

CHICAGO THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

**INTEGRATION OF ISLAMIC VALUES
IN MUSLIM ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE MOVEMENT**

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE CHICAGO THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

FACULTY IN THE CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

BY

NANA FITRIANA FIRMAN

CHICAGO, ILLINOIS

APRIL 2024

Copyright © 2024 by Nana Firman

All rights reserved

ABSTRACT

Author: Firman, Nana, F.

Institution: Chicago Theological Seminary

Degree Received: Master of Arts in Islamic Studies

Title: Integration of Islamic Values in Muslim Environmental Justice Movement

Supervising Professors: Aaron Higashi and Munir Shaikh

There is increasingly evidence today that the ecological crisis serves as a clear indication of our cultural failures and spiritual bankruptcy. We are currently witnessing an unparalleled level of human impact on the environment. Essentially, the environmental crisis reflects the inequities in our religious beliefs and human behavior, highlighting the need for a change in our mindset and actions. Recognizing that our current struggles stem from a moral and ethical crisis that demands a spiritual response, this thesis aims to explore the connection between humanity and the natural world through Islamic teachings. It seeks to revive the profound wisdom of Sufism within the context of Muslim environmentalism as a response to the urgent ecological crisis we face today. Through incorporating a spiritually centered approach to environmental activism that highlights the consciousness of God and the interconnectedness of all His creations, Muslims can take a prominent role in tackling the environmental challenges of our era, all while avoiding the drawbacks of materialism and consumerism. Additionally, this thesis recommends integrating the spirit of mizan into the environmental justice movement as a potent means of promoting fairness and equity for all beings and paving the way toward a flourishing earth.

Keywords: Compassion, Climate change, Conservation, Ecology, Environment, Environmental education, Environmental ethics, Environmental justice, Environmental movement, Islam, Justice, Muslims, Nature, Sustainability

To my beloved parents and sisters,
my wonderful husband Jamal Yusuf Ali,
and all my fabulous nephews and nieces,
who have been the pillars of my journey.

Your presence in my life has been a constant source of strength and solace.

Your love and encouragement have shaped me into who I am today.

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	vi
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS.....	vii
GLOSSARY.....	viii
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER 2. RELIGION AND ECOLOGY.....	4
The Beginning.....	5
Environmental Movement Overview.....	6
Toward Environmental Justice.....	9
An Alliance for Change.....	13
Healing the Sacred Connection.....	15
CHAPTER 3. ISLAMIC WORLDVIEW ON THE ENVIRONMENT.....	21
Environment in Qur'an and Sunnah.....	22
Islamic Ethics on Environment.....	29
Islamic Jurisprudence about Environment.....	31
CHAPTER 4. MUSLIM ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE MOVEMENT.....	36
Reviving Sufism in Muslim Environmental Movement.....	37
Muslim Environmentalism Globally.....	41
Building Muslim Environmental Justice Movement.....	44
The Way Forward.....	48
CHAPTER 5. CONCLUSION.....	51
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	53

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In the name of God, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.

I express my gratitude to the Lord of all worlds, whose Grace and Blessings have allowed me to complete this thesis. I am thankful for the opportunities, challenges, and resilience that have guided me through this chapter of my life.

I offer my utmost salutation to Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him), whose life serves as a source of inspiration and guidance for humanity, and I send prayers to his family and companions.

I extend sincere appreciation to Bayan Graduate Islamic School and its faculty for providing me with the opportunity to embark on this educational journey to deepen my knowledge of Islamic teachings, traditions, and histories. It is a privilege to have been awarded the "Muslimah Changemaker Scholarship," and I am committed to fostering connections between communities globally to address the current ecological crisis and advocate for a sustainable future.

I am grateful for the persistent support of my classmates, who stood by me through challenges and achievements, always willing to lend a helping hand. May God bless them with success and honor in their endeavors.

Lastly, I offer profound thanks to my family members across different continents. Their unwavering support and prayers have been instrumental in making this journey possible.

Thank you!

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
GMOs	Genetically Modified Organisms
NRDC	Nature Resources Defense Council
IPCC	Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
UNDESA	United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs
UNEA	United Nations Environment Assembly
UNEP	United Nation Environment Program
WRI	World Resource Institute
WWF	World Wildlife Funds for Nature

GLOSSARY

'adl. justice

adab. good manners, morals, decency

ard. earth

ayaah (s), ayaat (p). verses, signs

bi'ah. environment

darurat. necessity, emergency

deen, din. path, way, religion

dhikr. remembrance of God

fard. obligation

fard al-'ayn. individual obligation

fard al-kifayah. collective obligation

fasad. corruption

ghusl. ritual bath

hajiyat. needs

hifdh al-'aql. protection of mind or intellect

hifdh al-bi'ah. protection of environment

hifdh al-din. protection of religion

hifdh al-maal. protection of wealth

hifdh al-nafs. protection of life

hifdh al-nasl. protection of lineage

hima. protected zone

hukum (s), ahkam (p). rules, order, judgment, decree

hukum as-shar'i. rules of Islamic law

'ibadah (s), 'ibadat (p). service or servitude, worship, religious rituals

'ilm. knowledge

imara. political governance or rulers

i'tidal. moderate, balance, equilibrium

israf. wastefulness, extravagance or overspending

jama'ah (s), jama'at (p). congregations

jihad. spiritual struggle or physical battle

ikhlas. sincerity

khalifah. protector, steward, caretaker, successor, vicegerent, viceroy

khalifah al-ard. steward or caretaker of the earth

laudato si'. praised be

ma'ruf. good, accepted, beneficial

mafsadah. detrimental

masjid. mosque, a place for prostration or worship

maslahah(s), masalih (p). beneficial, public good or public interest

maqasid. goals or purposes

maqasid al-shari'ah. goals or objectives of Islamic law

masalih al-khalq. well-being of God's creation

masalih al-khalai kaffatan. welfare of the entire creation, universal common good

mizan. balance

munkar. denied, wrong, harmful

mu'amalah (s), mu'amalat (p). public affairs

niyyah (s), niyyat (p). intentions

rahmah. compassion

ri'ayat. conservation

sadaqah (s), sadaqat (p). charity, benevolence

sadaqah jariyah. ceaseless charity

shari'ah. Islamic law

sunnah. Prophetic tradition

tafheem, tafhim. understanding

taharah. purification

tahsiniyat. luxuries

tasbih. glorification of God

tasawwuf. sufism

tawheed, tawhid. oneness of God

umm. mother

usul al-fiqh. Islamic jurisprudence

wadud. love

wudu'. ablution

zuhd. asceticism, detachment or renouncing worldly pleasures

CHAPTER 1.

INTRODUCTION

In June 2023, the world was deeply saddened by the passing of Ibrahim Abdul-Matin, a distinguished Muslim environmental advocate who was also a dear friend of mine. His loss reverberated throughout the global Muslim environmental community. Shortly before his unexpected death, he shared an idea for a follow-up to his renowned book, “GreenDeen: What Islam teaches about protecting the Planet.” He urged me to continue his work and build on the progress made since the book’s publication in 2010. Translated into numerous languages, the book has inspired countless young Muslims worldwide to actively participate in environmental initiatives. In his book, he explained about the core message of “Green Deen”:

Materialism and overconsumption have resulted in a reduction of the human experience to units of production and consumption. A *Green Deen* is rooted in the exceptionality of individuals who will one day be held accountable to their Creator. How we manage waste, watts, water, and food – and most importantly ourselves – is beyond marketing ploy: it is a *Deen*, a path, a way, a calling.¹

As a result, many Muslim youth were motivated, leading them to embrace Islamic environmental ethics and take action against issues like land degradation, deforestation, water scarcity, pollution, climate change, and natural disasters.

Muslims are guided by their faith to praise the Creator and foster their community. Abdul-Matin highlighted humanity’s collective responsibility as stewards of the earth by drawing attention to the Prophetic tradition of considering the earth sacred.

¹ Ibrahim Abdul-Matin. *GreenDeen: What Islam Teaches about Protecting the Planet* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2010), 188.

Through his book, he encouraged readers to reflect on their lifestyles, occupations, and communities while urging them to take small yet impactful steps toward reducing their individual and collective environmental footprint. By highlighting inspiring examples from friends, family members, and local Muslim groups, he demonstrated what could be achieved through concerted efforts. Thus, it is crucial to acknowledge that one's environmental actions are often closely tied to their values, with faith playing a significant role in Islam.

Our current environmental conditions undeniably present both challenges and progress. Pollution, climate change, deforestation, and biodiversity loss are significant concerns. However, there are also positive efforts worldwide to address these challenges, such as the increased use of renewable energy sources, conservation initiatives, and sustainable practices. It is equally important to thoroughly examine economic inequality and address the “root causes” rather than merely the “consequences” of environmental issues. A fresh perspective centered around creating a more unified and inclusive society across various sectors and faiths holds immense potential. This vision entails implementing “new policy reforms,” some of which are already in progress. We are entering a phase characterized by stronger executive leadership and accountability, along with renewed legislative focus. This marks a time for “community organizing, interfaith collaboration, and innovative practices” across sectors.²

With the advancement of Religion and Ecology study, communities of different faith traditions must promote values of gratitude for the blessings of life and practices

² Abdul-Matin, *GreenDeen*, 188.

that prioritize nurturing the earth and all its inhabitants. In this regard, Muslims can truly contribute positively to environmental conservation efforts globally. In fact, Muslim religious beliefs and practices exemplify the influence of Islam on ongoing conversations about environmental ethics and environmental justice from a decolonial standpoint.

Although Islamic principles promote stewardship of the earth rooted in compassion and justice, the profound connection between Islamic teachings and environmentalism remains widely unknown. Therefore, this thesis aims to explore the connection between humanity and the natural world through Islamic teachings, while seeking to revive the profound wisdom of Sufism within the context of Muslim environmentalism, and to integrate the spirit of *mizan* toward the environmental justice movement as a potent means of promoting fairness and equity for all beings.

In essence, this thesis seeks to ignite a discussion about Muslim environmental justice movement among Muslims worldwide. This will be done by exploring:

- a. The historical context that gave rise to the collaboration between religion and environmental concerns.
- b. The Islamic perspective on the environment, which is rooted in spiritual values.
- c. The importance of creating a Muslim environmental justice movement centered on compassion and fairness.

The ultimate goal is for this thesis to help address the pressing ecological crisis we face today and to pave the way towards a flourishing earth.

CHAPTER 2.

RELIGION AND ECOLOGY

For much of our earlier history, the environment was not a topic that required direct attention; it was simply a part of our existence, like the water we sip or the air we breathe. While ancient societies did not universally prioritize nature, a deep respect for the sacred played a role in maintaining balance and setting limits. However, these principles have been eroded with the rise of modernity and industrialization. Tyson Yunkaporta, an Aboriginal belonging to the Apalech clan in Australia, emphasizes the importance of Indigenous knowledge by illustrating that there is a pattern to the universe and everything within it. He explains:

There is a pattern to the universe and everything in it, and there are knowledge systems and traditions that follow this pattern to maintain balance and to keep the desires of narcissism in check. But recent traditions have emerged that break down creation systems like a virus, infecting complex patterns with artificial simplicity, exercising civilizing control over what some see as chaos. From the Sumerians to the Romans to the Anglosphere, now the world is stuck in it. The war between good and evil is an imposition of stupidity and simplicity over wisdom and complexity.¹

Evidently, in various cultures, the environment was held sacred and interconnected with the Divine, viewed as God's creation. However, unfortunately modern traditions have disrupted these natural systems by oversimplifying complex patterns, exerting control over perceived chaos, which belongs to deeper wisdom found in complexity.

¹ Tyson Yunkaporta. *Sand Talk: How Indigenous Thinking Can Save the World* (New York: HarperCollins, 2020), 3.

The Beginning

During the 2014 Festival of Faiths on Sacred Earth Sacred Self in Louisville,² Hamza Yusuf discussed the three purposes of human existence according to Islamic tradition. The first purpose is to cultivate the earth, “it was He who brought you into being from the earth and made you inhabit it.”³ Indeed, God has made the earth a suitable environment for human habitation.⁴ The second purpose is to worship or adore the Creator, “I created jinn and mankind only to worship Me.”⁵ These perspectives are rooted in Abrahamic traditions, which assert that the purpose of human existence not merely to seek their own sustenance, but rather to worship and submit to God.⁶ The third purpose is stewardship, also known as *khalifah*, which involves taking care of what we have been given. In other words, it means acting as caretakers or successors entrusted by God to oversee the land, “Your Lord make you successors to the land to see how you behave.”⁷ Additionally, it is mentioned in the Qur’an that God said, “I am putting a successor on earth,”⁸ implying that a vicegerent acts on behalf of another in Divine stewardship.

² Festival of Faiths, “Healing Self, Healing Society,” YouTube video, 51:25, May 20, 2014, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d0SYEYK6ec&t=202s>

³ Qur’an 11:61, all Qur’anic citations are drawn from M. A. S. Abdel-Haleem translation, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

⁴ Syed Abul A’ala Maududi, “Towards Understanding the Qur’an” last modified March 11, 2024. <https://www.islamicstudies.info/tafheem.php?sura=11&verse=61>

⁵ Qur’an 51:56.

⁶ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Caner K. Dagli, Maria Massi Dakake, Joseph E.B. Lumbard and Mohammed Rustom, eds., *The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary* (New York: HarperCollins, 2015), 1280.

⁷ Qur’an 7:129.

⁸ Qur’an 2:30.

In the Jewish tradition, David was told, “O David! We have given you mastery over the land. Judge fairly between people. Do not follow your desires, lest they divert you from God’s path.”⁹ Among all species, humans possess the unique ability to discern moral right from wrong using their intellect, enabling them to make choices based on this understanding. The ability to make choices sets humans apart from other animals, and also entrusts us with an additional responsibility of nurturing the rest of God’s creation. Nevertheless, human beings often fall short when they prioritize their desires over other considerations. In that regard, Masri explicitly criticizes the shortcomings of humans who succumb to their desires within a finite environment:

Until a few centuries ago it was believed that the space on earth was limitless and that its resources were endless. This wrong impression gave people the idea that they liked, without exhausting them. Unfortunately, despite our knowledge of the limits of the earth’s resources, we continue to behave the same way.¹⁰

Therefore, it is important to question how effectively we are fulfilling our role as caretakers of the environment, considering it may be one of our primary responsibilities.

Environmental Movement Overview

The environmental movement, according to Encyclopedia Britannica, did not gain significant traction in public activism until more recent times. It primarily arose from concerns in the late 19th century about “preserving wilderness areas” in the U.S. and countryside regions in Europe, as well as “addressing health issues caused by pollution” during the Industrial Revolution. However, unlike the prevailing liberal ideology of that

⁹ Qur’an 38:26.

¹⁰ Al-Hafiz B. A. Masri, “Islam and Ecology” in *Islam and Ecology* (London: Cassell, 1992), 3.

era that advocated for solving all social problems through “free market mechanisms,” early environmentalists argued that “government” should take a leading role in safeguarding the environment and conserving natural resources.¹¹

In the late 1800s, conservation organizations in the U.S. began rallying to protect wilderness areas and wildlife from threats posed by activities such as mining, logging, and dam construction. Early environmental activists, such as John Muir,¹² the founder of Sierra Club in 1892, were not considered as ‘radicals’ but rather as ‘forward-thinking individuals’ who were deeply concerned about the impact of modernization and industrial growth on America’s natural landscapes, particularly in the Western regions. These activists sought better regulations for sustainable development and founded national parks to preserve America’s remarkable wilderness areas and provide recreational opportunities for nature enthusiasts.

In the early 20th century, a grassroots movement arose to support environmental conservation. This movement alerted the U.S. government to the detrimental effects of unregulated economic growth on natural resources.¹³ Concerns were expressed about public health risks in congested cities, where waterways were contaminated with raw sewage and industrial waste, and the air was polluted by emissions from smokestacks.

Various groups, including scientific experts, urban reformers, and women’s

¹¹ Lorraine Elliott, “History of the Environmental Movement,” in *The Encyclopedia Britannica*, accessed December 31, 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/environmentalism/History-of-the-environmental-movement>

¹² Harold Wood, “Who was John Muir?” *Sierra Club*, updated December 24, 2023, https://vault.sierraclub.org/john_muir_exhibit/about

¹³ Amy Hayes, “The 20th Century Environmental Movement in the US.” *The Collector*, published November 7, 2022. <https://www.thecollector.com/american-environmental-movement/>

organizations, advocated for policies to combat disease and improve the quality of air, land, and water. This mobilization reached its peak with the first Earth Day in 1970.¹⁴

Since then, there has been an increasing interest in environmental issues, which signifies a shift in how we value this concept. The increasing interest mirrors a wider societal awareness of the significance of environmental preservation and sustainability. Over the past 70 years, the earth has become increasingly vulnerable and has significantly impacted human life. Presently, these fundamental problems have increased substantially, due to our neglect of the environment. Therefore, it is incumbent upon everyone to address this issue by making sustainable choices and reducing excessive consumption.

People must strive to adopt a more environmentally friendly lifestyle. Educating individuals and communities about the significance of water, soil, air quality, trees, rain, waste management, and biodiversity becomes essential. Prioritizing these foundational elements is crucial in cultivating a sense of responsibility and care for the environment. This will motivate individuals to embrace sustainable living and contribute to a healthier and more harmonious world for present and future generations.

Therefore, it is imperative to raise awareness and increase knowledge regarding current environmental issues while advocating for sustainability and conservation. It is crucial to reduce the adverse effects of our lifestyles on the environment by empowering individuals to make informed choices and actively work to protect the earth. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), “environmental education allows individuals to explore environmental issues, engage in problem-solving activities, and

¹⁴ “EPA History: Earth Day,” The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, last modified July 17, 2023, accessed December 31, 2023, <https://www.epa.gov/history/epa-history-earth-day>

take action to improve the environment.”¹⁵ And through this process, individuals gain a “deeper understanding” of environmental issues and develop the “ability to make informed and responsible decisions.” Ultimately, responsible citizens are those who value and respect their environment. Without adjusting, or restraining our lifestyles, there can be no progress towards sustainability. The Qur’an challenges the dominant materialistic view on nature, offering a more comprehensive and inclusive approach to developing an ethical framework for the environment.¹⁶

The environmental issue, which was a significant focus during the 20th century, remains an urgent concern as human development strains the earth’s ability to support life. The rapid advancement of technology without sufficient oversight has resulted in various problems affecting both human health and the environment. Reports on ecosystem deterioration, species loss, and increasing human consumption continue to raise alarms about the direction of global progress. Additionally, there is growing evidence that excessive use of fossil fuels could trigger climate change.

Toward Environmental Justice

By now, we can all agree that giving importance to environmental justice is a necessity. The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights defines environmental justice¹⁷ as “the fair treatment of people of all races, income, and cultures with respect to the

¹⁵ “What is Environmental Education?” The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, last modified July 10, 2023, accessed December 31, 2023, <https://www.epa.gov/education/what-environmental-education>

¹⁶ İbrahim Özdemir, “Toward an Understanding of Environmental Ethics from a Qur’anic Perspective” in *Islam and Ecology, A Bestowed Trust* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press 2003), 6.

¹⁷ “What is Environmental Justice?” The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, published October 1, 2003, accessed December 31, 2023, <https://www.usccr.gov/files/pubs/envjust/ch2.htm>

development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies, and their meaningful involvement in the decision-making processes of the government.” Undoubtedly, environmental justice is “the manifestation of social justice” elements within the realm of environmental ethics. The movement emerged in response to the “unfair concentration of toxic waste facilities” in low-income communities of color¹⁸ in the United States. In 1990, Robert Bullard, known as the ‘father of environmental justice,’ published a groundbreaking book titled “Dumping in Dixie: Race, Class, and Environmental Quality,” which highlighted the role of race in determining the placement of hazardous facilities that produce toxic chemicals. Bullard initiated the environmental justice movement by advocating for “fair treatment and meaningful participation for all individuals, regardless of race, color, national origin, or income, in the development and implementation of environmental laws and policies.”¹⁹ His research and activism have drawn attention to the disproportionate burden faced by marginalized communities and have promoted more equitable and sustainable environmental practices.

Unlike other forms of environmental activism focused on preserving nature, this movement prioritizes enhancing human well-being by protecting the environments where people live and work. Everyone is entitled to equal environmental protection and involvement in shaping community policies. Unfortunately, people of color, those with low incomes, and individuals in the Global South²⁰ have rarely experienced such fairness. In this matter, environmental injustice undoubtedly is influenced by colonization patterns

¹⁸ Robert D. Bullard, *The Quest for Environmental Justice: Human Rights and the Politics of Pollution* (Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2005), 2-7.

¹⁹ Bullard, *The Quest for Environmental Justice*, 20-21.

²⁰ Bullard, *The Quest for Environmental Justice*, 285-287.

that have persisted throughout history and continue to impact various aspects of society.²¹ Furthermore, Bullard's book "The Quest for Environmental Justice: Human Rights and the Politics of Pollution" sheds light on this issue by highlighting instances where marginalized communities are disproportionately affected by environmental hazards due to systemic inequalities. Understanding and addressing these disparities is essential for achieving true environmental justice.²² It is evident that environmental justice places human welfare at its core while acknowledging the importance of ecosystem health. This emphasis on human prosperity has broad appeal.

Over time, the scope of environmental justice has expanded from local anti-toxics activism to addressing global economic inequalities and environmental degradation. In "From the Ground Up: Environmental Racism and the Rise of the Environmental Justice Movement," Cole and Foster investigate further the concept of environmental racism and its impact on marginalized communities. This book emphasizes the need to "address environmental justice from a grassroots level, empowering affected communities to fight for their rights."²³ Numerous environmental justice organizations advocate for the basic entitlement of every person and community to clean air, water, and access to clean energy. They emphasize the essential nature of a clean environment. Additionally, as global concern over climate change continues to grow, many organizations are promoting ethical measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, aligning with the principles of

²¹ Fazlun Khalid, *Signs on the Earth: Islam, Modernity and the Climate Crisis* (Leicestershire: Kube Publishing, 2019), 100-103.

²² Bullard, *The Quest for Environmental Justice*, 2-7.

²³ Luke W. Cole and Sheila R Foster. *From the Ground Up: Environmental Racism and the Rise of the Environmental Justice Movement* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), 31-33.

environmental justice. Likewise, climate justice is also a crucial aspect of environmental advocacy. Mary Robinson’s book “Climate Justice: Hope, Resilience, and the Fight for a Sustainable Future” highlights the importance of addressing climate change in a way that ensures fairness, equality, and human rights for all individuals, particularly those most vulnerable to its impacts.²⁴

According to the U.N. DESA’s World Social Report 2020, “global consumption remains imbalanced. Developed countries’ population, comprising only 20 percent of the world’s population, consumes 80 percent of its resources, leaving the remaining 80 percent with only 20 percent of resources.”²⁵ This overconsumption poses a threat to the equilibrium between our consumption and what the planet can generate. Alongside these environmental challenges, social and economic inequalities are widening as millions face challenges in meeting their basic needs for water, food, and shelter.

Exploring more on this subject, the 2021 IPCC Sixth Assessment Report²⁶ provides comprehensive scientific evidence on climate change and its impacts. It serves as a valuable tool for recognizing the urgency of addressing this global issue. In fact, the report has cautioned that a 2°C increase above pre-industrial levels could lead to severe weather events such as intense heatwaves and destructive storms. This could displace

²⁴ Mary Robinson, *Climate Justice: Hope, Resilience, and the Fight for a Sustainable Future* (New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018), 5-7.

²⁵ The U.N. Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *World Social Report 2020: Inequality in a Rapidly Changing World*, (New York: United Nations Publication, 2020), <https://desapublications.un.org/publications/world-social-report-2020-inequality-rapidly-changing-world>

²⁶ The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, *Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009157896>

millions of people from their homes and livelihoods. The report also predicts inevitable famine outbreaks due to crop failures. Therefore, this has become a compelling argument for Muslims to play a significant role in the climate justice movement.

An Alliance for Change

Environmentalists have identified three main contributors to this crisis. Firstly, there is the prevailing anthropocentric worldview that prioritizes human interests over environmental well-being. Secondly, there is widespread acceptance of the modern technoscientific paradigm that often overlooks ecological consequences. Lastly, economic ideologies like market or state capitalism dominate globally.²⁷ These factors significantly influence today's environmental challenges, as highlighted by a well-known Muslim theologian and philosopher, Seyyed Hossein Nasr.

Moreover, religion and ecological movements have increasingly intertwined within environmentalism in the 21st century. Lynn White Jr.'s discussion on Christianity's role in the environmental crisis sparked this connection by shedding light on how misinterpretations of biblical teachings placed humans above all other creations.²⁸ He emphasized the importance of recognizing the "religious roots of the environmental crisis." His arguments were perceived as a critique of Christianity. Despite that, his

²⁷ Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis of Modern Man* (Chicago: ABC International Group, 1997), 19-23.

²⁸ Lynn White Jr, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis," *Science* 155, no. 3767 (March 10, 1967): 1203-1207, <https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.155.3767.1203>

arguments ultimately led to the emergence of “Religion and Ecology” as an academic field.

Faith communities have also actively engaged in environmental efforts. Known for their historical advocacy for human justice, people of faith are now reclaiming their roles as protectors of the planet and champions for its well-being. By framing ecological issues within theological contexts, they have undergone a significant shift in attitude towards the environment. There has been a shift in how nature is viewed, with an increasing reverence for its sacredness and a deeper connection to the environment. This shift has resulted in an acknowledgment of the responsibility to preserve and protect creation. Through the development of contextual and practical theology, religious principles are being used to address contemporary social issues, particularly the environment, leading to the emergence of eco-theology. İbrahim Özdemir, author of “Toward an Understanding of Environmental Ethics from a Qur’anic Perspective,” describes that metaphysical and philosophical factors are at the root of the environmental crisis.²⁹ How humans treat and perceive nature is intricately linked to our values.³⁰ Arne Naess, known as the ‘father of deep ecology,’ implies that viewing humans as separate from nature fosters selfishness towards both others and the environment.³¹ Because being human means connecting spiritually with the natural world.³² And the ability to connect with the spiritual essence within nature is certainly a natural gift shared by all humans.

²⁹ Özdemir, “Environmental Ethics from a Qur’anic Perspective,” 4.

³⁰ Özdemir, “Environmental Ethics from a Qur’anic Perspective,” 7.

³¹ Arne Naess, *The Ecology of Wisdom* (Berkeley: Counterpoint Press, 2008), 105-106.

³² Fletcher Harper, *GreenFaith: Mobilizing God’s People to Save the Earth* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2015), 6.

According to the Global Religious Landscape Report by Pew Research Center, about 84 percent of the global population identifies with some form of religion, and this number is projected to increase to 87 percent by 2050.³³ This indicates that religion can educate, organize, and mobilize for social and environmental change. Spiritual rituals and practices can be adapted to integrate environmental awareness with believers' spiritual beliefs.

Thus, it is crucial for various sectors of society, including religious communities, to collaborate in addressing the negative consequences of ecological degradation. By advocating for government intervention and the implementation of policies and measures to safeguard the environment and conserve natural resources, we can make a significant impact. Even small efforts contribute to this cause.

Healing the Sacred Connection

Religion plays a significant role in addressing questions about humanity, nature, and the Creator. In the 21st century, it provides a foundation for developing an ecological ethic. This thesis explores Islam's relationship with nature and how religion contributes to our understanding and connection with the environment. It also examines an environmental justice ethic rooted in Islam and explores the Muslim environmental movement. However, given limited research on Islam's intersection with ecology,

³³ "The Global Religious Landscape," Pew Research Center, last modified April 12, 2022, accessed December 31, 2023, <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2012/12/18/global-religious-landscape-exec/>

especially within the environmental movements, this thesis aims to shed light on Islam's environmental narrative, its expression within Muslim environmental activism around the world, including recommendations on some important aspects of activism.

The emerging eco-Islam or green Muslims movement highlights the significant role played by Muslim scholars, educators, and activists in promoting environmental teachings and bringing about transformative changes. Limited efforts have been made to explore the educational implications of integrating Islamic eco-ethics into the environmental movement. By doing so can greatly impact our approach to sustainable education and foster a deeper understanding of the interconnectedness of all living creatures and the importance of nurturing the planet. In the meantime, environmental challenges have become a significant focus for the younger generation of Muslims. And this thesis hopes to contribute to the understanding of this shift by examining historical precedents and scholarly works.

It is commonly known that according to Islamic law, it is forbidden to destroy plants or abuse natural resources. Instead, preventing harm is prioritized. Therefore, Muslims, including individuals, communities, scholars, businesses, and governments, have a mandatory obligation (*fard*) to actively care for the environment and work towards reducing ecological degradation and climate crisis.

The Qur'an warns against altering God's creations. Unfortunately, human actions have resulted in widespread corruption and devastation of the environment counting back to the last two centuries since the Industrial Revolution. We must acknowledge that the intertwined systems of "colonialism and capitalism," which have historically relied on the exploitation of people, land, and natural resources, have undoubtedly contributed to the

current crisis we now face.³⁴ That includes polluting air and water, contributing to global warming and climate change, overexploiting natural resources, destroying habitats, degrading soil quality, introducing invasive species and genetically modified organisms (GMOs), eradicating predators and pests while causing overpopulation.³⁵ Despite being entrusted as stewards of the earth; humans have filled it with corruption and bloodshed possibly leading to the sixth mass extinction in history.³⁶ The focus on profit over environmental sustainability by such oppressive structures has brought us to the challenging situation we currently face.

These days, the consequences of upsetting earth's balance are evident.³⁷ However, there remains a significant gap between what is required to prevent future catastrophic ecological collapse and the actual commitments made by governments, financial institutions, and corporations who possess the power to act.³⁸ This disparity is overly concerning. Thus, Muslims also bear an obligation to address these environmental issues within our current economic and developmental frameworks.

By reviving the forgotten beliefs such as recognizing humans as *khalifah al-ard*, meaning the caretakers upon the earth appointed by God, can be instrumental in

³⁴ University of St. Thomas, "Islam, Christianity, and the Environmental Crisis." YouTube video, 1:14:35, March 18, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xqasknBBBCo>

³⁵ Bill McKibben, *The End of Nature* (New York: Random House, 2006), 50-52.

³⁶ "What is the sixth mass extinction and what can we do about it?" WWF, last modified March 10, 2021, accessed December 29, 2023, <https://www.worldwildlife.org/stories/what-is-the-sixth-mass-extinction-and-what-can-we-do-about-it>

³⁷ Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs the Climate* (New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 2014), 73-75.

³⁸ Klein, *This Changes Everything*, 233-234.

protecting the environment and improving its conditions. Muslim scholars, environmental activists, and educators have worked towards reintroducing these beliefs to a wider audience, including secular scientists and policymakers. Reconnecting with the teachings and guidance of Divine religions and reassessing current policies on natural resource responsibility, economic development, and technology usage may facilitate this process.

The teachings of the Qur'an have a strong connection to the sanctity of nature. Alongside the Prophetic hadiths, they provide ethical principles and guidelines for behavior in relation to the environment. These teachings extend beyond environmental concerns to encompass social, economic, and political aspects, giving faith traditions the potential to advocate for social and environmental justice.³⁹

Islam is not the only religion with environmental awareness, respect for and mindfulness of nature can be found in various faith traditions. Fazlun Khalid, the founder of the Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Science, explains:

Traditional and Indigenous communities considered themselves to be integral to nature, and in the absence of scripture, the natural world itself was the text. The Eastern traditions also had a close affinity with nature, and it was looked upon as a gift from the Creator in the Abrahamic faiths. All these ways of being and relating to the natural world were destroyed when modernist thinking emerged and turned it into an economic resource.⁴⁰

Consequently, in our modern industrialized society driven by profit, nature has been commodified, resulting in a degradation of the spiritual connections that exist within all religions. These connections are often reduced to superficial gestures, further distancing

³⁹ Odeh R. Al-Jayyousi, *Islam and Sustainable Development: New Worldviews* (Surrey: Gower Publishing, 2012), 27.

⁴⁰ Khalid, *Signs on the Earth*, 19.

our society from the natural world. While “nature is an entity in whose embrace we exist, as exemplified by the Sufic tradition in Islam and by the Franciscan tradition in the Christian faith.”⁴¹

Ultimately, the ongoing environmental degradation can be attributed to two main causes namely, a diminishing reverence for the sacredness of nature and an increasing disconnect between humanity and the natural world that has led to its exploitation.⁴² For this reason, many people find themselves entrenched in empty secular settings that mask their overwhelming debt and self-indulgence, driving them towards excessive consumerism.⁴³

Hence, to heal our connection with the natural world and rediscover its sacredness, active engagement in conservation efforts and environmental protection is necessary. Through these actions, we can restore our disconnect with nature and awaken our inherent ability to connect with the Divine. During the 2019 International Summit on Zero Waste in Istanbul, Emine Erdoğan, First Lady of Türkiye confirmed about the importance of our connection with nature:

In accordance with our civilization and our faith, it is said that there are 18,000 worlds in the universe. We all are members of the world family together with endemic plants blossoming on mountain tops, trees of great variety, all kinds of birds perching on one branch then to the other, bees, high rocky hills, deep waters, bacteria that we do not see but we are indebted to, microorganisms, and many more.⁴⁴

⁴¹ Khalid, *Signs on the Earth*, 19.

⁴² Nasr, *Man and Nature*, 17-20.

⁴³ Khalid, *Signs on the Earth*, 88.

⁴⁴ Sümeyra M. Kılınç, *The Zero Waste Movement* (Istanbul: Turkuvaz Kitab, 2023), 15.

Therefore, promoting environmental education and raising awareness can help heal the fractures between humans and nature connection. A deeper connection with the environment can be fostered by encouraging individuals to immerse themselves in nature, gaining knowledge about ecosystems, and appreciating the significance of nature preservation. Additionally, advocating for sustainable practices like waste reduction and support for eco-friendly initiatives can also have a positive impact. It is crucial for faith communities to collaborate in cultivating a balanced relationship between humanity and the natural world, grounded in spirituality and an awareness of Divine consciousness.

CHAPTER 3.

ISLAMIC WORLDVIEW ON THE ENVIRONMENT

Nature and biodiversity are considered communities in Islam, like human beings. Muslims are encouraged to perceive the environment as a reflection of the Divine God, who is both sublime and omnipresent. For instance, trees hold great significance, not only for sustaining life but also as a powerful symbol. The Qur'an likens a good word of a believer to a tree, symbolizing stability, and strength, just like a sturdy tree: "Do you not see how God makes comparisons? A good word is like a good tree whose root is firm and whose branches are high in the sky."¹ This analogy illustrates a righteous person and a healthy tree, highlighting the influence and impact of sincere words. It demonstrates how the entire universe, encompassing the earth and the heavens harmoniously interacts with and embraces this person. Apart from that, planting a tree, even a moment before the world ends, is considered a blessed act within Islamic tradition. Along with that, water is also highly valued as it symbolizes Divine Mercy. Consequently, polluting water is regarded as a sin in Islam.

Historically, Muslims have lived according to God's commandments, understanding that human dominion over nature should be exercised with restraint. Together with that, the purpose of studying nature has been to "gain knowledge about God's wisdom" rather than seeking "control or dominance" over the natural world.² In

¹ Qur'an 14:24.

² Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Religion and the Order of Nature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 213-215.

Islam, monotheism (*tawhid*) forms the basis of environmentalism³ as it highlights the interconnectedness between humans, nature, and God. Whereas morality plays a significant role in this relationship. And now more than ever, exploring Islamic teachings on the environment can provide solutions to current ecological challenges.

Environment in Qur'an and Sunnah

The Qur'an holds special emphasis on nature and the earth compared to other holy books. Numerous chapters within it focus on various natural phenomena,⁴ such as *Al-Fajr* (The Dawn), *Al-Duha* (The Morning Brightness), *Al-Layl* (The Night), *Al-Ra'd* (The Thunder), *Al-Dukhan* (Smoke), *Al-Dhariyat* (The Scatterers), *Al-Shams* (The Sun), *Al-Najm* (The Star), *Al-Qamar* (The Moon), *Al-Buruj* (The Constellations), *Al-Zalzalah* (The Earthquake), and *Al-Nur* (Light). These chapters offer valuable guidance on preserving nature and all of God's creations. The early verses of the Qur'an encourage thorough observation and exploration of the natural world including birds, sheep, fish, camels, bees, flies, dates, grapes, olives, the sun, the moon, seas, mountains, clouds, wind, rain – all natural phenomena. This emphasis on investigating nature aims to cultivate individuals who actively engage with an open mind while comprehending the world through a Qur'anic lens.⁵

³ Yunus Negus, "Science within Islam: Learning How to Care for Our World," in *Islam and Ecology* (London: Cassell, 1992), 37-40.

⁴ Nasr, Dagli, Dakake, Lombard and Rustom, eds., *The Study Qur'an*, vi-vii.

⁵ Özdemir, "Environmental Ethics from a Qur'anic Perspective," 7-8.

The profound connection between Qur’anic teachings and the sanctity of nature forms the basis of a comprehensive Islamic eco-theology. Islamic spirituality is shaped by these distinctive characteristics as well. The Qur’anic verses and Prophetic hadiths provide a rich source of ethical principles and behavioral guidelines related to the environment, while also addressing social, economic, and political aspects. The Qur’an is not only remarkable because of its Divine origin, but also because it covers a wide range of subjects that relate to human life. Apart from that, people approach the Qur’an with different perspectives, driven by a desire for knowledge or inspired by spiritual awakenings. These intellectual pursuits and spiritual moments shape how individuals engage with the Divine scripture.⁶ Essentially, the Qur’an’s main purpose is to encourage a contemplative relationship with the Divine, achieved through reflection on its meanings, purposes, and rulings rather than just recitation. This includes thinking about environmental sustainability and treating God’s creations with kindness, which are integral concepts in Islam.

Currently, environmental degradation has become a global challenge that affects both humanity and the natural ecosystems around us. Subsequently, protecting the environment has gained significant attention worldwide. In fact, the Qur’an repeatedly emphasizes a fundamental concept beyond nature – the reason for its existence and significance. According to the Qur’anic message, “nature is not there just by accident, as a result of the process of evolution and chaotic configurations, without meaning or

⁶ Nasr, Dagli, Dakake, Lombard and Rustom, eds., *The Study Qur’an*, 23-25.

purpose, it has order and meaning.”⁷ Therefore, it is evident that nature is organized and holds values. In fact, the Qur’an confirmed this reality: “On earth there are signs for those with sure faith; and in yourselves too, do you not see?”⁸ Hence, everything in the universe has been intricately designed with beauty, purpose, and balance, both in quality and quantity: “We have created all things in due measure.”⁹ And by contemplating the intricate design of natural phenomena, “we can deduce the existence of a Creator who is All-Powerful, All-Knowing, and All-Merciful.”¹⁰ Therefore, safeguarding the environment is crucial for ensuring sustainable human life on earth.

The environment encompasses all spaces inhabited by humans and provides valuable resources within specific communities and populations throughout various times. Humans possess unique qualities that enable them to be effective stewards of the earth. One such quality is their ethical consciousness which motivates them to care deeply about their surroundings. And humans possess knowledge that empowers them to fulfill their responsibilities. An interesting aspect of human capability is their ability to comprehend and assign names to various elements of creation, an act exclusive to our species,¹¹ symbolizing our knowledge and intelligence. Humans indeed are distinct from all other beings, including angels. The Qur’an states that Adam was taught the names of

⁷ Özdemir, “Environmental Ethics from a Qur’anic Perspective,” 8.

⁸ Qur’an 51:20-21.

⁹ Qur’an 54:49.

¹⁰ Özdemir, “Environmental Ethics from a Qur’anic Perspective,” 8.

¹¹ Mawil Izzi-Dien, “Islamic Ethics and the Environment,” in *Islam and Ecology* (London: Cassell, 1992), 27-28.

things and then asked the angels to name them as well.¹² Accordingly, by embracing spirituality, individuals can lead a more spiritually fulfilling life and connect with God through nature. This shift in perspective encourages seeing nature not just as a resource to exploit, but as a way to deepen one's connection with the Divine. Plants, animals, and the natural world are sentient beings with their own consciousness. They praise God (*tasbih*) through constant remembrance (*dhikr*),¹³ as emphasized by Muslim historian and theologian, Abdal Hakim Murad. In Islam, all of God's creations are revered because they reflect His beautiful names. And they should be treated with respect, as mentioned in the Qur'an, "All the creatures that crawl on the earth and those that fly with their wings are communities like yourselves. We have missed nothing out of the Record, in the end they will be gathered to their Lord."¹⁴ In that respect, humans can interact with God through their surroundings, demonstrating their unique position even above angels, by possessing knowledge and free will. For instance, one of God's beautiful names is *al-Wadud*, meaning love. This love is selfless and nurturing, motivating one to care for others without expecting anything in return. God loves His creations unconditionally and continuously, even when they reject Him. Understanding this love and mercy leads individuals to fall in love with their Creator and cherish His creations on earth.

Furthermore, the Qur'an also emphasizes humans' role as stewards of the environment through a famous hadith stating that "The earth is green and beautiful, and

¹² Qur'an 2:31.

¹³ LSE Faith Center, "What does Islam have to say about the environment?" YouTube video, 6:53, January 23, 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZmvmWCLNj3w>

¹⁴ Qur'an 6:38.

God has appointed you His stewards over it.”¹⁵ Therefore, as stewards of the earth, we must safeguard and conserve the environment. Islam prohibits unethical and excessive exploitation of the environment. On this subject, Prophet Muhammad emphasized the importance of conserving natural resources, treating animals ethically, practicing sustainable land use, and overall environmental protection. He exemplified the principles of Islam and served as a role model for his followers. For this reason, two Muslim women recently compiled a collection of sayings by Prophet Muhammad that encourage and advocate for environmental sustainability in “Forty Green Hadith”¹⁶ as part of their leadership project for GreenFaith Fellowship Program.¹⁷ Together with that, the Prophet also emphasized the significance of planting trees and caring for greenery. According to him, “There is none amongst the Muslims who plants a tree or sows seeds, and then a bird, or a person or an animal eats from it, but is regarded as a charitable gift (*sadaqah*) for him.”¹⁸ Trees certainly play a crucial role in cooling the atmosphere through transpiration, providing shade for humans and animals, improving air and water quality by absorbing pollutants and emitting oxygen while reducing ozone levels. Additionally, the Prophet stressed the importance of continuing to plant trees even when anticipating the end of the world, “If the Final Hour comes while you have a shoot of a plant in your

¹⁵ *Sahih Muslim*, no. 2742, bk. 49, hadith 12.

¹⁶ Kori Majeed and Saarah Y. Latif. *Forty Green Hadith: Sayings of the Prophet Muhammad on Environmental Justice and Sustainability* (Washington DC: GreenRamadan, 2020), 68, accessed December 25, 2023, <https://greenramadan.com/2020/12/new-ebook-40-green-hadith/>

¹⁷ “Apply for the GreenFaith North America Rising Leaders Fellowship,” GreenFaith, last modified March 1, 2024, accessed March 7, 2024, <https://greenfaith.org/north-america-rising-leaders/>

¹⁸ *Sahih al-Bukhari*, no. 2320, bk. 41, hadith 1.

hands and it is possible to plant it before the Hour comes, you should plant it.”¹⁹ This hadith serves as a reminder to maintain hope and optimism for the future. And when it comes to natural resource management, he emphasized moderation and conservation in all aspects of life, including resource utilization and avoiding extravagance. His teaching, “Do not waste water, even if you perform your ablution on the banks of an abundantly flowing river,”²⁰ serves as a reminder to use natural resources thoughtfully. The Prophetic teachings on moderation extend to daily practices like ablution (*wudu*) and ritual bath (*ghusl*), emphasizing the importance of using only what is necessary and avoiding waste. In fact, the Qur’an warns against wastefulness (*israf*), “O Children of Adam! dress well whenever you are at worship and eat and drink [as We have permitted] but do not be extravagant: God does not like extravagant people.”²¹ Wastefulness not only impacts the environment but also poses challenges for resources such as water, food, and energy. The Prophet also considered ongoing acts of charity to include clearing rivers, digging wells, and engaging in other beneficial activities. With the global population increasing rapidly, embracing these conservation and mindfulness practices becomes essential to maintaining ecological balance while preserving animal habitats and ecosystems.

When discussing the environment, it is undeniable that animals play a crucial role in nature by enhancing ecosystem diversity, which is vital for the overall well-being of the environment. The interaction between different species and their habitats contributes to the harmony of ecosystems. The importance of serving animals is also emphasized in

¹⁹ *Musnad Ahmad*, hadith 12491.

²⁰ *Sunan Ibn Majah*, no. 425, bk. 1, hadith 159.

²¹ Qur’an 7:31.

Prophetic teachings, as stated in a hadith, “There is a reward for serving any living being.”²² In another hadith, the Prophet prohibited humans from overburdening animals beyond their capabilities, “Fear Allah regarding these dumb animals. Ride them when they are in good condition and feed them when they are in good condition.”²³ Animals are not just meant to be used as mounts but also as companions in our lives. These hadiths emphasize the value of compassion and stewardship towards all living beings, including animals.

Regrettably, the environmental perspectives within Islam are often not given the recognition it deserves, particularly in highlighting the importance of the relationship between humans and nature to encourage conservation and sustainable use of natural resources. ‘*Hima*,’ as one example of conservation efforts, is actually a protected zone based on *shari’ah* (Islamic law) where certain environmental resources are conserved and protected. In fact, *hima* zones represent one of the most prevalent and enduring Indigenous conservation practices in the Middle East, possibly worldwide. The modern concept of protected areas and conservation measures, such as national parks, perhaps can be traced back to initiatives taken by Prophet Muhammad over 1400 years ago. The Prophet emphasized the significance of *hima* zones signifies safeguarding the environment for present and future generations. In that respect, *hima* zones promote sustainable balance. This principle certainly aligns with the environmental stewardship values advocated in Islamic teachings, emphasizing humanity’s responsibility to function

²² *Sahih al-Bukhari*, no. 6009, bk. 78, hadith 40.

²³ *Sunan Abi Dawud*, no. 2548, bk. 15, hadith 72.

as stewards on earth and preserve its natural resources.²⁴ Unfortunately, the *hima* system experienced a decline due to political and socio-economic changes in the region throughout the 20th century. Nevertheless, this does not diminish the responsibility of individuals to engage in environmental conservation efforts.

Islamic Ethics on Environment

It is acknowledged that religion has a major influence on various aspects of human lifestyle that can impact the environment. This includes consumption patterns related to natural resources and greenhouse gas emissions, as well as the willingness to take action against environmental degradation and climate crisis. All major faith traditions emphasize the protection of life, generosity, hospitality, and social justice.²⁵ They also agree that nature is a Divine creation that should be treated accordingly. Consequently, contributing to environmental destruction for profit goes against religious teachings.²⁶ Likewise, ecological degradation and climate crises are considered moral and ethical crises that expose failures in our religious beliefs and human behavior. The ecological crisis and climate change not only have serious implications for our planet's future but also represent significant moral and ethical issues that require us to respond with actions. Thus, it is the responsibility of faith leaders and religious scholars to guide

²⁴ Khalid, *Signs on the Earth*, 166-168.

²⁵ Venerable Santussika Bhikunni, "Mobilizing People of Faith in the People's Climate Movement," in *A Planetary and Global Ethics for Climate Change and Sustainable Energy* (Bangkok: Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, 2016), 65-68.

²⁶ Roger Gottlieb, *A Greener Faith* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 41-44.

believers in following their faiths, teaching them moral principles, and providing support for acting accordingly. In that regard, Özdemir explains:

Once the metaphysical foundation for an environmental ethic is discovered within the Qur'anic value system, it will not be difficult to develop an environmental ethic on this basis. Furthermore, understanding the metaphysical dimension of the Qur'anic message will give us the opportunity of understanding and appreciating the development of sensitive ideas and attitudes concerning the environment during the course of Islamic history.²⁷

Thus, after we uncover the spiritual basis for an environmental code of conduct within the Qur'anic principles, creating such a code will become a straightforward task. And delving into the spiritual essence of the Qur'anic teachings will allow us to comprehend and value the development of mindful thoughts and behaviors regarding the environment. Therefore, it is fundamental to highlight that God did not create the earth frivolously or without purpose; it possesses inherent existence as a reflection of His magnificence and compassion.²⁸ Because every creature deserves recognition and respect due to its connection with the Divine.²⁹

In Muslim communities, it is commonly emphasized that when a person dies, their deeds come to an end except for three things: the prayers of a righteous descendant who continue prays for the deceased, a knowledge which is beneficial to others, and any ceaseless charity (*sadaqah jariyah*);³⁰ this includes acts of kindness such as building mosques, schools, and wells. On the other hand, if a person causes harm to the

²⁷ Özdemir, "Environmental Ethics from a Qur'anic Perspective," 6-7.

²⁸ Özdemir, "Environmental Ethics from a Qur'anic Perspective," 10.

²⁹ Özdemir, "Environmental Ethics from a Qur'anic Perspective," 11.

³⁰ *Riyad as-Salihin*, no. 1383, bk 12, hadith 8.

environment by spreading mischief and leading to ecological destruction, the negative consequences of their actions will persist even after their death, resulting in continued accumulation of sin. Therefore, Muslims consider safeguarding the environment and ensuring its preservation to be an obligation (*fard*) at both individual (*fard al-‘ayn*) and collective (*fard al-kifayah*) levels.³¹ In short, Muslims are tasked with extending God’s compassion to all aspects under their influence, including caring for natural resources, protecting animals and plants, and overall improvement and nurture of the environment.

Islamic Jurisprudence about Environment

Muslims worldwide hold a fundamental belief in the sanctity of all people, living beings, and the earth itself. The Islamic environmental perspective is deeply rooted in the concept of stewardship. This perspective draws from the Qur’an and the *Sunnah* as two primary sources of Islamic law. These sources can be likened to a vast reservoir of legal principles, concepts, and internal guidelines that offer wisdom on environmental matters.

The teachings from these sources are transformed into practical actions aimed at positively impacting our contemporary global society’s efforts to combat the current environmental crisis on a large scale. Additionally, Prophet Muhammad emphasized the sacredness of the entire earth when he stated, “The whole earth has been made for me a sacred place for prostration (*masjid*) and a means of purification (*taharah*).”³² This

³¹ Nana Firman, “Act of Worship.” *Earth Island Journal*, Winter 2024, 34.

³² *Sunan an-Nasa’i*, no. 736, bk. 8, hadith 49.

teaching highlights that treating the earth with respect is essential; no element present on it should be mistreated.

Furthermore, Islam recognizes that God has created the magnificent universe and entrusted human beings the role of stewardship (*khalifah*) responsible for cultivating greater good for all people and creatures. Muslims are also familiar with referring to the earth as their mother (*umm*), as mentioned by Prophet Muhammad, “Take care of the earth for she is your mother. No one does good or evil on her except that she will speak of it [on the Last Day].”³³ This understanding emphasizes that just as we show respect, care, and protection towards our birth mothers, we must extend those principles towards our shared mother earth. In brief, Islam encompasses values and beliefs that have the potential to bring about positive change in collective behavior within global society. It achieves this by raising awareness about environmental issues and their significance. These teachings align with numerous national legal systems and can function as a major catalyst for the development of international regulations for environmental protection.

In addition to Islamic eco-theology, another important principle in environmental protection and climate action is the ultimate purposes of Islamic law, known as “*maqasid al-shari’ah*.” During the early days of Islam, scholars did not use this specific term to articulate the objectives and purposes behind rulings or anything related to Islamic law (*shari’ah*). Instead, they used the term “*hukum as-shar’i*” to generally define or explain the purposes behind such rulings. The term “*maqasid al-shari’ah*” was later introduced by notable figures such as Imam al-Juwaini, Imam al-Ghazali, al-Razi and al-Amidi.

³³ *Faydul Qadir*, hadith 3260.

This concept is considered a “distinctive branch of knowledge” and is regarded by some as a higher level of Islamic jurisprudence (*usul al-fiqh*). And contemporary Muslim jurists have placed a greater emphasis on *maqasid*, where the ultimate objective of *shari’ah* is defined as the well-being of God’s creation (*masalih al-khalq*), encompassing both immediate and eternal welfare. According to Othman Abd-ar-Rahman Llewellyn,³⁴ author of “The Basis for a Discipline of Islamic Environmental Law,” it is essential for Muslims to understand and embrace these principles in order to effectively address environmental challenges. He further discusses in detail:

The ultimate purpose of the shari’ah is the universal common good, the welfare of the entire creation (*masalih al-khalqi kaffatan*). This objective of the universal common good is a distinctive characteristic of Islamic law. It means, first, that both material and nonmaterial dimensions must be taken into account, and second, that the welfare of humans and of nonhuman sentient beings must be considered in the course of planning and administration. No species or generation may be excluded from consideration, for every atom’s weight of good and every atom’s weight of harm that has resulted from our actions will be weighted on the Day of Judgement.³⁵

Therefore, within Islam, it is inevitable for Muslims to adopt a comprehensive approach to environmental conservation and justice, based on the Islamic principle of *masalih al-khalqi kaffatan*, which considers the well-being of all creation throughout time and space.

In this regard, Muslim scholars have agreed upon five main objectives: preserving religion (*hifdh al-din*), preserving life (*hifdh al-nafs*), preserving lineage (*hifdh al-nasl*), preserving mind (*hifdh al-‘aql*), and preserving wealth (*hifdh al-maal*). These objectives

³⁴ Othman Abd-ar-Rahman Llewellyn, “The Basis for a Discipline of Islamic Environmental Law,” in *Islam and Ecology: A Bestowed Trust* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 193.

³⁵ Llewellyn, “Islamic Environmental Law,” 193.

are seen as basic human needs. The classification of *maqasid* is based on three categories: levels of necessity (*darurat*), needs (*hajiyyat*), and luxuries (*tahsiniyyat*). The goal was to extract and categorize the higher objectives of Islamic law (*maqasid al-shari'ah*) in order to establish a general philosophy that can guide legal rulings, fatwas, and ethical conduct. In addition to that, Yusuf al-Qardawy, the former chairman of the International Union of Muslim Scholars, established a strong basis for promoting environmental sustainability and creating a framework to safeguard human welfare. In his book "Conservation of the Environment in Islamic Law" (*Ri'ayat al-Bi'ah fi Shari'ah al-Islam*), he delved into the importance of environmental preservation (*hifdh al-bi'ah*) as part of *maqasid al-shari'ah*. This viewpoint highlights the significance of safeguarding the environment within the framework of Islamic law.³⁶ His book has certainly established the groundwork for advanced environmental sustainability and a framework to protect human welfare from Islamic perspective.

Furthermore, in the realm of environmental law, it is widely acknowledged that addressing society's basic needs through sustainable development is essential for ensuring effective environmental protection. These core principles directly relate to the well-being of present and future generations. This can be observed in the context of lineage, where stable family relationships ensure the future stability of society. It also extends to broader aspects such as religion, life, mind, and wealth.³⁷ Another significant

³⁶ Ahmad Sarip Saputra, Ida Rohmah Susiani, and Nur Syam, "Hifdh Al-Bi'ah as part of Maqasid Al-Shari'ah: Yusuf Qardawy's perspective on the environment in Ri'ayat al-Bi'ah fi Shari'ah al Islam book," *AIP Conference Proceedings* 2353, no. 030106 (May 2021): 3-5, <https://doi.org/10.1063/5.0052768>

³⁷ Llewellyn, "Islamic Environmental Law," 194-195.

principle involves the interconnected twin concepts³⁸ of *maslahah* and *mafsadah*, which entail incorporating the public interest into the interpretation of Islamic law. This principle is crucial in tackling environmental justice issues. Any action that upholds the core principles is considered as beneficial (*maslahah*), while anything that undermines them is identified as detrimental (*mafsadah*).³⁹ Therefore, it is evident that when viewed through a decolonial lens, Muslim religious beliefs and practices reflect the impact of Islam on the ongoing discussions around environmental ethics and environmental justice.

Furthermore, taking a political economy perspective is also crucial in understanding how an Islamic approach can enhance Muslims' understanding of modern environmental challenges by incorporating Islamic values prioritizing social justice, sustainability, and ethical conduct while respecting individual ways of life. Therefore, the integration of Islamic values into policymaking and daily practices perhaps has a potential to create a more equitable and sustainable future for everyone. This can foster a balanced and fair relationship between humanity and the environment.

³⁸ Marina A. Bakar and Ahmad K.A. Rahim. "Maqasid Al-Shariah Theory: A Comparative Analysis Between the Thoughts of Al-Shatibi and 'Izz Al-Din Ibn 'Abd Al-Salam." *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences* 11, no. 8 (August 2021): 187, <http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBS/v11-i8/10683>

³⁹ Bakar and Rahim, "Maqasid Al-Shariah Theory," 184-186.

CHAPTER 4.

MUSLIM ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE MOVEMENT

It is now widely recognized that the current state of modern civilization is unsustainable, including the Western lifestyle that many aspire to. And we are presently facing the consequences of our actions, as stated in the Qur'an, "corruption has flourished on land and sea as a result of people's actions, and He will make them taste the consequences of some of their own actions so that they may turn back."¹ The Qur'an acknowledges human responsibility for all forms of corruption (*fasad*), including those that affect the environment. This disconnection has worsened inequity and injustice, burdening communities already facing numerous challenges.

The land and sea have been corrupted by human activities, and now we must face the outcomes of our actions, as well as those of our predecessors. This is not meant to be punishment, but rather a reminder of our need to return to God and restore nature balance. Experiencing these consequences requires us to acknowledge that we are not exempt from rectifying the effects of our own actions and those before us. As individuals within society, we are interconnected and share a collective responsibility to make amends.

As this thesis delves into the environmental teachings found in the Qur'an and inspired from the Prophetic traditions regarding nature conservation, it also explores the principles and practices of the Muslim environmental movement, specifically focusing on environmental justice. In contrast to the dominant paradigm in environmental studies that

¹ Qur'an 30:41.

treat environmental issues as reactive problems to address, Muslim environmentalism is characterized by responsible and accountable engagement with creation. The practical norms of Muslim environmentalism are rooted in a broader ethical framework, as long as Islam remains significant.²

Islamic law, for instance, plays a vital role in addressing environmental justice concerns. As a result, Islamic environmental justice pertains to the concept of promoting fairness and equality in environmental management and conservation in alignment with Islamic beliefs and values. By incorporating these teachings into daily practices and policies, Muslims can make a powerful impact in effecting a positive change for the environment. After all, nature holds sacred wisdom that requires profound exploration; it is not an empty existence devoid of significance for humanity. Rather than being merely an accessory in this world, it serves as a medium through which humans can connect with their Creator.

Reviving Sufism in Muslim Environmental Movement

One significant component in the Islamic tradition is Sufism, also known as *tasawwuf*, which emerged as a mystical and spiritual tradition within Islam, originating from the teachings of Prophet Muhammad and his companions but fully developing into a distinct movement with unique practices, teachings, and orders over the centuries. Historically, Sufism has been instrumental in influencing the cultural and spiritual setting

² Anna M. Gade, *Muslim Environmentalisms: Religious and Social Foundations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019), 3.

of the Islamic world such as music, literature, art, and philosophy. Its emphasis on personal piety, spiritual growth, and the pursuit of inner knowledge has made Sufism an integral aspect of Islamic civilization. Rooted in Islamic ethics, Sufism emphasizes virtues such as compassion, humility, patience, and love for all creation. It centers around inner purification to foster a personal connection with the Divine that guides ethical living. These principles inspire integrity, kindness, generosity while nurturing community and interconnectedness.

Given its focus on spiritual connection and reverence for nature, Sufism can certainly play a crucial role in contemporary Muslim environmental movement. Sufi teachings often highlight the interconnectedness of all living beings and emphasize caring for the environment as a way to honor the Creator. From a Sufi perspective, human perfection lies in purity of soul. By recognizing the sanctity of life and recognizing the Divine laws present in every aspect of the universe, individuals can embody divine qualities within themselves. Consequently, the entire universe is not seen as mere material objects but as an entity that becomes signs (*ayaat*) of God inseparable from itself. As a result, individuals with this paradigm will not view nature as something to exploit but rather as a sacred trust to preserve and protect, considering it a form of worship (*'ibadat*) in a broader sense. Traditionally, the rationale for preserving and sustaining sacred natural elements like forests, water sources, grazing land, or animal populations was rooted in vibrant spiritual beliefs passed down through generations. The local ecology, consisting of vegetation, water, and animals, provided strength to the people. It was revered for its blessing and healing properties, which were often associated with the divine sacred power in nature. Sufism offered a path to peace and spiritual solace

by emphasizing the importance of balance (*mizan*) as the fundamental law of existence. This concept of balance encompassed not only individuals but also extended to the wider community and the natural world. Recognizing that God established a life-sustaining balance (*mizan*) in the natural world, it is crucial for us to respect and protect it. The Qur'an teaches that God created everything with precision and established a balance that should not be disrupted:

It is the Lord of Mercy who taught the Qur'an. He created man and taught him to communicate. The sun and the moon follow their calculated courses; the plants and the trees submit to His designs; He has raised up the sky. He has set the balance so that you may not exceed in the balance: weigh with justice and do not fall short in the balance. He set down the earth for His creatures, with its fruits, its palm trees with sheathed clusters, its husked grain, its fragrant plants. Which, then, of your Lord's blessings do you both deny?³

Most Muslim scholars interpret the term "*mizan*" (balance) as justice, indicating that justice forms the foundation of the entire universe's structure. Without equilibrium and justice among all elements in the universe, including stars, planets, creatures, and forces, life on earth would cease to exist. Unfortunately, human activities such as resource overconsumption, industrial pollution, burning fossil fuels, and deforestation, have significantly disrupted this delicate environmental balance. These actions have caused widespread ecological destruction like habitat loss, species extinction, and ecosystem degradation. While excessive release of greenhouse gases from human activities contributes to climate change with adverse effects such as increasing temperatures, sea-level rise, and extreme weather events. To restore balance and protect the environment requires addressing these issues through sustainable practices and conservation efforts. Balance is an inherent aspect of both earthly and heavenly spheres of life. While Sufism

³ Qur'an 55:1-13.

emphasizes spiritual practices like daily prayer, equal love and attention are given to other aspects of life too. This includes committing to community welfare as well as caring for the environment through practical actions in everyday life. These practices serve as constant reminders that humans must utilize earth's resources wisely. However, acknowledging spiritual experiences is challenging in the modern human paradigm. This paradigm prioritizes truth based on correspondence and coherence, neglecting the spiritual dimensions. From this paradigm, numerous schools of thought have emerged, including materialism, liberalism, rationalism, pragmatism, positivism, and secularism, each offering different perspectives on the relationship between humans and nature. Therefore, caring for the environment in a responsible manner is viewed as an expression of gratitude and a means to ensure lasting prosperity for generations to come.

Over time, Muslims have developed a relationship with the environment that demonstrates both challenges and a deep connection and respect for nature. Islamic teachings have given rise to rules and institutions emphasizing the importance of caring for the environment as part of a holistic way of life. These rules and institutions reflect a comprehensive approach to living in harmony with nature, recognizing the interdependence of all living beings and our duty to be good stewards of the earth.

Perhaps a comprehensive Islamic perspective on the environment can be summarized in three aspects, as explained by Khalid:⁴

- a. The first is to approach the earth as sacred and identify how through abusing it we have desecralized our understanding of it. Hence, we can rediscover what it is that we have lost in the process.

⁴ Khalid, *Signs on the Earth*, 149-150.

- b. The second is to formulate an ethical understanding of our relationship with the natural world and build a knowledge base that enables us to resolve the immediate crisis and motivates us to lay down a basis for long term behavioral change.
- c. The third is to look at this through the prism of political economy and discover what it is that an Islamic approach to this subject can do to both improve our understanding of the current malaise and provide some answers as to how we can create a model of well-being without having to subvert our existence.

These aspects provide a solid foundation for deriving principles and practices for the Muslim environmental movement.

Muslim Environmentalism Globally

Muslim scholars and environmental experts have actively joined religious leaders in advocating global initiatives to address environmental crises and climate change since the 1960s. This effort has led to the development of an Islamic eco-theology by notable scholars like Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Fazlun Khalid, İbrahim Özdemir, Mawil Izzi-Dien, and Syed Nomanul Haq, to name a few. They aim to bridge theological teachings with contemporary ecological issues by participating in various initiatives and projects that foster interconnectedness between humanity and the surrounding ecosystems. To amplify their voices and create a meaningful movement, Muslim faith leaders, ecologists, activists, and politicians from over twenty countries convened for a symposium in Istanbul in August 2015. During this event, the Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change was released. This document aimed to urge the nearly two billion Muslims worldwide to address ecological imbalances collectively and promptly through coordinated action. The declaration emphasized the urgent need for addressing climate

change, following a similar initiative by the Vatican earlier in the year with Pope Francis releasing his encyclical on climate change called *Laudato Si'*. This encyclical warned society about the potential devastating consequences of neglecting climate change and ecosystem destruction. These discussions then led to conversations about ecological injustice and Islamic responses, which laid the groundwork for the development of Islamic eco-theology and environmental justice movement.

There are differing perspectives on the broader implications of Islamic environmentalism, it is suggested that these movements represent more than passing trends but rather fundamental shifts in the teaching and interpretation of Islam. Some studies indicate a rise in environmental consciousness among political Islamists, through their adoption of environmentalist language may be seen as strategic. Currently, natural environment concerns are not central to Islamic thought, which tends to prioritize issues such as terrorism, radicalism, human rights, and democracy. As a result, Muslim environmentalists make up a relatively small minority within the global Muslim community. Although recently, there has been a significant interest in Muslim environmental activism and organizations among young Muslims at both local and global levels. The following are some examples of Muslim environmental organizations and alliances that have launched initiatives, campaigns, and programs in recent years:

1. Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences (IFEES)
2. Muslim Association for Climate Change Action (MACCA)
3. Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) Green Initiative
4. Global Muslim Climate Network (GMCN)
5. Green Muslims of Washington DC
6. Wisconsin Green Muslims (WGM)
7. Green Muslims of New Jersey (GMNJ)
8. Chicago Muslims Green Team (CMGT)
9. Green Cadre of Muhammadiyah (KHM)
10. EnviroMuslims

11. GreenUmmah
12. Global One
13. EcoIslam
14. Arab Youth Climate Movement
15. Ummah for Earth
16. EcoMadrasah/Pesantren
17. Green Ramadan
18. Muslim Climate Watch
19. EcoMasjid/Mosque
20. Khaleafa
21. EcoLiteracy
22. Faithfully Sustainable
23. EcoMENA
24. Ummah for the Universe
25. EcoDeen

Undeniably, environmentalism is deeply ingrained in Islam, influencing personal behavior and relationships with others and the natural world. These principles originated from Prophet Muhammad’s teachings and are based on three core values such as, encouraging beneficial actions to society (*ma’ruf*), preventing harmful actions (*munkar*), and always maintaining a moderate approach (*i’tidal*).⁵ These values are also commended in the Qur’an, “be a community that calls for what is good, urges what is right, and forbids what is wrong: those who do this are the successful ones.”⁶ Certainly, Islam has also had a considerable influence on individuals in different regions and time periods, shaping both their spiritual and worldly experiences. In fact, Islam is not merely a religion, but also a civilization with a long history spanning across Asia, Africa, and parts of Europe. Its impact on shaping world society is profound, given that nearly a quarter of the global population follows it, coming from diverse backgrounds.

⁵ Firman, “Act of Worship,” 34.

⁶ Qur’an 3:104.

Recently, an esteemed panel of Muslim scholars and organizations collaborated to create a groundbreaking document called “Al-Mizan: A Covenant for the Earth.”⁷ This document presents an Islamic perspective on ecological responsibility and calls for collective action to address climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution. The document was launched during the UNEA-6 in Nairobi in February 2024. During the official announcement, Iyad Abumoghli, the Director of UNEP’s Faith for Earth Coalition, stated that “Al-Mizan” goes beyond being just a document; indeed, it serves as a catalyst for transformation and provides a framework for individuals, communities, and organizations to translate Islamic principles into concrete actions. Although grounded in Islamic principles, the document extends its message to communities of different faiths and cultures. It emphasizes the importance of global collaboration in addressing environmental issues that transcend cultural and religious boundaries.⁸

Building Muslim Environmental Justice Movement

Islamic principles emphasize the significance of maintaining justice in every facet of life, from personal behavior to interactions within society. Muslims are urged to act justly, treat others with fairness and equality, and oppose oppression and injustice. And now more than ever, it is crucial to move away from flawed paradigms and rectify these corruptions by adopting a spiritual approach that emphasizes living in harmony with

⁷ “Al-Mizan: A Covenant for the Earth,” The U.N. Environment Program, last modified February 29, 2024, accessed March 3, 2024. <https://www.unep.org/al-mizan-covenant-earth>

⁸ “Faith for Earth Dialogue at UNEA 6,” The U.N. Environment Program, last modified March 1, 2024, accessed March 3, 2024. <https://www.unep.org/events/unep-event/faith-earth-dialogue-unea-6>

nature. This necessitates advocating for an Islamic environmental justice movement to address pressing issues. To begin this process, it is important to delve into discussions on environmental justice and explore principles and practices related to environmental conservation in Islam. Drawing inspiration from teachings in the Qur'an and Prophetic traditions can guide us in approaching environmental issues with a sense of justice and responsibility.

Islamic legal framework inherently protects the environment by prioritizing the common good and advocating for an economic system that involves shared financial risks among stakeholders. It also enacts laws regarding agriculture and water distribution that prioritize the well-being of all creatures. These principles emphasize the importance of environmental preservation and sustainable behaviors within Islamic teachings. They underscore the interconnectedness between humanity and the natural world, stressing the obligation to care for and preserve the earth for generations to come. And in order to effectively address climate change and other environmental challenges, it is important for the Muslim community to have a seat at the global climate change discourse.⁹ Memona Hossain, an Ecopsychologist, argues that their perspectives are “valuable” and should be “included” in decision-making processes related to climate action.

Many Muslim-majority nations are now facing direct consequences from ecological degradation and climate change. However, the understanding of these contemporary issues is often limited when viewed solely through a political economy

⁹ Memona Hossain, “Muslim community must have a seat for global climate change discourse,” *Mongabay*, November 2, 2023. <https://news.mongabay.com/2023/11/muslim-community-deserves-seats-at-global-climate-change-discourses-commentary>.

perspective, due to the post-colonial development system. While there is existing literature exploring Islam's potential to address environmental challenges, little is known about how these eco-friendly interpretations impact wider Muslim populations' attitudes and behaviors toward environmental issues. Even so, there has been an encouraging increase in interest among Muslim activists over the past twenty years to actively participate in the global and local environmental movement, drawing inspiration from Islamic teachings. This shift towards "Islamic environmentalism" holds promise in effectively addressing environmental challenges without relying on the Western narrative prevalent in developed countries that portrays them as saviors. And by embracing an approach rooted in their own cultural and religious heritage, Muslim activists can play a significant role in promoting sustainability and conservation efforts that align with their values and identity.

According to Anna Gade's research on Muslim environmentalisms throughout Southeast Asia, when environmentalism is deeply intertwined with religious devotion, it engages with tradition in a unique way compared to instances where religion is only incorporated as a secondary aspect in environmental projects. The authenticity of this approach is not determined by its instrumental use but rather by its primary focus on religious objectives. Teachings such as "apocalypticism or the exemplary model of Prophet Muhammad," which are not typically found in standard interfaith dialogues, become central aspects of Muslim commitments to environmentalism. These teachings shed light on dimensions that may not have "corresponding terminology" in Western

environmental studies, such as the afterlife. Consequently, these practices¹⁰ shape communities as movements that “may not fit” within the conventional social analysis framework of mainstream global environmentalism.

Additionally, it is widely recognized that justice is considered a core principle in Islam. Thus, Muslims are encouraged to act with fairness, equity, and righteousness in their interactions with others. This includes seeking justice for all individuals, standing up against oppression and inequality, and promoting a just society based on Islamic principles. By establishing justice, Muslims aim to create a community where everyone’s rights are respected, peace prevails, and equality is upheld. Consequently, there is frequent reference to the concept of upholding justice in Islamic teachings. One of them is *al-‘Adl* which is one of God’s beautiful names representing perfect justice and equity. It signifies God’s inherent fairness in all actions and decisions. It reassures believers that ultimately justice will prevail, and individuals will be treated fairly based on their deeds. *Al-‘Adl* encompasses principles of justice and fairness, serving as a fundamental component of Islamic doctrine to promote a society characterized by fairness and harmony. This belief serves as a source of comfort and guidance for those seeking justice and fairness, reminding them to strive for righteousness and uphold justice in all their actions.

Considering the significant representation of Muslims in the current global population, it is encouraging to witness an increasing interest among young Muslims in delving into environmental justice through an Islamic perspective. Then, without a doubt,

¹⁰ Gade, *Muslim Environmentalisms*, 199.

it is crucial for Muslims involved in the environmental movement to have a comprehensive understanding of Islamic teachings and traditions related to environmental conservation. These teachings are deeply rooted in principles of compassion (*rahmah*) and justice (*'adl*).

The Way Forward

Moving forward, developing a Muslim environmental movement centered on environmental justice rooted in Islamic principles is an honorable pursuit and an urgent matter. By incorporating three key principles – responsible and accountable engagement with creation, a broader ethical framework, and a political economy perspective – the movement can strive to promote sustainability, social equity, and ethical behavior within the Muslim community and beyond. Dockrat highlights that Islam's essential social contract binding individuals to society is encompassed by the concept of congregations (*jama'at*), which is founded on worship (*'ibadat*), private and public affairs (*mu'amalat*), and political governance (*imara*).¹¹ Failure to comply with this understanding of *jama'at* results in individualism, excessive pursuit of wealth, and the loss of political sovereignty. On the contrary, the more *jama'at* adheres to God's commands within the social contract, the stronger it becomes. This Divine contract is based on obedience, responsibility, and accountability. Hence, when initiating the Muslim environmental movement focused on environmental justice rooted in Islam, it is crucial to begin with sincerity (*ikhlas*) of

¹¹ Hashim Ismail Dockrat, "Islam, Muslim Society, and Environmental Concerns: A Development Model Based on Islam's Organic Society" in *Islam and Ecology: A Bestowed Trust* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 345.

intentions (*niyyat*). In the realm of environmentally driven activism guided by spirituality, everyone involved in such efforts should consistently reaffirm their intentions. They should ensure that their actions, campaigns, and movement are solely aimed at pleasing God rather than primarily seeking validation from others. The acceptance and blessings bestowed upon one's deeds by God depend primarily on the intention (*niyyah*) behind those actions.¹² The Prophet underscored in this regard, "People will be resurrected [and judged] according to their intentions."¹³

Finally, the following are some essential aspects that should be reflected as Muslim environmental movement continue to develop:

- a. Commencing with sincerity of the intention (*niyyah*) solely for the pleasure of God.
- b. Acquiring knowledge (*'ilm*) through environmental education based on Qur'an and *Sunnah*.
- c. Reviving compassion toward nature inspired by *tasawwuf* practices.
- d. Upholding justice for all, rooted in the principles of *mizan*.

In practice, as a faith-based environmental movement, Muslim environmentalists will engage in awareness-raising activities, organizing events and initiatives to bring people together, mobilizing support for sustainability efforts, and advocating for policy changes to make a substantial difference. After all, environmental justice is a crucial aspect, they need to ensure it receives due consideration. As part of nearly a quarter of the world's population, it is critical for Muslims to lead the effort in the environmental justice movement, their perspectives, knowledge, and contributions are essential to

¹² Dawud Walid, *Towards Sacred Activism* (USA: Al-Madina Institute, 2018), 37.

¹³ *Sunan Ibn Majah*, no. 4229, bk. 37, hadith 130.

comprehensive and inclusive solutions. And, by educating Muslim communities about the importance of environmental care based on shared values and promoting unity through events and initiatives while garnering support for sustainable practices and advocating for policy changes, Muslims can definitely make a tangible difference.

CHAPTER 5.

CONCLUSION

Several years ago, I stumbled on a BBC Radio program on “Share Planet: Religion and Nature” where it shared the quote from Gus Speth, an American environmental lawyer, who founded WRI (World Resource Institute) and NRDC (Nature Resources Defense Council). His famous remark conveys:

“I used to think the top environmental problems were biodiversity loss, ecosystem collapse and climate change. I thought that with thirty years of good science we could address those problems. But I was wrong. The top environmental problems are selfishness, greed, and apathy. And to deal with those we need a spiritual and cultural transformation and we (lawyers) and scientists, do not know how to do that.”¹

His words sparked a surge of interest and discussion among environmental scientists, activists, and professionals at that moment. Continuing the same subject in the Earth Charter podcast, he elaborated² more on outdated patterns of thinking such as “individualism, materialism, consumerism, and tribalism,” which are no longer relevant in today’s world, emphasizing the need for a “new consciousness.”

He then mentioned what requires is “not further analysis, but a spiritual awakening to embrace a new consciousness” regarding human and nature relationship. He also highlighted the importance of “education, religion, social movements, and role models” to create a sustainable future. His ideas resonate with my belief. And with more

¹ Monty Don, “Religion and Nature,” October 1, 2013, in *Shared Planet*, produced by BBC Radio 4, podcast, MP3 audio, 29:00, accessed January 1, 2024. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/b03bqws7>

² Mirian Vilela, “A New Consciousness and the Eight-fold Way towards Sustainability,” April 7, 2023, in *Earth Charter Podcast*, produced by The Earth Charter, podcast, MP3 audio, 50:31, accessed on January 7, 2024. <https://earthcharter.org/podcasts/gus-speth>

than 75 percent of the global population identifying with faith traditions, there is immense potential for faith communities to drive impactful change through collective efforts. Likewise, ordinary people and communities can certainly contribute to the safeguarding of our shared home, this earth!

Therefore, it is imperative to unite people of diverse faiths to take the lead in a global effort to redefine what is regarded as sufficient. A flourishing life is indeed characterized by a sense of interconnectedness with one another and the natural world. It beholds a thriving environment that replaces hopelessness with happiness, scarcity with shared prosperity, and privilege with equitably distributed power.

In conclusion, this thesis asserts the importance for Muslims to make a powerful impact in urging a positive change for the environment. Several aspects, such as educating all members of Muslim communities about the importance of environmental stewardship based on the Qur'an and the *Sunnah*, must be introduced, and disseminated. In addition to that, organizing events and initiatives to foster unity and mobilizing support for sustainable projects must be encouraged. And most importantly, advocating for policy reforms beyond demographic and geographic boundaries must be developed in different Muslim communities worldwide. By reviving the profound wisdom of Sufism as well as the integration on the value of *mizan* to restore the connection with the natural world, Muslims can contribute significantly to responding to the urgent ecological crisis we face today. Lastly, Muslims must also promote fairness and equity for all beings to the global society and pave the way to establishing a genuine Muslim environmental justice movement, deeply rooted in God-consciousness. Together, hand in hand and shoulder to shoulder, working toward protecting the earth for a sustainable and harmonious future.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abdel-Haleem, Harfiyah. *Islam and the Environment*. London: Ta-Ha Publishers, 1998.
- Abdel-Haleem, M.A.S. *The Qur'an*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Abdul-Matin, Ibrahim. *GreenDeen: What Islam Teaches about Protecting the Planet*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2010.
- Al-Jayyousi, Odeh R. *Islam and Sustainable Development: New Worldviews*. Surrey: Gower Publishing, 2012.
- Bakar, Marina A, Ahmad K.A. Rahim. "Maqasid Al-Shariah Theory: A Comparative Analysis Between the Thoughts of Al-Shatibi and 'Izz Al-Din Ibn 'Abd Al-Salam." *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences* 11, no. 8 (August 2021): 180-193.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.6007/IJARBS/v11-i8/10683>
- Bhikunni, Venerable Santussika. "Mobilizing People of Faith in the People's Climate Movement." In *A Planetary and Global Ethics for Climate Change and Sustainable Energy*, 64-78. Bangkok: Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, 2016.
- Bullard, Robert D. *The Quest for Environmental Justice: Human Rights and the Politics of Pollution*. Berkeley: Counterpoint, 2005.
- Cole, Luke W. and Sheila R Foster. *From the Ground Up: Environmental Racism and the Rise of the Environmental Justice Movement*. New York: New York University Press, 2001.
- Dockrat, Hashim Ismail. "Islam, Muslim Society, and Environmental Concerns: A Development Model Based on Islam's Organic Society." In *Islam and Ecology: A Bestowed Trust*, 341-375. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003.
- Don, Monty. "Religion and Nature." Produced by BBC Radio 4. *Shared Planet*. October 1, 2013. Podcast, MP3 audio, 29:00. Accessed January 1, 2024.
<https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/b03bqws7>
- Elliot, Lorraine. "History of the Environmental Movement." In *The Encyclopedia Britannica*. Accessed December 31, 2023.
<https://www.britannica.com/topic/environmentalism/History-of-the-environmental-movement>
- Esack, Farid. *Qur'an Liberation and Pluralism: An Islamic Perspective of Interreligious Solidarity against Oppression*. Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 1998.

- Festival of Faiths. "Healing Self, Healing Society." YouTube video, 51:25. May 20, 2014. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d0SYEYKm6ec&t=202s>
- Firman, Nana. "Act of Worship." *Earth Island Journal*, Winter 2024.
- Gade, Anna M. *Muslim Environmentalisms: Religious and Social Foundations*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2019.
- Gottlieb, Roger. *A Greener Faith*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2006.
- GreenFaith. "Apply for the GreenFaith North America Rising Leaders Fellowship." Our Campaigns. Last modified March 1, 2024. <https://greenfaith.org/north-america-rising-leaders/>
- Hadith Answers. "An Online Source for Hadith Fatwas." Last modified, March 22, 2024. <https://hadithanswers.com/>
- Hage, Ghassan. *Is racism an environmental threat?* Cambridge: Polity Press, 2017.
- Hamouchene, Hamza, Katie Sandwell. *Dismantling Green Colonialism: Energy and Climate Justice in the Arab Region*. London: Pluto Press, 2023.
- Harper, Fletcher. *GreenFaith: Mobilizing God's People to Save the Earth*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2015.
- Hayes, Amy. "The 20th Century Environmental Movement in the US." *The Collector*, November 7, 2022. <https://www.thecollector.com/american-environmental-movement/>
- Hossain, Memona. "Muslim community must have a seat for global climate change discourse." *Mongabay*, November 2, 2023. <https://news.mongabay.com/2023/11/muslim-community-deserves-seats-at-global-climate-change-discourses-commentary>.
- Izzi-Dien, Mawil. "Islamic Ethics and the Environment." In *Islam and Ecology*, 25-35. London: Cassell, 1992.
- _____. *The Environmental Dimensions of Islam*. Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press, 2000.
- Khalid, Fazlun. *Signs on the Earth: Islam, Modernity and the Climate Crisis*. Leicestershire: Kube Publishing, 2019.
- Kılınç, Sümeyra M. *The Zero Waste Movement*. Istanbul: Turkuvaz Kitab, 2023.

- Klein, Naomi. *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs the Climate*. New York: Simon and Schuster Paperbacks, 2014.
- Koehrsen, Jens. “Muslims and climate change: How Islam, Muslim organizations, and religious leaders influence climate change perceptions and mitigation activities.” *WIREs Climate Change* 12, issue 3 (May/June 2021): 1-19.
<https://doi.org/10.1002/wcc.702>
- Llewellyn, Othman Abd-ar-Rahman. “The Basis for a Discipline of Islamic Environmental Law.” In *Islam and Ecology: A Bestowed Trust*, 185-247. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003.
- LSE Faith Center. “What does Islam have to say about the environment?” YouTube video, 6:53. January 23, 2020.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZmvmWCLNj3w>
- Majeed, Kori and Saarah Y. Latif. *Forty Green Hadith: Sayings of the Prophet Muhammad on Environmental Justice and Sustainability*. Washington DC: GreenRamadan, 2020. Accessed December 25, 2023,
<https://greenramadan.com/2020/12/new-ebook-40-green-hadith/>
- Masri, Al-Hafiz B. A. “Islam and Ecology.” In *Islam and Ecology*, 1-23. London: Cassell, 1992.
- Maududi, Syed Abul A'ala. “Towards Understanding the Qur'an” last modified March 11, 2024. <https://www.islamicstudies.info/tafheem.php?sura=11&verse=61>
- McKibben, Bill. *The End of Nature*. New York: Random House, 2006.
- _____. *Deep Economy*. New York: Holt Paperbacks, 2007.
- Naess, Arne. *The Ecology of Wisdom*. Berkeley: Counterpoint Press, 2008.
- Nasr, Seyyed Hossein. *Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis of Modern Man*. Chicago: ABC International Group, 1997.
- _____. *Religion and the Order of Nature*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- _____, Caner K. Dagli, Maria Massi Dakake, Joseph E.B. Lumbard and Mohammed Rustom, eds. *The Study Qur'an: A New Translation and Commentary*. New York: HarperCollins, 2015.
- Negus, Yunus. “Science within Islam: Learning How to Care for Our World.” In *Islam and Ecology*, 37-49. London: Cassell, 1992.

- Özdemir, İbrahim. "Toward an Understanding of Environmental Ethics from a Qur'anic Perspective." In *Islam and Ecology: A Bestowed Trust*, 3-37. Cambridge: Harvard University Press 2003.
- Pew Research Center, "The Global Religious Landscape." Report. Last modified April 14, 2022. <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2012/12/18/global-religious-landscape-exec/>
- Rao, Anuradha. *One Earth: People of Color Protecting Our Planet*. South Korea: Orca Book, 2020.
- Robinson, Mary. *Climate Justice: Hope, Resilience, and the Fight for a Sustainable Future*. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018.
- Saputra, Ahmad Sarip, Ida Rohmah Susiani, and Nur Syam. "Hifdh Al-Bi'ah as part of Maqasid Al-Shari'ah: Yusuf Qardawy's perspective on the environment in Ri'ayat al-Bi'ah fi Shari'ah al Islam book." *AIP Conference Proceedings* 2353, no. 030106 (May 2021): 1-6. <https://doi.org/10.1063/5.0052768>
- Sunnah. "The Hadith of the Prophet Muhammad at Your Fingertips." Last modified, April 1, 2024. <http://sunnah.com>.
- The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. *Climate Change 2021: The Physical Science Basis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009157896>
- The U.N. Department of Economic and Social Affairs. *World Social Report 2020: Inequality in a Rapidly Changing World*. New York: United Nations Publication, 2020. <https://desapublications.un.org/publications/world-social-report-2020-inequality-rapidly-changing-world>
- The U.N. Environment Program. "Al-Mizan: A Covenant for the Earth." Al-Mizan. Last modified February 29, 2024. <https://www.unep.org/al-mizan-covenant-earth>
-
- . "Faith for Earth Dialogue at UNEA 6." UNEP Event. Last modified March 1, 2024. <https://www.unep.org/events/unep-event/faith-earth-dialogue-unea-6>
- The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. "What is Environmental Justice?" Not in My Backyard: Executive Order 12,898 and Title VI as Tools for Achieving Environmental Justice. Published October 1, 2003. <https://www.usccr.gov/files/pubs/envjust/ch2.htm>
- The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. "EPA History: Earth Day." EPA History. Last modified July 17, 2023. <https://www.epa.gov/history/epa-history-earth-day>

-
- . “What is Environmental Education?”
Education. Last modified July 10, 2023. <https://www.epa.gov/education/what-environmental-education>
- University of St. Thomas. “Islam, Christianity, and the Environmental Crisis.” YouTube video, 1:14:35. March 18, 2021.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xqasknBBBCo>
- Vilela, Mirian. “A New Consciousness and the Eight-fold Way towards Sustainability.” Produced by The Earth Charter. *Earth Charter Podcast*. April 7, 2023. Podcast, MP3 audio, 50:31. Accessed on January 7, 2024.
<https://earthcharter.org/podcasts/gus-speth>
- Walid, Dawud. *Towards Sacred Activism*. USA: Al-Madina Institute, 2018.
- White Jr, Lynn. “The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis.” *Science* 155, no. 3767 (March 10, 1967): 1203-1207.
<https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.155.3767.1203>
- Wood, Harold, “Who was John Muir?” Sierra Club, updated December 24, 2023,
https://vault.sierraclub.org/john_muir_exhibit/about
- WWF. “What is the sixth mass extinction and what can we do about it?” Stories. Last modified March 10, 2021. <https://www.worldwildlife.org/stories/what-is-the-sixth-mass-extinction-and-what-can-we-do-about-it>
- Yunkaporta, Tyson. *Sand Talk: How Indigenous Thinking Can Save the World*. New York: HarperCollins, 2020.