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Review of *A Greener Faith: Religious Environmentalism and Our Planet's Future* by Roger S. Gottlieb

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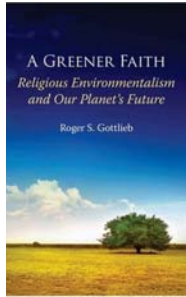
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Reviews**A Greener Faith: Religious Environmentalism and Our Planet's Future**

Roger S. Gottlieb
ISBN: 0195176480
Oxford University Press 2006

One arena with the most diverse wealth of ideas is environmentalism. The environmental consequences experienced since the beginning of the industrial revolution and throughout the entire post-Fordian era have raised genuine concerns on how to combine the commodities of modernity with sustainability. These concerns have been discussed from different positions, one of which is Religious Environmentalism.

Presented by Roger S. Gottlieb as a proselytizing document written from a militant's point of view, Religious Environmentalism finds its foundation in the idea that, either by probability or divine intervention, the existence of the entire universe must be seen as a miracle. Humanity must be seen as the guardian of the universal miracle, the steward of natural resources and the slayer of environmental crises.

In the introduction, the author solves the meta-ethical question "What is goodness?" by claiming that goodness is the ecumenical God and all that is created by Him. In order to preserve goodness, Gottlieb suggests that "occidental" morals must shift into a more spiritual and conscious appreciation of the world that surrounds us. To attain the moral shift, the author makes it clear that Religious Environmentalism has to rise into a strong political voice.

A Marxist-oriented philosopher himself, Gottlieb takes some ideas from World Systems Theory and modifies the dialectic situation between developed and developing countries by saying that the imperialism lays far beyond economics and power, placing it in the sin category. *A Greener Faith* proposes a bold way of looking at conservationism based on a reinterpretation of sacred texts from various monotheistic religions, and a later politicization of the reinterpretation. I make special emphasis in the word bold, because of the tremendous impact that the approach has on three main points: consumerism, global neoliberalism, and religious fundamentalism. The former position discloses the potential impact that Religious Environmentalism may have over consumption patterns, and, in turn, over political economy. Meanwhile, by reinterpreting the texts of several religious traditions, Religious Environmentalism questions the validity of literal or traditional interpretations of the writings, and by such, the whole legitimacy of religious authorities and ecclesiastic systems. It is precisely these three points that make the book appealing to social scientists who should be delighted by the fact that, by attacking the "dialectical sin", the book represents an open antagonism to savage capital and globalizing processes.

Gottlieb offers a fun to argue with, and "interesting to think about" position on how to accost the environmental state of the planet from a holistic point of view. Social scientists will surely argue against some of Gottlieb's personal judgments on social inequity and the environmental state of the planet. However, I am still convinced that readers will appreciate the revolutionary impact that the trend of Religious Environmentalism can have over politics, conservation, economics, and ethics. Gottlieb gives witness the rise of a new political voice for the global times to come, in which humanity will suffer major moral, political, and economic shifts while trying to harmonize the different views of a global society.

Review by Nemer E. Narchi, Department of Anthropology at the University of Georgia.