

1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction

The attempt to look at Islam through a 'green' environmental lens, or indeed to look at the environment with an Islamic lens, requires first that both concepts be clearly defined so as to have an undistorted picture of their relationship. Today, both concepts, Islam and environmental conservation, appear to share similar features and attributes which act as influencing factors on people's attitudes towards life and their surroundings. To understand both Islam and the environment undoubtedly helps greatly in improving the conservation of the natural environment as well as the life of Muslims, who represent a large percentage of the world's population.

In this chapter I will endeavour to provide a background to the remainder of the book by briefly outlining Islam as a world religion and environmentalism as an emergent ideology.

1.2 Islam as a Religion

Islam, as a religion, carries all the positive features of a world religion. It also carries the problematic ones such as the difficulty of definitions and the unquantifiable difference between theory and practice. In particular it carries the feature of the influence that a religion has on its people.

Apart from the literal meaning of submitting to the will of God, Islam encompasses the notion of a mutual exchange of peace between a multitude of entities. Islam testifies that there is no god but God and that Muhammad^{PBUH} is the prophet of God; however, this is only the vocal manifestation of Islam. The resonance of these words includes beliefs, patterns of behaviour and meanings that both Muslim and non-Muslim scholars have been trying to understand for the past 1,400 years. Is Islam about knowledge, as the first Quranic words that were revealed to Muhammad maintain?¹ Is it about worshipping God as if He is visible, as some of Muhammad's Traditions state?² Or is it about death and life, as the Quran proclaims in the chapter entitled Power, *Mulk*?³

To introduce Islam, I use Ninian Smart's six dimensions or categories as a guide in defining religion: ritual, doctrinal, mythological, ethical, social, and experiential. To avoid possible misunderstanding arising from disparities in epistemological terminology, these are, however, referred to purely as a working platform rather than a factual statement. I have ordered these dimensions according to their importance in Islam.⁴

The Doctrinal

One of the most important events in Islam is the moment when the Quran was first revealed to Muhammad, bringing the message that it was God who was the author of Creation, and that all concepts of life should be derived from Him. According to Smart, ‘the history of religions must be more than the chronicling of events: it must be an attempt to enter into the meanings of those events’.⁵ The key for such an entry into the meaning of Islamic events is represented in the understanding of the individual dogmatic commitment. Total obedience to God, *Islam*, is the main consequence of this doctrine, and one that believers exercise during every waking moment of their lives. When a Muslim government makes plans for the environment, it is imperative that it takes into consideration the public commitment to the Islamic faith. Without that, the effectiveness of any environmental planning to manage humans and the environment is likely to be reduced.

Since the birth of Islam the environment has been considered as an integral part of the faith. Prostration provides a message of harmony between humans and earth in submitting to the one Creator. During prayers, the supplicant’s head is placed on the earth, accepting that the entire destiny of humanity is in God’s power.

The significance of the environment in Islam, as a vessel for multitudinous religious events, is manifested in different forms and patterns of behaviour, not only by human beings but also by other elements of nature. However, Islam does not perceive the environment or its elements as a god, but rather as ontological symbols upon which people’s minds can be focused to understand the Creator. The role of the environment as such is therefore derived from what it represents and not from what it is. Axiomatic meanings for human existence are often concluded from the environment. Human beings are given value, for instance, from the fact that they are made from the clay of the earth, an often unclean substance that discomforts when it dirties clothes or utensils. Yet this substance is a basic element for the continuity of life. Earth is considered to be the womb for all life, for from it all life forms gain nourishment. It is one womb that produces different types of offspring, different fruits and vegetables, resonating the power of its Maker:

And in the earth are tracts
 [Diverse though] neighbouring,
 And gardens of vines
 And fields sown with corn,
 And palm trees – growing
 Out of single roots or otherwise:
 Watered with the same water. . . . (Quran xiii, 4)

Water is seen by the Quran as a cleansing agent, *tahur*, used in the preparation for prayer, *wudu*, as well as for a variety of religious actions in Islam.⁶ Although water is not sacred in Islam it is considered important not to waste it while carrying out these processes. Water is thus given a symbolic value, as well as being recognised as the element that initiates the cycle of life. Water carries the genes at the start of procreation; water comes from the sky to give life to earth and water is used to clean the human body from both physical and spiritual impurity. The fact that both may be cleaned by the same element of life confirms the Islamic doctrine that physical and spiritual contamination are similar in essence.⁷

Earth *Tayammum* is an alternative process for cleanliness, *tahara*, when water is scarce or unavailable. In these circumstances, the dust of the earth is considered to be the most suitable alternative for cleansing. After performing this practice a person is considered clean and ready for prayer or other acts of devotion that require cleanliness. The process consists of tapping the bare earth and wiping over the face and hands. Then, even if the physical dirt remains, the person would be considered clean. The Quran makes clear that Allah's main purpose is to purify people and not to cause them hardship. Purity is a paramount prerequisite for prayer and therefore it may be concluded that *tayammum* is merely a symbolic practice used to achieve human psychological cleansing while facing God.

if you are ill,
Or on a journey,
Or one of you comes
From offices of nature,
Or you have been
In contact with women,
And you find no water,
Then take for yourselves
Clean sand or earth
And rub therewith
Your faces and hands
God does not wish
To place you in a difficulty,
But to make you clean. . . . (v, 6)

Plants Apart from the fact that all plants are creatures that praise God and are worthy of respect, green has always been considered symbolising of peace and the colour of the clothes of the people of Paradise:

they will
Be adorned therein

With bracelets of gold,
And they will wear
Green garments of fine silk
And heavy brocade. . . . (xviii, 31)⁸

The importance of plants is further emphasised by sura xcv which begins by offering four symbols, the first two being plants, namely the fig and the olive, and the remaining two being Mt Sinai and Makka. Apart from the precise meaning of these symbols, the utilisation of plants as parallel symbols to the sacred lands indicates the value of the plants in supporting the doctrinal foundation of Islam. The focus of this sura, according to Sayyid Qutb, is the reality of human nature, which can be perfected once the believer submits to God.⁹ The fig, according to one interpretation, is a symbol of human destiny that can be either good or bad. For a fig, when cultivated, is one of the finest fruits, but in the wild can easily become infested by maggots,¹⁰ while the olive represents the source of oil, providing a pure light.¹¹ The Quran often uses plants as a symbol for life and its continuity, and on some occasions the symbiotic element of ecology is mentioned. In the following verse plants are referred to as the habitat for other creatures:

And your Lord taught the Bee
To build its cells in hills,
On trees, and in [human] habitations (xvi, 68)

The interaction between the environment and creatures in their service to one another, as seen in the above verse, represents a symbolic scenario supporting the doctrinal belief, in Islam, that it was God who created the interactive system and all of its elements should be nurtured and maintained. The curative effects of honey, the product of the bees, is mentioned as a popular remedy. This may be indicative of a principle with further environmental connotations, in that the products of the environment should be cared for so that they are kept fresh and then utilised for cures and for life rather than left unkempt, open to infestation and liable to die in the same way as the fig.

The Ritual

In Islam, ritual is a fundamental 'layer' of the faith. Formal prayer five times each day, fasting during the month of Ramadan, and performing pilgrimage to Makka, are rituals that provide the opportunity for physical interface between human beings and the Divine. According to the Prophet of Islam, when worshippers are in a state of prostration, *sujud*, with an awareness of the Divine, they are at their closest to Him. According to the laws of Islam,¹² all life's actions are forms of worship¹³ and rituals provide lifelong guidelines for behaviour.

For rituals to be correct they require certain environmental preparation in order to be aligned with the path of Islam. On ritual and the environment Smart maintains that: ‘the meaning of ritual cannot be understood without reference to the environment of belief in which it is performed’.¹⁴ When this statement is applied in the Islamic context, the ritualistic environment would include intention, *niyya*; cleanliness, *tahara*, and the orientation of prayer, *qibla*. *Niyya* is the wish to undertake a particular action, whether physical or spiritual. Cleanliness represents a clear environmental perspective to ritual: accordingly human beings must be physically clean in order to seek internal purity. While it is personal cleanliness which is most often emphasised, cleanliness of the surroundings in which prayer is performed is no less important. Directing the believer’s mind towards the house of God in Makka is another prerequisite for prayer which gives a physical sense to the spiritual practice. The term ‘spiritual environment’ is retained in the wider meaning of worship in active life. The intention of the practice has to be for the sake of good, the practice has to be pure from evil, and behaviour should be as God instructs. The prostration, *sujud*, in Islam is not only a mechanistic ritual action but it is also evidence of existence. Prostration, according to the Quran, is practised by everything that God created:

Whatever beings there are
 In the heavens and the earth
 Do prostrate themselves to God
 Willingly or unwillingly,
 Including their shadows. . . . (xiii, 15)

According to this verse, the prostration is like a holistic symphony habitually played out by all creatures. Such a notion can be significant when Muslim governments need to be provided with a convincing case to produce legislation in order to protect both people and the other elements of nature. This could also be an influencing factor when decisions need to be made regarding radical alteration of landscape features in response to urbanisation. When a mountain is blown up to build a motorway, evaluation has to be made of the impact of the destruction of the natural habitat of other creatures who also prostrate themselves.

The Mythological

The use of the word ‘myth’ provides a good example of the difficulty that is often encountered in comparative religion. Smart’s comments on the use of the term ‘myth’ are acceptable to Islam in general terms:

the use of the term myth in relation to religious phenomena is quite neutral as to the truth or falsity of the story enshrined in the myth . . . in calling something a story we are not thereby saying

that it is true or false . . . we are just reporting on what has been said . . . it is convenient to use the term to include not only stories about God . . . but also the historical events of religious significance.¹⁵

Despite this, it seems that the term 'myth' could still present difficulty, since neutrality in this context implies uncertainty, and accepting uncertainty compromises the methodology of establishing knowledge. In Islam, establishing the correctness of a text is a paramount prerequisite for its utilisation. Therefore neutrality is not a good standpoint for assessing the reliability of the text. For Muslims the authenticity of the Quran is established by the unique language of the text and the challenge contained in it to produce something similar.¹⁶ The possibility of correctness or incorrectness in a neutral form is found in the science of *hadith* narration, which classifies even accepted *hadith* as correct, less correct or weak. The difference between Smart's understanding of the term 'myth' and the Islamic concept of narration, *riwaya*, is small, bearing in mind that both indicate the possibility of correctness or incorrectness. It is imperative to add here that Islamic scholarship differentiates between historical events and religious narrations. A religious narration provides what ought to be done, while history provides background information.

In practice, if we base our respect for the environment on the grounds of an uncertain historical incident, then respect is compromised: unlike the respect based on an authentic religious narration. Undoubtedly examining Islam with an assumption of textual correctness creates problems for those who do not believe, but we have to acknowledge that religious experience requires more than material sense and rational logic, which might be the reason for Smart stating: 'each religion must also be seen essentially in its own terms, from within as it were.'¹⁷

The Ethical

Ethics in Islam is the control of inherent evil and profanity by virtue and goodness. According to the Quran these conflicting elements reside in the soul of human beings from the moment of creation,¹⁸ and it is the Quran that provides the basis for human ethics. When the Prophet's wife 'A'isha was asked about the ethics of the Prophet she replied, 'his ethic was the Quran'. Such a statement highlights the relationship between the text and the ethics of the Quran, with the text representing the prescription of belief, and human morality also representing the inherent nature of human beings. It might be observed that there is a dialectical relationship in Islam between ethics and belief because ethics can affect belief, for ethical behaviour is an essential element in the perfection of faith. The Prophet of Islam is reported to have said 'the most perfect of the believers in their faith are those who are most perfect in their ethics'.¹⁹ However,

one can observe a difference between the instructions of the faith and the conduct of social life of some Muslims which correlates with Smart's general statement about world religion: 'it is important to distinguish between the moral teaching incorporated in the doctrines and mythology of a religion, and the social facts concerning those who adhere to the faith in question.'²⁰ Pertinent to this point is Smart's other statement that 'most religions are institutionalised [therefore] . . . religion is not just a personal matter . . . it is part of the life of the community.'²¹

The institutionalisation of religion provides it with an enforcement power which makes the theory more applicable by using the force of the institution. However, in Islam, the situation is different, for the Islamic religion has not been institutionalised because it rejects having any medium as intermediary between the human and the Divine. It is perhaps for this reason that the reverse process took place, whereby institutions became religiously orientated rather than religion becoming institutionalised. This direct relationship between humans and God is an effective factor that remoulded prevalent social concepts to a form compatible with the principles of Islam. The association of doctrinal ethics with social circumstances gave further definition to religious ideals infused within the daily life of the society. The payment of *zakat* is one example of a faith which liquifies all prevalent social facts inside a melting-pot of doctrine and ethics. In *zakat*, the concept of tax is given a different dimension. It is not only a compulsory due, to be paid by force, but a cleansing process for both wealth and the individual. The doctrine states that wealth is God's and that it should be redistributed for inherently ethical purposes. Ethics confirm that paying *zakat* purifies the soul when it is used for good causes. The result is the widespread belief in Islamic societies that money and wealth are not the objectives of life. Accordingly money has no value in itself, but has only the role of a value conveyer. By altering the name of tax to 'purifier', *zakat*, Islam remoulds a prevalent social fact into ethical meanings under a new concept that indicates purity as well as belief in the One who owns everything.

A similar scenario to the above is manifest in the effect that Islam has on the human environment. In each of the four schools of Islamic law the relationship between text, ethics and social application was carefully scrutinised through the complex process of Islamic jurisprudence. Islam is applied to every layer of life – it is an intrinsic part of the structure. In old towns, Islam is evident in the architectural language, the behavioural etiquette of the market, and the scholars' methodology for acquiring knowledge.

In contrast to this, there seems to be an inclination among contemporary Muslims towards experiential interpretation, which represents a new tendency distinct from the previous traditional dependency on the text

and the presumption of its ability to provide answers. It is only the future that will determine whether the consequence of these new developments will be of value or will lead to cultural and social upheaval. However, from the environmental perspective, it cannot be claimed that the Islamic world is moving towards a positive attitude towards conservation, for we are witnessing the severity of catastrophes occurring in the Muslim world. These were largely produced as a result of unethical political decisions, epitomised in the Gulf War oil slick, the destruction of the Kuwaiti oil wells and the deliberate burning of tropical rainforests in south-east Asia with its destructive impact on natural bird and animal habitats.

The Social

One of the most important impacts that early Islam made upon the life of the Arabs was the social transformation from a physical nomadic life to a cultural society founded on Islamic ideals. The ideals seem to be opposed to the human tendency towards materialism that accompanies the pursuit of power. There is much evidence of destructive backlashes throughout history wherever Muslim society abandoned Islamic idealism. Such a scenario might appear typical and is found in all world religions where: 'religious and ethical ideals are adapted to existing social conditions and attitudes'.²²

The example that Smart cited²³ is that of Japanese fishermen reconciling the Buddhist injunction against taking life with their activity as fishermen. In Islam this attitude can occur, but we observe that ideals in Islam are considered to be within human capacity and so human beings are bound by their responsibility to other creatures and the environment. In Muslim societies social conditions, although culturally variable, follow a certain religious pattern that is strongly influenced by the thread of the text. In marriage, for instance, the dowry is considered to be a fundamental condition that cannot be compromised. However, the dowry is misused in different societies under the influence of social conditions and cultures. Many Muslim societies contain a large number of unmarried women because prospective bridegrooms cannot afford the payment of a high dowry. The natural environment is similar; Islam claims to be an environmentally aware religion, but many Muslims tend to consider only their material needs upon which they justify all forms of environmental misuse, abuse and exploitation.

The Experiential and its Implications for the Faith

When examining the experiential element of the Islamic faith, the Quran often instructs believers about what is real and unreal, for these can easily be confused just like mirage and reality. This reflects the relationship

between human experience and doctrine, at least in one direction. According to Smart, 'experience and doctrinal interpretation have a direct relationship. The latter colours the former but the former also shapes the latter.'²⁴

Putting this statement in an Islamic context, Smart maintains, that 'we should recognise that it was his [Muhammad's] experience of Allah which determined his subsequent acts.'²⁵ However, it can be added here that Muhammad's experience of the Quran was unique, in the sense that it provided an unexplained phenomenon for both the Arabs of his time and many modern linguists. While 'the dialectical relationship between experience and doctrine colour and shape one another,'²⁶ the relationship between the two in Islam is affected by Divine instruction: should Muslims violate these instructions, they violate the direct order of God.

The relationship between doctrine and experience can be viewed through artistic and cultural practices. Often stylised Quranic recitations are employed on various occasions in the Muslim world to remind the believers of what the Quran conveys concerning the practice of their daily life. Calligraphy of the Quranic text and the Traditions of Muhammad have played an important role in propagating Islam and have occupied the position normally taken by pictures in other faiths. While pictorial self-expression is evident in the Muslim world, it remains very limited when compared with the legacy of other world cultures, such as those of Greece or India. In Islam, the dialectic between experience and doctrine is tuned through the modality of the Quran as represented by the personality of Muhammad. It may be concluded that the utilisation of the doctrine's influence on people's experience and perceptions of what is aesthetic may be an effective method to enhance environmental conservation among Muslims. This can be used to ensure the protection of the natural beauty of virgin territory from human interference or misuse.

1.3 Environment and Environmentalism

Defining the environment, like defining religion, provides one with a maze of terms and concepts. However the following can provide a starting point:

the sum total of the conditions within which organisms live; it is the result of interaction between non-living (abiotic) physical and chemical and where present living (biotic) parameters.²⁷

It may also be considered as the surroundings of an organism²⁸ and understanding the relationship between the surroundings of different organisms and species is termed 'ecology', which has its roots in the Greek words *oikos*, meaning house, and *logos*, meaning understanding.²⁹ A technical definition could be:

Ecology: study of the structure and function of nature. The study of relationships between organisms of different species with each other and with biological, physical and chemical components of the environment in which they live.³⁰

Do the surroundings encompass only what can be physically sensed, and, if so, does that mean what is not sensed is not part of the environment? Religious believers maintain that there are other 'worlds'.³¹ Are such worlds a part of the human environment? The human environment seems to exist in layers and dimensions that start from deep within the psyche and extend to infinity.

It is often said that the home is the first environment for a child, although it could be argued that the first true home for human beings is the mother's womb. The beat of the mother's heart and the pumping of her blood probably represents a human being's earliest experience of an environment. The Quran names the womb *rahm*, which means the abode of mercy. According to Islam, when human beings are born they are transferred from one womb to another, from one environment to a second. Then when human beings die, they are transferred from their accustomed environment to a third environment, not previously experienced.

The Environmental and Religious Experience

The case for environmental protection seems to have been surrounded by an atmosphere similar to that which encircles religion. The environmentalists' experience is comparable to that of religious advocates who initially endure similar rejection and humiliation. Even the word 'ecology' took over half a century to be included in the dictionaries. Porritt summarises the history of the development of the green movements in the following terms: 'ecology was first used by the German biologist Ernest Haeckel in 1870, but it was not until the 1930s that ecology assumed full professional status'.³² At first, the sanity of those who were in the ecology movement was often questioned: they were typically described as 'emotional misfits'. Lord Rothschild described them, in his 1978 Dimpleby Lecture as eco-maniacs or eco-nuts.³³ E.F. Shumacher did not object to being called a crank, since a crank is a small, simple, inexpensive and efficient tool – and it makes revolutions.³⁴

Both the environmental movement and orthodox religion have ethical values as the centre of their concerns. Like environmentalism, in Islam the intrinsic value of objects is no less important than their economic value. If contemporary economics could accept the fact that the value of objects may be measured not only by monetary worth but also on an ethical scale, many world problems would be significantly reduced.³⁵

Environmentalism can be seen to rival religion in some respects, al-

though the concept of religion might take on a different complexion with the inclusion of rituals, even though they too exist when environmentalism has a background in a particular culture. The contemporary hostile attitude towards the environment is often seen as an echo of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries' secular and mechanistic view. After the industrial revolution, materialism was the force that led humanity away from religious spirituality. The same tension between environmentalism and materialism can be observed, the problem being that, for many, materialism is an integral part of human nature and everything in nature itself serves some material purpose. Aristotle (384-322 BCE) maintained in his natural teleology that rain causes crops to grow, plants exist for the sake of animals and animals exist for the sake of human beings.³⁶ But who has the authority to decide on the relationship between nature and humans?

John Locke (1632-1704 CE) answered such a question through his Theory of Given Property. God gave all of nature, including 'inferior creatures' to humanity to hold in common. A similar theory of Divine gift exists among Muslim scholars, with the modification that what is given to a human being is not a gift but a loan.

In the West, however, humankind's centrality to nature was radically undermined by the discoveries of Charles Darwin (1809-1882), who theorised about how purposeless was the composite of life and how unhierarchical in order it was. Accordingly, human beings were a part of nature, not on top of it. In furthering Darwin's views, John Muir (1838-1914) ridiculed the theory of Divine appointment of human matters by questioning that if God created nature solely to serve human interests, then what should be made of human parasites and poisonous plants?³⁷ In recent years, the environment has become a central core of philosophical debate and reason for the formation of political groups.

The most distinctive views on the relationship between human beings and the environment can be divided into two strands. The first maintains that human beings can no longer ignore environmental threats and should seek to resolve them through the globalisation of environmental concerns. This view is manifest in the tendency in world religions to unite in order to agree on the notion of caring for the environment. The outcome of this religious unity was the Assisi Declaration of 1986. Such a religious phenomenon was undoubtedly influenced by Western culture, which utilised both political establishments and the aspirations of various faiths to achieve such an important event. It is apparent that at present there is an acceptance that materialism, with its economic and mechanistic calculations, is not enough to ensure the survival of life on earth, including the planet itself.

The other strand considers nature and earth in particular as separate

entities with their own intrinsic value and their own ability to take care of themselves. On the basis of his study of the ways in which the earth's fundamental life-support mechanisms operate, Professor James Lovelock believed that the earth constitutes: 'a single system made and managed to their own convenience by living organisms'.³⁸ Lovelock asked how else the correct balance of oxygen could be arrived at and the correct temperature maintained. Such relative stability is 'too convenient to be mere coincidence',³⁹ with the planet seeming to be: 'controlled by its living organisms, and these organisms behave as if they were a single entity *Gaia*, which is actually shaping the conditions for life on Earth'.⁴⁰

In other words, nothing controls the earth except the earth itself; therefore it is divine like the Greek goddess, Gaia. Although Lovelock's hypothesis appears attractive, Islam's creed declares there is no god except God. The ability of the earth to control itself does not imply a divine function, and if the earth rejects human abuse of its environment, it is only functioning within the overall system which its Maker has designed for it. In this system the earth is made as an abode, *mustaqarr*, for all creatures including human beings:

It is God Who made your abode
Homes of rest and quiet
For you, and made for you,
Out of the skins of animals,
[Tents for] dwellings, which
You find so light [and convenient]
When you travel and when
You stop [in your travels];
And out of their wool,
And their soft fibres
And their rich stuff
And articles of convenience
[To serve you] for a time.
It is God Who made,
Out of the things He created,
Some things to give you shade;
Of the hills He made some
For your shelter; He made you
Garments to protect you
From heat. . . . (xvi 80-1)

Deep Ecology shares the same concept of individuality of nature vis-à-vis human beings. For Deep Ecology⁴¹ the value of non-humans is independent of their usefulness. The main emphasis of Deep Ecologists places them in opposition to the world conservation strategy which has a

human utilisation focus. Whether inclined to the intrinsic value of the environment or focusing on the utilitarian aspect, the environmental movement, like religion, has created its own politics which have proved effective in reforming society. The development of environmental politics in the West can be gauged by the change of title in the United Kingdom's environmental party from the Ecology Party to the Green Party in 1986. This incident represented the subject of the opening pages of Porritt's book *Seeing Green* in which he endeavoured to explain the politics of ecology. In this he maintained, 'ecology is still a rather daunting word, perhaps too scientific, too specialised to convey the full scope of the green perspective'.⁴²

Porritt summarises the ecology and the green movements as largely composed of various environmental groups, although not all supporters of these groups could be termed 'green'. Foremost amongst those who are not truly green are the conservationists, who were previously unopposed to earlier industrialisation, and seek the conservation of the best of the remaining unspoilt habitats. The most radical greens are opposed to the present industrial system, seeking a change in order to create a new lifestyle based on small-scale, self-sufficient communities. The majority of the supporters of environmental groups lie somewhere between these two extremes. They are not opposed to industrialisation and in Porritt's opinion (writing in the 1980s) would resent the term 'green'. In addition to the environmentalists there are groups of individuals who are actively involved in green lifestyles. These include smallholders, organic farmers, cyclists, vegetarians, those protesting for animal rights, against the nuclear industry or multinational companies, some parts of the women's movement, as well as those formally involved in greening various political parties.⁴³ In attempting to understand the range of environmental politics, one would ask whether this diversity of environmental sectarianism is an indication of the weakness of the global concern for the environment. These movements have mushroomed in a way which is similar to that in which religious sects sprang up in the seventeenth century, as religion started to lose its position of pre-eminence. Was this diversity caused by the lack of solid political power behind the environmental movements or was it because, like religion, it was unable to attract practical commitment as well?

By producing an outline of how Islam can relate to the environment, the missing element that makes environmentalism a working reality from within one faith can be perceived. Whether this is considered Islamic environmentalism or environmental Islam will depend entirely on the emphasis and understanding of the two concepts.