kansas Wildlife Education Coordinator sent us boiler plate material about an education wildlife notebook. In the cover letter he wrote, "I leave you with this thought: 'Children who care about our earth today can change the world of tomorrow.'" When the insanity is this widespread and this far down the ladder, one may only conclude that it is thorough, pervasive, and triumphant.

*Green Rage* was written, of course, for true believers. The fact that Manes found a

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<sup>1</sup> For more information, see Dr. Elizabeth Whelan's excellent and informative "Mouse Terrorism: Pseudoscience and the Regulation of Environmental Chemicals", *Commonsense* 1 (3), Summer 1994, pp. 30-47.

mainstream publisher in Little, Brown should serve notice to the rest of us who wish some reason be injected into the ecology debate that the debate has been lost for now. What we must do is fight the sky-is-falling mentality with some level-headed antidotes. By understanding our adversary's arguments, our antidotes will have a more far-reaching outcome on the salubrity of our patient. While *Green Rage* will acquaint readers with those arguments, books such as Ron Bailey's *Eco-Scam* and Joseph Bast, Peter Hill, and Richard Rue's *Eco-Sanity: A Commonsense Guide to Environmentalism* and the late Dixie Lee Ray's *Environmental Overkill* are the right antidotes.