

Reviews and Commentary regarding  
*The Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature*

(Bron Taylor, Ed. in Chief, Thoemmes/Continuum, 2005).

**The following is a “highly recommended” review from *Choice: Current Reviews for Academic Libraries* (Issue: 2005 November)<sup>1</sup>**

The ambition, scope, and caliber of this set establish it immediately as a crucial resource for study in the field. It offers nearly 1,000 entries from more than 500 contributors. Yet what is at least equally valuable here is the exceptional effort that was made to incorporate perspectives from as many countries and cultures as possible, and the thoughtful adoption of alternate entry formats for subjects requiring longer (or otherwise nonstandard) treatment. Examples include an eight-part essay of more than 50 pages on Christianity; four pages each on the Islamic basis for environmental protection and the Sierra Club; and two pages on Buckminster Fuller.

Bibliographies (both general and article-specific), cross-references, and indexes are generous. This work serves as a model in several ways. Although it takes a general area of study that at first glance might not appear to be of broad interest, it is certain to draw new readers in through its sheer usability and richness of content. Furthermore, its thoughtful design accommodates scholars with either a cursory interest in a particular subject or a more expansive one. In these and other ways, this work offers considerably more than meets the eye. **Summing Up:** Highly recommended. Lower-level undergraduates and above; general readers. – *D. R. Stewart, Luther Seminary*

**The following is a featured or “starred,” highly recommended review in Library Journal, August 2005**

The study of religion and the environment has been variously referred to as ecotheology, cultural ecology, ecological anthropology, or religious environmentalism. Call it what you will, this interdisciplinary field now has an outstanding encyclopedia that impressively reflects the breadth and depth of its global subject matter. Chief editor Taylor (religion & nature, Univ. of Florida) has assembled 518 international and multicultural contributors to produce more than 1000 entries that range widely and thoughtfully over the intersection of human cultures, spiritual beliefs, and ecological concerns. The great majority of entries are scholarly, peer-reviewed pieces, often written by highly distinguished leaders in the field, that cover people, places, and organizations as well as concepts. A significantly smaller number are identified as Scholarly Perspective or Practitioner entries. In Scholarly Perspective entries, prominent writers offer personal reflections on diverse topics (e.g., "Abortion," "The Sacred and the Modern World"); Practitioner entries are reflections by people actively engaged in a particular ecospiritual activity ("Depth Ecology," "What Would Jesus Drive?"). Together, these types of entries give this work a sense of intimacy and nuance important in a field with both scholarly and personal dimensions. Extensive cross-referencing allows the reader to pursue particular threads in great depth. Bottom Line On the study of ecotheology, other existing encyclopedias of religion or ecology cannot substitute for this excellent title, the first of its kind. It will no doubt remain an essential reference source on the subject for many years to come. Highly recommended for public, academic, and special libraries.-Nadine Cohen-Baker, Student Learning Ctr., Univ. of Georgia

## From Stephen J. Shaw's review in the *American Reference Books Annual 2006*

To say that this is an indispensable reference work is an understatement. [Bron] Taylor's *Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature* (ERN) is an impressive two-volume collation of esoteric material dealing with the rich interpenetration of religion and ecology. This expansive collection is akin to the perfect present; until you see it, you could never imagine how much you wanted it. This is an astonishingly useful reference book for multiple disciplines including religion, philosophy, history, interdisciplinary studies, and ecology. . .

The ERN's length allows not only for longer articles than one might find in comparable titles, but far more classificatory detail . . .

There are many beautiful, serendipitous links that lead in thought-provoking paths [and] provide for an almost online experience, replete with deeply embedded hyperlinks.

There are many beautiful, serendipitous links that lead in thought-provoking paths. . . . Superbly edited and carefully crafted, the ERN is essential.

## From Jane Goodall . . .

"This is a remarkable encyclopedia that explores our spiritual connections to nature in countless ways, and describes our ever more urgent efforts to create a more compassionate and environmentally sustainable world. It tackles the tough questions: will the emergent "greening" of religion, and our efforts to leave ever lighter ecological footprints in our daily lives, spread rapidly enough around the globe to halt our heedless destruction of nature and heal some of the scars we have inflicted, before it is too late? Many of the contributions reflect my conviction that there is, indeed, reason for hope. The *Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature* is a scholarly and critical resource for anyone who cares about the future of planet Earth, and wonders how we might more effectively work together to save our beautiful world for future generations."

Jane Goodall PhD, DBE  
Founder - the Jane Goodall Institute  
& UN Messenger of Peace [www.janegoodall.org](http://www.janegoodall.org)

## From Roger Gottlieb

. . . *The Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature* covers the entire field with, well, encyclopedic scope. Comprising two very large volumes, 1.5 million words, and a hefty price tag, the ERN is not the kind of thing most people will pick up and read from cover to cover. However, **it is a breathtakingly valuable, truly multicultural reference work, indispensable for libraries, religious institutions, and environmental organizations.** In it you will find nearly one thousand detailed, scholarly, and surprisingly well-written essays on everything from "Abbey, Edward" (one of America's premier fiction and nonfiction radical environmental writers) to "Zulu Culture." The ERN's editors have cast a very wide net, interpreting "nature" to include all aspects of contemporary environmentalism and ecology and "religion" to encompass a wide variety of moral, political, social, aesthetic, and traditional perspectives. Many of the contributors are themselves highly distinguished . . . Authors of the many selections on Christianity, for instance, include pioneering ecotheologians and ethicists Jürgen Moltmann, H. Paul Santmire, Jay McDaniel, and James Nash, environmental journalist and activist Bill McKibben (author of the classic *The End of Nature*), and a brief excerpt from John Calvin.

[Roger Gottlieb](#)  
Editor, *This Sacred Earth* (1997), from "Religion and Ecology" review essay in *Tikkun* 19(5, 2004): 77-80.

### **From Bill McKibben**

This massive undertaking documents the impressive groundswell of connection between environmentalism and religion, and lays clear the future possibilities. As one scientist after another has made clear, a habitable planet depends on this collaboration bearing fruit – so bravo for this essential document!

[Bill McKibben](#)

Visiting Scholar in Environmental Studies  
Middlebury College  
Author, [The End of Nature](#)

### **From Holmes Rolston**

This encyclopedia will become the essential reference in the critical important dialogue between religious faiths and environmental concern. Quite impressive in scope with 1,000 entries by over 500 authorities, both scholars and activists, it is especially commendable for bridging religious conviction to environmental ethics, science, and policy, across local, regional, and global levels.

[Holmes Rolston, III](#)

University Distinguished Professor and  
Professor of Philosophy  
Colorado State University  
Templeton Prize Winner, 2003

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<sup>i</sup> A publication of the Association of College and Research Libraries. Editorial Offices: 100 Riverview Center, Middletown, CT 06457-3445 [www.choicemag.org](http://www.choicemag.org)