

An Islamic Response to Climate Change

“Do you not observe that God sends down rain from the sky, so that in the morning the Earth becomes green?”

– Qur'an 22:63

Rooted in Tradition:

As is true for any global religion, there are countless iterations of Islam. Increasingly, however, Muslim voices are coming out in favor of environmentally conscious interpretations and practices. There are numerous examples in both the Qur'an and Hadith which honor the sacredness of Allah's creation and support a strong environmental ethic within Islam. Several examples are below:

“The Most Gracious has imparted this Qur'an (unto man). He has created man: he has imparted unto him articulate thought and speech. (At His behest) the sun and moon run appointed courses; (before Him) prostrate themselves, the stars and the trees. And the skies He has raised high, and He has devised (for all things) a balance, so that you (too, O men) might never transgress the balance (of what is right): weigh, therefore, (your deeds) with equity, and cut not the balance short! (Qur'an 55: 1-9)”

“Devote thyself single-mindedly to the Faith, and thus follow the nature designed by Allah, the nature according to which He has fashioned mankind. There is no altering the creation of Allah (Qur'an 30:30).”

Voices for an Eco-Islamic Ethic:

Two brief examples of strong voices in this field are Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Iftikhar Awan. One of the first pioneering figures on the topic of Islam and the environment was **Seyyed Hossein Nasr**, born in Iran, educated at MIT and Harvard, and now a professor at Georgetown University. His most influential work, *Man and Nature: The Spiritual Crisis in Modern Man*, ties together issues of faith, environmentalism, science, and the Islamic religion.

In a speech delivered to an Operation Noah event in 2008, **Iftikhar Awan** of the Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental sciences said the following, “Allah originated creation and then created mankind within it...Human beings tame forces of nature like no other creature can...But have we carried these activities to excess? Our actions seem to show that we have lost the vital understanding of our place in the intricate natural order.”

A Sense of Urgency:

The negative effects of climate change globally will in many ways disproportionately affect Muslim populations as – according to a study by the Pew Forum (<http://www.pewforum.org/2011/01/27/future-of-the-global-muslim-population-regional-asia/>) – approximately 62% of the world's Muslims live in South and Southeast Asia. Countries in this region such as Bangladesh and Indonesia are particularly susceptible to sea level rise. Further, climate change predictions often entail dire water issues and severe damage to agricultural industries in Sudan and the Middle East. As we continue to seek viable, faith-based approaches to addressing climate change, it is important to consider that “though many of these same dangers haunt the developing world writ large, Muslim countries as a whole are disproportionately susceptible — particularly in comparison with those industrialized clusters of countries that have pumped much of the carbon into the atmosphere.” <http://www.yaleclimatemediaforum.org/2012/04/green-muslims-eco-islam-and-evolving-climate-change-consciousness/>)