



GET THEE TO A SHRUBBERY

by Garrett Gleeson

Despite an appreciation for the work of Bill Nye and a sentimental attachment to the Coldplay song, I am not a scientist. Furthermore, as my parents, sisters, girlfriend, and local liquor store clerk can affirm, I am also not a member of the clergy. That being said, I do not hesitate to speak authoritatively on either science or religion because, after all, I am an American, and I am righteous.

Traditionally, many accidents have occurred at the intersection of science and religion. Rarely have religious leaders embraced the foremost science of their day, and scientists have had a tenuous relationship with the Church. For this reason, the movement to label environmentalism as a religion has seemed particularly peculiar.

Esteemed scientist, er, science-fiction writer Michael Crichton branded environmentalism as a religion in a 2003 speech in San Francisco. He equated organic foods to communion and sustainability to salvation. His evaluation of the environmentalist movement became a rallying call for the “anti-environmentalist” community, who subsequently blogged, posted, texted, and reported (on Fox News) about the “religion” of environmentalism. While much of Crichton’s speech was patently absurd, his message was not wholly without merit.

Isms, in my opinion, are not good. A person should not believe in an *-ism* — he should believe in himself.

—Ferris Bueller, *Ferris Bueller’s Day Off*

Environmentalists, like members of traditional religions, are concerned for the country and the world in which they live. Both groups have certain beliefs regarding existence, man’s role in the world, and our responsibility to one another. Both seek to effect change and make the world a better place. Both groups adhere to a code that governs their behavior and wish for others to do the same. These elements are all very much in step with the role of traditional religion and, in and of themselves, are not particularly bad things.

Problems, however, do arise as a result of too many people within the environmentalist community thinking similarly (or engaging in groupthink per the parlance of our time). It creates an atrophy of new ideas and a codification of old ones. This may be a desired result in traditional religion, but it is a matter of heresy in science. In environmentalism, it is essential to have a wealth of perspectives and new ideas, devoid of agendas, about what is best for the Earth and its inhabitants.

Modern examples of the codification of old ideas include the continued implementation of widespread recycling programs despite their limited effectiveness and a weariness to further explore nuclear energy as a viable alternative to fossil energy. Both of these topics are matters of debate and exploration, but both should be debated and explored, not stifled by an old guard and protected by their followers.

New concepts, such as carbon captures or carbon vents, may not follow the traditional tenets of conservatism, but that does not mean that they are not worthy of consideration and further study.

A veritable forest of ideas exists in the struggle for a “greener” Earth. It is essential that we not lose the forest for the trees in our search. Take it from an authority. ■