

framework for theists who have at various times reconciled their theology with concepts such as the eternity of the universe and determinism. The dominant nineteenth-century paradigm of ether theory, for example, although thoroughly materialistic in one sense, was readily made compatible with various versions of cosmic design and religion.

Barr explores his topics with clarity and occasional insight; readers should note, however, that his discussion is popular and polemical rather than scholarly and historical.

STEPHEN P. WELDON

Michel Bess. *The Light-Green Society: Ecology and Technological Modernity in France, 1960–2000.* xix + 369 pp., illus., bibl., index. Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 2003. \$18, £13 (paper).

There are few historical studies of environmentalism in France, and Michel Bess's interesting book provides a remedy that will surely intrigue English-reading historians. It shows how France has changed to become a "greener" society through environmentally sensitive landscape policies, legislation, and technology.

Readers of *Isis* may recall the controversial testing of nuclear weapons on the French Polynesian island of Moruroa in 1995. Refusing to test their weapons on domestic soil, the French government bombed the interior of this remote island in a display of brute power aimed at Polynesian anticolonialists and environmentalists. The French fought them head-on, sinking a Greenpeace boat, killing an activist, and using military force to oppress the Polynesians. As a result, Bess notes, "the French do not enjoy a very positive image in the eyes of the world's green activists" (p. 13). The building of numerous nuclear power plants, the polluting Concorde, and other controversial development projects have hardly been helpful in promoting France as an environmentally friendly nation.

Despite all this, Bess argues that over the last forty years France has become a "light-green society." He provides a history of how conflicting forces within French political culture found common ground in environmentally friendly technologies, landscapes, and political structures. As the radical counterculture greens of the 1960s turned moderate, the old-school technoptimists turned more eco-friendly. As a result, a series of innovative legal reforms took place, and new land policies and technologies have transformed France into a greener society. As an example, Bess points to the development of the

high-speed TGV trains. They provide citizens with environmentally sound transportation while also appealing to French enthusiasm for technological wonders. Less alluring examples include a detailed historical analysis of how environmentalists gradually managed to turn the famously complex French bureaucracy to their advantage. This history reflects tendencies in other European nations, many of which have gone much further than France in adopting environmental legislation, technologies, and policies.

Most of Bess's evidence consists of newspaper cuttings and notes in the personal archives of the environmental activists Jean Carlier, Jean-Pierre Raffin, and Pierre Samuel. His reliance on this material has created a book favorable to their interests and points of view. There is little discussion of the role of French scientists or ecologists, and historians of science may thus find the book disappointing. There is, on the other hand, a fine discussion of the role of philosophers and intellectuals, including some interesting sections on Bruno Latour, Luc Ferry, and Michel Serres. *The Light-Green Society* also includes a section in the style of utopian fiction that is meant to capture the French ecological vision of tomorrow.

Given the dramatic way the book opens, with the nuclear tests at Moruroa, one would expect Bess to address French colonial policies. Yet the reader is left to wonder whether "the light-green society" ever arrived in French Polynesia. Why did so few French environmentalists press for halting the tests or protest the brutal oppression of anticolonialists and environmentalists? What is the connection between green policies at home and colonial policies abroad? Until a critical history untangles such questions, it is hard to judge whether French society has become green or even light green. Environmental concern is (or at least should be) incompatible with colonialism.

This criticism should not overshadow the fact that Bess has written a fine history of recent French environmentalism. It is an important and interesting study, well worth reading.

PEDER ANKER

Johan A. M. Bleeker; Johannes Geiss; Martin C. E. Huber (Editors). *The Century of Space Science.* Foreword by **Lodewijk Woltjer. 2 volumes. 1,846 pp. Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2002. €675, \$595 (cloth).**

In his personal memoir *Beyond the Atmosphere* (NASA, 1980), former NASA Director of Space