Marine ecological history and the Prophetic Imagination

Prophets arise under conditions of oppression, grief, anger and despair. The *Prophetic Imagination* combines a radical critique of the present with hope of renewal when there are no grounds for hope. Projects such as the 'History of Marine Animal Populations' and Sea Around Us are prophetic. They predict depleted oceans, devastated Indigenous and small scale fishers, lost incomes and general wrath to come. They excoriate the conversion of long-lived fish populations to more profitable investments, the subsidies driving the marine face of footloose capital disbursed, ironically by the nations that set food security targets. They document the damage and loss in papers, tables and graphs, but lack the 'prophetic voice'—the language of love, loss, mourning, grief and shame. They offer little that is radically new; nothing to liberate fleet owners from accumulated capital investment that demands to be fed; nothing to liberate the desperately poor from saving their children from starvation at the expense of fish populations that shaped their societies over millennia. We cannot ask scientists to adopt the tropes of theology, where every extinction is "the loss of a mode of divine presence"[i] or to describe dams blocking Pacific salmon runs as "Uncreating the primordial waters' response to the touch of the Spirit of God[ii]." They would lose all credit. We need to expand the collaboration to welcome Indigenous and mainstream spiritual leaders, artists, poets and painters. Together we can imagine a future where fish and human communities flourish. Together we can mobilize support for a just way to remove corporate fleets from the world ocean (whatever injustices they may have inflicted). A modest amount compared to the recent bank bailout might just turn the wit and wisdom of the maritime community from fighting the loss of investment to solutions we cannot at present imagine.

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[i] Thomas Berry: *Befriending the Earth*.
[ii] David James Duncan: *My Story as Told by Water*.