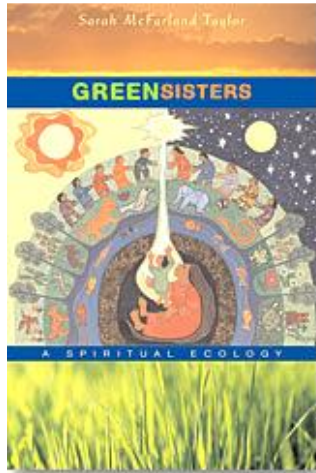


BOOK REVIEW

Taylor, Sarah McFarland. *Green Sisters: A Spiritual Ecology*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2007.



Green sisters are environmentally active Catholic nuns who are working to heal the earth as they cultivate new forms of religious culture. Sarah McFarland Taylor approaches this world as an "intimate outsider". Neither Catholic nor a member of a religious order, she is a scholar - Assistant Professor in the Department of Religion at Northwestern University, Illinois - well versed in both ethnography and American religious history.

Green Sisters provides insights into the lives and motivations of the growing number of sisters in North America who are creating community-supported organic gardens in place of their manicured lawns; building alternative housing structures and hermitages from renewable materials; adopting the green technology of composting toilets, solar panels, fluorescent lighting, and hybrid vehicles; and turning their community properties into land trusts with wildlife sanctuaries.

Taylor's research involved active participation (among other tasks: digging potatoes, mulching, weeding and turning vegetable beds), on-site observation, personal interviews with a number of the green sisters, and extensive electronic communication with many others. These women are clearly passionate about their convictions; they are practical, down-to-earth, frequently highly educated, and deeply committed to the earth and its sustainability.

In this study Taylor gives a firsthand understanding of the practice and experience of these women, whose lives bring together Catholicism and ecology, orthodoxy and activism, traditional theology and a passionate mission to save the planet. As green sisters explore ways of living a meaningful religious life in the face of increased cultural diversity and ecological crisis, their story offers hope for the future - and for a deeper understanding of the connections between women, religion, ecology and culture.

The book covers both the theory and practice of "greening the earth"; explores the role of "green sisters" and religious life in an ecological age and their relationship to other emerging earth-centred movements; provides insights into the prayer and ritual life of the sisters; and offers some pointers to the future.

Green Sisters is an academic work of wide-ranging research and scholarship, but it should appeal to any reader who is interested in environmental activism, nature mysticism, social justice, feminism, Catholicism, or monasticism.