

# **Green Revelations?**

## **Ecologically Relevant Teachings in the Quran and the Bible**

**Given the growing environmental crises and climate change, examining the role of religion in shaping environmental attitudes and behaviors has become increasingly important. This study by Younes Nourbakhsh (Tehran), in cooperation with Joachim Kügler (Bamberg), highlights that interfaith dialogue and creative reinterpretation of sacred texts can play a crucial role in shaping ecologically conscious and sustainable societies.**

feinschwarz.net/06.09.2025

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### **1. Problem Statement**

Building ecologically sustainable societies requires deep social and cultural change. Religion can drive these shifts in mindset, behavior, and policy. Many religious communities are increasingly engaging with environmental issues, climate change, and sustainability, leading to a growing body of literature on the intersection of religion, environment, and development. (Öhlmann, 2022) Given these changes, Gottlieb suggests that world religions have entered an "ecological phase", where caring for the environment now stands alongside traditional religious concerns like sexual morality, rituals, helping the poor, and spreading the faith. However, recent research has taken a closer look at this "greening of religion" idea, and new studies reveal a more complex

and nuanced reality (Ibid, 4). It should be noted that, so far, none of the known religions has explicitly addressed environmental protection in the modern sense—aside from the admonishing voices of certain individuals—since awareness of ecological issues is a relatively recent development (Pye & Dech, 2015: 1).

Recent studies highlight the growing academic and strategic interest in this field. While the sheer number of publications during this period makes it impossible to cover everything, it is useful to distinguish two key areas of scholarly development that reflect this increasing focus. The first revolves around discussions within the well-established field of religion and development, while the second encompasses a broader range of interdisciplinary debates that extend beyond the traditional boundaries of religion and development (Öhlmann, 2022: 7).

Yoreh and King (2024) conduct a comparative analysis of the language and frameworks used in both faith-based and secular environmental movements. It examines the convergence and divergence in the rhetoric and environmental frameworks of these two perspectives. Concepts such as the importance of the environment, environmental justice, and shared responsibility are emphasized in both views, but there are also notable divergences between them. Faith-based environmentalism draws on religious and spiritual concepts to justify environmental protection, whereas secular environmentalism relies more on scientific data and empirical reasoning (Yoreh, 2024).

According to Ellingson (2016, p. 1; pp. 3–4), religious environmental activists do not describe their efforts using scientific or political language. Instead, they rely on religious concepts such as stewardship, justice, covenant, and redemption. Rather than presenting alarming scenarios of ecological destruction or engaging in technical discussions on reducing greenhouse gas emissions, they offer a hopeful vision of God’s intention to save all of creation and respond to divine commandments and promises concerning nature.

However, unlike Ellingson’s (2016) claims that ENGOS<sup>1</sup> and RENGOs<sup>2</sup> do not share common culture or identity, we find that there is in fact common ground where these organizations can converge. While there are indeed unique values and language that separate faith-based

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<sup>1</sup> ENGOS: Environmental Non-Governmental Organizations

<sup>2</sup> RENGOs: Religious Environmental Non-Governmental Organizations

environmentalism from secular environmentalism, there are also shared values and language that could form the basis of coalition-building (Ibid. p. 11).

Boersema, Blowers and Martin (2008) explore the complex relationship between scientific inquiry and religious belief in the context of environmental issues. It outlines three distinct scientific approaches to the religion-environment nexus. The first approach seeks historical root causes of environmental degradation in religious traditions, most notably through Lynn White Jr.'s thesis linking the ecological crisis to the Judeo-Christian worldview. The third, empirical approach uses data to test correlations between religious affiliation and environmental behavior, often finding little to no direct connection. However, the editorial places particular emphasis on the second approach, which views religion as a potential source of environmental inspiration and moral motivation. This perspective highlights the reverence for nature present in many religious traditions and promotes their teachings as valuable tools for fostering ecological awareness and sustainable development. Scholars and institutions like the Harvard Forum on Religion and Ecology advocate for mobilizing religious values to encourage environmentally responsible action, positioning religion as a powerful and underutilized ally in addressing ecological challenges (Boersema & etc., 2008: pp. 217-219).

Religion, with its values and beliefs, plays a role in shaping how we think and act in different aspects of life, including our relationship with the environment. Our values can guide our decisions by influencing our beliefs and social norms, but they don't work in isolation or determine every choice we make (Dietz & etc. 2005).

Based on these two assumptions, we explore the perspectives of religions on the environment.

With growing global concerns about climate change and environmental degradation, exploring the role of religion in shaping environmental attitudes and behaviors is increasingly significant. This research thus seeks to examine how Islamic and Christian perspectives on the environment differ and how these differences might shape attitudes and behaviors toward environmental conservation and resource management.

## **2. The Research Method**

This study employs a qualitative research approach, focusing on analyzing religious texts and conducting a content analysis of related scholarly sources. Initially, primary religious texts from

Islam and Christianity, such as the Quran, Islamic traditions, and the Christian Bible, are examined to identify fundamental concepts regarding creation, nature, human responsibility, and conservation. To gain a deeper understanding of these religious perspectives, authoritative commentaries are also reviewed. Subsequently, scholarly sources, including books and articles, are analyzed for insights into how Islamic and Christian teachings shape environmental attitudes and practices among their followers. These sources provide critical perspectives on the influence of religious beliefs on environmentally related behaviors. Data drawn from religious texts and scholarly works are systematically organized using primary and secondary coding methods, allowing for a comparative analysis that highlights the similarities and differences in environmental perspectives within Islam and Christianity.

For the content analysis, we examined the Quran and the Bible based on specific concepts related to environmental issues. Simultaneously, we analyzed both supportive and opposing views regarding the positive perspectives of Islam and Christianity toward the environment. Finally, we categorized these two religions according to the extent and nature of their environmentalism.

The tripartite approach is rooted in the longstanding consideration by hermeneutic phenomenologists and ordinary language philosophers of different modes of accessing social phenomena in general, and social change in particular. By synthesizing these two traditions, John B. Thompson (1990) has advocated for the disclosure of social phenomena through multilayered forms of contextualization. In doing so, he has outlined three interrelated object-domains for social analysis:

- (a) The context of the production, dissemination, and disclosure of an object, utterance, or action, typically examined through social and historical methods as well as political economy approaches.
- (b) The object, utterance, or action as a text, analyzed using semiotic and discursive approaches.
- (c) The way in which the object, utterance, or action constitutes and is experienced as being, investigated through ethnographic methods and life history accounts.

These three object-domains are inherently interconnected; a deeper understanding of any one of them enhances and informs the analysis of the other two. In this article, I focus on the second

aspect of this approach, namely religion as a text, while also acknowledging that not everything that occurs in the lived experience of religious adherents originates solely from religion.

In the emerging field of religion and ecology, three major methodological approaches have been identified to guide scholarly inquiry and practical application. These are:

**interpretive retrieval**, which involves revisiting sacred texts and traditional teachings to uncover environmentally compatible principles;

**interpretive reevaluation**, which critically assesses traditional doctrines in light of contemporary ecological challenges; and

**interpretive reconstruction**, which seeks to creatively reinterpret religious concepts to formulate constructive responses to today's environmental crises.

These approaches reflect the dynamic engagement of religious traditions with modern ecological concerns and point toward their potential for ethical transformation. (Tucker & Grim, 2001, pp. 16–17)

In this research, while critically engaging with the subject and religious texts, we seek to offer a new reinterpretation of the sacred scriptures.

### 3. Literature Review

Various studies have shown that religion can play an essential role in promoting environmental protection. White (1967) argues that Christian teachings, with their emphasis on human dominion over nature, have historically contributed to environmental degradation. This classic article by White Jr. is considered one of the most influential works on the relationship between religion and the environment. He claims that Judeo-Christian teachings, especially the emphasis on human dominion over nature, have played a major role in modern environmental crises, allowing humans to act as superior beings and exploit natural resources without considering ecological consequences. The text argues that modern science and technology, often seen as extensions of Christian theology, have empowered humanity in ways that have led to ecological harm. It suggests that these developments, rooted in Christian beliefs about man's dominance over nature, now present significant challenges (White, 1967). Later, in 2016, research conducted on many articles and scientific studies confirmed that White Jr.'s findings were correct. However, some scholars later argued that the major world religions, particularly

Christianity, have moved towards more environmentally friendly approaches. Yet, a review of over 700 related articles shows that White's theory about the negative impact of religion on the environment still holds, and the "greening of religion" hypothesis is not supported (Taylor & Zaleha, 2016).

In another study from 1995, environmental attitudes among different religious groups in the United States were examined. Using national survey data, the authors analyzed the relationship between religious beliefs and environmental attitudes. The results showed that members of Protestant churches, particularly evangelical groups, had lower environmental attitudes. In contrast, Catholics and Jews had stronger environmental attitudes, explained by differences in religious teachings and emphasis on social and ethical responsibility towards the environment. The main hypothesis is that conservative eschatology (apocalyptic thinking) and religious traditions negatively impact environmental policies. Using survey data, it was found that conservative eschatology, religious tradition, and religious commitment all have negative effects on environmentalism. In more detailed analyses, conservative eschatology was identified as the strongest predictor of anti-environmental views, although other variables also have an impact. (Guth, & etc. 1995)

Another study from 2007 examined how religious beliefs and practices affect environmental concerns and activities. Using national survey data, the authors showed that religious beliefs could significantly influence environmental concerns and behaviors. Religiously devout individuals who strongly believe in the sanctity of nature and human responsibility are more likely to participate in environmental activities, emphasizing that religious beliefs can be important resources for promoting environmental protection. (Sherkat & Ellison, 2007).

Religious institutions are identified as important in maintaining a mastery-over-nature orientation in Western culture. This orientation seems to have a negative impact on environmental attitudes. Despite widespread discussion, little empirical research has been conducted to examine these relationships. Hand & Van Liere (1984). identify three alternative approaches to examining the link between religious identification and commitment, mastery-over-nature orientation, and concern for environmental issues: (1) White's model, (2) a denominational diversity model, and (3) a "no difference" model. These approaches are empirically examined using data from a mail survey of Washington State residents. The results indicate support for the view that Judeo-Christians are generally more committed to the mastery-over-nature orientation than non-Judeo-Christians, but this commitment varies among

denominations. Furthermore, commitment to the mastery-over-nature orientation plays a crucial role in shaping concern for environmental issues. (Hand & etc.1984)

Research also suggests that the teachings of Islam and Christianity can support environmentalism. *The Bible on Environmental Conservation* identifies **2,463 verses** on ecological principles, showing that environmental care is a biblical concern. While some interpretations have contributed to ecological neglect, Christianity's historical influence on literature, art, and science suggests a strong ethical basis for conservation (Johnson, 2000). In Islam, the Quran presents humanity as **trustees (amana)** of the earth, a role initially declined by nature but accepted by humans despite their limitations (Quran 33:72). Though ultimate sovereignty belongs to God (2:107, 5:120), humans are accountable for their actions. The Quran and Hadith provide a strong foundation for Islamic environmental ethics, encouraging sustainable stewardship (Jusoff, & Abu Samah, 2011).

Johnson argues that the Bible contains extensive guidance on environmental conservation, contradicting claims that Christianity is inherently anti-environmental. The author compiles over 2,400 Bible verses organized into nine thematic sections—Creation, Stewardship, Provision, Pleasure, Praise, Power, Witness, Consequences, and Perspective—highlighting how the Scriptures support responsible care for the Earth. Johnson critiques the misconception that Christianity encourages exploitation of nature, instead emphasizing that the Bible teaches humans to manage the environment as stewards under God's authority. He also includes relevant hymns that reflect environmental themes, showing the integration of environmental awareness into Christian worship. The article explores the international scope of environmental crises, noting that ecological problems are not unique to Christian-majority nations, and suggests that modern technological and political systems are more to blame. The paper advocates for collaboration between science and faith, asserting that Christian principles—when genuinely applied—promote sustainable, ethical environmental behavior. Ultimately, Johnson (2002) proposes that environmental restoration begins with spiritual renewal and a right relationship with God.

Environmental issues are increasingly recognized as a multidimensional challenge arising from the detrimental impacts of human activities. This research emphasizes that religious solutions can help mitigate environmental degradation by fostering harmony between God, humans, and the natural world. Within the Islamic tradition, the environment is considered a divine gift

entrusted to humanity. It is humanity's duty to maintain and care for this trust. Achieving harmony between humans and nature involves adhering to ethical and religious principles, thereby creating both moral and practical commitments to preserving the environment. This perspective underscores the responsibility of humans, as stewards of God on earth, to respect and protect the natural world (Lunić & Ćesarević, 2020).

The growing significance of environmental issues and their connection to biblical creation narratives has presented new challenges for biblical scholars. Some aim to recover an ecological message from the Bible, while others interpret it through the lens of environmental justice. These efforts show how ecological concerns can inspire fresh interpretations of religious texts and foster new approaches to environmental ethics. Similarly, in Islamic theology, Seyyed Hossein Nasr argues that the environmental crisis arises from a spiritual disconnection from nature. He attributes ecological decline to the separation of knowledge from the sacred. For Nasr, tradition—viewed as a sacred connection to divine principles—provides a holistic framework to address contemporary environmental challenges. He sets his understanding of Islam in contrast to modern Islamic thought, highlighting fundamental differences in worldview and metaphysical principles. (Nourbakhsh & Rasoulzadeh, 2022)

In texts like *Religion and the Order of Nature* by Seyyed Hossein Nasr and *Environmental Theology* by Mostafa Mohaghegh Damad, Islamic thought on environmental stewardship is thoroughly articulated. Both authors explore how religious teachings can inspire a sustainable relationship with nature, viewing the environment as a sacred trust to be preserved for future generations.

The concept of tradition in Nasr's thought is connected with the concepts of religious sanctity and spirituality. In this regard, he categorizes 'Islamic sciences' as a type of traditional science. He believes that being religious is one of the characteristics of traditional sciences. Therefore, while he does not reduce the concept of tradition to religion, considers tradition as a collective science, which is also close to religious truths. He clearly distinguishes between traditional sciences and jurisprudence. He points out that "These sciences [i.e., the traditional sciences] were not subservient and slaves to religious sciences like the science of esoteric interpretation, theology or jurisprudence, but they never rebelled against the religion of the society in which they were raised" (Nasr, 2007: 254).

Mostafa Mohaghegh Damad links environmental issues to a neglect of spirituality, citing Quranic teachings that emphasize divine remembrance as a source of peace and harmony. Compared to

Nasr's view, the concept of tradition in the thought of Mustafa Mohaghegh Damad is more connected to the concept of jurisprudence. The concept of tradition in Mohaghegh Damad's belief is emphasized through jurisprudential principles. Through examination of Quranic verses, he shows some practical rules and limits of ownership of nature. By studying about 200 verses, he shows that the rules of jurisprudence can provide the basis of many environmental fatwas<sup>3</sup>.

Korean Christians' negative attitude towards nature is influenced by premillennialism and premillennial dispensationalism, leading to a need for a shift in interpretation towards renewal and reconciliation. This paper proposes that the tremendous influence of certain brands of Western theology, historical premillennialism, and premillennial dispensationalism, associated with the biblical literalism and dispensationalism that early Western missionaries taught to early Korean Protestants, was one of the causes of indifference towards the environment.

Premillennialism, particularly in its dispensational form, holds several core beliefs that can foster a negative view of the environment. According to this perspective, the natural world is ultimately destined to be destroyed by God's judgment. Faithful believers will be taken up—raptured—from this corrupt world to be with Christ before the great tribulation, and afterward, they will return to reign with Him over the earth forever. (Shin, 2021).

In many traditional African worldviews, nature is seen as a sacred entity that allows the communication with the spiritual world and at the same time nature is experienced as an enemy threatening human life. Nowadays, many authors work on this tradition with the help of Islamic and Christian traditions as well as and traditional African religions, and try to construct a religio-cultural framework for changing attitudes and practices towards natural environment (Berman et al., 2021; Nyoni, 2019; Taringa, 2014). Also, the concept of “development” as a radical assimilation to the non-sustainable Western way of life is questioned (Chitando et al., 2020).

Several basic tenets of ecotheology offer starting points for educators by providing common ground between theology and environmental education. (Hitzhusen, 2007). “Ecotheology” is used as a general term to refer to theologies or religious teachings that address environmental concerns. This definition is imprecise in at least two ways—not all spiritual and religious insights that bear on the environment are considered theology, and theological insights have varying degrees of environmental applicability. Yet Ecotheology has developed along several

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<sup>3</sup> A fatwa is a formal legal opinion or ruling issued by an Islamic scholar or a religious authority, typically in response to a specific question or issue raised by a Muslim community member.

characteristic lines, such as the stewardship, eco-justice, and creation spirituality traditions within Christianity noted by Kearns (1996).

In this research, we examine how ecotheological concepts are articulated in different religions, specifically Islam and Christianity. We examine the teachings of Islam and Christianity and their various interpretations. Additionally, we compare their relationship with different types of environmental ethics to explore how religious perspectives shape environmental responsibility and behavior.

Environmental ethics is a vital branch of philosophy that examines the relationships between humans and the natural environment while exploring our ethical responsibilities toward nature. This field raises key questions regarding the moral status of non-human entities—such as animals, plants, and ecosystems—along with issues of equitable resource distribution and intergenerational justice. It emphasizes that, as integral parts of an ecosystem, humans have a duty to protect and sustainably manage natural resources. Based on these studies, we aim to examine the extent to which the approaches of Islam and Christianity are aligned with environmental ethics. Are their teachings anthropocentric or eco-centric? Therefore, we will employ environmental ethics theories to analyze and interpret the findings. There are two primary perspectives within environmental ethics:

- **Instrumental View:**

This perspective sees nature primarily as a resource for fulfilling human needs, driving economic development, and enhancing overall well-being. In modern capitalist societies, this view often promotes consumption and the exploitation of natural resources. While some scholars (e.g., Norton, 1997) argue that even a modest anthropocentric approach can motivate environmental protection, critics contend that it tends to overlook the intrinsic value of nature and may contribute to environmental degradation.

- **Intrinsic View:**

In contrast, the intrinsic perspective regards nature as possessing inherent worth and sanctity, independent of its utility to humans. Proponents of this view advocate for a respectful and harmonious coexistence with the natural world, emphasizing the need for sustainable development that ensures environmental integrity for future generations. This approach challenges traditional economic models by prioritizing ecological balance and long-term sustainability.

Key theoretical frameworks in environmental ethics include:

- **Anthropocentrism:**

Evaluates nature's value based on its contributions to human well-being, thereby justifying environmental protection for instrumental reasons.

- **Ecocentrism:**

Advocated by thinkers such as Aldo Leopold (1966), this approach attributes intrinsic value to all components of ecosystems, emphasizing the importance of preserving ecological balance and integrity.

By offering a comprehensive ethical framework, environmental ethics not only guides the evaluation of environmental challenges but also promotes sustainable, equitable practices that respect both human and non-human life.

#### **4. Discussion and review of evidence**

##### **4.1. The similarities and differences**

This study explores the similarities and differences between the views of the Quran and the Bible on environmental concepts and conservation. The findings are organized into four main themes: Creation, Nature, Human Responsibility, and Conservation. Each section demonstrates how these sacred texts address related environmental issues, showing overlaps as well as distinctions in their teachings.

These four concepts play a crucial role in environmental protection. Creation is regarded in religions and philosophies as a valuable world that must be preserved. Nature is not only a resource for human survival but also a complex system with intrinsic value, whose destruction has serious consequences. Human responsibility emphasizes the ethical duty of humans toward nature, as reflected in concepts like *Khilafah* in Islam and *Stewardship* in Christianity. Conservation involves practical measures to maintain ecological balance. These concepts promote ethical and practical engagement in environmental policy and awareness.

### *1. Creation*

Both scriptures emphasize God's power as the Creator of the heavens and the earth. The Quran portrays creation as a reflection of God's infinite knowledge and power. For example, Surah As-Sajda (32:4) states: "It is Allah who created the heavens and the earth and what is between them in six days." Similarly, the Bible demonstrates God's strength and role as Creator in Genesis 1:1: "In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." The harmony and order within creation are seen as reflections of the Creator's power. The Quran highlights the balance and consistency of creation, as in Surah Al-Mulk (67:3): "He who created seven heavens in layers. You do not see in the creation of the Most Merciful any inconsistency." Likewise, the Bible acknowledges the perfection of creation, as shown in Genesis 1:31: "And God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good." However, the Quran focuses on the purposeful nature of creation and refers to "signs" (ayat) that lead to the recognition of God, while the Bible provides a more narrative-driven account of creation with fewer explicit calls for reflection on these signs.

### *2. Nature*

Both texts depict nature as a source of sustenance for humanity. The Quran considers nature as a divine blessing that provides resources for human use, such as plants, water, and animals. Surah Al-Hijr (15:20) states: "And We have made therein [the earth] means of living for you and for those for whom you do not provide." Similarly, the Bible acknowledges natural resources as divine gifts, as shown in Genesis 1:29: "Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you, it shall be for food." Both scriptures discuss the balance and harmony within nature. The Quran views this harmony as a divine sign and encourages reflection, as highlighted in Surah Ar-Rahman (55:7): "And the heaven He raised and imposed the balance." The Bible also describes nature as a reflection of God's presence, although it does not explicitly call for contemplation: "All things were created in Him, and in Him, all things hold together" (Colossians 1:17).

### *3. Human Responsibility*

The Quran explicitly refers to humans as God's "khalifah" or vicegerents, tasked with preserving and responsibly utilizing natural resources. Surah Al-Baqarah (2:30) states: "Indeed, I will make upon the earth a successive authority." And the Bible emphasizes stewardship in Genesis 1:28: "And God said, 'Have dominion over all living creatures on the earth.'" The Quran frequently urges against wastefulness and destruction, as seen in Surah Al-Isra (17:27): "Indeed, the wasteful are brothers of the devils." While the Bible also supports responsible stewardship, its teachings on avoiding waste are often indirect and tied to moral lessons, such as in Luke 3:11: "Whoever has two coats should give one to the one who has none."

### *4. Conservation*

The Quran and the Bible texts promote respect for natural resources and their conservation. The Quran calls for balance and reverence in using natural resources, as in Surah Hud (11:61): "He brought you forth from the earth and settled you in it." Similarly, the Bible suggests that respecting nature is an act of honoring the Creator, as described in Genesis 2:15. Both scriptures emphasize kindness toward animals. The Quran regards this as part of human responsibility, as illustrated in Surah Al-An'am (6:38): "There is no creature on earth or bird that flies with its wings except [that they are] communities like you." The Bible also encourages compassion toward animals, as expressed in Proverbs 12:10: "The righteous care for the needs of their animals." This detailed exploration of creation, nature, human responsibility, and conservation underscores the shared values and unique aspects of Islamic and Christian teachings on environmental ethics. (Table 1)

*Table 1: The similarities and differences between the views of the Quran and the Bible on environmental concepts*

<b>Concept</b>	<b>Quran</b>	<b>Bible</b>	<b>Similarity/Difference</b>
Belief in God as Creator and Owner of the World	God is Creator and Owner (Surah Baqarah 2:29)	God as Creator of all (Genesis 1:1)	Similarity
Nature as a Sign of Divine Power	Nature as signs of God's greatness (Al-Imran 3:190)	Nature as evidence of God's power (Romans 1:20)	Similarity
Human Responsibility for the Earth	Human as 'Khalifah' with stewardship (Surah Baqarah 2:30)	Humans as rulers (Genesis 1:26-28)	Similarity
Condemnation of Waste and Destruction	Condemns waste (Al-An'am 6:141)	Manage resources responsibly (Luke 12:42-48)	Similarity
Role of Humans in Creation	Human as Khalifa with responsibility	Humans as caretakers, not specifically trustees	Difference
Focus on Balance and Justice	Emphasis on balance and justice (Rahman 55:5-8)	Focus on ethical use, less on balance	Difference
Eschatological View on End Times	No indication of nature's ultimate destruction	Some interpretations foresee nature's destruction	Difference
Concept of 'Subjugation' and 'Trusteeship'	Humans to 'subdue' with trusteeship (Jathiyah 45:-1213)	Humans as shepherds, with no direct trusteeship	Difference

The verses from the Quran and the Bible related to "Creation," "Nature," "Human Responsibility," and "Conservation" reveal both similarities and differences, rooted in the theological foundations of these sacred texts. Below is an exploration of the key commonalities and distinctions between these teachings.

### Similarities

- a) *God as Creator and Owner of the World:* Both the Quran and the Bible affirm that God is the Creator and ultimate Owner of the world. They emphasize that God created everything and holds dominion over the heavens and the earth. For instance, the Quran describes the heavens and the earth as signs of God's creation (Surah Baqarah, 2:29). Similarly, the Bible highlights God's creative authority (e.g., John 1:3).
- b) *Nature as a Reflection of Divine Power:* Both scriptures depict nature as a testament to God's greatness and power. In the Quran, nature is described as containing "signs" that invite reflection and comprehension of God's presence (Surah Al-Imran, 3:190). The Bible mirrors this idea, presenting nature as evidence of God's existence and might, enabling individuals to know Him (Romans 1:20).
- c) *Human Responsibility for the Earth:* The Quran identifies humans as God's "khalifah" (vicegerents), tasked with maintaining balance and avoiding excess (Surah Baqarah, 2:30; Surah Al-A'raf, 7:31). The Bible echoes this responsibility, designating humans as stewards of the earth and rulers over creatures, expected to care for creation responsibly (Genesis 1:26-28).
- d) *Condemnation of Waste and Exploitation:* The Quran explicitly forbids such actions (Surah Al-An'am, 6:141). Likewise, the Bible underscores responsible use of resources and stewardship, illustrated through parables like the one in Luke 12:42-48, which highlights accountability in resource management. In general, the ideal of a minimalist way of life (Matthew 6:26-34 par. Lk 12:22-31) can be seen as a way to reduce the climate footprint of humans.

### Differences

- a) *Purpose and Role of Creation:* The Quran portrays creation as purposeful and divinely planned, with humans entrusted as stewards to use resources wisely and avoid excess (Surah Baqarah, 2:30). The Bible also assigns humans dominion over the earth, but some

Christian interpretations, particularly premillennialism, view nature as temporary, diminishing its perceived importance in conservation efforts.

- b) *Emphasis on Balance and Justice*: The Quran places significant emphasis on balance and justice in nature and resource use, as seen in Surah Ar-Rahman (55:5-7), advocating for environmental preservation. The Bible, while also promoting ethical use of resources, focuses less on balance and more on humanity's role as rulers and shepherds of creation.
- c) *Eschatological Perspectives*: Certain branches of Christianity, particularly those influenced by premillennialism, regard nature as transient, destined for destruction in the final judgment. This perspective may lessen the perceived necessity for long-term environmental conservation. In contrast, the Quran does not indicate nature's ultimate destruction, instead underscoring humanity's perpetual responsibility for stewardship.
- d) *Subjugation vs. Trusteeship*: The Quran permits humanity to subjugate nature but emphasizes trusteeship and balanced, responsible use (Surah Al-Jathiyah, 45:13; Surah Al-A'raf, 7:31). In contrast, the Bible, particularly in traditional interpretations, emphasizes dominion over nature without the same explicit focus on trusteeship. The Quran stresses humans as caretakers of nature, treating it as a divine trust.

#### 4.2. Critiques of Christianity Regarding Environmental Issues

Sociologists and theologians have critiqued Christianity's approach to environmental issues, often linking these concerns to historical and cultural interpretations of its teachings. In some cases, these interpretations are thought to have contributed to neglecting environmental conservation.

One of the most notable criticisms was put forth by Lynn White Jr. in his influential 1967 essay, *The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis*. White argued that the Biblical directive in Genesis 1:28, which commands humanity to have dominion over the earth and its creatures, has been misinterpreted to justify the exploitation of natural resources. He asserted that this perspective fostered an anthropocentric worldview in Western culture, reducing nature's intrinsic value and leading to environmental degradation. Other critics, such as Max Oelschlaeger in *Caring for Creation: An Ecumenical Approach to the Environmental Crisis* (1994), contend that Christian

scriptures, particularly the Bible, place insufficient emphasis on environmental preservation. They argue that Christian teachings often focus more on spiritual and moral matters than on humanity's responsibility to care for the environment. Historical studies further suggest that many Christian societies have shown little concern for environmental issues in the past. A significant critique relates to Christianity's focus on salvation and the afterlife, especially in traditional interpretations. This eschatological outlook, which prioritizes preparation for the afterlife, is thought to detract from attention to present-world issues, including environmental stewardship. Michael Northcott, in *The Environment and Christian Ethics* (1996), argued that such beliefs might hinder the development of a robust environmental ethic within Christian communities. Additionally, some scholars, such as John B. Cobb Jr. in *Is It Too Late? A Theology of Ecology* (2021), highlight how Christianity, particularly in Western societies, has often prioritized economic growth and technological advancement over environmental conservation. Critics assert that economic development, especially in Christian-majority regions, has sometimes occurred at the expense of ecological sustainability. Theologians like Sallie McFague, in *The Body of God: An Ecological Theology* (1993), advocate for a reimagined Christian theology that emphasizes coexistence with nature rather than dominion over it. Such reinterpretations aim to integrate environmental responsibility into Christian doctrine. In response, some Christian theologians and churches have sought to reshape Biblical teachings to emphasize environmental conservation. Initiatives such as Pope Francis' *Laudato Si* (2015) focus on the concept of "care for creation," encouraging Christians to balance human activity with sustainability.

#### **4.3. Critiques of Islamic Teachings Regarding Environmental Issues**

While less frequently discussed than critiques of Christianity, Islamic teachings on environmental issues have also faced scrutiny. Critics often highlight challenges in interpreting and applying Islamic principles of environmental stewardship. A primary critique concerns the Quranic concept of humans as "khalifah" (stewards) on earth (Surah Al-Baqarah, 2:30). Some argue that misinterpretation of this role could encourage an anthropocentric view that justifies dominance over and exploitation of nature. Although Islamic theology emphasizes conservation, critics contend that narrow interpretations of stewardship have sometimes led to neglect of environmental responsibilities.

Ibrahim Özdemir, in *The Ethical Dimension of Human Attitude towards Nature – A Muslim Perspective* (2008), notes that while Islamic teachings advocate environmental responsibility, there has been a lack of effective implementation in many Muslim-majority societies. He argues that robust policies are needed to combat pollution and resource depletion. The economic priorities of Muslim-majority countries have also been criticized. Many of these nations, driven by resource-based economic growth, such as oil and gas extraction, have prioritized development over sustainability. Efforts to reinterpret Islamic principles to emphasize environmental ethics, such as those by Seyyed Hossein Nasr in *Religion and the Order of Nature* (1996), have faced resistance in some communities. Traditional interpretations and opposition to modern reinterpretations are seen as barriers to widespread implementation of Islamic environmental teachings.

Consequently, Islamic principles have not sufficiently influenced policies promoting sustainability. Despite these challenges, there has been a growing effort within the Islamic world to address environmental issues. Movements promoting conservation, inspired by Quranic teachings, are gaining traction in some countries.

Despite political and economic challenges, numerous initiatives in the Islamic world address environmental issues based on Islamic principles. These include the Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change (2015), which calls on Muslims worldwide to engage in environmental protection, the Muslim Seven Year Action Plan on Climate Change (2009), aimed at promoting environmental awareness and sustainable practices in Muslim communities, and the UK-based Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Science (IFEES), which has been developing educational resources and environmental projects since 1993.

#### **4.4. Environmental Ethics Theories**

The comparison of Islamic and Christian perspectives on environmental conservation can be understood through the lens of various environmental ethics theories, including anthropocentrism, biocentrism, and ecocentrism. (Gada, 2014) These frameworks provide a structured way to explore how the two religions approach and perceive environmental stewardship.

- *Anthropocentrism*

Anthropocentrism places humans at the center of value, viewing nature primarily in terms of its utility to humanity. In Islam, humans are seen as “khalifah” or stewards of the earth, tasked with responsibly managing natural resources while maintaining balance and justice. The Quran emphasizes harmony in creation and discourages waste and environmental harm, reflecting an anthropocentric view infused with a moral duty to protect and wisely use resources. Christianity also contains anthropocentric elements. Teachings such as “dominion over the earth” grant humans authority to govern nature. However, this dominion is not meant to allow unchecked exploitation but rather imposes a divine responsibility to care for God’s creation. Thus, the anthropocentric perspective in Christianity is tempered by a moral obligation to conserve and preserve the environment.

- *Biocentrism*

Biocentrism asserts that all living beings have intrinsic value and a right to exist, independent of their utility to humans. In Islam, the rights and welfare of animals are emphasized, with teachings promoting kindness to all living beings. The Quran encourages responsible use of resources and prohibits actions that harm the environment. This aligns with biocentric values, recognizing the inherent worth of all life forms and their roles in the broader ecosystem. Christianity also reflects biocentric ideals. Biblical teachings encourage compassion and care for animals and all forms of life. Many Christian doctrines affirm the intrinsic value of God’s creatures, highlighting their role in the divine plan. Although anthropocentric views are present, Christianity’s emphasis on the worth of all living beings aligns closely with biocentric principles.

- *Ecocentrism*

Ecocentrism, the broadest of these theories, values the environment not only for its service to humans or specific species but as an interconnected and self-sustaining ecosystem deserving preservation. Islam’s perspective includes ecocentric elements, viewing creation as a sign of God’s greatness. The Quran emphasizes the balance and order within the natural world and warns against corruption and environmental harm. This perspective sees the ecosystem as part of a divine system, where all elements are interconnected and function harmoniously.

Christianity also incorporates ecocentric views, particularly in modern movements that stress moral responsibility toward preserving natural ecosystems. Traditional Christian teachings recognize nature as a vital aspect of divine creation, deserving respect and care. These teachings suggest that all creatures are part of God's greater plan, and humanity has a duty to nurture and protect the environment. Ecocentrism has gained traction in contemporary Christian thought, emphasizing the importance of ecosystems as integral to God's creation.

#### 4.5. Summary

Both Islam and Christianity exhibit anthropocentric views but also embrace biocentric and ecocentric elements. These shared perspectives indicate that both religions consider environmental protection a moral and spiritual duty. They advocate for the responsible use of resources, the respect of all living beings, and the preservation of nature's balance and beauty as essential to their theological and ethical frameworks. (Table 2)

*Table 2 : Religion and Environmental ethic*

<b>Ethics Theory</b>	<b>Islamic View</b>	<b>Christian View</b>	<b>Similarities</b>
Anthropocentrism	Islam places humans as 'khalifah' or stewards, emphasizing a balanced and just use of resources with a moral duty to avoid waste and protect the environment. The Quran promotes harmony in creation and discourages environmental destruction, combining an anthropocentric view	Christianity's concept of 'dominion over the earth' gives humans authority over nature, viewed as a divine duty to care for God's creation rather than exploit it. This anthropocentric perspective includes a moral obligation to preserve the environment, acknowledging that	Both view humans as central but include a moral duty to protect and responsibly manage natural resources, underscoring a moral and spiritual responsibility toward the environment.

	with ethical responsibility.	governance is not a license for exploitation.	
Biocentrism	<p>Islam assigns intrinsic value to all living beings, advocating for animal rights and kindness towards all life. Teachings encourage responsible resource use and discourage harm to the environment, aligning with biocentrism in recognizing the inherent worth of all life forms and their roles in nature.</p>	<p>Christianity emphasizes compassion and care for animals and all creatures. Many Biblical teachings highlight the value of all living beings as part of God's creation, promoting respect for animals and nature. While anthropocentric elements exist, the worth of all life forms is recognized as part of the divine order.</p>	<p>Both religions recognize the intrinsic value of all living beings, emphasizing compassion and kindness toward animals and highlighting the significance of each creature within the divine or natural order.</p>
Ecocentrism	<p>Islam views creation as a divine sign, advocating for the preservation of the natural world as an interconnected whole. The Quran stresses accountability for actions that harm the environment and views the ecosystem as a cohesive divine system where all elements function harmoniously.</p>	<p>Christianity acknowledges nature as part of divine creation, deserving respect and care. Modern Christian movements emphasize ecocentric responsibility, advocating for the protection of natural ecosystems as essential parts of God's world. Christianity suggests that humans are to protect and nurture the</p>	<p>Both contain ecocentric elements, seeing nature as a unified creation deserving of preservation. They advocate for protecting the environment as a moral duty, recognizing the ecosystem as part of a divine system.</p>

		ecosystem as part of divine stewardship.	
Summary	Islam contains anthropocentric, biocentric, and ecocentric perspectives, with a strong emphasis on moral and spiritual responsibility for the environment.	Christianity includes anthropocentric views balanced by biocentric and ecocentric elements, promoting a moral duty toward environmental protection as part of caring for God's creation.	Both religions emphasize a multifaceted ethical approach to environmental conservation, encouraging responsible resource use, respect for all living beings, and preservation of ecosystems as divine and integral to nature.

### Comparative Analysis: Islam (Quran) and Christianity (Bible) on the Perception of Nature

Religions like Islam and Christianity offer rich frameworks for understanding humanity's relationship with nature. Here's a comparative overview based on the specified criteria:

1. **Perceiving Nature as Inherently Valuable:** The Quran emphasizes the intrinsic value of nature, describing it as a "sign" (ayah) of God's power and wisdom. Nature is not merely a resource for human use but is valuable in its own right (Quran 6:141, 55:13). The Bible reflects a similar sentiment, portraying nature as "good" in its essence, as repeatedly declared during the creation narrative in Genesis (Genesis 1:31). This inherent goodness highlights nature's intrinsic worth.
2. **Perceiving Nature as Part of Human Existence:** Humans are viewed as an integral part of creation, with a responsibility to live in harmony with nature. The Quran stresses balance and moderation, emphasizing that humans and nature coexist within a divinely ordained order (Quran 2:164, 7:31). The Bible also positions humans within creation, emphasizing stewardship. Humanity's role as caretakers of the Earth underscores their interconnectedness with nature (Genesis 2:15).

3. Perceiving Nature as a Public Good for the Common Good: Islam (Quran): Nature is described as a trust (Amanah) shared by all humanity. Resources like water and land are considered communal blessings meant for the collective benefit of all creatures (Quran 6:141, 55:10-13). The Bible supports the idea of shared resources, portraying the land as belonging to God and humanity as its stewards. This notion is encapsulated in Levitical laws advocating for the equitable use of natural resources (Leviticus 25:23-24).
4. Perceiving Nature as God's Creation: The Quran frequently refers to nature as God's creation, underscoring its divine origin and sanctity. The natural world is seen as a testimony to God's existence and attributes (Quran 30:20-25). The Bible identifies nature as the handiwork of God. The Psalms celebrate the heavens and the earth as declaring the glory of God (Psalm 19:1).
5. Perceiving Nature as Sacred: Islam (Quran): In Islam, nature holds a sacred status because it is a manifestation of God's will and design. Sacred sites and natural elements are treated with reverence, reflecting their spiritual significance. The Quran regards nature as a sign (ayah) of God's power and wisdom (Surah Al-Imran, 3:190). Nature is also considered sacred in the Bible, with specific natural elements, such as mountains and rivers, often associated with divine encounters (Exodus 3:1-6).
6. Perceiving Nature as an Aesthetic Entity: Islam (Quran): The Quran portrays nature as a source of beauty and inspiration, encouraging believers to contemplate its aesthetic value as a reflection of God's artistry (Quran 55:68, 16:10-13). The Bible echoes this view, celebrating the beauty of creation in passages like Psalm 104, which describes the majesty and splendor of the natural world.
7. Perceiving Nature as a Symbol of World Order: The Quran highlights the order and balance of nature as a symbol of God's perfect design. Disrupting this balance is seen as contrary to divine intentions (Quran 55:7-9). In Christianity, the harmony and order of nature reflect God's sovereignty and creative power. Nature's reliability and patterns serve as metaphors for divine faithfulness (Job 38:4-7).

## 5. Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that both Islam and Christianity offer rich ethical frameworks for environmental protection, grounded in their sacred texts and theological traditions. Through a comparative textual and conceptual analysis, the research highlights shared themes such as stewardship, the sacredness of nature, and the responsibility of humans as caretakers of the Earth. At the same time, it reveals significant divergences in eschatological views, interpretive emphases, and the application of ecological ethics—particularly between anthropocentric, biocentric, and ecocentric orientations within both traditions. The novel contribution of this article lies in its multi-layered analytical approach: by combining religious hermeneutics with environmental ethics theory, it bridges theological interpretation and ethical philosophy to deepen our understanding of how religious worldviews shape environmental attitudes and behaviors. Unlike previous studies that often focused narrowly on either Islamic or Christian perspectives in isolation or reduced environmental concern to simple moral appeals, this research integrates primary texts, scholarly interpretations, and ethics theories to offer a more nuanced, critical, and constructive comparative framework. In contrast to Lynn White Jr.'s influential thesis (1967), which attributes the ecological crisis largely to Christian anthropocentrism, this article presents a more balanced perspective, showing that both Islamic and Christian traditions—when interpreted with ecological sensitivity—contain profound resources for promoting sustainability. While empirical research such as that by Taylor, Van Wieren, and Zaleha (2016) questions the effectiveness of the “greening-of-religion” hypothesis, the present study demonstrates that interpretive retrieval and reinterpretation of sacred texts (Tucker & Grim, 2001) remain powerful tools for constructing contemporary environmental ethics within religious contexts. Furthermore, by emphasizing the interpretive variability within each tradition, the findings show that theological positions are not fixed but subject to transformation in dialogue with contemporary ecological realities. This aligns with the view that religion can be a dynamic agent of cultural and ethical change (Öhlmann & Swart, 2022).

In sum, this study contributes to the growing field of religion and ecology by offering a comparative, interdisciplinary, and ethically grounded perspective. It suggests that interfaith ecological collaboration is both theologically viable and ethically necessary in addressing the global environmental crisis. It seems that a reinterpretation of religion based on dialogue with other faiths, as well as an understanding of diverse life worlds in a way that fosters integration

rather than othering, can enhance the social role of religion in the field of environmental protection (Jahangiri & Nourbakhsh, 2019).

Future research should build on this foundation by incorporating empirical data from religious communities to assess how these theological teachings are enacted in practice.

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- ✓ The design of the article's tables was assisted by ChatGPT AI, utilizing the research concepts.

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