

THE EVOLUTION AND FUTURE OF RELIGION AND ECOLOGY: INSIGHTS FROM MUSLIM ENVIRONMENTAL THOUGHT

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Introduction

Environmental degradation and climate change highlight the unsustainability of modern practices, necessitating a reevaluation of our interaction with nature. Roger Gottlieb rightly argues that the environmental crisis challenges our fundamental beliefs about humanity and our way of life (Gottlieb 2006, 4). This crisis has driven a shift towards holistic ethical frameworks that emphasize interconnectedness and the moral imperative to protect our planet. Therefore, it would not be an exaggeration to say that the environmental crisis has served as a clarion call for a fundamental transformation in our values and ethics vis-à-vis the natural world.

Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim significantly advanced the field of religion and ecology by highlighting scholarly developments and the increasing involvement of religious leaders in environmental issues. Their pivotal role in organizing a seminal series of ten edited volumes, derived from groundbreaking conferences on “Religions of the World and Ecology” at Harvard (1996-1998), explored the ethical and spiritual resources within religious traditions for fostering sustainability. Their research illustrated how religious teachings and practices often emphasize stewardship of nature, although misinterpretations have occasionally led to environmental degradation. Their work continues to inspire the dialogue between religion and ecology and has profoundly impacted

Islamic environmentalism since I first encountered them at the 1998 “Islam and Ecology” conference. These conferences explored how the wisdom embedded in various religious and Indigenous cultures could contribute to a more profound understanding of our relationship with the cosmos. By bringing together scholars, theologians, and environmentalists, the conferences aimed to uncover the ethical and spiritual resources within religious traditions that could inspire more sustainable and respectful ways of living on our planet (Grim and Tucker 2014).

Eco-Theology as a Response to Environmental Challenges

Eco-theology and cosmoethics have emerged as fields that integrate cosmological principles with ethical responsibilities, emphasizing harmony with the universe. These interdisciplinary frameworks highlight the moral duties of humans within the cosmos, combining insights from cosmology and ethics (Salgues 2016). Islamic eco-theologians utilize Islamic principles to address ecological problems, promoting sustainable living as an essential aspect of faith. By drawing on approximately 750 Qur'anic verses related to the natural world and the Prophet's teachings on conservation and balance (al-Mīzan), Islamic eco-theology seeks to harmonize spiritual devotion with ecological consciousness based on Tawḥīd (oneness of God). This approach views environmental stewardship as a divine mandate, fostering a just interaction with the cosmos reflecting compassion, responsibility, and reverence for all of God's creation. Integrating spiritual and moral perspectives with environmental ethics, this framework addresses the ecological crisis comprehensively, urging a re-examination of our beliefs and advocating for sustainable coexistence within a balanced cosmos (al-Mīzan).

Muslim Environmental Thought

The Qur'anic View of the Universe: Order, Purpose, and Reflection

The Qur'an profoundly transformed the early Muslims' worldview and their approach to life, replacing the pre-Islamic perception of nature as “chaotic, meaningless, and purposeless” and the consequent belief that human life is similarly devoid of meaning. The Qur'an gradually replaced this perception with the perception that the universe is a creation imbued with signs (*āyāt*) of God's presence and wisdom, encouraging believers to reflect deeply on all existence with a holistic and inclusive perspective. This transformation underscores that human life must be meaningful and purposeful if nature possesses meaning and

purpose (Özdemir 2003). The Qur'anic vision fosters a profound sense of gratitude, responsibility, and reverence for the Creator, reinforcing the central concept of Islam that everything in the universe is a manifestation of God's meticulous design and purposeful creation. By viewing the natural world as a testament to divine wisdom, early Muslims were encouraged to engage with their environment in ways that honored and preserved its sanctity. The Prophet Muhammad pioneered in forbidding the felling of any tree in the wilderness that provides valuable shade or sustenance, either for people or animals, and declared, *"If anyone plants a tree, no human, nor any of God's creatures will eat from it, without its being reckoned as charity from him"* (Khalid et al. 2024, 28). When he emigrated to Al-Madinah, he established a sacred sanctuary encompassing that oasis city and its date palm groves, wherein the native vegetation would not be cut and wherein wild animals would not be hunted or disturbed, and surrounding that zone, a wider protected area (*himā*), in which wild trees and shrubs would not be felled. This understanding nurtured an ethic of stewardship and care in which the well-being of all creation was paramount. The Qur'anic emphasis on the interconnectedness of life and the universe continues to inspire a deep respect for the environment and a commitment to sustainable and ethical living, reflecting the timeless wisdom of Islamic teachings (Özdemir 2022, 64).



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Moreover, the Qur'anic perspective on the universe as the total of “everything other than God” (*mā siwā Allāh*) suggests a God-centric cosmos where all creation is intrinsically linked to the divine (Bakar 2018). This perspective underscores the interconnectedness of all entities within the universe, establishing a foundation for understanding the cosmos not just as a physical space but as a manifestation of divine will and order. This inherent connection between the universe and God highlights the metaphysical relationships central to Islamic cosmology. Such a new perspective profoundly shifted Muslims’ ways of being, doing, thinking, and feeling in several significant ways:

1. Muslims were urged to recognize the divine in every aspect of life, fostering a holistic understanding of existence that integrated the sacred with the mundane. This spiritual awareness permeated daily activities, encouraging believers to see the presence of God in all creation (Q. 41:53).
2. The emphasis on justice, compassion, and moral integrity reshaped how Muslims approached their daily actions. It promoted ethical behavior in personal and communal affairs, highlighting the importance of honesty, charity, and social responsibility (Q. 2:177).
3. By presenting the universe as a sign of God’s presence and wisdom (30:17-21), the Qur’an encouraged Muslims to reflect deeply on existence. This reflection nurtured a sense of gratitude and responsibility, reinforcing the belief that everything in the universe is a manifestation of God's meticulous design and purposeful creation.
4. Nature's interconnectedness and divine purpose of creation inspired an ethic of stewardship and care for the environment. Muslims were encouraged to view the natural world as a trust bestowed by God to be protected and preserved for future generations (*Amanah*).

By adopting this comprehensive perspective, Muslims could integrate their spiritual beliefs with their everyday lives, promoting a sense of purpose, ethical conduct, and commitment to environmental stewardship. This transformative perspective instilled a comprehensive ethical framework that guided Muslims in all aspects of life, fostering a community grounded in spiritual awareness, justice, compassion, and respect for the natural world (Acikgenc 2014; Draz 2008).

Moreover, the Qur'an teaches a fundamental principle regarding the universe: “*Everything has been created with a specific order, duty, meaning, and purpose*” by God (Qur'an 38:27; 3:190–191; 21:16–17; 23:115). This concept is central to the Islamic worldview. It underscores the importance of reflection and contemplation (*tafakkur* and *tadabbur*) over the creation, the signs of God, and the resulting cosmoethical awareness. According to the Qur'an, every element of

the universe is meticulously designed with a specific purpose and duty by the Creator. Deep reflection and contemplation on the creation and signs of God, both in the furthest horizons and within oneself, are considered acts of worship (Q. 41:53).

The Qur'an frequently reminds believers of God's blessings, emphasizing that God is the sole creator and sustainer of all life (Q. 35:3). The abundance of blessings and sustenance on Earth and in the skies serve as constant reminders of God's generosity and care, fostering a comprehensive understanding of the cosmos as a divine order. This perspective promotes stewardship and accountability, urging humanity to act with compassion and justice towards all beings and the environment. Embracing this ethical framework, we are reminded of our duty to preserve the cosmos' intricate balance and recognize the profound interconnectedness of all life. It calls for stewardship that honors this divine interconnectedness, encouraging sustainable practices, conservation efforts, and a reverence towards nature, aligning human actions with divine purpose.

The moral implications of the Qur'anic worldview are significant, calling for a deep sense of care and responsibility towards all life forms. The Qur'an repeatedly invites reflection on God's signs in nature, fostering compassion and empathy, where the well-being of animals, plants, and the environment is integral to humanity's well-being. Respect for creation is another cornerstone, urging humans to treat nature with dignity and reverence, translating into sustainable practices that honor the natural world's balance and harmony. Rather than exploiting resources for short-term gain, the Qur'anic approach promotes responsible and equitable use of nature's bounty, ensuring that future generations inherit a healthy planet. Moreover, sustainability is a moral imperative, highlighted by teachings on moderation and avoiding wastefulness, as exemplified by the Prophet Muhammad's guidance on water usage. The Qur'anic worldview champions care, compassion, respect, and sustainability, fostering a just and harmonious relationship with the natural world, reflecting divine order and wisdom.

Manifestations of this worldview are evident throughout Islamic civilization, from Andalusia to India. In Andalusia, the integration of architecture, agriculture, and urban planning with the natural environment demonstrate respect for ecological balance. Gardens like those in the Alhambra symbolize Islamic stewardship and sustainability. Similarly, the Mughal Empire's architectural marvels in India, such as the Taj Mahal, reflect Qur'anic principles of beauty, harmony, and respect for nature, designed with sensitivity to the natural environment and emphasizing the interconnectedness of human creations and the natural world. These historical examples highlight how the Qur'anic ethical framework has been applied in diverse cultural contexts, promoting an enduring legacy of care, compassion, and sustainable living.

Drawing inspiration from these past achievements, contemporary societies can reinvigorate their commitment to these timeless principles, ensuring a future where the well-being of all creation is upheld.

Key Concepts of Islamic Environmentalism

Japanese scholar Toshihiko Izutsu (1914-1993) dedicated his life to studying the Qur'an and its hermeneutics. In his seminal work, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur'an*, he examined the Islamic moral code and the ethical relationship between humans and God. Izutsu argues that the Qur'an portrays God as embodying ethics, requiring individuals to live ethically as a form of devotion. He highlights that ethics and religion are intertwined in the Qur'an, using ethnolinguistics to explore key concepts and the interplay between language and culture (Izutsu 2002).

The authors of *Al-Mizan: A Covenant for the Earth*, in the same spirit, redefined key terms of Islamic environmentalism based on the Qur'anic worldview and Sunnah of The Prophet to reflect its core message and special needs. These key concepts collectively form a comprehensive ethical framework that promotes care, compassion, respect, and sustainability in human interaction with the natural environment. Major concepts are summarized here as they are expected to shape the development of Islamic environmental discourse in the future.

Tawhīd: Tawhīd affirms God's oneness and signifies oneness, unity, uniqueness, singularity, matchlessness, and incomparability. Tawhīd is the bedrock of the Islamic ethos. Muslims hold that the oneness of God is the basis of our faith, metaphysics, ethics, law, and spirituality. God—be He glorified and exalted—has not made any of His creatures worthless: The very fact that He has created a being gives it inherent worth and value. The most essential ethical implication of God's oneness is to serve the one God—the Lord of all beings—by doing the greatest good we can to all His creatures. Suppose we recognize God as the one and only Lord of every created being. In that case, we must know that devotion to Him requires utmost goodness toward His entire creation—and that we must treat every creature with *taqwā*, or reverence toward its Creator. All created beings have inherent worth and value because God has been creating them. To exclude any created being from moral consideration violates the principle of tawhīd. Indeed, to make our ultimate aim less than the good of all beings is unethical and immoral: it violates the principal ethical demand of tawhīd (Khalid et al. 2024).

Āyah / āyāt: The word “āyah,” plural “āyāt,” means a sign, a wonder, a marvel, a masterpiece, or a miracle. In Islamic teaching, each created being is a wondrous sign that points beyond itself to its Maker, His wisdom, and His mercy;

each is a portent filled with meaning and lessons to be learned. The same word “āyah” is also used for the Qur’an verses. Muslim scholars have stressed the parallels between the revelations of the written texts revealed to humankind through the prophets, the messengers of God, and God’s revelations in the world of nature. Each is a revelation composed of signs, āyāt, coming from the same source. The signs of the divine clarify the meanings of those in the texts, and the written texts guide us in understanding the signs of creation. Therefore, every element of the natural world holds intrinsic value, reflecting divine attributes and fulfilling a purpose within the creation’s grand design (ibid).

Mizan: The Qur’an emphasizes the concept of al-Mizan, or cosmic balance, as a fundamental principle created and sustained by God. In the Qur’anic context, it signifies *weighing, balance, equilibrium, proportion, harmony, reciprocity, equity, fairness, and justice*. The Qur’an describes a cosmic equilibrium (Al-Mīzān) in which all interconnected and interdependent beings are integrated in harmony (15:19-20, 55:7-10). This concept is crucial for understanding the ecological equilibrium and ethical conduct associated with resource consumption. The Qur’an highlights the intricate balance within creation, urging humans to avoid corruption and excess (fasad) that disrupt this equilibrium. Believers are called to reflect on this harmony as a sign of God’s wisdom. “And the heaven He raised and imposed the balance. That you do not transgress within the balance. And establish weight in justice and do not make deficient the balance” (55:7-9). These verses draw attention to the precision and equilibrium in the universe, urging humans to maintain this balance in their lives (ibid).

Khalīfah fi ’l-ard: In Qur’anic teaching, the concept of khalīfah fi ’l-ard—stewardship on Earth—is central to understanding humanity’s role and responsibility. The term *khalīfah* derives from the root *kh-l-f*, meaning to succeed, follow, or act on behalf of another. This ethical mandate, assigned by the All-Merciful Lord, emphasizes the responsibility and accountability of human beings on Earth (Qur’an 2:30, 6:133, 7:129, 11:57, 24:55). Khalīfah implies a relationship with the Earth, inherited by successive individuals and generations. It is a test from the Lord to examine human actions, requiring knowledge of right and wrong and empowerment to influence creation for good or ill. The highest degrees of empowerment involve judging justly rather than ruling over the Earth. Therefore, the notion of a khalīfah as God’s viceroy with dominion over the Earth is misinterpreted. The terms “steward” and “stewardship” better capture the responsibility inherent in khalīfah, though khalīfah also involves minimizing interference in the natural processes by which God has set the Earth aright (ibid).

Humans, as stewards (khalīfah) of the Earth, are responsible for caring for and managing the environment. This stewardship implies sustainable use of resources, protection of ecosystems, and ethical treatment of all living beings, reflecting a profound sense of duty towards maintaining the balance of nature.

This stewardship is not merely a position of dominance but a trust (Amanah) that requires humans to respect, protect, and nurture the environment (Q. 33:72).

Prohibition of Isrāf: Islam strongly prohibits wastefulness (isrāf) and extravagance, advocating for the sustainable use of resources (Q. 7:31). Knowledge about the consequences of wasteful consumption and its impact on the environment helps Muslims adhere to the Qur'anic prohibition against wastefulness. Understanding the ecological impact of waste promotes more mindful and sustainable consumption practices. Informed consumption involves considering the ethical implications of products and services, including their environmental footprint and the conditions under which they were produced. This knowledge helps Muslims make choices that reflect their values and commitment to social and environmental justice. The Qur'an's moral teachings guide believers to avoid corruption (fāsād) and wastefulness (isrāf), instead promoting actions that sustain and enhance the natural world. From an eco-theological perspective, this elevated consciousness creates a harmonious existence where spiritual fulfillment and environmental stewardship are deeply intertwined. It calls for a reverence of nature as part of one's devotion to Allah and a commitment to ethical conduct that ensures the well-being of all creation (ibid).

Concrete examples of eco-theology and cosmology can be seen in Islamic classical literature. In seeking a deeper understanding and a different orientation to life, the Sufi legacy persuades us that the experience of a cosmic connection can help us overcome the disenchantment of nature in modern times and grow toward a new meaning of life. This Sufi perspective encourages a profound appreciation of the interconnectedness of all life, fostering a sense of stewardship and responsibility towards the environment. By immersion in this spiritual heritage, one can find inspiration to adopt sustainable practices and nurture a deeper, more harmonious relationship with nature.

Some Historical Examples of Islamic Environmentalism

The case of the Sufi Bāyazīd Bisṭāmī (d. 875) illustrates the profound ethical consciousness and compassion central to the Qur'anic ethos. His story exemplifies the ethics of reflection on cosmic, multidimensional morality and our responsibilities toward the cosmos. Bāyazīd demonstrated deep spiritual awareness and ecological sensitivity, highlighting the intimate connection between creation and divine purpose.

One day, Bāyazīd bought cardamom seeds in Hamadhān and inadvertently brought several ants back to Bisṭām. Realizing his mistake, he compassionately journeyed 450 miles back to return the ants to their home. This act reflects his profound ethical responsibility toward all life forms, emphasizing the

interconnectedness of all beings. Bāyazīd's actions, rooted in Sufi tradition, underscore the unity and interconnectedness of creation. Sufism teaches that every element of the universe is a manifestation of divine presence, deserving of love and respect. By embodying these principles, Bāyazīd demonstrated a holistic approach to ethics. His journey to return the ants highlights the importance of ethical duties beyond the human realm, fostering a sense of responsibility and compassion essential for maintaining cosmic balance. Bāyazīd's story, therefore, serves as a powerful reminder of the ethical and spiritual principles of cosmoethics, encouraging us to adopt a more inclusive and compassionate approach to our responsibilities, deepening our connection with the cosmos and all its inhabitants (Nicholson 1914, p. 108).

Al-Nabulsi and the Book of Universe

Abd al-Ghanī ibn Ismā'īl al-Nābulusī (1641-1731) was a distinguished Sunni Muslim scholar, poet, and author on Sufism, ethnography, and agriculture. His poetic invitation, "*Reflect upon the lines of the [Book of the] Universe, for they are letters to you from the highest realm,*" encapsulates Islamic cosmoethics (Nursi 2007, pp. 368–369). This perspective encourages viewing the universe as a divinely authored text, revealing spiritual truths and ethical guidance. Al-Nābulusī's metaphor aligns with key principles of Islamic eco-theology: a) Every element of creation is a sign (ā'y ā't) from God, urging believers to recognize the divine in nature; b) the reference to creation's balance reflects God's wisdom and justice, promoting harmony in environmental interactions; c) contemplating the universe's "lines" fosters awareness of one's duties as a steward (khalifah) of the Earth; d) every aspect of creation holds significance, countering the notion of nature as mere resource and highlighting its divine worth; e) the metaphor underscores the unity (Tāwhid) of all creation, advocating for an integrated approach to environmental stewardship.

This Islamic worldview was vibrant and influential as late as the 19th century, as evidenced by the accounts of Western travelers in Muslim countries, who remarked on the profound sense of interconnectedness, balance, and spirituality in Islamic societies. They noted the deep respect for nature, the emphasis on community welfare, and the pervasive influence of Islamic principles on daily life. This enduring presence of the Islamic worldview highlights its resilience and continued relevance even in the face of modernization and external influences.

Lamartine's Observations

The famous French poet and statesman Alphonse de Lamartine (1790-1869) made insightful observations about Muslims' compassionate and respectful

relationship with all animate and inanimate creatures. During his extensive journey and stay in Ottoman lands, he noted: “Muslims extend their compassion and kindness to trees, birds, dogs, and all the species of wretched animals that are often abandoned or ill-treated in other societies. This behavior is deeply rooted in the principles of the Qur’anic worldview, which can be understood as the cosmic moral code that defines our relationship with the rest of creation” (Lamartine 1850, p. I, 160).

Lamartine's observations underscore a deep-rooted ethic in Muslim culture that values and protects all life forms, fostering harmonious coexistence with nature. This respect for creation reflects Islamic principles of mercy, stewardship, and interconnectedness. Practices such as leaving water for district dogs and establishing foundations to feed one's pigeons after one's death exemplify this respect and compassion. By meeting the basic needs of animals, Muslims embody the cosmic moral code in daily life, maintaining balance and harmony in the cosmos. Lamartine's insights vividly illustrate the compassion extended to all creatures by Muslims. This ethical framework, transcending social and cultural boundaries, emphasizes that such compassion is a moral imperative. It highlights a profound understanding that all life forms deserve dignity and care, embodying a universal principle of kindness and stewardship.

Contemporary Muslim Scholarship on Environmental Awareness

Since the late 1960s, Muslim scholars and environmental experts have been contributing to the religiously inspired calls for “global action on climate change,” fostering the development of Islamic eco-theology. These scholars have engaged in various environmental projects, making theological formulations relevant to contemporary ecological issues and creating a sense of interconnectedness between humanity and the surrounding ecosystem.

The contributions of contemporary scholars such as Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Fazlun Khalid, Ibrahim Özdemir, Othman Llewellyn, Mawil Y. Izzi Dien, Ibrahim Abdul-Matin, Aishah Ali Abdallah, Sarra Tlili, Tarik M. Quadir, Anna Gade, MD Abu Sayem, Odeh Al-Jayoussi, and Fachruddin Mangunjaya have been pivotal in reviving and articulating Islamic environmental ethics. Their work has played a crucial role in awakening Islamic environmentalism and promoting sustainable practices within the framework of Islamic teachings.

Seyyed Hossein Nasr, often regarded as a trailblazer in Islamic environmental thought, authored the seminal work, *Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis of Modern Man*, in 1968. Offering insights into the interconnection between humanity and the natural world, this book is essential reading for Muslims concerned about the environmental challenges of our time, especially with its

particular Sufi dimension. Nasr's work emphasizes the spiritual dimensions of environmental stewardship, highlighting the profound connection between faith and care for our planet. Nasr argues that the environmental crisis is fundamentally a crisis of values and that a spiritual reawakening is necessary to address it. Nasr advocates for a worldview that sees nature as sacred and humans as stewards entrusted with its care. His writings have highlighted the need for a metaphysical foundation for environmental ethics.

The growing interest in how Islamic teachings intersect with environmental stewardship has led to the publication of several crucial books that delve into this critical relationship. These works explore the ethical, theological, and practical dimensions of environmentalism in Islam and offer guidance for Muslims seeking to align their faith with eco-conscious actions.

"The Muslim Declaration on Nature," written by Dr. Abdullah Omar Naseef for the 1986 Assisi meeting organized by WWF-International and the Alliance of Religions and Conservation, emphasizes that the universe is God's creation, with mankind as His vicegerent (khalifah) tasked with stewardship. It highlights the fundamental Islamic concepts of Tawhid (Unity of God), Khalifah (trusteeship), and Akhirah (accountability). These principles, Naseef argues, underscore the interconnectedness of all creation and the ethical responsibility to maintain ecological balance and harmony. The declaration calls for Muslims to integrate these values into all aspects of life, including environmental legislation, to foster a sustainable and compassionate relationship with the natural world. This holistic approach, rooted in Islamic teachings and Shari'ah law, provides practical guidance for protecting nature and addressing modern issues like nuclear power and biotechnology, ensuring that actions align with divine ethical boundaries (Naseef 1986).

However, one of the foundational texts in this field emerged a decade later: *Islam and Ecology: A Bestowed Trust*, edited by Richard C. Foltz, Frederick M. Denny, and Azizan Baharuddin (Foltz et al. 2003). This anthology offers a comprehensive overview of Islamic environmental ethics, exploring the ethical, theological, and practical dimensions of environmentalism in Islam. For sustainable Muslims it is essential reading to understand their religious responsibilities towards the environment.

Fazlun Khalid's work, on the other hand, promotes practical and theological approaches to ecological issues, blending traditional Islamic teachings with contemporary environmental science. Khalid's *Signs on the Earth: Islam, Modernity, and the Climate Crisis* investigates the intersection of Islam, modernity, and climate change. By offering insights into addressing environmental challenges through Islamic principles, Khalid's book is also essential reading for Muslims concerned about the planet's future (Khalid 2019).

Ibrahim Abdul-Matin's *Green Deen: What Islam Teaches about Protecting the Planet* provides practical advice for Muslims on how to contribute to sustainability efforts. By exploring Islamic teachings on environmental protection, Abdul-Matin's book is a valuable resource for those seeking to integrate their faith with eco-conscious actions (Abdul-Matin 2010). Sarra Tlili's *Animals in the Qur'an* examines animals' roles and symbolic significance within Islamic teachings and ethics. This comprehensive exploration of the Qur'anic depiction of animals helps Muslims deepen their understanding of the sanctity of all creation (Tlili 2012).

Anna M. Gade's *Muslim Environmentalism: Religious and Social Foundations* explores how Muslims engage with environmental issues. Highlighting Islamic environmentalism's religious and social roots, Gade's book offers valuable insights for those interested in the intersection of faith and ecology (Gade, 2019). Mawil Y. Izzi Dien explores the environmental teachings embedded within Islam in *The Environmental Dimensions of Islam* (Dien 2000). This book reveals the ecological wisdom of Islamic tradition, making it a valuable resource for Muslims seeking to deepen their eco-spirituality. Lastly, Ibrahim Özdemir's *Care for Creation: An Islamic Perspective* emphasizes the importance of caring for the Earth from an Islamic perspective. It guides sustainable Muslims striving to fulfill their religious obligations towards creation.

These books and the growing literature on Islam and the environment collectively provide a robust foundation for understanding the intricate bond between humans and nature within the Islamic tradition. They emphasize the spiritual dimensions of environmental stewardship and offer practical advice for integrating faith with eco-conscious actions, underscoring the importance of a harmonious coexistence with the natural world.

Two additional texts by Muslim environmentalists provide an overview of extensive consultations and debates. First, *The Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change*, launched in August 2015 at an International Islamic Climate Change Symposium in Istanbul, is a collective call from the Islamic faith to address climate change. Initiated by a diverse symposium of academics, religious authorities, inter-governmental organizations, and civil society representatives, the declaration emphasizes the environmental ethics of Islam and calls for rejecting human greed, respecting nature's equilibrium, and recognizing the moral obligation to conserve.

Second, *Al-Mizan: A Covenant for the Earth* is a global endeavor to engage Islamic scholars and Muslim institutions in developing and adopting an Islamic outlook on the environment. It is a restatement of the principles governing the protection of nature in a form that meets current challenges. The initiative seeks to bridge the divide between religiosity and sustainability, providing guidance on the ways Muslims can reignite environmental activism from the Islamic tradition.

Conclusion and a Vision for a Sustainable Future

Although modern Islamic environmental thought and activism began with Nasr's works in the 1960s, *Al-Mizan: A Covenant for the Earth* (noted above) represents the culmination of Muslim environmental efforts. This covenant embodies the essence of Islamic environmentalism, integrating centuries of wisdom with contemporary insights. It is a testament to our enduring commitment to the Earth, reflecting a legacy of stewardship and serving as a beacon of hope for future generations. As we navigate the relationship between faith and ecology, *Al-Mizan* offers a path toward harmonious coexistence, inspiring renewed dedication to the sacred balance of our natural world. Contemporary Muslim scholars have provided a robust framework for addressing today's environmental challenges by grounding ecological responsibility in spiritual and ethical principles. Their work highlights the potential of religious teachings to inspire sustained and meaningful action towards a just and sustainable world.

Al-Mizan outlines a comprehensive framework for Muslim policymakers and NGOs, integrating Islamic principles with environmental stewardship. It advocates for a holistic approach to sustainability, emphasizing that the well-being of our planet and future generations relies on immediate and concerted efforts. Integrating *Al-Mizan's* principles into educational curricula is essential for fostering a generation committed to environmental sustainability. By embedding these core messages in our educational systems, we can nurture values of moderation, balance (*mīzān*), and stewardship (*khalīfah*) in young minds. These values translate into practical actions, such as reducing waste, conserving resources, and promoting sustainable community practices.

Policymakers play a pivotal role in embedding *Al-Mizan's* principles within national and international environmental frameworks. This shift requires moving from traditional, unsustainable economic models to sustainable, circular systems based on the *maqāṣid al-sharī'a* (goals or objectives of sharia). Implementing *Al-Mizan* can yield significant long-term benefits—mitigating climate change, preserving biodiversity, and ensuring the sustainable use of natural resources. This vision promises a healthier, more equitable, and resilient world for us and future generations. The future of a better and healthier world hinges on realizing the findings of *Al-Mizan: A Covenant for the Earth*. By aligning our educational and policy frameworks with its core messages, we can nurture a generation dedicated to environmental stewardship and sustainable living, securing a brighter future for all.

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