

REVIEW ARTICLE BY HARFIYAH HALEEM

THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF RELIGION AND NATURE, Ed Bron Taylor, Thoemmes Continuum, Bristol, London and New York 2005, 2 vols, Introduction xxix pp. + 1880 pp; extracts available on www.religionandnature.com

WATER MANAGEMENT IN ISLAM Ed. Naser I Faruqui, Asit K. Biswas and Burad J. Bino, IDRC/UNU Press, Tokyo, 2001, ISBN 0 88963 924 0, 170 pp.

ENVIRONMENTALISM IN THE MUSLIM WORLD, Ed. Richard Foltz, New Science Publishers Inc., New York 2005 ISBN 1 59454 386 0, h/b 150pp.

THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE JUDICIARIES OF THE ARAB WORLD: Proceedings of the Arab Chief Justices' Regional Conference and Symposium on the Training of Judges and Other Legal Stakeholders in Environmental Law and Sustainable Development, eds. Judges Mamdouh Marie and Adel Omar Sherif, UNEP and the Supreme Constitutional Court of Egypt, Cairo 2004, 240 pp. in English, 215 pp. in Arabic, 32 pp colour plates.

ABRAHAM'S CHILDREN: JEWS, CHRISTIANS AND MUSLIMS IN CONVERSATION, Norman Solomon, Richard Harries and Tim Winter (eds), T&T Clark, London and New York, 2005, ISBN 056708171 0 h/b ISBN 056708161 3 p/b, 335 pp. Chapter 8, 'The Environment' pp. 248-288

ANIMALS IN ISLAMIC TRADITION AND MUSLIM CULTURES by Richard C. Foltz, Oneworld Books, Oxford 2006 ISBN 1 85168 398 4, p/b 192pp

POWER, PERSON AND PLACE: Tradition, Modernity and Environment in the United Arab Emirates, Pernilla Ouis, Lund University Press, Sweden 2002, ISBN 91 628 5352 X p/b, 418 pp

ISLAM AND ECOLOGY: A BESTOWED TRUST eds. Richard C. Foltz, Frederick M. Denny and Azizan Baharuddin, in the series: 'Religions of the World and Ecology', Harvard Centre for the Study of World Religions, Harvard University Press, 2003. ISBN 0-945454-40-6 p/b, 584 pp

SUSTAINABLE DIPLOMACY: Ecology, Religion and Ethics in Muslim-Christian Relations, David Joseph Wellman, Palgrave Macmillan, New York and Basingstoke, 2004, ISBN 1 4039 6442 4, h/b 250 pp.

THE GOLDEN AGE AND DECLINE OF ISLAMIC CIVILISATION, Salah Eddine al-Djazairi, Bayt al-Hikma Press, Manchester, 2006, ISBN 0 95511563 9, p/b 822 pp

'There are signs in the heavens and the earth for those who believe'
(Qur'an 45:3)

When Muslims look at the world around them and think about it, what thoughts and feelings arise? Allah says in the Qur'an '*Do you see the seeds*

you sow in the ground? Is it you who make them grow or We? (56:63), but how many people nowadays still sow seeds? And what sort of seeds? Genetically modified? Packaged from a seed merchant via a supermarket? Or from the fresh fruit and vegetables we eat, if they are not flown in from so far away that they could not possibly grow where we live?

'Let man consider the food he eats!' (80:24). What people cultivated it? How much of the money we pay for it goes to them? What do they themselves eat? What is the price their land pays for the intensive agriculture used to produce it? How much energy is wasted in transporting it, how much carbon is emitted into the atmosphere to add to the unprecedented levels now present? Is all this leading to drastic climate change? Will this make the earth uninhabitable?

A growing army of scientists and other academics, thinkers, activists, politicians, youth workers and people of all religious persuasions is trying to ponder such questions, find scientific, technological, cultural, anthropological, historical and religious answers to them, and to try and put right what has been spoiled, to bring people out of the cities to which they have been migrating in ever-increasing numbers, into closer communion with what is variously referred to as 'nature', 'the environment,' 'the countryside', 'God's creation', as opposed to the human-built environment.

In the time of the Prophet (S), city dwellers used to send their children, as his mother sent him, out into the nomadic tribal lands to gain an understanding of the healthy life and learn 'pure' Arabic. In Europe the 'pastoral' tradition became ritualised in poetry and was taken to new heights by Queen Marie Antoinette of France, who in 1783 created, in the park surrounding the great palace of Versailles, her own small rural 'hamlet' where she played at being a shepherdess. The yearning to be closer to nature inspired the 'Romantic' poetry and art movements of the 18th-19th centuries, bringing a new, more dramatic and majestic view of wild nature, verging on pantheism, where an indwelling spirit in the landscape healed souls or expressed disapproval.

Pernilla Ouis in her book on the United Arab Emirates (p. 334), distinguishes between those who really live close to the land and interact with it, and who refer to its phenomena in detailed, familiar, practical language, and those who, being separated from it, look at it from a distance in a broader perspective, inventing words for it such as those mentioned above. In the Qur'an, both perspectives can be found, from the intimate detailed observation of different features of a date stone, found in a series of images in Surat al-Nisa and elsewhere, to the majestic towers or constellations seen in the heavens in Surat al-Burūj and the many references to Allah's Creation, 'greater by far than the creation of mankind' (40:57).

So how much responsibility do human beings have in relation to His creation? What is our place in it? Are we 'viceregents' of Allah to whom all other creatures are subjected? Or are we 'successors', placed on earth like our ancestors and other orders of creation such as the dinosaurs, given some things and deprived of others, to test us and reveal which of [us] performs

best' (67:2)?¹ How do we come out of that test? Are we *mufsidin fi-l-ard* (corrupters in the earth) or *muslihin*, (people who put things right)? Are we the honoured servants of God, enabled to benefit from His gifts, or foolish, arrogant, wasteful and destructive? This is the basic choice we have as human beings. The way we relate to Allah's Creation (including each other) is the way we relate to Allah.

The books reviewed here are some of the more recent attempts to bring Muslims and Islam into the context of the Environmental Movement that started in the 1960s as a reaction against growing materialism, urbanisation and the drive to 'conquer' nature and other races in a Darwinian struggle for survival.

The **Encyclopedia of Religion and Nature** is a major collection of the spiritual wisdom that has contributed to the study of the environment. After posing some key questions and defining the terms, Religion (broadly), Nature (the world that includes us but confronts us with its otherness), and 'Nature Religion' (any religiosity that considers nature to be sacred ...), Bron Taylor's Introduction to the **Encyclopedia**, followed by a long bibliography and a Reader's Guide, provides a useful historical overview of the evolution of interest in Religion and Nature, oddly starting with the USA from the 19th century to the 1960s, and then Europe starting earlier, from 17th Century, before 1856 when Darwin's *Origin of Species* started a conceptual revolution. As usual in Western history books, no mention is made of the effect of Islamic civilization and empirical science on the European Renaissance, which was in fact crucial to the whole development of Western civilization, but more of this later.

In the USA the connections drawn between Religion and Nature were first influenced by the Romantic Movement and sparked off by the deforestation caused by the voracious and unsustainable use of wood and charcoal to smelt pig-iron during the Industrial Revolution. This led to the establishment of National Parks, and one of the earliest environmental disputes in the US was between two divergent strands of this Movement. John Muir, inspired by the 'Wilderness Religion' of Henry David Thoreau, and Gifford Pinchot, a social environmentalist, who became the first Chief Forester of the United States between 1899 and 1910, respectively opposed and supported the damming of the Hetch Hetchy Valley, in the Yosemite National Park. Amazingly, this dispute still rumbles on, as can be seen from www.hetchhetchy.org!

In Europe, Taylor writes, the first interest was in anthropology and 'nature religions', a study which, after Darwin, was largely based on the evolution of religions from natural habitats. The Europeans, then based in the monotheistic Abrahamic religions, saw such 'nature religions' as pagan and primitive, but this viewpoint has largely been reversed in more recent times among environmental thinkers, with 'nature religions' seen as closer to the

¹ See also 'Is Man the Vicegerent of God?' Idris, J S, *Journal of Islamic Studies.*, Oxford 1990; 1: 99-110

earth and more friendly towards it than the monotheistic religions, whose anthropocentric disrespect for nature has often been blamed for the state in which the world finds itself now.

Further sections in the Introduction bring the history up to date with Gaia Theory, Primate Spirituality (supported by Jane Goodall), a concept that, Taylor says 'May well revolutionise human understanding of both religion and ethics, extending both beyond humankind.' Of course the Qur'an already states that animals are communities like us and worship Allah, so Islamic thought does not need to be revolutionised by this.

Many environmentalists nowadays believe, like Arnold Toynbee, that 'the present threat to mankind's survival can be removed only by a revolutionary change of heart in individual human beings. This change of heart must be inspired by religion in order to generate the will power needed to put arduous new ideals into practice.' New ethical values are needed, Taylor holds, in the wake of Darwin, in which 'all life shares a common ancestor and came into existence through the same survival struggle. These values displace human beings from an isolated place, alone at the centre of moral concern.' If human beings learn to adapt and survive, Taylor concludes, 'this exceptionally interesting species, *Homo sapiens sapiens*, might yet live up to its lofty (if self-designated and highly ironic) name.'

In another section on 'Religious Studies and Environmental Concern', Taylor continues his overview of the field, showing how various scholars have pushed forward the debate. Some key figures from various religious backgrounds are mentioned, notably those attached to the American Academy of Religion, as well as Lynn White whose seminal paper in 1967 'On the Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis' blamed orthodox Christianity, recognised Islamic influence, and held up St Francis as a revolutionary Christian thinker, and Thomas Berry, a Catholic priest who inspired the WWF Assisi conference in 1986, where representatives of all major religions came together to make environmental declarations. Berry also wrote, with his protégé, Brian Swimme, an influential book *The Universe Story*, inspired by the French Jesuit thinker Teilhard de Chardin.

The Harvard University conferences between 1996 and 1998, organized by Mary Tucker and John Grim, who were also inspired by Teilhard, brought together representatives of 'world religions' aiming to produce a religious 'greening' process. This conference resulted in an impressive series of books on the subject, one of which, *Islam and Ecology: a Bestowed Trust*, I reviewed for this journal in the winter of 2003-4. Into this section of the *Encyclopedia* Taylor inserts his own review of the conference and book series, criticising its rather limited definition of 'world religions', although admitting that the series does include a conference and book on 'indigenous traditions'. He also criticises Tucker and Grim's thesis that religions shape human ecology rather than the other way round, as many entries in the *Encyclopedia* seem to indicate.

The *Encyclopedia* entries under 'Islam', each with its own short bibliography, start with Richard Foltz's overview of Islam. After the basics, this progresses quickly to a study of the 'intellectual tradition' in Islam influenced by Greek philosophy, where the word *tabī'a* was used to translate the Greek word *physis*. It goes on to Ibn al-'Arabi and his *wahdat al-wujud*, and Shah Waliullah's *wahdat al-shuhud*, before considering modern Islamic ripostes to Lynn White like that of Iqtidar Zaidi, and states that Seyyed Hossein Nasr anticipated White's critique in his own lectures given earlier the same year. After all these, Foltz wisely decides to restrict the term 'Islamic' to 'that which can be derived from the canonical sources of Islam as opposed to the activities of Muslims'. Here, the UK based Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences (IFEES) is cited as an example of environmentalism based on Islamic principles, whereas other organisations tend to 'reflect western notions of what constitutes environmental education and protection'. Foltz analyses Muslim discourse on the environment, and notes the verse (6:38) mentioned above about animals being 'peoples like unto you' as being 'a basis for tempering the hierarchical notion implied in the concept of stewardship.' Most Muslims, he says, argue that environmental degradation is a 'symptom of social injustice'. 'The problem, they argue, is not that humans as a species are destroying the balance of nature, but rather that *some* humans are taking more than their share.' *Riba* is blamed for this, while overpopulation is seen as being caused by restriction of migration. Nevertheless contraception is not forbidden and has been promoted (sensibly) for practical reasons in Islamic Iran.

Whatever the truth of these arguments, he says, 'these problems would clearly be less pronounced if large numbers of Muslims were shaping their lifestyles according to an interpretation of Islam which strongly emphasized *khalifa* as applied to the natural environment. The reality is that most are not, and this includes governments for whom development and economic growth are the top priority.' Foltz proceeds to examine the records of three countries that claim to be Islamic: Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and Iran, which 'has gone further than any of the world's Muslims today in deriving and articulating an Islamic environmental ethic ...' yet even here, 'environmental protection has taken a back seat to the exigencies of rapid industrialization and development and environmental degradation there remains severe.'

Nawwal Ammar's section on 'Eco-Justice' makes many good theological points about *Tawhid*, where nature, animals, humans and other creatures form a unified class of God's creation, all made from water, with order, purpose and function, to worship God (no need for Darwin here, then). The earth is created for all generations, past, present and future, to see how they will behave (Qur'an 10:14). The moral dilemma is to find ways to use the earth in a balanced way, without corrupting it. She states trenchantly the main environmental problems facing the Muslim world today, 'with more than thirty wars devastating' it, glaring difference between the rich and poor ... the extraction of oil with minimum controls on toxic emissions and hazards...' Nevertheless human beings were given the '*amana*' of nature and, to manage it, 'humans need to follow the social justice ethic of the Qur'an, actively negate

evil' by doing good deeds, and 'utilize the resources of Earth in a balanced manner.' We should all be doing more.

On 'Islam and Environmental Ethics', James L. Wescoat Jr. urges Muslims to advance 'beyond simple oppositions between Islamic principles and the consequences of Western humanism, and toward a theory and practice of sacred science.'

Foltz contributes an article on 'Islam and Environmentalism in Iran', which reiterates most of the material on this subject in his two other books, showing the enthusiastic efforts made by Iran to advance the cause of the environment, even providing a clause in its constitution to protect it, and with its Vice President (under Khatami) acting also as Director of the Department of the Environment and the Environmental Protection Organization.

Kaveh Afrasiabi, in 'Islam and Post-Anthropocentrism', tackles the centrality of human beings in Islamic theology and says the challenge is 'to find a creative process of reinterpretation that can illuminate the Qur'anic system of inter-species relations in a less anthropocentric way.' The earth is not created just for human beings but 'spread out' for 'His creatures'

Mohammed Aslam Parvaiz further explores the relationship between Man and Nature, again referring to the Qur'anic concepts of Balance and Peace between them. He draws a distinction between Man as 'conqueror or master' of nature and his role as *khalifa*, which he interprets as 'guardian' or 'protector'. Knowledge of the divine laws brings the recognition that 'nothing can survive by defying natural laws'. Like Nawwal Ammar, he speaks of 'environmental justice' and 'equitable distribution of natural resources' as a religious duty. He provides (on p.877) a useful list of unjust deeds as found in the Qur'an, followed by a much longer list of good deeds, 'acts of correction and reformation, which would undo the damage done by the spoilers or corruptors', and concludes that Islam, 'if put into practice, as was done by the Prophet,' would bring peace and tranquillity here in this world, as well as in the life hereafter, but that Islam has always been opposed by vested interests, including Muslim ones.

Fazlun Khalid, Chair of IFEES, provides a section on the Islamic Basis for Environmental Protection. In the first he too expresses the belief that the Islamic teachings, if followed, could lead to a harmonious way of living within the *fitra* (the primal condition of humankind in harmony with nature), in submission to the will of the Creator. 'The problem now,' he writes, 'is that Muslims live mostly outside the precepts of the Shari'ah and in doing so have lost the understanding of their relationship with nature.' He goes into the 'Ethical Foundations' in the Qur'an, starting with *tawhid*, and expands on the concept of *fitra*, describing it as the pure state or the state of infinite goodness', pointing to the possibility that 'everything in creation has a potential for goodness, the conscious expression of which rests uniquely with humankind.' This is the way Allah created them, *fatara* being the verbal form of *fitra*, meaning 'He created', or 'He originated'. He continues by explaining

mīzān (balance), and the importance of 'actively recognizing' the order that is around us instead of committing 'acts of folly that destroy the environment'.

Like Parvaiz, he interprets *khalifa* to imply that 'human beings are required to act as protectors of the environment Allah *ta'ala* has placed us in' quoting the *aya*:

'Corruption has appeared on the land and sea because of what people's own hands have brought about so that they may taste something of what they have done so that hopefully they will turn back'.
(30:40)

He ends with a brief description of some of the Islamic laws concerning accountability, and the institution of the *muhtasib*, who was responsible for enforcing these in commerce. Probably Hajj Fazlun is correct in using the pronoun 'he' for most *muhtasibs*, but in environmental circles it is noteworthy that the first *muhtasib*, appointed by the Caliph 'Umar, was a woman. The final paragraph of this article hints at some of the 'problems encountered in trying to explain the benefits of such laws in a context where the secular paradigm is dominant,' and the following article on IFEES, by M. Aslam Parvaiz, continues the story of the Foundation's work in progress.

The final section under Islam is on Islamic Law, written by Ali Ahmed. He stresses the concept that 'every organism on Earth partakes in God's creation and as such deserves love and respect,' yet 'Islam is neither associated with historical profanation, nor the contemporary sacralisation of nature.' All the natural resources in Islamic law are in the public domain (i.e. they belong to Allah and all His creatures), and 'regulations ... are dictated by considerations focused on preventing harm to humans and nonhumans alike.' Although Islam recognises 'the primacy of humankind with its attendant right to use Earth resources', this right is limited by accountability to Allah, and the responsibility to maintain the balance set up by Allah. If a human is threatened by an animal, minimum force is to be used to remove the danger. 'All persons are subject to civilian criminal penalties for disturbing, much less killing any wildlife from its chosen habitat...' He states that Environment programmes in some Muslim countries are beginning to reflect Islamic law principles and gives, as examples, Article 50 of the Iranian Constitution and the use of the story of Noah as a basis for biodiversity preservation in many reports to the UN.

Some examples of the practical operation of Islamic law principles in the modern regulation and management of water use in various Muslim countries can be seen in ***Water Management in Islam***. Most of this book can be read and downloaded from the Internet on www.idrc.ca/en/ev-9425-201-1-DO_topic.html. Basically water rights in Islam start at the source and are shared by others downstream according to the availability of the water and the needs of the users. These rights have to be agreed in consultation with all parties, including women.

Wasting water is forbidden, according to the words and example of the Prophet, and there is a 'right of thirst', which means that denying water to a thirsty person or animal is forbidden, whereas giving them water is a good deed deserving reward. Priority is given to humans, then animals and finally to agriculture, which means that used, 'grey' water, or purified sewage water, can be used for agriculture, leaving the fresh water for drinking. Grey water has more nutrients and is therefore useful in nourishing the plants. The use of wastewater for irrigation in Saudi Arabia and elsewhere is saving a great deal of this precious and scarce resource, since agriculture consumes by far the greatest proportion of water used. *Fatwas* have been issued to allow this, provided the water is sufficiently treated to remove any harm that might result from it. In the provision of water, ownership of water resources is permissible, and full cost-recovery is permitted. The price must be equitable as well as efficient, but not unduly cheap so that it encourages wasteful use. Water in the Gulf Arab states is often obtained by desalination of sea water or exploiting ground reserves, sometimes at unsustainable rates, in order to 'green' the desert and create a 'paradise' on earth while feeding their own people, as did the late Sheikh Zayed in Abu Dhabi (Pernilla Ouis: 2002). Although there were hopes that more agriculture and trees would increase the rainfall there, after initial unusually high rainfall more droughts followed, so conserving and recycling water seems to be the only solution.

In the overview of *Water Management in Islam*, it is noted that Muslims are willing to be educated about the environment by their religious leaders. In Shah's study on a water dispute in Pakistan, where local *maulvis* gave sermons on the sin of taking other people's share of water, it was found that 'focusing on religious values can be surprisingly effective.'

Environmentalism in the Muslim World expands on the practical manifestations of environmentalism in some Muslim countries with Islamic agendas, as well as some that claim to be secular. These include Iran, Turkey, Egypt, Pakistan, Nigeria, and a personal story of forest and river conservation projects by Ayman Ahwal in Malaysia. Each chapter starts with a description of the *genus loci*, the geography, flora and fauna of the country concerned. Fazlun Khalid contributes a paper on 'Applying Islamic Environmental Ethics' detailing projects in four Muslim countries, where Islamic ethics and motivations are being introduced and, where available, their effects on the projects. 'This book,' as Foltz writes in his introduction, 'emphasises not what Muslims say about the environment so much as what they *are doing* to save and protect it.' 'Muslims, like those of other backgrounds, must find ways of living with new technologies and within a global economy that cannot be escaped but can perhaps be accommodated in ways that are compatible with the value-system their cultural heritage provides them.' Here he begs the question of whose technology it is. If Muslims were to succeed in mastering this technology, what changes would they make? What new technology would they bring to the global market, to make it less exploitative and more sustainable? Could they go with the present flow and develop new, more efficient ways to use renewable sources of energy, to make energy freely available to people in the rural areas to help with the arduous tasks of irrigation and agriculture, and circumventing the

whole fossil fuel conundrum, or are the Muslim countries too dependent on the extraction of oil to consider doing this?

So how are they coping now with the task of adapting current technologies to their own needs and values? Iran, as we see in this and other versions of Foltz's study, has been taking environmentalism very seriously indeed, delegating a vice-president to the task, including a clause in its constitution on environmental protection, devoting manpower and resources to it and encouraging participation by approved NGOs.

Ibrahim Özdemir lists all the environmental problems in Turkey and puts them down, amongst other 'world-transforming activities' of the eighteenth-twentieth centuries, to the 'impact of European hegemony and influence' which 'not only destroyed the traditional Muslim political system but also the economic and social institutions that had sustained it.' He quotes Yunus Emre's poem, 'We love all creation for the sake of the Creator' as an example of the native Turkish and Sufi attitude to the earth. In the Ottoman Empire some official protections existed for élite properties, but also a widespread network of *waqfs* whose constitutions show evidence of concern for environmental protection and animal welfare. The modern Turkish environmental movement started as early as the 1930s, and the 1961 constitution contains a clause that mentions the environment (*çevre*), alongside the protection of physical and mental health. An impressive list of environmental and conservationist initiatives follows, including some by Turkish Muslim groups, and even targeting the army. The overall effect of this activity, he concludes, has been to democratize Turkish society, to enable women to participate more, and to bring more unity and collaboration.

The paper on Pakistan lists the rich flora and fauna and the long list of environmental problems, government initiatives and NGOs (including an interesting list of donors, mostly external) while government interventions remain under-resourced, short-term and ad-hoc. Poverty-alleviation is taking precedence and environmental considerations are 'not yet fully part of development activities'. The National Conservation Strategy has introduced the idea of environmental challenges and advocates a participatory approach, but reformed governance and sustainable development 'have been buried under yards of red tape, lack of will and resources, and weak governance.' Intentions and awareness, though, are growing, and it is 'not impossible' that they will continue to grow there.

Ali Ahmad's short but interesting paper on Nigeria examines whether Muslims in northern Nigeria now or at any time have been eco-friendly, and whether they can fulfil the Islamic duty to the environment in an increasingly complex world. It suggests how Islamic environmentalism can be applied to current environmental problems. He asserts that,

'In Muslim societies, an environmental law and policy informed by Islam will resonate more with the public and elicit a higher degree of voluntary compliance that when derived from other sources.'

The available sources for the history of environmental concern in Northern Nigeria are mostly oral, he writes, and indicate that 'Islam played a significant

role in engendering consciousness about natural elements, their beauty, their precise and delicate order, and how everything is interrelated and interconnected.’ Furthermore European observers reported a community of Muslims maintaining a ‘near perfect relationship with its [desert] environment’ ‘through intricate crop-rotation schemes, complex irrigation systems, and various schemes for controlling and rotating grazing among different communities over vast areas.’ ‘Through basic Islamic teachings, Muslims appreciated that harm or damage caused to natural elements would necessarily spread to others as well and would ultimately result into hardship to humans,’ and this ‘no-harm’ principle extended to animals and even insects, ‘especially those mentioned by name in Islamic texts, such as the ant.’ Islamic reserves (*himas* and *harims*) were honoured. However ‘in post-colonial Nigeria ... things radically changed’ and ‘there is no difference whatsoever between the personal environmental behavior of most Muslims today and other peoples around the world.’

‘If Muslims have embraced the Western industrial culture and its materialism, they cannot reject the [failed] western-style approach to environmentalism without developing a competing and viable environmental outlook.’ In any Islamic policy for the environment it must be recognised that although human beings may be ‘vicegerents’ they are also part of the creation they affect by their actions and have responsibility not to cause harm. Policymakers must realise that Islam is still relevant in addressing the environmental challenge.

The Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency was established in 1982 by presidential decree. Various other government initiatives followed, often hampered by ‘inadequate implementation and enforcement, unduly light penalties, lack of finance ...’ (p.45). On the other hand around 10% of all Egyptian NGOs in 2001 were environmental, and they were all headed by women, mainly in wealthier areas of Cairo, dealing for example with garbage collection, and terminating lead smelting. Coverage in mass media has been patchy, shallow or inaccurate, and more use of the mosques is suggested with communication based on Shari’ah laws. There is more activity in the Higher Education sector where there are courses in environmental specialisations at a few universities but the approach of the government, concludes the author, has been ‘passive’ and ‘short-sighted’, and could very well compromise the safety and welfare of generations to come.’

Nevertheless, some of the developments in Islamic legal thinking on the environment in Muslim countries can be seen in the proceedings of the **2004 Cairo Conference of Chief Justices** on the Environment and the training of judges to enforce environmental laws. Sponsored by UNEP and the Supreme Constitutional Court of Egypt, this conference included some guest Chief Justices from Europe, as well as those of the core target group of Arab countries. After the expressions of support from the host country’s representatives, the main part of the conference consisted mostly of reports from the various countries on the environmental problems they faced and the legal measures they were taking to overcome them. Both English and Arabic contributions are printed in the proceedings, without translations or abstracts. Those in English are mainly the preliminary speeches, reports from European countries (not including the UK) and two papers, one by Professor M. Abdel

Haleem, SOAS, London, on Islam and the Environment, showing the Qur'anic basis for cooperation in environmental legislation, and stressing the need for codification of such laws and training of legal personnel in enforcing them. The other is by Dr Gamil Muhammad Hussein, Professor of Islamic Law at Mansoura University, Egypt, detailing the bases of Islamic law, and how it relates to the environment, again heavily based on the Qur'an. He continues, though, to go into some detail on the institution of *hisbah*, a civil court set up to protect the interest of society, the *muhtasib* who is responsible to implementing the laws, and the *wali al-mazalim*, responsible for dealing with cases of alleged corruption or injustice perpetrated by government officials. From *hisbah* laws can be derived the principle that those who cause damage are responsible for repairing it and restoring the status quo, or 'the polluter pays' in environmentalist terminology. Necessity is not a defence in such cases. Professor Hussein also mentions prohibited environmental damage caused by war. Finally he shows that environmental treaties can be incorporated into Islamic law under the principle of *'urf* (customary or recognized law), provided that they do not contradict the Qur'an and Sunnah, and that Islamic law recognizes the sanctity of contracts and treaties. He concludes that 'international laws on the subject are binding on all Muslim states because they constitute part of Islamic law.'

Among the Arab delegates' prime concerns for their environment was the danger from conflicts in the region, including WMDs, nuclear, chemical and biological weapons. Prof. Mamdouh Marie, Chief Justice of the Supreme Constitutional Court of Egypt, host of the conference and co-editor of the book, said that such conflicts had prompted intellectuals and international organisations to pay attention to the relationship between pollution and human rights.' Human rights include the right to life, and a healthy environment is part of that right. The Chief Justice from Iraq also mentioned war and weapons as the chief environmental hazard in his country. The UNEP representative said that a UN convention called for any and all military or hostile advances with severe impact on the natural environment to be qualified as war crimes. He called for 'specialised juridical cadres' to protect the environment and achieve sustainable development, which would not 'blindly apply the law' but 'address issues of justice'. The Egyptian Minister of Justice pointed out that protection of the Nile was started by the Pharaohs. President Hosni Mubarak had said that environmental protection was 'not a luxury but one of the necessities of life.' The Minister listed a few achievements of environmentalists, including preventing the establishments of some restaurants and hotels in Alexandria that 'threatened the public right to enjoy some elements of the environment.' It is in such details that the practical needs for the application of such laws become clear. The Minister also mentioned the 16 courses held since 1996 to train 3067 members of public prosecution and also 5 for military judges. 'Even with so many wars and disputes,' he concluded, 'it is vital to cooperate ... and achieve a safe and secure life for the generations to come.' Here again we see the concern among Muslims that 'some humans are taking more than their share'.

In *Abraham's Children*, Rabbi Norman Solomon concludes that 'concern for our common home [the *bios* / Earth] should lead us to set aside the mutual

antagonisms which in the past have led to religious wars and human destruction.’ This book’s interfaith exercise in mutual understanding could help to promote more cooperation between the three religions in environmental protection. Here again it is the place of man in the cosmos that is the crucial problem. Rabbi Solomon emphasises six principles in Judaism: that God’s creation is good; biodiversity is protected; things range from higher to lower with man at the top, in a position of rule or stewardship, though he must be humble; human beings are responsible for the active maintenance of all life; land and people depend on each other; so there should be no waste or destruction. Although clearly hierarchical, this arrangement still demands humility and reverence for Creation. Kallistos Ware, the Christian contributor, compares the Eastern Orthodox view of ‘panentheistic’ nature, where God is both immanent and transcendent in His creation, with that of Western Christianity and the concept of ‘fallen world’, which he explains as the consciousness that ‘the world around us is not paradise. The world is still beautiful but its beauty is flawed.’ He suggests that human beings should see themselves as ‘priests of creation’ offering it up to God. Lutfi Radwan, from the Muslim point of view, sees the cosmos as ‘a reflection of one’s own reality’, and harmony as a ‘practical and spiritual goal’ in the Muslim’s life. He stresses the power and all-embracing knowledge of God, and the limited knowledge of human beings, surprised by the consequences of our own actions which ‘come back to haunt us’. The job of environmentalists is to analyse ecological impacts of human activity as far as possible. Through human morality and ethics we recognise the rights of other ‘constituent elements of the created world’ and find ways in which interrelation becomes co-operative and mutually life-enhancing for both sides.

In the final section, the three religions all agree that the natural environment is God’s creation. It is the place of man in it which differs subtly. They all agree that man should avoid cruelty to animals, but are they on a moral par? Here I would take issue with the wording of Lutfi Radwan quotation of an unreferenced translation of Qur’an 35:39:

‘He it is that has made you *his* representatives on earth’;
whereas, for example, Haleem’s *New Translation*² reads:

‘It is He who made you [people] successors to the land’.

As far as I am aware, nowhere in the Arabic Qur’an is man described as **God’s** *khalifa* or steward. He is **a** *khalifa* in the land / on the earth etc. There is no ‘lower order’ of nature. Man may be created ‘in the best of moulds’ (95:1), but he can fall far beneath animals to ‘the lowest of the low’ if he fails to ‘believe and do good deeds’ (same sura). Such fallen human beings are described in the Qur’an as ‘like cattle —no, they are further from the path’ (7:179) and having hearts ‘hard as rocks, or even harder’ (2:75). ‘All’ God’s other creatures bow down to Him, and only ‘many’ human beings (22:18).

The summary of this chapter rightly suggests that Islam ‘might be concerned at allocating too great a role of mediation to human beings. Nature needs guarding and protecting more than being “offered” or lifted, because God is already present within it.’ (p.288) The three religions have enough in common,

² *The Qur’an: a New Translation*, MAS Abdel Haleem, OUP, 2004.

though, to work together in ‘urging governments, international institutions and transnational corporations to pay more attention to the moral dimensions of issues, which need to be given greater weight in a world that is dominated by short-term economic gain.’

Animals in Islamic Tradition and Muslim Cultures by Richard C. Foltz, encapsulates, in a very brief and handy volume, most of the available information about animals in Islam. It covers Qur’an, Hadith, *fiqh*, philosophy and science, literature, art, contemporary scholars, including the great Al-Hafiz al-Masry, websites, Islamic vegetarianism, and has a chapter on dogs. Foltz’s attitude is generally open-minded and respectful, sometimes pointing out aspects in which Islam is superior to other traditions on caring for animals, e.g. that animals have souls (p.6), but he does not shy away from criticism of backward-looking *fuqaha*, and deviations in practice from the enlightened teachings of the Qur’an and the Prophet (pbuh). He is quick to point out where ‘species-ism’ makes Muslims, like others, feel superior to animals and treat them only as property or tools.

He summarises Islamic law on animals neatly, saying (p.33) that Muslims should ‘kill animals only to satisfy hunger or to protect themselves from danger’. ‘If observed, this would result in much better treatment of animals ... in Muslim societies and elsewhere.’

His conclusion urges us all to restrain our greed and procreation and contribute to the effort to save the planet. The way we live now is beyond carelessness and verges on insanity. This has to change: ‘If current trends continue, we will not’.

More on the treatment of animals as tools – camels in particular – can be found in **Pernilla Ouis’s** Chapter 6 ‘The Traditional Relationship with Camels’ and Chapter 7 on ‘The Role of Camels as an Index of Modernity’. She first explains what a camel is and gives a brief history of their domestication. Then she follows in great detail the transitions in the relationships between people and camels in the UAE, from intimate interdependence with, and knowledge of all the characteristics of camels, their place in ‘camel-friendly’ Islam, their personhood and subjectivity, through camel racing and farming to their objectification in modern science and replacement by cars and trucks, though, as the Arabs say, ‘We still like camels’.

Again, in ***Islam and Ecology***, Othman ‘Abd-al-Rahman Llewellyn, in his excellent exposition of ‘The Basis for a Discipline of Islamic Environmental Law’, quotes Ahmad Ibn Taymiyya, the 13th-century Iraqi scholar: ‘It is well known that in these creatures [animals] God has exalted purposes other than the service of man, *and greater than the service of man*; He only explains to the children of Adam what benefits there are in them and what bounty He has bestowed upon mankind.’ (p.230) S. Nomanul Haq in the midst of detailing some of the many animal protection provisions in Islamic law, quotes E.W. Lane’s early 19th-century observations of the ‘humanity to dumb animals’ shown by Egyptians, and his finding later that the Egyptians had lost some of this. Lane put this down to ‘the conduct of Europeans’, since he does not

‘remember to have seen acts of cruelty to dumb animals except in places where Franks either reside or are frequent visitors.’

In the same book, James L. Wescoat Jr. describes the degradation of the Mughal gardens under Sikh rule, the British Raj, where they were used as a barracks, and later under Pakistani rule in spite of objections from the Department of Archaeology, so that ‘the site now has a modern, park-like character and little of its original form or meaning’. Mawil Izzi Dien describes the disastrous effects of modern types of development on Saudi Arabia, with subsidised water inducing wasteful consumption, especially in the cities; new road networks tempting young people away from agriculture to the cities. ‘Farmers stopped planting because imported crops were cheaper, although not better, or because they found the task demeaning ... The Islamic holistic concept of one society like one body living on God’s gift to His creatures, the earth, began to crumble. The earth became only an object which is measured by meters and valued by dollars. Mother earth became building plots and high-rise towers climbed to take the virginity of nature’ (pp.111-2). Forugh Farrokhzad’s poem about the dying garden describes the sense of loss and decay felt in the Muslim world, and her faith that the garden ‘can be taken to hospital’, but ends with a poignant description of the ‘garden’s heart’ lying ‘swollen under the sun, its mind slowly draining out of green memories.’

If this is what Muslims feel about the decline of their civilisation and the earth itself, an outsider’s view is provided by David Joseph Wellman in his fascinating book on ‘**Sustainable Diplomacy**’. A Professor of Religion at Drake University, USA, he has degrees in International Affairs, Religion, and Christian ethics, has worked with the World Council of Churches UN office, and for two years he taught English to children in Southern Spain, where he made many friends. He spent almost all his free time in Morocco, where he was welcomed into a family home, and taken to the South by one of his friends there. As a musician, ‘his last band included musicians from Spain, Morocco, the Netherlands, Scotland and the US’. His work shows influences from all these sources as well as deep knowledge of ‘Religion and Nature’ parameters as described in the *Encyclopaedia*. He is of the ‘Bioregionalist’ persuasion, where peoples from ‘bioregions’ – in this case Morocco and Spain are seen together as one region with common types of landscape, soil, intertwined historical, religious, cultural and anthropological roots etc. On the basis of all these they are asked to cooperate with one another to protect their common bioregion instead of fighting. Borders should be porous, not barriers; the two peoples allowed to exchange the folk and agricultural knowledge; and young, active people from Morocco should be exchanged for more financial investment from Spain in Morocco’s development. Both countries have colonised one another in their histories, he says. Sometimes one was poor while the other was better off, and vice versa. He compares interviews with Moroccans and Spaniards, songs and poems from both countries, common stories and images from both religions, sensitive to the language used in each; draws parallels and contrasts and derives arguments from their scriptures to convince them both to be good to one another.

He talks of the 'mutual debt' they share, yet what has Spain given Morocco? When the Moors ruled Spain, they brought the flowers (literally) of their pluralistic and inclusive civilisation to it, yet Spain expelled the Moors and Jews from its shores between 1492 and 1600. Spaniards came to Morocco after the Civil War looking for work, yet now, when some Moroccans and other Africans are coming back to Spain looking for work, there is still much hostility towards them, and their illegal status leads to exploitation of their labour. Spanish people still celebrate the expulsion of the Moors from Spanish cities, while Moroccans still fret at the continued presence of Spanish colonies in Ceuta and Melilla. Spanish people, having lived under forced Catholicism under Franco, are now rebelling against that religion, while the Moroccans are still clearly religious and piously attached not only to their religion but to their ruler, whatever his faults. Spain is over-fishing Moroccan waters, while the Moroccan authorities are enforcing controls against them. Wellman talks of building on the affinities between the two peoples, who apparently quite like each other really, circumventing all the historical enmity and wrongs committed by governments, and urged on by the need to reach equitable 'ecological footprints' in order to save the planet. Spain's footprint is grossly unsustainable, whereas Morocco's for the most part, is within its own capacity to sustain. Can Spain learn sustainability from Morocco, or will Morocco, after recent droughts, continue to aspire to the standard of living in Europe? Having identified religious 'exclusivism' as one of the main obstacles, Wellman states his aspiration (p.178), that 'if Muslims and Christians choose to work together to preserve the Creation they claim to believe in, there is little they cannot accomplish, for together they make up over half the world's population.' However, he concludes, 'We must confront ecological colonialism in a world of tremendous ecological illiteracy – in its practitioners as well as those they have colonized.' 'Those who seek change must enter into a deep willingness to *learn from unconventional sources – from the land, and from people who do not share their faith, their race, their economic or political status, or even their hemisphere.* The evolution of Sustainable Diplomacy requires *turning the world as we know it on its head*, and coming to realize that sweeping changes are not to be feared, but in fact embraced.' What Muslim could disagree with that?

So what can the North, the 'Developed World', which has so succeeded in under-developing and over-exploiting most of the world, learn from the South, the world that once was civilized in a sustainable, principled, moral way? What in fact HAS it learned in the past and what did it get wrong? The clearest and most comprehensive picture I have so far encountered of this has been put together by Salah Eddine Al-Djazairi in his, *The Golden Age and Decline of Islam*. In its 822 pages, which are all well worth reading, he shows how the Islamic civilisation of the centuries between 6th and 14th centuries and beyond, decentralised, relying only on renewable energy resources such as wind and water mills, human and animal power, and wood, succeeded in laying all the foundations for modern civilisation, with industries producing on a commercial scale, global international trade, banking and interest-free investment finance, international currencies valid from one end of the world to the other, guilds and universities, widespread public libraries and education, public baths, waterworks powering justly-administered irrigation systems with

underground canals and pipes, splendid gardens with international horticulture, science, medicine, and engineering, all developed to a high degree not only of skill but of artistry, providing materials for sublime architecture and decorative art on all kinds of artefacts, even scientific instruments... The list goes on and on. This exemplary civilization was based on knowledge gathered from all the ancient civilisations, which was collected, translated, shared, studied, experimented on, using empirical methods

His powerful, detailed, referenced, inspirational and wide-ranging description of the thriving Islamic civilization that existed for so many centuries across the world from Spain to China revives and strengthens the fading 'green memories' of Muslims, wiped deliberately, as he shows, from their lands, from their minds and from public knowledge. All Dr Al-Djazairi's material comes from European history books, both the true and the false information, which he refutes so convincingly. How much more could be discovered, then, if all the existing Muslim manuscripts were translated and analysed? The garden may be dying, but at its root, as Al-Djazairi clearly shows, is Islam, based on the Qur'an, and that root is still alive.

How some of this civilization was transferred to Dark-Age Europe, resulting in the Renaissance, is detailed in Al-Djazairi's earlier book on *The Hidden Debt to Islamic Civilisation*. The broader picture given in *The Golden Age* concludes with a section on how it all came to grief, and the pattern still continues as he describes it. The rubble and carnage in Palestine and Lebanon now is like Baghdad crushed by the Christian Mongols in 1250, or by the USA in 2003, the Holy Land during the Crusades, Spain after 1492, India under the British, Algeria under the French, Libya under the Italians, Kazakhstan and Chechnya under the Russians, Bosnia and Kosovo under the Serbs ... 'When will they ever learn?'

Only when the governments of the North and West, and even the Muslim peoples themselves, cease to try and destroy the Muslim world and Islam, when they listen to what Islam has to say, will they learn the way to live sustainably. These books show that at least some people ARE starting to listen. This is how 'the world as we know it' will be 'turned on its head' or perhaps, as in al-Idrisi's famous 12th-century world map, put the right way up again at last.