

~ SPECIAL ~ FEATURE ~

~ introducing the new book ~

GREENSPIRIT: PATH TO A NEW CONSCIOUSNESS

‘The definitive book on green spirituality...’

...featuring contributions from 29 inspirational writers, including Matthew Fox, Brian Swimme, Stephan Harding, Rabbi Jamie Korngold, Emma Restall Orr, John Travis MD, Cormac Cullinan, David Korten and Neil Douglas-Klotz.

Edited by Marian Van Eyk McCain

...with a Foreword by Satish Kumar

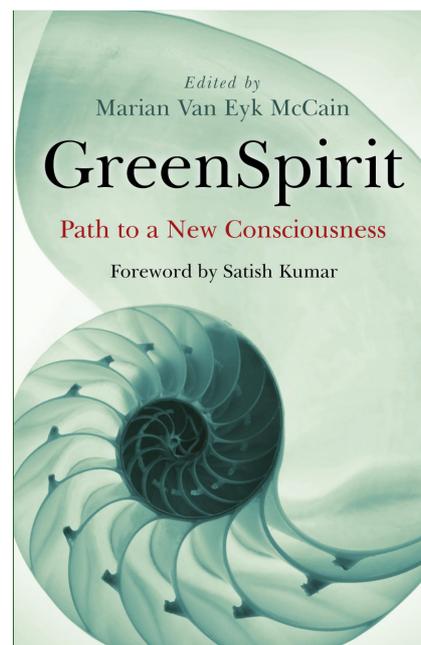
INTRODUCTION

Only by understanding the Universe as a vast, holistic system and Earth as a unit within it can we help restore balance to that unit.

Only by placing Earth and its ecosystems about which we now understand so much – at the centre of all our thinking can we avert ecological disaster.

Only by bringing our thinking back into balance with feeling, intuition and awareness and by grounding ourselves in a sense of the sacred in all things can we achieve a new level of consciousness.

Green spirituality is the key to a new, twenty-first century consciousness. And this book is the most comprehensive ever written on green spirituality.



The four short excerpts below are from the new book, *GreenSpirit*, in which the words and ideas of contemporary writers from a wide range of disciplines and wisdom traditions are brought together to create a comprehensive manual for eco-spiritual, green and sustainable 21st century living. .

Editor Marian Van Eyk McCain holds degrees in social work and east-west psychology. She was for many years a psychotherapist, health educator and workshop leader and is the author of five books. More information about Marian and the book, *GreenSpirit: Path to a New Consciousness*, follows the excerpts.

From the Editor's Introduction

About this book... Marian Van Eyk McCain

“... the book is divided into four parts. In the first, entitled ‘Understanding,’ we shall be looking at the various threads which have created the weave we call GreenSpirit. The first is cosmology. In describing this, we shall be drawing on the work of Thomas Berry and Brian Swimme, co-authors of *The Universe Story*, that masterful telling of the tale of our existence, from the ‘Big Bang’ onwards.

Another major thread is Creation Spirituality. In other words, a spirituality centered on the beauty and mystery of the world we see around us, rather than on some imaginal realm of gods and angels. Here we shall be turning to the thought and writings of Matthew Fox, the iconoclastic Christian priest who became unpopular with the Vatican for his insistence that the concept of ‘original sin’ needed to be replaced by one of ‘original blessing’ and who eventually left that church to become an Episcopalian instead.

A third thread is the thread of Deep Ecology: a way of appreciating the Earth and all its life forms by acknowledging their intrinsic value, as opposed to measuring their value on the basis of their usefulness—or otherwise—to human beings.

Then there is Gaia Theory: the discovery that our planet Earth, far from being merely a lifeless rock with a thin covering of air and water and life clinging to it like lichen on a stone, displays all the attributes of a living organism, including the ability to self-regulate.

Lastly, there is Ecopsychology. This is a way of understanding ourselves and our psyches in terms of our relationship with Nature, both around us and, just as importantly, within us.

In the second part of the book, ‘Spiritual Pathways,’ we examine the ways in which all these ideas fit together with some of the traditional religions and how each of those may be practiced from a GreenSpirit orientation.

Part III, ‘Greening Our Culture,’ is concerned with how we might bring—and indeed are already beginning to bring—GreenSpirit thinking to bear on the different institutions and sectors of human society, such as law, medicine, education, politics, economics, design and so on.

Finally, in Part IV, ‘Walking our Talk,’ we discuss the practicalities of living a GreenSpirit lifestyle. This is a lifestyle in which ecologically-minded behaviors such as simple living, ‘downshifting,’ recycling, frugality and so on all flow from a pure and boundless love of the Earth rather than from fear or because some individual, institution or government tells us it is the right thing to do.

Together, this collection of writings presents, for the first time in one volume, a comprehensive picture of GreenSpirit both as an organization and as a philosophy of life. From these pages you will discover what GreenSpirit is, what it stands for and how it can provide a way out of our current dilemmas and into a joyous, sustainable, peaceful and harmonious future.”

From the section entitled 'Understanding Ourselves'



'The Crack in Everything' ... Isabel Clarke

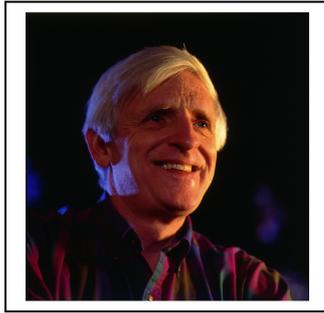
“How come human beings are so clever, and at the same time, so stupid? This question is vital to the joint survival of ourselves and our planet as we know it. Our cleverness is obvious in the way we have used our ability to control our environment to our own ends; to eliminate so many uncertainties and discomforts from our daily life. Our stupidity is evident in the way that this activity has increasingly entailed devastating side effects for the planet on which we—and more importantly, our descendants—depend for sustenance and survival. We love our children. So how come we are content to condemn them and their children to a ruined Earth?

Something is the matter with the way we relate to our planet, to our descendents and indeed, to ourselves and each other. An international conference to tackle climate change seems to illustrate this only too clearly. No-one can now dispute the facts, but can we get together and agree an immediate way forward, without feeling taken advantage of, without trying to score points? So far, the only way to avert deadlock has been to delay any real steps towards the declared goal.

The general irrationality of human behavior has been noted from the time of Plato (and no doubt, before). Recent understanding of the way in which the brain is wired up enables us to get some sort of a handle on this. We fail to act in straightforward, rational ways, because our rational, logical, faculty is only one part of the complex apparatus that is a human being, and it is not necessarily the most important part, or the one that is in charge....

...An embodied spiritual practice can facilitate healing the splits and help us open up to parts of our selves, our bodies and our feelings that we have rejected or denied, so that we can reconnect with the wholeness of our human animal nature. The felt sense, as a means through which we experience ourselves as organisms, offers a way we can learn to hear the Earth 'speak,' to listen to our instinctual voice and learn again to trust the wisdom of the soft animal body. When we embrace the reality of our experience, whatever this may be, we open to a deeper connection with our bodies, with Nature and with Spirit. Energy flows and we become more fully alive. As we reconnect, a felt sense of care for ourselves, for others, and for the Earth may arise naturally. Through this process of embodiment and integration of all parts of ourselves, we may then reclaim our whole human animal nature and our connection with the Earth.”

From the section entitled: 'Spiritual Pathways'



'Something is Amiss in the World of Religion' ... Matthew Fox

"Religion is in crisis the world over.

Islam has a problem, Christianity has a problem, Hinduism has a problem, Buddhism has a problem, the indigenous people have their problems, and of course the solution to religion's problems has always been spirituality, because that is the heart and the essence of any religion when it is being true to itself. Jesus came along at a time when his religion was in trouble. As Buddha came along at a time when Hinduism was in trouble, Martin Luther King came along in a time when Christianity in America was in trouble and Gandhi came along in a time when Hinduism was in trouble, etcetera. So we're living in a time when the religious consciousness of humanity has to wake up, has to be reinvented, reborn, simplified and the name for simplification of religion has been spirituality. We have to carry spirituality much more lightly into the twenty first century. We don't have to carry 2,000 years of religious history on our backs in the West. In fact we can't afford to. There is not enough time left for our species. We have to simplify, simplify, simplify, not just our economic lives but our religious lives....

...We are made for the universe itself. Our souls are cosmic in size but when we live in a culture that through the industrial and the modern age has set up corporations, fast food, plastic, malls, as somehow the archetypal temples for our souls, what really happens is that our souls shrink. We become smaller than we really are and far smaller than our ancestors were because they related to the universe.

We now live in an era where Father Sky can be responded to once again and what we're learning about Father Sky today is phenomenal, thanks to the Hubble telescope and other explorations. During the modern age we were told that the universe was essentially a machine. The sky was a junkyard for machine parts and it was dead and inert out there and I think in that context we shrank our souls. Especially men, because we had no place to invest in our greatness. I think violence and war achieved such huge proportions in human history because we were no longer connected to the universe. Our psyches had no cosmic bride, no cosmic husband to relate to...."

From the section entitled 'Walking our Talk'

'The Theory of Anyway' ... Sharon Astyk and Pat Meadows

“At least five of the world's great religions (Judaism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam and Hinduism) stress ‘the repair of the world’. Judaism probably says it most clearly. The Hebrew expression is *Tikkun Olam* - the repair of the world - and this is an obligation of observant Jews.

In Buddhism, the same idea is beautifully expressed in ‘The Bodhisattva's Vow,’ by Shantideva, written in the 8th Century CE, which contains this line: ‘For as long as space endures and for as long as living beings remain, until then may I too abide to dispel the misery of the world.’

Christianity has Jesus' exhortation to his followers: ‘Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.’ This can be extended to environmental causes, and Peak Oil as, obviously, others would enjoy clean air and sufficient resources to enable them to live decently.

Hinduism states ‘This is the sum of duty; do naught onto others what you would not have them do unto you,’ from the Mahabharata, (5:15:17) (ca. 500BCE), and Mohammed spoke to Islam saying ‘Hurt no one so that no one may hurt you,’ (c. 571 – 632 CE) in The Farewell Sermon. The Bahá’i faith teaches ‘Ascribe not to any soul that which thou wouldst not have ascribed to thee, and say not that which thou doest not. Blessed is he who prefers his brother before himself,’ (Tablets of Baha’u’llah 6.71).

However, as citizens of this planet, 95% of what is needed to resolve the coming crisis in energy depletion, or climate change or whatever, is what we should do *anyway*. Which is why we call this ‘The Theory of Anyway.’

Living more simply, more frugally, using less, leaving reserves for others, reconnecting with our food and our community, these are things we should all be doing because they are the right thing to do on many levels. That they also have the potential to save our lives is merely a side benefit (a big one, though).

This is a deeply powerful way of thinking because it is a deeply moral way of thinking - we would like to think of ourselves as moral people, but we tend to think of moral questions as the obvious ones ‘should I steal or pay?’ ‘Should I hit or talk?’ But the real and most essential moral questions of our lives are the questions we rarely ask of the things we do every day, ‘Should I eat this?’ ‘Where should I live and how?’ ‘What should I wear?’ ‘How should I keep warm/cool?’ We think of these questions as foregone conclusions - I should keep warm X way because that’s the kind of furnace I have, or I should eat this because that’s what’s in the grocery store. The Theory of Anyway turns this around, and points out that what we do, the way we live, must pass ethical muster first - we must always ask the question ‘Is this contributing to the repair of the world, or its destruction?’”

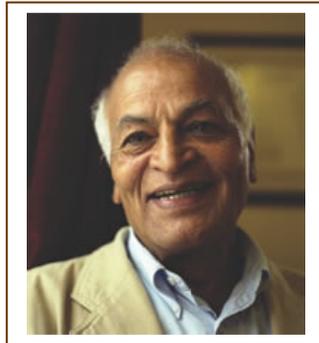
About the Editor



Editor Marian Van Eyk McCain holds a BSW from the University of Melbourne and an MA in East-West Psychology from CIIS, San Francisco. She is the author of *Transformation through Menopause* (Bergin & Garvey 1991), written for women who seek a deep understanding of their menopause process, *Elderwoman: Reap the wisdom, feel the power, embrace the joy* (Findhorn Press, 2002), an inspirational 'trail guide' for the third age journey, *The Lilypad List: 7 steps to the simple life* (Findhorn Press, 2004) and several works of fiction. Retired from private practice as a transpersonal psychotherapist, adult education tutor and workshop leader since 1996, Marian is a free-lance writer, columnist, book reviewer, blogger, editor of 'The Elderwoman Newsletter' and co-editor of the 'GreenSpirit Journal.'

Visit her main website at <http://www.elderwoman.org>

About the Book



From the Foreword, by Satish Kumar

Peace Pilgrim, Author and Editor of 'Resurgence' Magazine

“..... GreenSpirit is a movement as well as a philosophy. It brings East and West together. Hinduism, Buddhism and Taoism hold a spiritual view of nature. They believe in the unity of all life; human and non-human life are made of the same existential reality, we are all connected, we are all related, there is no separation, there is no dualism. The American Indians, the aboriginal culture of Australia and other

indigenous traditions have a similar world view: Nature does not belong to humans, humans belong to Nature, humans *are* Nature, there is no distinction. For me, God is not a person who created the world in six days in a historical time and then disappeared behind the clouds somewhere away from this world and left us to our fate. For me, God is not a creator in the past. The creator and creation are a continuous process and this process in itself is God. Nature is God. Hindus call creation the Dance of Shiva; the dance and the dancer cannot be separated. We are all dancers and we are the dance; we are all creators and also the creation. Nature is sacred, Nature is intelligent, Nature is alive. All life has intrinsic value and has a right to live. From this perspective, Deep Ecology and GreenSpirit share a common ground.

I am delighted that Marian Van Eyk McCain has brought many strands of ecology, spirituality and wholeness together. Her book *GreenSpirit: Path to a New Consciousness*, is like Ikebana, the Japanese art of flower arrangement. The essays brought together in this book represent many shapes, colors, forms; they are like beautiful flowers, beautifully composed. I am confident that the book will act like a guide to many who are seeking a right relationship between the human spirit and the natural world.”

GREENSPIRIT: PATH TO A NEW CONSCIOUSNESS

Edited by Marian Van Eyk McCain

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(ISBN: 978-1-84694-290-7, 293 pages, soft cover, US\$24.95, UK £11.99)

Available through most bookstores and all the main online ones. (And for readers in England the book is available with P&P included through GreenSpirit Books on:

<http://www.greenspirit.org.uk/books/index.htm?cat16.htm#1376>

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ENDORSEMENTS

'GreenSpirit: Path to a New Consciousness' offers numerous healing and inspiring insights; notably, that Earth and the universe are primary divine Revelation, a truth to be transmitted to our children as early and effectively as possible.

~ **Thomas Berry**, author of *Dream of the Earth, The Great Work*

This is a book for anyone who hungers for a spirituality relevant to our times.

~ **Chris Johnstone**, author of *Find Your Power*

A valuable guide to some of the deepest thinking on the connections between ecology and spirituality. Never before have so many important ideas on these subjects been assembled between the covers of a single book.

~ **Rupert Sheldrake, Ph.D.**, biologist and author of *A New Science of Life*

Think of 'GreenSpirit' as a vade mecum, namely, those insightful books of guidance known in all the traditions that fit in the pocket and 'went with a person' in the walk through life as a summary of wisdom teachings. GreenSpirit certainly aims to 'walk the talk,' and, while doing so, provides that good companion we all hope to find.

~ **John Grim**, Co-Director, Forum on Religion and Ecology, Yale University

A very different world awaits us. Old norms are evaporating; new realities are taking hold. Navigating the most profound transition in the history of humankind will require extraordinary resourcefulness – with a far greater emphasis on spirituality than ever before. 'GreenSpirit' celebrates the diversity and creativity of many of those shaping that greener consciousness.

~ **Jonathon Porritt**, Founder Director, Forum for the Future; Chairman, UK Sustainable Development Commission

'GreenSpirit' speaks to the heart. It beckons us into birthing a new consciousness and culture. Experienced practitioners and thinkers explore here the groundbreaking shift from anthropocentric to ecocentric ways of thinking and living. This is an inspiring vision of how cosmos, earth, and all of life, including the human, form one great, interconnected Whole – a vision to energise us into a more concretely rooted, more action-oriented spirituality that sustains a wholesome life, and encourages the flourishing of people and planet. May this treasure trove of a book with its words of wisdom and beauty, and its helpful practical advice, reach many people and guide them into simpler, more meaningful ways of living within the great community of Life.

~ **Ursula King**, Professor Emerita of Theology and Religious Studies, University of Bristol.

To actualize the immense opportunities in this planetary hour of diverse crises requires much more of us than adjustments in politics, business, and energy production. We are being asked – by life itself – to reinvent ourselves as a species, to learn again the everyday dance of sacred reciprocity with creatures, crops, and wild flora, with wind, water, and stars, and to rediscover the myths, mysteries, and stages of optimal human development; but this time with our awareness grounded in the unfolding, mystical story of our divine, evolving universe. 'GreenSpirit', with contributions from a host of artisans of cultural transformation, skillfully interweaves the strands of our new story, a new consciousness, renewed cultures, and our path to becoming fully human. Marian Van Eyk McCain has crafted an insightful and wide-ranging handbook to the promises and potentials of this new century.

~ **Bill Plotkin, Ph.D.**, author of *Soulcraft* and *Nature and the Human Soul*

We have all heard about the massive assault on our life-support systems. Yet it has not changed our behaviour except in rather trivial ways. How will we humans change our thinking and our behaviour to bring our technologies and lifestyles into harmony with the biological constraints of Earthly existence? Since our thinking and behaviour are underpinned by our spiritual beliefs and understandings, I believe that what we need is a spiritual revolution. And this book is part of exactly the kind of revolution that we need.

~ **John Seed**, Founder and Director of the Rainforest Information Centre.

To address the many social and environmental crises we face today, we urgently need holistic, human-scale solutions. 'GreenSpirit' is an inspiring call to reconnect our minds and hearts with practical, grassroots action.

~ **Helena Norberg-Hodge**, Founder and Director of the International Society for Ecology and Culture.

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www.greenspirit.org.uk