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FAITH-BASED APPROACHES TO ECOLOGICAL HARMONY AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

BY: NADIA B. AHMAD¹

ABSTRACT

The failure to recognize and establish legal environmental rights and norms is perilous for the health of the planet and its populations. Using another source of obligations, such as faith-based approaches for ecological harmony and environmental protection, can work to realign delicate ecosystem balances. This article considers ancient and medieval sources from the teachings of Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Zoroastrianism, Daoism, Shintoism, Sikhism, and others to provide new directions for existing environmental challenges.

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INTRODUCTION

This article delves into the origins of faith-based approaches to environmental law. These alternative viewpoints to the environmental law canon offer additional legal mechanisms for environmental protection, including, for instance, climate change adaptation measures.² World religions emphasize the duty of the individual to care for the environment instead of a rights-based approach as expressed, for example, in international human rights law in terms of the human right to a healthy environment.³ The origins of these faith-based traditions are based on Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Zoroastrianism, Daoism, Shintoism, Sikhism, and others.⁴ The scope of religious law is broad, but I focus on the interconnections of faith and ecology in world religions. The emphasis on righteousness lays the foundation for the religious command to protect the environment.⁵

The failure to enforce environmental rights and norms worldwide necessitates finding alternative sources of ecological obligation, such as that which could be derived from religious rules for faith practitioners. “Intergenerational equity is also a chief concern of climate change adaptation efforts and sustainable development. According to much religious teaching, present generations should keep the environment healthy and safe for inheritance by future generations.”⁶ An appreciation of the nexus between ecology and faith shows that faith traditions provide centuries old legal customs and norms for environmental ethics and can add to the understanding of the public trust doctrine and impact various international law agreements and modalities.⁷ While considering faith-based approaches more generally, this article focuses on the protections found in Islamic

² Nadia Ahmad, *Recognizing the Role of Religion in Environmental Legal Norms*, 32 ST. THOMAS LAW REVIEW 24, 24-25 (2019).

³ “This duty is rooted in the belief that the Earth in its totality is a creation of the Creator, and that both the individual and the State are enjoined to take responsibility for creation as part of religious duties.” *Id.*

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ “In sacred scriptures, humans have a divine mandate to improve nature and dispose of impurities as they find them. This purification is focused on bringing order and progress to nature without destroying it in the endeavor.” *Id.*

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ *Id.*

Law in particular, because its framework of environmental ethics allows for resisting the twin assaults to religious freedom and the environment. Identifying faith-based approaches to environmental protection assists in the conservation of religious identity and the protection of the environment.⁸ Religious environmental ethics have not been well addressed in the context of international environmental law in its current iteration, and this shortcoming may be contributing to the failure of international environmental law to protect the environment. Faith-based approaches can help formulate an international order that is more ethically driven, more ethically consistent, and less contradictory.⁹

This article is structured as follows. First, I highlight the role of sacred thought for creating justifications for environmental ethics. Then I lay out the general principles of specific religions with respect to the environment and discuss some of the shortcomings of faith-based environmental laws as alternative legal norms. I conclude by looking at how faith-based approaches to environmental law can be reframed as a heterodox formulation of environmental ethics and how to bring these into the fore as legal constructs. The reformulating of environmental ethics through religious principles can work to broaden mechanisms for environmental protection.

I. THE RISE OF FAITH-BASED APPROACHES

Religious worldviews are a contributing factor in creating environmental degradation and human misery in its various forms all over the world, whether today or in centuries past. For the same reason, religious worldviews have the powerful potential to help shape sustainable and inclusive worldviews with the aim of environmental protection. Psychologists defined religion as “a system of beliefs in a divine or superhuman power, and practices of worship or other rituals directed towards such a power.”¹⁰ The importance placed on worship and rituals suggests that community activities connect people together, based on how the term “religion” comes from the Latin

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ MICHAEL ARGYLE & BENJAMIN BEIT-HALLAHMI, *THE SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY OF RELIGION* 1 (Routledge, 1st ed. 2013).

religio, derived from *ligo*, meaning “to tie or bind.”¹¹ As opposed to “religion,” definitions of spirituality tend to place more “emphasis on the individual and on subjective experience,” explaining it more broadly as “a transcendent dimension within human experience . . . discovered in moments in which the individual questions the meaning of personal existence and attempts to place the self within a broader ontological context.”¹² While appreciating how religion and spirituality have been used interchangeably in various contexts, this article recognizes the distinction between them. Religion offers a systematic means to connect to the world and its problems in ways that other connections may not.

Philosopher Roger Gottlieb explores the current environmental crisis and how religions have entered an “ecological phase.”¹³ People who are religious have had to become political and environmental activists.¹⁴ However, there are also objections to ecological religion.¹⁵ For instance, one complaint is that democratic societies do not need religion involved in their political life to solve their problems.¹⁶ Religions have served as tools for political intolerance, bigotry, sexism, racism, and homophobia. In fact, religion was used to provide a moral basis for colonization and conquest on the Americas through the notion of Manifest Destiny.¹⁷ Religious arguments were provided in favor of slavery and ethnic cleansing.¹⁸

¹¹ *Id.* (quoting Gerard Saucier & Katarzyna Skrzypińska, *Spiritual but Not Religious? Evidence for Two Independent Dispositions*, J. OF PERSONALITY 1257, 1259 (Oct. 2006).

¹² *Id.*

¹³ ROGER S. GOTTLIEB, *Introduction: Religion and Ecology—What is the Connection and Why Does it Matter?*, in OXFORD HANDBOOK OF RELIGION AND ECOLOGY 4 (Roger S. Gottlieb ed., 2006), available at

<http://www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780195178722.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780195178722-e-1?print=pdf>.

¹⁴ *Id.* at 6.

¹⁵ *Id.*

¹⁶ *Id.* at 7.

¹⁷ Donald M. Scott, *The Religious Origins of Manifest Destiny*, NAT’L HUMANITIES CTR.,

<http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/tserve/nineteen/nkeyinfo/mandestiny.htm> (last updated Sept. 2013).

¹⁸ See generally Crystal Silpar, *Christian Devils: How the Bible Was Used to Mobilize Oppression of Native Americans*, MEDIUM (Feb. 20, 2018), <https://medium.com/race->

Nonetheless, environmental movements are “hospitable to religion.”¹⁹ This is because they tend to be more open to spirituality than many other political movements.²⁰ The mission of environmental groups is to protect all life and religion has a similar purpose towards the inclusion and cohesion of life.²¹

Industrialized countries need to account for previous centuries of greenhouse emissions by providing low cost transfer of skills, technology, and capital to emerging economies so that they can modernize without relying on carbon-based energy.²² Religion offers a sense of environmental justice, creating a sense of duty to the environment and to others, because religious rhetoric carries a powerful moral authority.²³ The religious duty to protect the environment precedes international environmental law instruments.²⁴ In the same way that the civil rights movement stood on a religious high ground, the environmental movement can also harness this authority for its purposes.²⁵ Indeed, in the 1970s, environmentalists claimed ecology more as a religion, arguing that interests the law serves are derived from how the natural world is seen, understood, and used.²⁶

Efforts to bring religious insights to international environmental debates are not new. In the past, international religious meetings on the environment, such as the Global Forum of Spiritual and Parliamentary Leaders, have been held in Oxford, Moscow, Rio,

law-a-critical-analysis/christian-devils-how-the-bible-was-used-to-mobilize-oppression-of-native-americans-84e67f7e091b; see also Noel Rae, *How Christian Slaveholders Used the Bible to Justify Slavery*, TIME (Feb. 23, 2018), <https://time.com/5171819/christianity-slavery-book-excerpt/>.

¹⁹ GOTTLIEB, *supra* note 13, at 11.

²⁰ *Id.*

²¹ *Id.* at 10.

²² Burns H. Weston, *Climate Change and Intergenerational Justice: Foundational Reflections*, VT. J. ENVTL. L. 375, 404 (2008).

²³ Lisa A. Binder, *Religion, Race, and Rights: A Rhetorical Overview of Environmental Justice Disputes*, WIS. ENVTL. L. J. 1, 16 (1999).

²⁴ Edith Brown Weiss, *The Evolution of International Environmental Law*, 54 JAPANESE Y.B. INT'L L. 1, 2 (2011).

²⁵ Chika Okafor, *Returning to Eden: Toward a Faith-Based Framing of the Environmental Movement*, 26 VILL. ENVTL. L. J. 215, 262 (2015).

²⁶ Jedediah Purdy, *American Natures: The Shape of Conflict in Environmental Law*, 36 HARV. ENVTL. L. J. 169, 228 (2012).

and Kyoto.²⁷ The Tehran Seminar on Environment, Culture, and Religion was held in Iran in 2001 and another meeting on “Environment, Peace and the Dialogue of Civilizations and Cultures” was organized in 2005.²⁸ Both of these were sponsored by the Iranian government with the support of the United Nations Environment Programme.²⁹ The International Union for the Conservation of Nature organized the first panel on “Spirituality and Conservation” at the World Conservation Congress in Barcelona in 2009.³⁰ Religion can assist humanity (as guardians/stewards) to advocate and protect the rights for future generations to come.³¹ The following sections survey religious doctrine on the environment.

Whether from an anthropocentric or a biocentric perspective, more adequate environmental values need to be formulated and linked to areas of public policy. Scholars of religion, as well as religious leaders and laity, are key players in this articulation process. Such an alliance of scholars, religious leaders, and activists is creating common ground for dialogue and creative partnership in envisioning and implementing long range, sustainable solutions to some of our most pressing environmental problems. This is critical because the attitudes and values that shape people’s concepts of nature come primarily from religious worldviews and ethical practices. Religions have been significant catalysts for humans in coping with change and transcending suffering while at the same time grounding humans in nature’s rhythms and Earth’s abundance. The creative tensions between humans seeking to transcend this world and yearning to be embedded in this world are part of the dynamics of world religions.

²⁷ Mary Evelyn Tucker, *Religion and Ecology*, in OXFORD HANDBOOK ON THE SOC. OF RELIGION 823 (Peter B. Clark ed., 2009).

²⁸ Mary Evelyn Tucker, *World Religions and Ecology for a Flourishing Future*, PATHS TO SUSTAINABILITY 193 (May 8, 2018), <https://pathstosustainability.com/2017/05/15/world-religions-and-ecology-for-a-flourishing-future-mary-evelyn-tucker/>.

²⁹ *Id.*

³⁰ *Id.*

³¹ Sasha Hollis, *Old Solutions to New Problems: Providing for Intergenerational Equity in National Institutions*, N.Z. J. ENVTL. L. 25, 60 (2010).

II. ENVIRONMENTALISM THROUGH FAITH

Each of the religions discussed in this article carry a wide set of rules, customs, and laws relating to environmental governance. However, I focus only on specific aspects of each particular religion to demonstrate the creative and normative possibilities of the use of such ideas in heightening environmental protection. As an academic exercise, this discussion is meant to provoke an appreciation for nature through faith and provide the foundational basis for alternative legal norms for environmental protection nationally, subnationally, and internationally through mutual cooperation and action.

Christianity, Environmental Ethics, and the Public Trust Doctrine

Ancient traditions have governed natural resource use by humans and their relationship with the environment. Religious scholar Gretel Van Wieren notes that Christian approaches to environmental ethics are not monolithic, fully agreed-upon principles, but recognize that individuals “should be *against* the unjustified destruction of nature and *for* the care of God’s Earth.”³² She also explains that Christian environmental ethicists focus on the idea that humans have a capacity to live with mutual respect and understanding with other creatures and creation as a whole.³³ Of the many Christian denominations, Lutheran traditions call on their members to challenge the practices where God’s creation is made into commodities in an unjust way, which negatively impacts the poor.³⁴ Regardless of the religion, the common theme of protecting the environment is pervasive.

Barry Law School’s Center for Earth Jurisprudence filed an amicus brief on behalf of the Global Catholic Climate Movement and the Leadership Conference of Women Religious in support of a constitutional climate change lawsuit brought by 21 young plaintiffs

³² Gretel Van Wieren, *Restoring Earth, Restored to Earth: Christianity, Environmental Ethics, and Ecological Restoration* 33 (2011) (unpublished dissertation, Yale University).

³³ *Id.*

³⁴ Gyula Bándi, *Richness of Traditions - Environmental Traditions*, 49 ANNALES U. SCI. BUDAPESTINENSIS DE ROLANDO EOTVOS NOMINATAE, 137, 145 (2008).

from across America in 2016.³⁵ As reported by *EcoWatch News*,

Catholic groups filed the brief to make their views known that the youth's legal claims are rooted in U.S. [legal] traditions and parallel Roman Catholic tenets. The Global Catholic Climate Movement is an international network of more than 250 Catholic organizations and individuals, including Pope Francis and Catholic bishops. The Catholic group is raising a strong voice in global climate change discussions, relying on the Pope's encyclical, *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home*.³⁶

A representative of the Global Catholic Climate Movement has said,

Laudato Si' reminds us that '[i]ntergenerational solidarity is not optional, but rather a basic question of justice, since the world we have received also belongs to those who will follow us.' By supporting this initiative, we join our voices with the young plaintiffs who are calling for climate justice and the protection of the atmosphere for generations to come.³⁷

Ileana Porras describes the encyclical as offering "a careful analysis of the root causes of environmental degradation, mapping out the complex linkages and tensions between globalization, economic growth, liberalized trade, unsustainable patterns of consumption and production, environmental degradation, involuntary migration, immiseration and growing inequality."³⁸ Porras postulates:

³⁵ Cent. for Earth Juris., *Center for Earth Jurisprudence Authors Amicus Brief in Constitutional Climate Change Lawsuit*, EARTH JURIST (Jan. 21, 2016), www.earthjurist.org/news/2016/1/21/cej-authors-amicus-brief-in-constitutional-climate-change-lawsuit (quoting Our Children's Trust, *Pope Francis Part of Amicus Brief Filed in Support of Teen's Landmark Climate Change Lawsuit*, ECOWATCH (Jan. 20, 2016, 10:41 AM), <https://www.ecowatch.com/pope-francis-part-of-amicus-brief-filed-in-support-of-teens-landmark-c-1882155017.html>).

³⁶ *Id.*

³⁷ Pope Francis, Encyclical Letter, *Laudato si': On Care for Our Common Home* (June 18, 2015), http://w2.vatican.va/content/dam/francesco/pdf/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si_en.pdf.

³⁸ Ileana M. Porras, *Laudato Si', Pope Francis' Call to Ecological Conversion: Responding to*

The call to ecological conversion draws on the profound spiritual idea of conversion, which at its simplest can be described as a radical re-orientation of perspective that informs our goals and therefore guides our choices and actions. In the religious tradition, a conversion depicts both a turning point and a journey. The turn is both a turning away from and a turning towards. Paradoxically, this shift in perspective is experienced at the same time as a momentous break, away from deeply entrenched habitual patterns of thought and action, and as a minor adjustment, for in the moment of conversion we merely rediscover our original orientation and destination.³⁹

Porras argues Francis provides the groundwork for an integral ecology, which parallels the notion of sustainable development.⁴⁰

The public trust doctrine is a way for citizens to stand as beneficiaries holding clear public property interests in natural resources, rather than as weakened political constituents making increasingly desperate environmental appeals to their public officials.⁴¹ The public trust doctrine relies on the idea that the government holds natural resources in trust for its citizens and carries the fiduciary obligation to protect these resources for present and future generations.⁴² The trust is rooted in the law as a characteristic of sovereignty itself.⁴³ The public trust is a common law doctrine that conserves navigable waters and tidal lands for public use, and institutes a duty in governments to guard such public use.⁴⁴ Christian

the Cry of the Earth and the Poor—Towards Integral Ecology, 109 AJIL UNBOUND 136, 136 (2015).

³⁹ *Id.* at 137.

⁴⁰ *Id.* at 139.

⁴¹ Mary C. Wood, *Atmospheric Trust Litigation Across the World*, in FIDUCIARY DUTY AND THE ATMOSPHERIC TR. 99, 106 (Ken Coghill et al. eds., 2012).

⁴² *Id.*

⁴³ Harrison C. Dunning, *The Public Trust: A Fundamental Doctrine of American Property Law*, 19 ENVTL. L. 515, 524 (1989); Mary C. Wood, *Advancing the Sovereign Trust of Government to Safeguard the Environment for Present and Future Generations (Parts I and II)*, 39 ENVTL. L. 43, 68-69 (2009).

⁴⁴ *Public Trust Doctrine*, BLACK'S LAW DICTIONARY (10th ed. 2014) (defining "public-

environmental ethics expand the latitude of legal norms to apply for international environmental law rulemaking. Christianity situates environmental ethics within “one of three ecologies of grace: redemption, sanctification, or deification,” to engage Christianity in the discussion.⁴⁵

Islam and Natural Resource Extraction

The rules governing Islamic law principles for environmental protection, sustainability, and economic development rest on the juristic principles of Islamic law, known as the *usul-al-fiqh*.⁴⁶ The principles of Islamic law consider the origins of these sources as well as their methodological framework.⁴⁷ Islamic law looks at what constitutes the discipline and how it is differentiated from the actual practice.⁴⁸ The Quran emphasizes the duty of the individual Muslim to care for the environment instead of a rights-based approach.⁴⁹ This duty is rooted in the belief that the Earth in its totality is a creation of God, and that both the individual and the State are enjoined to take responsibility for God’s creation as part of their religious duties.⁵⁰ Muslim thought about nature is shaped by several passages in the Quran, which exalt nature as the work of Allah:

So set thou thy face steadily and truly to the
Faith: (establish) Allah’s handiwork according to the

trust doctrine” as “[t]he principle that navigable waters are preserved for the public use, and that the state is responsible for protecting the public’s right to the use.”).

⁴⁵ WILLIS JENKINS, *ECOLOGIES OF GRACE: ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS AND CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY* 4 (2008).

⁴⁶ “Usul AL-FIQH, is the foundation of Islamic law or Shari’ah law. These Usul AL-FIQH [provide] modes and sources for the jurists to seek for appropriate legal rules for any problems or issues.” REMALI YUSOFF & NOR’ AZURAH MD. KAMDARI, *UNDERSTANDING USUL AL-FIQH AND ITS APPLICATION ANALYSIS FOR SUKUK*, 148 (2017),

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/319955200_Understanding_Usul_AL-FIQH_and_Its_Application_Analysis_for_SUKUK.

⁴⁷ *Id.*

⁴⁸ Ziauddin Sardar, *Islamic Science: the Contemporary Debate*, in *POSTCOLONIAL SCI. AND TECH. STUD. READER* 373-74 (Sandra G. Harding ed., 2011).

⁴⁹ Yaser Khalailah, *ENVTL. L. REP. NEWS & ANALYSIS* 10280, 10288 (2012).

⁵⁰ *Id.*

pattern on which He has made mankind: no change (let there be) in the work (wrought) by Allah. [T]hat is the standard Religion: but most among mankind understand not.⁵¹

The Quran also calls on humans to purify nature.⁵² The Quran indicates, “Truly he succeeds that purifies it, [a]nd he fails that corrupts it!”⁵³ Under Islamic teachings, humans have a divine mandate to improve nature and dispose of impurities as they find them.⁵⁴ This purification is focused on bringing order and progress to nature—but not destroying it in the process.⁵⁵ The limits of nature should not be exceeded, as stated in the Quran, “Do no mischief on the [E]arth, after it hath been set in order, but call on Him with fear and longing (in your hearts): for the Mercy of Allah is (always) near to those who do good.”⁵⁶ Allah requires humans to observe nature’s boundaries and draws near to believers who do good to the Earth. The air is part of creation for Muslims. As in many other religions, it is often associated with the wind:

It is He Who sendeth the winds like heralds of glad tidings, going before His mercy: when they have carried the heavy-laden clouds, We drive them to a land that is dead, make rain to descend thereon, and produce every kind of harvest therewith: thus shall We raise up the dead: perchance ye may remember.⁵⁷

The wind is akin to divine messengers and should not be fouled by humans. Air pollution thus represents a violation of Allah’s ordering of nature. “Verily, all things have We created in proportion and measure.”⁵⁸ There is a balance to nature as Allah has created it.

⁵¹ Quran 30:30.

⁵² See Quran 91:9-10.

⁵³ *Id.*

⁵⁴ Ali Ahmad, *Islamic Water Law as an Antidote for Maintaining Water Quality*, 2 U. DENV. WATER L. REVIEW 169, 179 (1999).

⁵⁵ M. Rafiq & Mohammed Ajmal, *Islam and the Present Ecological Crisis*, in WORLD RELIGIONS AND THE ENV’T 123 (O. P. Dwivedi ed., 1989).

⁵⁶ Quran 7:56.

⁵⁷ *Id.* at 7:57.

⁵⁸ *Id.* at 54:49.

According to Islam, air is a part of that balance and should be maintained in a pure state. Otherwise, a society may face tangible losses. Nature, including the air and all creatures who draw breath from it, is fair in its original state and should not be defaced by humanity. All elements of nature are to be considered common property of every creature—not just humans.⁵⁹ The Quran predicts the air pollution experienced today as a result of smoke, gas, and other emissions.⁶⁰ Corruption of the air spreads because of human activity, which damages the environment.⁶¹

The failure to completely achieve the goal of recognizing and establishing legal environmental rights and norms in Muslim majority countries in the Middle East supports the idea of finding another source of obligation, such as Islamic rules that bind Islamic States, some of which constitute major sources of environmental pollution. Incidentally, some of the populations in the Arabian Gulf have the highest per capita carbon footprints in the world, including Qatar and United Arab Emirates, and also have significant influence on oil and gas markets, namely Saudi Arabia, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates. They also happen to be strongly influenced by Islam. In Muslim majority states, these arguments may find more resonance compared with more secular arguments, and thus may be strategically deployed.

Judaism and Reducing Consumption

Jewish teaching posits God created the environment and that humans are not allowed to misuse it.⁶² As God's agents, humans are allowed to use God's Creation with limits (those limits are established by God).⁶³ For instance, the saving of human lives above all else leaves itself open to the critique of deep ecologists and

⁵⁹ Al-Hafiz B.A. Masri, *Islam and Ecology*, in ISLAM AND ECOLOGY 6 (Fazlun Khalid & Joanne O'Brien eds., 1992).

⁶⁰ Rafiq & Ajmal, *supra* note 55, at 128.

⁶¹ Masri, *supra* note 59, at 9.

⁶² Lawrence Troster, *10 Teachings on Judaism and the Environment*, HUFFINGTON POST (June 6, 2011), https://www.huffpost.com/entry/10-teachings-on-judaism-a_b_844973.

⁶³ *Id.*

anthropocentrism. But it also has emancipatory potential in terms of addressing environmental injustice, unequal access to the environment, and unequal impact of environmental damage. The Sabbath, by limiting use of resources, is a way of living a sustainable life.⁶⁴ The *halakhab*, which is the collective body of Jewish religious laws from the written and Oral Torah, disallows wasteful consumption (including of resources).⁶⁵ Judaism recommends caution when using modern materials and chemicals and consideration of their impact.⁶⁶ In fact, there are many Jewish religious teachings that mandate the proper disposal of waste by industrial production to be kept far away from “human habitation.”⁶⁷ The principle of *Bal tachit* (“do not destroy”) prohibits needless destruction, and senseless damage or waste.⁶⁸ Judaism encourages preservation of the planet, as it is a loan from God.⁶⁹ Jewish sacred texts further the idea of intergeneration equity and support for policies that address climate change and promote conservation. The greatest moral obligation is the principle of *pikuach nefesh*, (“to save human lives above all else”) and this can be accomplished by education and the prevention of environmental health risks, ultimately by preserving the Earth today and for future generations.⁷⁰ In Judaism, the scriptures indicate if the Messiah comes while you are planting a tree, you must first finish planting and then you go to the Messiah.⁷¹

Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Cosmic Ecology

Religious schools originating in India, such as Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism believe in a balanced cosmic ecology that does not separate the human species from the rest of nature.⁷² The concept

⁶⁴ *Id.*

⁶⁵ *Id.*

⁶⁶ *Id.*

⁶⁷ *Id.*

⁶⁸ Religious Action Ctr. of Reform Judaism, *Jewish Views on the Environment*, REFORM JUDAISM, <https://reformjudaism.org/jewish-views-environment>.

⁶⁹ *Id.*

⁷⁰ *Id.*

⁷¹ *Id.*

⁷² Oren Perez, *Reflections on an Environmental Struggle: P&O, Dahanu and the Regulation*

of the sanctity of life is clearly part of Hinduism in the sense that Hindu teachings recognize that “[o]nly God has absolute sovereignty over all creatures; thus, human beings have no dominion over their own lives or non-human life.”⁷³ As a result, “humanity cannot act as a viceroy of God over the planet, nor assign degrees of relative worth to other species.”⁷⁴ This notion of the Divine Being as expressed in the Yajurveda states: “The loving sage beholds that Being, hidden in mystery, wherein the universe comes to have one home; Therein unites and therefrom emanates the whole; The Omnipresent One pervades souls and matter like warp and woof in created beings.”⁷⁵ The sacredness of God’s creation means no damage may be inflicted on other species without adequate justification. Therefore, all lives, human and nonhuman, are of equal value and all have the same right to existence.⁷⁶

According to Buddhism, the root causes of climate change can be understood as cravings, delusions and aversions.⁷⁷ Religion can facilitate climate change work by engaging members of faith-based groups, building a community to support sustainability practices, sharing physical resources, offering ethical guidelines, and providing new paradigms of well-being.⁷⁸ Wisdom is the Dharma’s first principle to mitigate climate change.⁷⁹ The second principle is ethical conduct (compassionate concern for all living beings), and the third is

of Multinational Enterprises, 15 GEO. ENVTL. L. REV. 1, 28 (2002); see generally CHRISTOPHER G. FRAMARIN, HINDUISM AND ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS: LAW, LITERATURE, AND PHILOSOPHY (Gavin Flood ed., 1st ed. 2014).

⁷³ Onkar Prasad Dwivedi, *Satyagraha for Conservation: Awakening the Spirit of Hinduism*, in THIS SACRED EARTH: RELIGION, NATURE, ENVIRONMENT 153 (Roger S. Gottlieb ed., 1996).

⁷⁴ *Id.*

⁷⁵ Yajurveda 32.8.

⁷⁶ *Id.*

⁷⁷ Statement, International Dharma Teachers, The Earth as Witness: International Dharma Teachers’ Statement on Climate Change (Jan. 8, 2014), <https://oneearthsangha.org/articles/dharma-teachers-statement-on-climate-change/>.

⁷⁸ Paul L. Jones, *The Religions of the World Agree: Being Sustainable is a Moral Imperative; So, How Can We Bring the Ecology of Faith Home*, SUSTAINABLE BENEFITS (Oct. 3, 2017), <https://sustainablebenefits.com/tag/green-products/> (citing GARY GARDNER, INSPIRING PROGRESS: RELIGIONS’ CONTRIBUTIONS TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (2006)).

⁷⁹ International Dharma Teachers, *supra* note 77.

mindfulness (enhancing our awareness by noticing when we cause harm to the environment).⁸⁰ The *Earth as Witness: International Dharma Teachers' Statement on Climate Change* from 2014 states:

We must recognize that without swift and dramatic reductions in fossil fuel use and major efforts to increase carbon sequestration, global temperatures will rise close to or beyond [two] degrees C. This increase will lead to injury and death for millions of people worldwide and the extinction of many of the Earth's species.⁸¹

Buddhism works to overcome the theory-practice divide through the concept of sustainable economies.⁸² Mechanisms for bridging this gap include: the institutional example and dissemination of the *dhamma* ("teachings") from Buddhist-based organizations, charismatic inspiration and leadership, examples from the laity, as well as educating and communicating with society to highlight the relevance of Buddhist views in mitigating the conflict and adversity of a host of global environmental, cultural, social, and economic problems. These multiplicities of agenda items show how breaking silos of religion can lead to better sustainability outcomes. In Bhutan, Mahayana Buddhism is the state religion, yet in practice the balance between development and conservation is difficult to achieve.⁸³ Bhutan is concerned about biodiversity protection to preserve endangered species from vanishing from the common heritage list.⁸⁴

In Jainism, a key tenet is that "[e]verything attributed to self and self attributes everything to nature."⁸⁵ Its philosophy promotes resolving all types of crises by imparting faith and knowledge.⁸⁶ "When man is free from *Karma*, the environment will naturally be

⁸⁰ *Id.*

⁸¹ *Id.*

⁸² Akadémiai Kiadó, *Sustainability and Sufficiency: Economic Development in a Buddhist Perspective*, 29 SOCIETY AND ECONOMY 155, 177 (2007).

⁸³ Shera Lhundup, Note, *The Genesis of Environmental Ethics and Sustaining Its Heritage in the Kingdom of Bhutan*, 14 GEO. INT'L ENVTL. L. REV. 693, 694, 698 (2002).

⁸⁴ *Id.* at 699.

⁸⁵ J. Geetha, *Environmental Awareness in Jainism* 60 (2003) (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Mysore), <http://hdl.handle.net/10603/90291>.

⁸⁶ *Id.*

restored to its original purity.”⁸⁷ The theory of *Karma* is essential in resolving crises, because it deals with cause and effect.⁸⁸ “According to this theory, by exploiting natural and human resources, man is causing not only environmental crisis, but also self-inviting an influx of *Karma*.”⁸⁹

Zoroastrianism

In Zoroastrianism, *asha* means purity, righteousness, and a good order.⁹⁰ Members of the faith are to act as responsible agents of the environment in order to acquire plenty of food, pleasant surroundings and absence of illnesses.⁹¹ Neglect of the environment is seen as turning away from the pursuit of *asha*, surrendering to evil.⁹² Zoroastrians are renowned farmers and gardeners because of their understanding of the relationship between humanity with Earth and water.⁹³ In some Iranian Zoroastrian communities, after the birth of a child and after the death of a loved one, a fruit-bearing tree is planted in their honor.⁹⁴ Life could not exist without water. Water is not a lifeless creation, but a Divine Being worshipped as *Avan Yazad*.⁹⁵ Air is a Divine Being worshipped as *Mino Ram*.⁹⁶ Minerals are considered sacred and when we deplete the natural resources, our good health is also depleted, because for the Earth to maintain a healthy ecology, it also needs its minerals.⁹⁷ Zarathushtis are directed not to pollute

⁸⁷ *Id.* at 62.

⁸⁸ *Id.*

⁸⁹ *Id.*

⁹⁰ Shahin Bekhradnia, *Zoroastrianism and the Environment*, in REVELATION AND THE ENVIRONMENT AD 95-1995 149 (Sarah Hobson & Jane Lubchenco eds., 1995).

⁹¹ *Id.* at 150.

⁹² *Id.*

⁹³ *Id.*

⁹⁴ *Id.* at 150-51.

⁹⁵ Pervin J. Mistry, *Zoroastrianism: Its Stewardship for all Creation, the Animate and the Inanimate*. The Parliament of World’s Religions, Presentation at the Parliament of Worlds Religions (Dec. 5, 2009), available at <https://parsikhabar.net/culture/zoroastrianism-its-stewardship-for-all-creation-the-animate-and-the-inanimate/2232/>.

⁹⁶ *Id.*

⁹⁷ *Id.*

nature even at death.⁹⁸ They do not bury or cremate, instead they use an ecofriendly alternative: the “rays of the Sun to decontaminate and dispose” of the corpse.⁹⁹

Other Eastern Faith Traditions: Daoism, Shintoism, and Sikhism

Daoism is centered on the idea that human life is a small part of a grander process of nature and that human actions make sense when they are in the flow of nature.¹⁰⁰ The Chinese intellectual tradition is based off the concept that interplay between *yin* and *yang* creates *qi* (“vital energy”).¹⁰¹ Framing “*yinyang*” in this way establishes it as a provider for the natural flow of energy in the “primordial potency of the universe.”¹⁰² If a pernicious influence invades the *qi*, it can create an imbalance if it is not expelled.¹⁰³ Deep ecology generally is a philosophy addressing environmental crisis by combining thoughts of environmental movements and religion.¹⁰⁴ Its platform consists of eight basic principles: 1) human and nonhuman life have intrinsic value; 2) the diversity and richness of life forms contribute to the realization of these values; 3) humans may only reduce this richness and diversity to satisfy vital needs; 4) the flourishing of nonhuman life requires a decrease of the human population; 5) the interference of humans with the nonhuman world is excessive and worsening; 6) policy must be changed; 7) ideological change: appreciating life quality instead of increasing higher standard of living;

⁹⁸ *Id.*

⁹⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰⁰ Weatherhead East Asian Institute, *Introduction to Daoism*, ASIA FOR EDUCATORS (2009), http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/special/china_1000bce_daoism.htm.

¹⁰¹ Robin R. Wang, *Yinyang (Yin-yang)*, INTERNET ENCYCLOPEDIA OF PHILOSOPHY, <https://www.iep.utm.edu/yinyang/#H3>.

¹⁰² *Id.*

¹⁰³ Mehrab Dashtdar et al., *The Concept of Wind in Traditional Chinese Medicine*, 19 J. PHARMACOPUNCTURE 293 (2016), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC5234349/>.

¹⁰⁴ Wendy Ambrosius, *Deep Ecology: A Debate on the Role of Humans in the Environment* 8 U. WIS. L. J. OF UNDERGRADUATE RES. 1, 1 (2005), https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/ce5a/f4c5217e1ed31ded23e876ed2d70083194cd.pdf?_ga=2.194287022.2076651986.1585873243-908226670.1584829034.

8) by subscribing to these points we have an obligation to attempt the necessary changes.¹⁰⁵

In Shintoism, the land, its nature and the creatures in it are children to *Kami* (“deity”).¹⁰⁶ Jinja Honcho, the representative body of all Shinto Shrines in Japan, urges that we must take responsibility and address environmental issues.¹⁰⁷ Shintoism advises that we “shift our point of view and look at our environment with the spirit of ‘reverence and gratitude,’” how a parent cares for their children.¹⁰⁸ In Sikhism, the *Guru Granth*, which is the Sikh scripture, asserts that the purpose of humanity is to achieve a harmonious state with the Earth and all its creations.¹⁰⁹ There are approximately 25 million Sikhs worldwide.¹¹⁰

III. RESPONDING TO ENVIRONMENTAL THREATS WITH THE RELIGION

In *God, the Bible and the Environment: an Historical Excursus on the Relationship Between Christian Religion and Ecology*, anthropologist Marco Damonte explores several theological works including the Pope’s *Laudato si* and Lynn Townsend White Jr.’s position on Christianity and ecological problems.¹¹¹ Damonte’s work described Christianity as the most anthropocentric religion, thus resulting in exploitation of nature.¹¹² White accuses Christianity of 1) considering humans above all beings, thus creatures are to service mankind; 2) monotheism prevents humans from forming a relationship with nature; 3) the denial of metempsychosis, causes a decline in value of the animal

¹⁰⁵ *Id.* at 2.

¹⁰⁶ Jinja Honcho, *Shintoism*, in FAITH IN CONSERVATION: NEW APPROACHES TO RELIGIONS AND THE ENVIRONMENT 127 (2003).

¹⁰⁷ *Id.* at 129.

¹⁰⁸ *Id.*

¹⁰⁹ Paula J. Posas, *Roles of Religion and Ethics in Addressing Climate Change*, 7 ETHICS IN SCI. & ENVTL. POL. 1, 12 (2007), <http://www.gci.org.uk/Documents/E80.pdf>.

¹¹⁰ Steve Almasy, *Who are Sikhs and What do They Believe?*, CNN (May 25, 2018, 2:17 PM), <https://www.cnn.com/2012/08/05/us/religion-what-is-a-sikh/index.html>.

¹¹¹ Marco Damonte, *God, the Bible and the Environment: an Historical Excursus on the Relationship Between Christian Religion and Ecology*, 5 RELIGION BEYOND ANTHROPOCENTRISM 27, 27 (2017).

¹¹² *Id.* at 30, 32.

world; 4) deserts and wild places are thought to have no intrinsic value due to its biblical depiction; 5) indifference to material world is due to appreciation in transcendent world; 6) and “the apocalypse implicit in the final judgment and the relative annihilation are not compatible with an ethic environment.”¹¹³ White urges for Christianity to drop its dogmas.¹¹⁴ “The human task towards nature has to have the qualities of a good administration, not of a dictator, nor a cold person.”¹¹⁵ The links between religious identification and commitment to the environment are crucial because the environmental attitudes will vary among Judeo-Christian denominations.¹¹⁶ White’s criticism could apply equally to Judaism and Islam.

Religion helps people cope with natural disasters because it offers explanations and perceptions, but not humanly caused environmental disasters (e.g. Chernobyl).¹¹⁷ Environmental legislation faces difficulties, and philosophical controversies exist that prevent ecologists from overcoming such difficulties.¹¹⁸ Environmental philosopher Mark Sagoff states that “after 60 years of standing on the mountainside beseeching the sky, mathematical theorists should concede that the hope for a theoretical and deductive, as distinct from an empirical and inductive, ecology reflects a religious faith more than a rational expectation.”¹¹⁹ Bioethics and religious scholar Harold Coward studies the impact of religion on the environment by

¹¹³ *Id.* at 33.

¹¹⁴ *Id.* at 37.

¹¹⁵ *Id.* at 41.

¹¹⁶ Carl M. Hand & Kent D. Van Liere, *Religion, Mastery-Over-Nature, and Environmental Concern*, 63 SOC. FORCES 555, 557 (1984).

¹¹⁷ Suzanne Keller, *Ecology and Community*, 19 B.C. ENVTL. AFF. L. REV. 623, 623 (1992).

¹¹⁸ Dustin R. Turin, *Environmental Problems and American Politics: Why is Protecting the Environment so Difficult?*, 6 INQUIRIES J. 1, 1 (2014), <http://www.inquiriesjournal.com/articles/943/environmental-problems-and-american-politics-why-is-protecting-the-environment-so-difficult> (stating that tackling environmental problems today is more difficult because the nature of the problems have changed from scientific and technocratic in nature to almost exclusively relating to political issues).

¹¹⁹ Mark Sagoff, *Ethics, Ecology, and the Environment: Integrating Science and Law*, 56 TENN. L. REV. 77, 146 n.347 (1988).

changing patterns of consumption and reproduction (as social force).¹²⁰ He argues for a partnership between international law and world religions.¹²¹ Even though the United Nations may be able to convince governments through agreements, these agreements are written in a modern language that appear foreign to many cultures.¹²² Thus, if these documents were to be translated into the norms of religions such as Hinduism, Islam, or Buddhism, there will be a better chance that ordinary people would embrace them and change their behavior.¹²³

In 2013, researchers studied the relationship between a country's religion and its biodiversity areas.¹²⁴ The study showed that Christian countries, particularly Catholic ones, had more areas set aside for nature than other countries.¹²⁵ However, another study found that Christian fundamentalists are less willing to spend money on conserving the environment than Catholics.¹²⁶ Therefore, this study suggests that behavior towards nature is influenced by the type of Christianity.¹²⁷ For instance, another study showed that the Maasai people in Kenya who had converted from traditional faith to Evangelical Christianity did not have a positive attitude towards wildlife; in fact they had a higher intent to kill lions.¹²⁸ Conservationists need not ignore religion.¹²⁹ The Alliance for Religion and Conservation's ("ARC") most successful project was convincing fishermen on an island off the Coast of Tanzania to give up dynamite fishing.¹³⁰ They did so by showing the local Sheikhs passages of the

¹²⁰ Harold Coward, *Religious Responses to the Population Sustainability Problematic: Implications for Law*, 27 ENVTL. L. 1169, 1169 (1997).

¹²¹ *Id.* at 1185.

¹²² *Id.* at 1180.

¹²³ *Id.*

¹²⁴ Niki Rust, *Religion Can Make Us More Environmentally Friendly - or Not*, BBC EARTH (Feb. 7, 2017), <http://www.bbc.com/earth/story/20170206-religion-can-make-us-more-environmentally-friendly-or-not>.

¹²⁵ *Id.*

¹²⁶ *Id.*

¹²⁷ *Id.*

¹²⁸ *Id.*

¹²⁹ *Id.*

¹³⁰ *Id.*

Quran promoting environmental behavior.¹³¹ The Sheiks then shared the information with the fishermen, who were devout Muslims.¹³²

CONCLUSION

Many conflicts couched as religious conflicts are, in fact, natural resource conflicts. To practice religion as a means of peace building, harmony, and reconciliation will work to resolve ongoing conflict. To contemplate religion one step further for protecting the environment and limiting pollution will work to improve problems of climate change adaptation, pollution, toxicity, chemical spills, wildlife loss, and migration. Religion can serve to not only divide, but also to unite. The recognition of religious harmony with environmental sustainability is crucial for protecting the planet from greed and avarice. With the rise of petro-capitalism, religion can be used as a wedge for divisive action for enhancing market competition of fossil fuel commodities to increase demand and prices for oil and natural gas. On the other hand, religion can be the Klaxon call to halt construction and infrastructure expansion for preservation of nature. Legal norms for environmental protection nationally, subnationally, and internationally would be strengthened by the use of faith-based approaches to environmental protection. The process of making and unmaking international law for the environment entails reimagining the role of religion to broaden the legal conversation through the religious audience.

¹³¹ *Id.*

¹³² *Id.*