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Green Space, Green Time: The Way of Science. By CONNIE BARLOW. New York: Springer-Verlag, 1997. 329 pages. $25.00.

For Connie Barlow—naturalist, science writer, and self-styled "enthusiast" of science—the time is ripe for an "extension" of science into realms of meaning and value. Her new book offers a framework, and no little inspiration, for this enterprise. She examines "the way of science" as a "spiritual path" capable of cultivating "ecoreligious experience" and nurturing a "greening of one's deepest worldviews" (pp. 15, 19, 20). In the process, Barlow provides a kind of benchmark in the environmental movement, suggesting how a green consciousness might now fully realize its religious character.

To move toward a synthesis of environmental science, religion, and ethics, Barlow combines an exposition of the sciences with conversations with scientists. As a knowledgeable amateur (in the traditional sense of that word), Barlow provides an accessible and often passionate discussion of several life sciences. She covers evolutionary and molecular biology and sociobiology, along with geochemistry, geophysiology, ecology, and cosmology. Along the way, her conversations with chosen experts enliven professional opinions with personal stories as she consistently demands an answer to the "religious question" (for example, p. 152). As a seeker herself, Barlow wants to know what to make of science spiritually (p. 198). As a practicing member of the Unitarian Universalist church, she offers practical suggestions for celebrating nature as known by science. Ultimately, her approach creates a style of journalism that is breezy, even whimsical at times, and scientifically sound. She herself emerges as a kind of mediator between specialist and layperson, interpreting the science in pursuit of a "spirituality that is Earth-centered" (p. 233). Her personal search for a "science-based religion" becomes a subtle, background motif for the book (p. 31). In all this, Barlow at least approaches her grand objective to motivate as well as instruct, to find meaning in science in a way that can "affect our psychological states, our commitment to credos of ultimate value, our sense of our own role on Earth and in the cosmos" (pp. 227–28).

Barlow begins by offering a scientific account of ecoreligious sensibility. Drawing upon the work of E. O. Wilson (who, with Julian Huxley, becomes a sagelike figure in this account), she anchors a universal "sense of the sacred" in an innate

"religious capacity"—an evolved, observable urge for meaning and value. Human beings can satisfy this "mythopoeic drive" in a number of ways. Barlow aims to direct it toward a scientifically informed green worldview in which "ecological concern" is infused with a "vision of the sacred" (p. 12).

The task of the book then becomes one of developing the core beliefs of an ecoreligious creed. Barlow first establishes the "epic of evolution" as the grand narrative for the new faith. The "evolutionary epic" (a term coined by Wilson and a topic of a number of recent conferences on science and religion) translates the accumulated knowledge of the sciences into a creation story. This science-based myth subsequently provides a framework for four fundamental affirmations: belief in the continuous, unfolding "pageant of life"; the fact and value of the "diversity of life"; appreciation of "the richness and integrity of bioregions"; and a perception of the Earth as "Gaia"—a self-regulating, self-organizing living system (pp. 236–37). In a concluding chapter, Barlow adds a fifth tenet that defines the place of *Homo sapiens* in the story. Responding to a question from her niece about the value of human beings, and to charges of misanthropy in an ecocentric view of life, Barlow describes human beings as "the meaning-makers" of the cosmos. It is a sense of the self that seems to confirm the role of scientist-as-seeker (p. 261).

Each chapter is devoted to developing one tenet of the creed. In each case, Barlow introduces us to scientists and other scholars whom she considers "visionaries" and "prime movers" in an "eco-religious movement" (p. 12). Her presentation of the *evolutionary epic* is accompanied by snippets from her "conversation with catalysts." Physicist Brian Swimme and cell biologist Ursula Goodenough, among others, reveal their professional and personal interests in getting the story out (pp. 57–79). Barlow's examination of *biodiversity* includes an interview with Diane Ackerman, who, as "nature writer" and "Earth ecstatic," exemplifies a religious identity that celebrates a relatedness to all living things (pp. 106, 108). In this context, Barlow proposes another of Wilson's ideas, *biophilia*, as a key spiritual trait in a science-informed faith. As an evolved love of life for life, biophilia counters the view of nature as a mere struggle for existence. In *bioregionalism*, Barlow links ecology, "the science of relationships," with "the green equivalent of multiculturalism . . . a knowledgeable and loving attachment to one's home region" (p. 122). Here Barlow examines the pivotal role of "keystone species" in particular ecosystems. She also acknowledges certain "polarities" in public policy debates over whether to protect near-pristine bioregions or restore ravaged areas, to intervene in "natural" processes or leave well enough alone (p. 145). Finally, her examination of the Gaia hypothesis provides a global scale for an Earth-centered spirituality. Her conversations here link an emerging science of geophysiology with the perception of life as a planetary phenomenon and understanding of the Earth as a self-organizing *biosphere*. Key proponents of a gaian perspective appear, including James Lovelock and Lynn Margulis.

In a real sense, Barlow's book answers recent calls for a theology of nature. Reminiscent of Auguste Comte's fully developed Religion of Humanity, Barlow sketches a bona fide Religion of Nature. She provides a reading of the text of Nature in which "the diversity of life is scripture," and to "behold another species with reverence is no less a religious act than to read the Bible in a pious frame of mind" (p. 242). She offers specific ways of directing that natural piety in prayers and rituals that are informed by science. She introduces the sages, if not the priests

and priestesses, of this new faith and new hope while clearly indicating the ethical demands on believers. Finally, throughout the text she evinces a kind of evangelical urgency to instruct the young, to educate the next generation in "joyful, science-based cosmologies that nurture green values systems" (p. 240). This book, then, is a kind of Talmud for a new religion. It provides commentary on the sacred text, offering guidance and consolation to those in search of a relevant faith. As such, the book is both a comfort and a challenge to traditional religion. While it interprets science in ways affirming the spiritual life, it also proposes a substitute faith. In fact, an unresolved tension in the book pits an apparent sympathy with religion against a critique of religions that seem overly committed to the transcendent in theology and overly anthropocentric in ethics.

Who, then, should read this book? In the first place, *Green Space, Green Time* has intrinsic value as a popularization of the life sciences. Moreover, it introduces some of the literature and personalities involved in a developing science-religion community. In addition, students of religion should find the book an interesting, frank account of an emerging new religion. Fundamentally, though, the book seems designed for the college educated who somehow share Barlow's search for a spiritual life that is ecologically sensitive, scientifically informed, and religiously mature, capable of substituting for a traditional faith. I myself am considering passing the book along to a geologist friend who, in discussing her research in the Everglades, saw the need for representatives of religion and science to collaborate in public policy debates. Her own concern to reconcile her limited role as scientist with a deep commitment to the environment—itself grounded in a long-standing and now scientifically informed sense of the interconnectedness of all life—finds rather full expression in Barlow's way of science.

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