

ISLAMIC ENVIRONMENTALISM AND DEVELOPMENT OF ELEMENTS OF AN
ISLAMIC FOOD ETHIC IN
THE MODERNWORLD

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Saffet Abid Catovic

Drew University

Madison, NJ

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ABSTRACT

This paper will explore ways in which various Islamic teachings regarding food, its production, processing and consumption can be re-imagined and understood by Muslims in today's complex world, with the view to re-articulate a food ethic that seeks to reset the balance and redirect and re-orient the relationships between Muslims, their Creator, the food they consume and the world that they participate in and share with others. I shall utilize Islam's teachings on the subject as the basis for constructing the elements of this ethic, which I shall put in conversation with various concepts and ideas put forth by the leading Christian "food" theologian, Norman Wirzba in his book *Food and Faith*.¹ By employing this inter-faith dialogical framework and methodology, I seek to incorporate a greening of world religions approach suggested by Christian theologian Rosemary Radford Ruether, when she says "...while affirming its distinctive identity and tradition, (a world religion – in this case, Islam), may borrow useful aspects from another religion or rediscover those potentials in its own tradition through dialogue and mutual engagements with other faiths."² In my conclusion, I will outline a way forward by going back, through the religiously defined and spiritually charged path of *Tawbah* (repentance, return and reset) to Islam's best practices when it comes to responsible and ethical eating.

¹ Norman Wirzba book *Food and Faith* touches on a whole host of issues related to eating, its social context and constructs, its religious nature and meaning, the Eucharist, and discussions about grace and sacrifice. Norman Wirzba, *Food and Faith: A Theology of Eating* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

² Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Integrating, Ecofeminism, Globalization and World Religions* (New York, NY: Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, 2005), 80.

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Epigraph

“It is He who hath made you (His) agents, inheritors and caretakers of the earth: He has raised you in ranks, some above others: that He may try you in the gifts He has given you: for Your Lord is quick in punishment: yet He is indeed Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful.” (Quran 6:165)³

“then We (God) made you heirs and caretakers of the earth after them, to see how you would act and behave!”(Quran 10:14)

“The roots of our ecological crises are axiomatic: they lie in our belief and value structures which shape our relationship with nature, with each other and the lifestyles we lead.”⁴

Introduction and Overview

I shall seek through this paper to highlight and focus on some of the ways in which religion in general and Islam in particular have played a role in shaping the new global eco-justice movement for planetary salvation. Islam and its followers, Muslims, today represent one of the significant worldwide faith communities. Muslims, according

³ All verses quoted from the Quran throughout this paper are *italicized* and their English translations are taken from Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an* (Brentwood, MD: Amana Corporation, 1992).

⁴ Ziauddin Sardar_ is a journalist-scholar-adventurer and a self described “critical polymath.” He is a prolific writer on many areas including Environment, Science and Technology and Islam. He was one of the early proponents of “greening” the Hajj during his work in the mid seventies at the Hajj Research center in Saudi Arabia. In the early 1980s, he edited the pioneering Muslim magazine 'Inquiry', before establishing the Center for Policy and Futures Studies at East-West University in Chicago. Ziauddin Sardar, *Islamic Futures* (New York, NY Mensell Publishing Limited. 1985), 218.

to a study by Pew Research, now number over 1.6 billion worldwide.⁵ A primary reason for my deciding on this subject for my thesis was in response to observations made by various Muslim scholars in the field like Zainal Abidin Bagir and Najiyah Martiam who wrote the Islam piece in widely referenced Routledge Handbook of Religion and Ecology “that despite the rise in publication of works on Islam and Ecology in the past decade and despite the similarity of the structure of environmental and other contemporary problems as well as their methodological challenges the matter has not been integrated with the wider issue of Muslim responses (what I call Faith in Action section of my thesis) to the modern contemporary world. Textual exposition of Islam as a ‘green religion’ is not enough to address problems. At this point it becomes urgent to focus more attention on the practices of believers and not only to (textual) normative sources as means of justification.”⁶ In this connection, I view my MA thesis and scholarly project as a humble response to the call made by Fazlun Khalid when he said, “As faith communities wake up to their responsibilities they face up to the monumental but necessary task of changing the behavior of their adherents from consumerism to conservationism. This is a daunting task, but it must be done. The task now is not just to re-explain the material but to present it in a way that can be readily understood, absorbed and applied.”⁷ At the end of his essay Fazlun Khalid charges the Muslims whose textual tradition is deep and profound,

⁵ Drew DeSilver and David Masci, “World’s Muslim Population more Widespread Than You Might Think,” January 31, 2017, *Pew Research Center*, accessed December 3, 2017, , <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/01/31/worlds-muslim-population-more-widespread-than-you-might-think/>.

⁶ Bagir, Zainal Abidin, and Najiyah Martiam. "Norms and practices." *Routledge Handbook of Religion and Ecology*(2016): 79.

⁷ John Hart, *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Religion and Ecology*. First edition (Oxford, UK: John Wiley & Sons Ltd. Publishers, 2017), “Exploring Environmental Ethics in Islam – Insights from the Quran and Practice of the Prophet Muhammad”, by Fazlun Khalid, 131. DITTO

but whose current practice is shallow with the following words: “Muslims now live like the rest of the human race, willingly or unwillingly, in a hegemonic, secular driven regime. The challenge facing Muslims is how to implement the teachings and practices of their worldview within an institutional framework that has a fundamentally opposing outlook.”⁸

Specifically, I have focused on the core eco-religious teachings of Islam and the emerging Muslim voices that are part of this project. To this end I will attempt to situate and contextualize the development of Islam’s core ecological terms and concepts, what may be termed eco-language, within the historical narrative and development of modern Islamic environmentalism. I shall then seek to delineate the ways in which these terms and their historical trajectory intersect with the most regular, direct and intimate way in which we as humans interact and impact the environment: namely, through our food consumption practices. I will bring to the fore a mindful and practical Islamic sustainable eating ethic and praxis based on the premise that our actions, including eating habits, are driven in great part by our beliefs and value structures which shape our relationships with one another and the lifestyles we lead.

In particular, this paper will explore ways in which various Islamic teachings regarding food, its production, processing and consumption can be re-imagined and understood by Muslims in today’s complex world, with the view to re-articulate a food ethic that seeks to reset the balance and redirect and re-orient the relationships between Muslims, their Creator, the food they consume and the world that they participate in and

⁸Khalid, Fazlun M. "Exploring Environmental Ethics in Islam." *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Religion and Ecology*(2017): 130.

share with others. I shall utilize Islam's teachings on the subject as the basis for constructing the elements of this ethic, which I shall put in conversation with various concepts and ideas put forth by the leading Christian "food" theologian, Norman Wirzba in his book *Food and Faith*.⁹ By employing this inter-faith dialogical framework and methodology, I seek to incorporate a greening of world religions approach suggested by Christian theologian Rosemary Radford Ruether, when she says "...while affirming its distinctive identity and tradition, (a world religion – in this case, Islam), may borrow useful aspects from another religion or rediscover those potentials in its own tradition through dialogue and mutual engagements with other faiths."¹⁰ In my conclusion, I will outline a way forward by going back, through the religiously defined and spiritually charged path of *Tawbah* (repentance, return and reset) to Islam's best practices when it comes to responsible and ethical eating.

Methodological approach

My approach will be "religious" in the sense that I will seek to flesh out arguments based on the sacred texts and sources of Islam. The first primary source being Islam's sacred text, The *Quran*. Muslims hold the *Quran* as being the uncreated Divine Word/Speech (Logos) whose wording and meaning are both from *Allah*.¹¹ It is the first of

⁹ Norman Wirzba book *Food and Faith* touches on a whole host of issues related to eating, its social context and constructs, its religious nature and meaning, the Eucharist, and discussions about grace and sacrifice. Norman Wirzba, *Food and Faith: A Theology of Eating* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

¹⁰ Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Integrating, Ecofeminism, Globalization and World Religions* (New York, NY: Rowan & Littlefield Publishers, 2005), 80.

¹¹ *Allah* is the Arabic word for God. As such it is used by Arabic speaking Christians and Jews alike when they call upon God. This is not the name of the strange God of *Islam* as some Fundamentalist Christian Ministers like Rev. Franklin Graham claim. Rather it is the same God of Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammed (AS). Linguistically the Arabic word Allah does not have plural or can be divided or reduced like the English word God which can be made into Gods or Demi-Gods simply by adding a letter or a prefix word. Hence the practice of some of the translators of the *Quran* (e.g. Pickthall) into English to leave the transliteration of the word *Allah* when it appears in the original Arabic instead of translating it to

the two universally accepted primary sources of *Hidaya* (life guidance) and *Shariah* (*Islamic* jurisprudence/legislation) for Muslims. The second primary source being the *Sunnah* or *Hadith*. *Hadith* is the Arabic word for the sacred saying of the Prophet Muhammed (*AS*)¹² as remembered and recorded by his *Sahabah* (Companions), *Azwaj* (Wives), or *Ahl-Ul-Bayt* (literally “People of the House” – immediate familial relations). It is also used in connection with the term *Sunnah* (Traditions) which includes Prophetic actions and approvals as well as sayings as they pertain to the sacred. One should bear in mind that *Islam* does not maintain the same duality and apparent concrete separation of sacred/profane as found in the modern Western Judeo-Christian context, but rather a more fluid continual spectrum. I have sought to follow this through the myriad of scholarly interpretations into the realm of “real world” understandings and applications, “lived religion” as it is often referred to in the literature. After defining various usages and meanings of the religious terms and concepts as found in the texts and creation stories/narratives of Islam utilizing both traditional and modern scriptural hermeneutics and exegesis, I will seek to understand how these definitions are enacted and operationalized in the world via the formulation of the faith community’s *Weltanschauung*,¹³ or worldview, and the associated environmental ethics and ecological

God. Something I have opted to do in this paper as well. For additional detailed discussion of this topic, see Ahmed Deedat, *What is His Name?*, (Durban, South Africa, Islamic Centre, 2000).

¹² Throughout this paper, I have chosen to use wherever appropriate the original Arabic/*Islamic* terms (*italicized*) as means of familiarizing the reader who may be unaccustomed to the religious language with that language and its flavor. *AS* is an abbreviation for the Arabic phrase “*AlayheSalam*” which means “Peace be upon him.” *Islamic* tradition holds that whenever Prophet Muhammed’s name is mentioned verbally or in writing, the aforementioned phrase must be uttered as a matter of religious practice and respect. In addition, the same phrase is strongly commended to be used when mention is made of any recognized Prophet or Messenger or similar ranking personality.

¹³ For the purposes of this paper, I will use as reference Clifford Gertz’s explanation of religion and its relationship to *weltanschauung* (world view), which is that “Religion is never merely meta-physics.... It is an ethos – the moral (and aesthetic) aspects of a given culture, the evaluative elements, have commonly been summed up in the term ethos, while the cognitive, existential aspects have been designated by the

practices. I will explore in detail some of Islam's primary teachings on the environment and manifestations of some of its ecological practices in particular as they relate to food production and consumption. Finally, I will attempt a cross-comparative analysis of some of these competing and contrasting definitions by putting them in conversation with one another with the aim of helping to enrich and deepen the understanding of each through eyes of the other.

Both during the conduct of my research and in the writing of this thesis I have remained cognizant and vigilant concerning the caveats regarding the diversity inherent in any religious tradition. There is *historical diversity* within and among religious traditions over time and in various social and cultural contexts. This type of diversity is of particular import to my project as I seek to tease out and chart the development of more authoritative interpretations of the scriptural terms and terminologies through an inductive exegetical approach that recognizes this evolutionary process. I also remain cognizant of the fact as John Grim and Mary Evelyn Tucker observe in their book *Ecology and Religion* "there is the *dialogical and syncretic* nature within and among religious traditions."¹⁴ Just as no man is an island unto himself, no religious tradition can be understood in complete isolation from others. In fact, to truly understand any religious Scripture, one must pay close attention to the influence of other religious traditions and scriptural understandings and how they impact the trajectory of the other's scriptural understandings. Third, the *cosmological* and *ecological* diversity within each religious

term 'world view.' A people's ethos is the tone, character, and quality of their life, its moral and aesthetic style and mood; it is the underlying attitude towards themselves and their world that life reflects. Their worldview is their picture of the way things actually are, their concept of nature, of self, of society. It contains their most comprehensive ideas of order." See Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures*, publishing info? pp.126-127.

¹⁴ John Grim and Mary Evelyn Tucker, *Ecology and Religion*, (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2014), 21.

tradition must be kept in mind. Religious traditions develop “unique narratives, symbols, and rituals to express their relationships with the cosmos and with local landscapes.”¹⁵ It is in these very religious narratives, in particular the Creation story/myth, that a religious community not only roots and situates itself in the past and tells the story of its origins, but also establishes the nature and type(s) of relationship it has with nature and the cosmos. It is also in these narratives that we are able to locate and discern the meaning(s) and concept(s) of the terms being discussed and associated terms.

In this sense, such narratives not only speak to who “we” were and where “we” came from, but also to our relationships with others and who “we” are and aspire to be. This will be extremely useful for my research in deciphering the how and why of Islamic religious practices and rituals originating or connected to the creation stories and their ecological ramifications for this community of believers. Bear in mind that religions, as ethicist Iris Marion Young observed in another context, “implicitly or explicitly relies on a conception of human nature – and making implicit or explicit assumptions about human beings in the formulation of its vision.”¹⁶ This “vision” in turn affect and modulates the social, cultural and interpretative applications within a historical context.

Background

The serious study of religion in the world of academia in the post-Industrial-Capitalist Western hegemonic¹⁷ dominated modern period has too often found itself

¹⁵ Ibid., 22.

¹⁶ Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2011), 36.

¹⁷Antonio Gramsci has suggested that hegemony in particular “cultural hegemony” maintained its control not just through violence and political and economic coercion, but also through ideology and “manufacture of consent.” For Gramsci it was fundamental to the attainment of power that cultural hegemony be achieved first. Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (New York: International Publishers, 1971), 25.

limited to either religious specialists or academics. A religious specialist is one who is engaged in pursuing the study of religion largely outside the halls of modern academic enterprise i.e. seminary, either as a teacher or student of a particular sectarian/denominational vocation and calling.¹⁸ The academic on the other hand is one who developed largely in the academy and studies various disciplines including that of sociology, whose modern genesis many date back to the “big three white grand-fathers” primary crafters of this Euro-centric Western discipline – Marx, Durkheim and Weber. These academics typically investigate religion and religious phenomena so as to delineate its social functions and economic underpinnings.¹⁹ This paper will explore the activist role of “religious ‘practionar’ environmentalists” and the function of religion, faith based communities and organized religion in providing a leadership role along with the moral and ethical framework, giving moral voice and galvanizing traditionally absent disparate faiths and “secular”/ naturalist/naturist” sectors of what has come to be loosely called the environmental movement.²⁰

¹⁸ Many academic pedagogical organizations accept as a basis of its design the dualistic mega-categorical separation of the sacred and profane, often referred to as separation of Church and State in its political articulation and construction. This is not part of the Islamic conception which in its political construction rejects the modern (Western) world’s bifurcation and separation of the sacred and secular with implications and ramifications far beyond the political realm. An insightful observation about the real-life implications of Divine Unity for a faithful and practicing Muslim was put forth by Syed Qutub when he noted “*Islam* chooses to unite heaven and earth in one spiritual organism ... For the center of its being and the field of its action is human life in its entirety, spiritual and material, religious and worldly. Muslims must practice their faith in their social, legal and economic relationships. One of the characteristic marks of this faith is the fact that it is essentially a unity. It is at once worship and work, religious law and exhortation.”, Syed Qutub, , *Social Justice in Islam*, trans. John Hardie and Hamid Algar (Oneonta, NY: Islamic Publications, 2000), 17-18.

¹⁹ In this context mention needs to be made of the work done in Liberation Theologies which are the production of both religious specialists and academics as theologians many times wear both hats. My late Professor, Otto Maduro was an example of this type scholar. A similar case can be made for the way in which those within the field of Sociology of Religion have been viewed within the dominant perspective in the larger discipline of Sociology. The role of religious actors in both the environmental and feminist movement suffered a similar fate.

²⁰ “Religious practionar environmentalists” is a term that I use in reference to both those who are inspired by their faith and religious teachings to actively engage in a direct and constructive way to be good

It can be said that since the coming of human beings to their earthly realm until the present, humans have wrestled and struggled to understand and come to terms with their relationship(s) and role(s) both with the Divine and Nature herself. Each individual realizes this struggle through and in the context of his/her societal grouping, that is a collective of persons distinguishable or differentiated by cultural forms, practices or their way of life and framed by time. Though this relational story is an ancient and evolving one, the modern academic interdisciplinary field of Religion and Ecology is a growing yet relatively new and emerging area of study, research and engagement. According to Tucker and Grim serious work in this emerging field finds its first major milestone in a series of ten conferences that were held at the Harvard Center for the Study of World Religions from 1996-1998 which was attended by over 800 scholars of religions and environmentalists.²¹ Despite its great strides, it is still a developing discipline that has yet to come of age and find its home within the secular leaning academy. This is due in no small part to the fact that its scholars and practitioners are trained and hail from a diverse multiplicity of disciplines, including environmental studies, geography, history, anthropology, sociology, politics, philosophy and religion. Religions, both in the form of traditionally organized as well as the newly studied personal religiosity that is being experienced by many on an individual basis yet is collectively manifested, are pushing

stewards – guardians and protectors of the earth. This is a more expansive definition than that of a “religious environmentalist as put forth by Roger Gottlieb. His definition is “the one who believes that non-human Nature has value, moral standing, and spiritual significance – apart, that is, from the way it can be used to meet human needs and desires.” (Gottlieb p. 439 needs more info). My definition includes also some of those scholar activists in academia who are religiously/spiritually driven “called” in the religious sense: to engage in the study and realization of Religion and ecology in the lived world.

²¹ Willis Jenkins, Mary Evelyn Tucker and Grim, John, Editors, *Routledge Handbook of Religion and Ecology* (London, UK: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2016), “The Movement of Religion and Ecology-Emerging Field and Dynamic Force” by Tucker and Grim, 9. By author, not editor

back against the secular mindset. A mindset which seeks to marginalize religion and religious activism limiting its function and “place” to the private realm.²²

There is no clearer recent evidence of this attempt to re-sacralize the public square than the organizing and coming of age of a multi-faith, social and political global movement addressing the environment and action in defense of the earth. The backbone of this movement can be found primarily at local and regional levels amongst a growing number of forward thinking academic/activists, a growing cohort of what I term “environmental/religious practitioner-callers.” This category of folks includes both those members of organized religions who have formal ordained institutional clergy and those of religious and spiritual communities who while not having these institutionally sanctioned leadership credentials in some cases owing to gender i.e. being women, or the lack of such type of religious roles/authority within their religious tradition and faith/spiritual communities) are able to assert themselves and be accepted into religious and spiritual leadership roles as stewards of environmental leadership. It further includes those who use their pulpits and positions of religious authority to preach and teach religious environmentalism, lay clergy at some local independent non-affiliated congregations, and some disconnected and estranged members of the clergy from various

²² In addition to the various types of “born agains” across the diverse multi-faith religious spectrum of traditional organized religion and faith communities, there is a new trend in what the literature refers to as “Nones” (spiritual but not religious) which includes those with no religious orientation, but also those who are spiritual but not affiliated with/members of a particular organized religion/or faith community. These “Nones” may opt instead for an eclectic individualistic religious expression and identity. This category of people also includes those who connect to various forms of non-traditional religion – meaning spiritualities. For more on this phenomena, see Gregory Smith, and Alan Cooperman, “The Factors Driving the Growth of Religious ‘nones’ in the U.S.” September 2016, accessed April 1, 2018 <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/09/14/the-factors-driving-the-growth-of-religious-nones-in-the-u-s/> ; and Michael Lipka and Gecewicz, “More Americans now say they’re spiritual but not religious” September 6, 2017, accessed April 1, 2018, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2017/09/06/more-americans-now-say-theyre-spiritual-but-not-religious/>.

“mainline” organized religious communities. These individuals have begun to unite their independent, disparate grass roots efforts aimed at addressing the environmental crisis into a movement, and this movement is gaining traction.

Religious leaders at organizations with these environmentally minded members were pressured to adopt a more engaged and activist stand against global warming and climate change. As such, many of these traditional global faith communities, organized religions and spiritualities were literally catapulted onto the world stage in 2015 when the global faith communities declared loud and clear (e.g. as manifested in their organizing, mobilizing and taking it to the streets in Peoples Climate Marches around the globe) their intent to battle climate change and protect the earth “our common home”²³ with the release of statements and declarations, such as the Papal Encyclical on the Environment and Climate Change, *Laudato Si* and similar calls for integral ecology that have been made by faith based declarations of Muslims (I was honored to be a consultant to the Drafting Committee of the Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change which was adopted in Istanbul, Turkey in August 2015), Jewish and Christian denominations, and other world faiths. These declarations and the movements behind them provide heretofore missing religious language, symbolism and imagery coupled with the moral voice that was necessary to inform and transform the loosely connected environmental socio-political movement into a sacred movement for planetary salvation.²⁴

These declarations symbolize more than just calls to action to protect the environment, they also represent a commitment on behalf of their authors and the

²³ Pope Francis’s coinage term from *Laudato Si*.

²⁴ Note the phrase: “sacred movement for planetary salvation.” In its terminology, construction and usage is my attempt to characterize and describe this unprecedented new dynamic global religious-environmental movement that is in the forefront of what Mary Evelyn Tucker calls the “Planetary Phase” of environmental engagement.

multiple religious communities, who historically often have been “bloody” adversaries and arch-nemeses, to begin to work together in concerted and tangible ways to address the immediate and just needs of the most vulnerable frontline communities among us, those who *Isa ibnu Mariam* (Jesus Son of Mary - Peace Be Upon Him) referred to as “the least of these.” I firmly believe this was a precursor and critical factor in transforming what its detractors have called “the polar bear saving” environmental movement into a universal movement for planetary salvation.²⁵ These religious declarations not only awakened and brought the realities and existential threat of anthropogenic global warming and climate change to the consciousness of the people from all parts of the globe, all social classes and walks of life, but also successfully altered the calculus of the world’s political leaders on this. On the occasion of the start of the historic COP21 Paris negotiations UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon observed the role of civil society (which included the religious and faith communities in particular) in pressuring world leaders to reach an agreement when he said, “Civil society came to Paris in large numbers. They may not have been able to march through the streets, but their voices have filled these conference rooms.” He further stated: “First of all, in general, I am very grateful to the religious, the faith leaders, including His Holiness Pope Francis, who has [spoken with] such a clear, moral voice, loud and clear, in June through his Encyclical. He made it quite clear, and asked world leaders to show moral and political leadership.”²⁶

I was honored to be part of the organizing team of religious and faith leaders who issued

²⁵ To be sure, the environmental movement is a very broad movement and has addressed a wide range of issues going back to the 1950’s like pollution (air and water), food production and consumption (organic, Community Supported Agriculture-CSAs), toxicity and the like. Yet this caricature depiction remains vivid in the popular consciousness. I was reminded recently of a question that such descriptions should bring to mind as put forth my late Professor Otto Maduro who would say “Who benefits from such a description?” Certainly, from the perspective of those people most impacted, such an image leaves them out.

²⁶ <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/press-encounter/2015-12-07/full-transcript-secretary-generals-press-conference-cop21>, accessed 4/1/2018.

a strong inter-faith call to climate action a few days before the signing of the Paris Climate Change Agreement on 22 April in New York. The Interfaith Climate Change Statement was delivered to Mogens Lykketoft, President of the UN General Assembly on 18 April at a special inter-faith ceremony in New York.²⁷ The statement was signed by 270 high level religious leaders, close to 5,000 individuals and 176 religious groups. At the multi-faith ceremony, UN General Assembly President Mogens Lykketoft said,

This and other religious initiatives demonstrate that climate change is now firmly accepted as a moral issue. The Statement shows how religions can be a catalyst for common action. You are telling your followers that you recognize the seriousness of climate change, its impacts on the vitality of the planet and the wellbeing of humanity. You are demanding action to be taken now. Most of the action will have to come from individuals. The faith community is part of the broader Civil Society movement and plays an absolutely critical role in reaching out to followers to change their behavior and demand smart policies. An initiative like this makes me confident that we can and will succeed.²⁸

In essence, this faith in action helped to catalyze and guide the powers that be to act together as never before by bringing about the conditions necessary for the adoption of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change by all the nations of the world.²⁹

Literature Review

A basic survey and review of the literature has resulted in numerous scholarly works on the broader areas of Religion and Ecology. In a widely referenced article that surveys “the field of study and some of the broader movements of religion and ecology...,” the co-authors Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim, two of the leaders in the field, describe it as one that “...explores the complex and varied systems of human-Earth

²⁷ <http://www.interfaithclimatestatement2015.com/>, accessed 4/1/2018.

²⁸ <https://unfccc.int/news/religious-groups-urge-governments-to-rapidly-implement-paris-agreement>, accessed on 4/1/2018.

²⁹ That was prior to the pull out of the Climate Accord by the Trump administration in 2017. Making the United States of America the only nation in the world not a party to the Agreement.

relations as expressed in religious traditions.”³⁰ In the article Tucker and Grim assert that owing to its emergent nature, the field of Religion and Ecology is still defining its scope and limitations. While much additional work in this emerging field has been made since the publication of this reference work, not much has been developed in the area of my research project. The authors also point out that there is NOT necessarily a correlation between “environmentally friendly scriptural passages” and “environmentally sensitive practices,” something that will be of critical importance to my project as I explore the real-world implications and applications for the theological conceptions of eco-religious terms gleaned from my scriptural and textual analysis. Tucker and Grim do provide wide ranging and inclusive examples from multiple faith traditions in support of their statements including Islam, though the majority of examples are from the Jewish and Christian traditions. The primary sources used in my project will be the primary source documents of Islam’s teachings, namely the *Quran* and *Sunnah* (Prophetic traditions) along with both traditional and contemporary scholarly Muslim theological reflections and commentary. In spite of these scholarly endeavors for this research paper, I recognize that I have in fact only scratched the surface. I am well aware that my research and study of this subject is very much a work in progress and is neither definitive nor exhaustive. Rather, it is my humble effort and small contribution to elucidate some meanings and explain some concepts more thoroughly in this matter, based both on the literature, and my own observations in the field.

³⁰ The organizers of a series of international conferences Center for the Study of World Religions from 1996 to 1998 at Harvard University and attended by more than 800 international scholars, religious leaders, and environmentalists, the proceedings of which have been published in a series of ten books (The Religions of the World and Ecology Book Series), one for each of the world’s major religious traditions. See Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim, "Ecology and Religion: An Overview," in *Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. Lindsay Jones, 15 vols., 2nd ed.. (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2005), 4: PAGE NUMBERS?.

A Personal (reflexive) Reflection

I am an American Muslim of Bosnian-Anglo descent.³¹ I seek to reflexively understand and orient myself as a cross-cultural interpreter of lived cultures who, owing to my personal situatedness and multiplicity of identities as an insider/outsider, a Western Muslim,³² is desirous and hopeful that in some small way my intellectual enterprise be of an activist not “objective” analyst – because I do not believe such a creature exists. I am dedicated to blurring those clear lines of boundary demarcation with the view of creating more equitable understandings and relations with and between the opposing “Others.”

To fully understand how my approach to the topic of food was shaped, it is helpful to begin with my parents. My father was born and raised during his younger years on our ancestral farm in Bosnia and Herzegovina. He loved working together outdoors with my mother, a first generation American of Scottish-British ancestry. My mother had converted to Islam, and had found in her special brand of Protestant upbringing in the Plymouth Brethren Church a connection with nature. These earth-connected practices she found were re-enforced through her embracing of Islam and its teachings. They inculcated in me and my siblings at the home of our birth and residence in Teaneck, New Jersey, a love of the earth through gardening and the special blessings that came from

³¹ The technical definition of a *Muslim* is one who willingly submits his/her will to that of God. While my theological orientation comes out of *Sunni Islam* (more specifically the *Hanafi* Madhhab – School of Jurisprudence/Thought), I was raised and nurtured by my family in a more universalist and inclusive understanding of Islam which sought to de-emphasize the *Sunni/Shia* divide in Islam and included the study of religious texts from both traditions.

³² The terms Western and Eastern are historic complex socio-political terms with economic underpinnings and religious dimensions. In my usage here, by the term “Western Muslim” I mean that I am of Muslim faith and practice originated in the Middle-East but was born and descended from and am indigenous to the geo-political West. As such I find myself in a particular in-between “situatedness” that was aptly characterized by the war-time Grand Mufti (Supreme Muslim Religious Leader), Dr. Mustafa Ceric when he described Bosnian Muslims as “too Muslim for Europe and too European/Western for the Muslim World.” Citation?

eating the fruits (and vegetables) which we had planted with our own hands. Our back yard was initially filled with large trees and in order to make productive use of the land we worked together with my father to cut down many of the large trees. We would chop them up into firewood which we would store and use to heat the living room during the cold winter nights. In their place, we would plant fruit trees of all sorts which, under his tutelage, we learned to prune and harvest their fruit.

My father often likened our garden to *Jannah* (Garden of Paradise) as being a lush green garden shaded by fruit trees of all kinds. Memories of weekend morning breakfasts (weekdays as well in the summer) under the shade of those trees still evokes deep joyous feelings in me to this day. I remember helping my mother along with my siblings in the kitchen to bake apple and cherry pies using the fruits we had harvested and canning tomatoes to be used during the winter months. We were taught to place all the peels, eggshells and the like, including grass clippings, outside in the compost pile adjacent our garden to be used as organic fertilizer in the spring. I recall becoming frustrated with our neighbors, the rabbits and squirrels, who used to eat some of the garden vegetables (after all our hard work) and when I suggested that we fence in the garden, my father would remind us of the saying of our Prophet Muhammed (AS) who said all the creatures are part of the *Ayalul* (family) of Allah (God) and that we would receive the great rewards of *Sadaqa* (charity) for their eating from that which we had planted.³³ Still, I was happy when we eventually got a guard dog for the house, Princess, who helped to ensure that the garden vegetables remained on the plants until we picked them ourselves.

³³Prophet Muhammed (AS) said Archangel Jibraeel/Gabriel (AS) emphasized the rights of neighbors (*Huququl Jaar*) to such an extent that he (AS) thought that *Allah* would make them share in his inheritance. In a real sense, all of creation is our neighbors (*jaar*): fellow humans, animal and plant life and the entire visible and invisible world that surrounds us.

How many countless times over meals did my parents remind us to thank the Lord for our food and show this by cleaning our plate, referencing the Quranic verse – *Allah has no love for those who waste* (Quran 7:31). As I grew, I came to understand that my parents’ teachings were deeply rooted in our Islamic religious conception of human beings being Bani Adam - Children of Adam (and Eve): creatures of God who were created from the Earth and made to live on the Earth in the Divinely mandated role of *Khalifa* (Stewards/Caretakers). We were given the *Amanah* (trust) and thereby made responsible to serve as care-takers so we must take care of the earth we all share; paramount in this is not to waste the blessings of God within and all around us. My parents inculcated in us the Islamic belief of Divine judgement which will come during which we will all be held individually accountable for what we did or did not do during our brief sojourn on the Earth.

As a young man I found myself involved in various ways in the activities of area *Masjids* (Mosques) and community centers, in particular organizing and working with various Muslim youth groups. I was one of the founders of the Muslim Youth of North America (MYNA) organized under the auspices of the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA).³⁴ Among my cherished memories of those days was organizing resident summer camps where Muslim youth, especially those from the inner cities like Newark, New Jersey, had the opportunity to get out and experience the great outdoors with Muslim youth from other ethnic and racial backgrounds. This work continues, as I further my appreciation of the common ground (literally) that we all share by learning how people of

³⁴ The Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) based in Plainfield, Indiana, USA was officially established in 1982. Its genesis goes back to the Muslim Students Association (MSA) which was established in 1963. It is a National Muslim umbrella group and has been described in the media as the largest Muslim organization in North America. For more info, go to <http://www.isna.net/>.

various faith traditions (including my own) contextualize "green activism" in their respective scriptures and religious traditions and more importantly explore areas where we can work together in concrete ways towards a more sustainable environment for our children and our children's children. Toward this end, I work with GreenFaith, Green Muslims of New Jersey, ISNA, Global Muslim Climate Network and others to help develop a comprehensive and practical Islamic environmental ethic.

Reflections on Industrial Revolution, Scripture and the Environment

Prior to the industrial revolution, environment and ecological consideration were not a global pressing issue for us as human beings in the way it has become today as a result of the unprecedented burning of fossil fuels and carbon/greenhouse gas emissions, which in turn is the primary driver of global warming induced climate change.³⁵ For in those pre-industrial times our daily lives and existences though difficult and challenging were at the deepest level and for all practical purposes intimately interconnected with and a part of the larger natural world.³⁶ Our daily activities as the human animal were impacted in a very real way through the changing of the seasons and associated weather patterns. While this reality shaped and informed many of our modes of living and cultural practices, the fact of the matter was that actions of "Mother Nature" controlled us much

³⁵ Multiple studies published in peer-reviewed scientific journals show that 97 percent or more of actively publishing climate scientists agree: Climate-warming trends over the past century are extremely likely due to human activities. See "Scientific Consensus: Earth's Climate is Warming," *NASA*, accessed April 1, 2018, <https://climate.nasa.gov/scientific-consensus/>

³⁶ There is an inherent danger and a type of denial and lack of reality in –re-imagining the Pre-industrial age in a romanticized way on the one hand and on the other denying the many benefits that the Industrial revolution and the technologies a machine it has produced have provided to human civilization and advancement. I am keenly aware of falling into this "hole" and mode of thinking. As many of the benefits of technological advancements especially with the advent of electricity and automated machinery are self-evident including modern mechanized farming equipment and techniques. Since my purpose in this paper is to see how the interpretation and re-interpolation of some religious terms, and associated concepts in particular within Islam are/can be read and understood from an ecological perspective, I will spend less time on the actual conditions of food production, although these are also important.

more than we controlled it, no matter what our religious texts may say. Nature was something practically to be feared, and in awe of, to be respected. Our relationship with her is one which could be characterized as one based on mutual reciprocity. This is in stark contrast with human relations with the natural world of the post-industrial period which can be more appropriately characterized as one of domination, control and manipulation. No doubt, it is true that humankind has always pursued ways and means of ensuring human safety, security and wellbeing. This pursuit and manipulation of the natural world has included: land development and usage; farming techniques, river and water flow control through construction of dams and canals, etc., and the associated growth of urban centers. However, taken collectively these anthropogenic activities did not tip the natural balance in such a dramatic way that the underlying physical systems of the earth were compromised, thus not putting the continued existence of human beings and nature herself into question as is the case today. Nature, the natural world, the environment: these terms have different meanings and denotations and connotations in various disciplines/circles of academia at different times and depending on the terms used may have policy implications. Yet for those outside of academia they have for all intents and purposes been used interchangeably (hence my mentioning all of them together here) and the ecological systems were largely independent variables in the mathematical sense. The cosmic balance was separate and apart from the influence in any real way of human life-patterns/styles, practices and plethora of activities. The extent to which human activities (dependent variable) impacted and were able to manipulate the natural world in any real way, these were largely limited and on the receiving end, namely mediating and adapting to its effects.

It is in this historic context, that each of the major religious traditions functioned and religion was lived by the peoples of the earth. One could argue, and I am doing so here, that pre-industrial religions in general were much more earth based and earth connected, aligned with, if not even earth friendly as in the case of many native (non-Abrahamic) traditions and spiritualities, precisely because our interconnectedness and intimacy with the earth and as such could be understood as being eco-neutral if not eco-friendly in terms of their respective teachings. Religious texts, in particular in the role they play within the Abrahamic faith traditions – which are religions of the “written word³⁷”, speak to the various ways in which we human beings locate ourselves within the cosmos and universe and the associated cosmologies and theologies we derive so that we may make meaning out of the mysteries and order out of the chaos. Human interaction with the Divine, the Sacred often occurs in and through nature and the larger cosmos – the great outdoors. This way of experiencing the Sacred is often related and explained from the perspective of the Divine “looking down” on us from above.

The timing, changing and passing of the seasons as well geological occurrences and happenings are referenced in many verses of the sacred texts and scriptures of the various religions, as are the natural observable cycles and processes of life and death and rebirth. Many of these natural processes become part of and are integrated into the symbolic and ritual structures of the respective religious traditions and systems and provide the basis and content in their cosmological myths, symbols, and rituals. That being said, these texts and rituals were explained and had a flavor which was more about “receiving the spirit” from on high than about sending it forth. For in general they were

³⁷ Or what the Quran refers to as *Ahlul Kitab* Peoples of the Book. An honorific title given to the other Abrahamic Faith traditions of Judaism and Christianity.

understood and interpreted as reinforcing concepts of a primarily Western anthropocentric Weltanschauung which uniquely privileged divinely imbued humans over a soulless material, if not “fallen,” natural world.

Lynn White jr., in his provocative 1967 essay, “The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis” one of the most cited works within the theological debate about the environment, opines that the antecedents for the modern ecological/environmental crisis predates the industrial revolution and in fact dates back to the advent of anthropocentric world that was engendered in Western Christianity theologies.³⁸ For White, Western Christianity (post Roman Empire acceptance of Christianity as its official religion) paved the way for a historically unprecedented anthropocentric theology, in his own words “the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen.”³⁹ This overemphasis on anthropocentrism found its expression and in a sense scientific validation in a specific Western post-enlightenment world view that establishes dualism between man and nature and drawing hard and fast boundaries between human and non-human/nature and natural world. So that the anthropocentric axiom of *separate and apart from* was easily transformed into *above and against*. Permission thereby given to human beings to exploit nature in a mood of indifference to the inherent life and integrity of nature and her being. In White’s words “[Christianity] not only established a dualism of man and nature but also insisted that it is God’s will that man exploit nature for his proper ends... Man’s effective monopoly...was confirmed and the old inhibitions to the exploitation of nature

³⁸ Lynn White jr., “The Historical Roots of our Ecologic Crisis” *Science* 155 (1967): 1203-1207.

³⁹ White, “Ecologic Crisis,” 1205. Anthropocentric means 'human-centered', based on the Greek word for human or person, *anthropos*.

crumbled... Christianity made it possible to exploit nature in a mood of indifference to the feelings of natural objects.”⁴⁰

White argued that within this view of Christian theology, "nature has no reason for existence save to serve [humans] .”⁴¹ Thus, for White, Christian arrogance towards nature "bears a huge burden of guilt⁴²" for the contemporary environmental crisis, one which emphasizes the radical transcendence of humans over and above nature. This hubris and arrogance for White originates from the belief that humanity was uniquely and exclusively made in the image of God (*Imago Dei*). White juxtaposes this historically with people’s prior beliefs in a more enchanted world in which living spirits and the like inhabited nature and thus made her sacred and sacrosanct. This theological perspective has been amplified by interpretations which emphasize and privilege Genesis 1: 26-30 that “man” was given “dominion” and control over all creatures of the earth vis-à-vis other readings and scriptural passages of Genesis which speak to a more cooperative, connected and nurturing role for humans as those who tend the garden and respect the natural world. Nurturing man as the tiller of the Garden has recently become more of an area of study, re-focus and re-emphasis in the Christian environmental movement. White decries this dualism between humans and nature and the resultant *weltanschauung* which animates a divinely mandated man to monopolistically “benefit and rule” over nature and aggressively exploit her resources.

With the onset of the industrial revolution in Europe and the West, (the “Muslim World” owing to various historical socio-political developments was not a significant player at this time) and its fossil fuel driven machine economy, the calculus dramatically

⁴⁰ White, “Ecologic Crisis,” 1205.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 1207.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 1206.

and radically changed as did human beings relation with nature and the natural world resulting in a progressive disruption at many levels of the balance and natural order and a dislocation of human beings from their previous place in the cosmos.⁴³ These anthropogenic mega-changes would materially alter the physical systems of the natural world and our relations with her, ushering in what scientists and social scientists are calling “the anthropocenic age” in contradistinction to the halocenic epoch of 12,000 years which have preceeded it.⁴⁴ Religious texts and their exegesis and understandings in light of these new dynamics and realities were utilized by communities of interpreters to make sense of this “scary new world” and unfortunately in many cases interpreted to provide religious sanction, legitimacy and justification in keeping with Lynn White’s articulated historic theological assertions for domination of the earth and peoples’ unbridled extraction of her natural resources.⁴⁵

Theological Underpinning of Islam and the Environment

To fast forward, many trace the modern environmental movement to Rachel Carson’s exposure of the effects of pesticide, as outlined in her 1962 book *Silent*

⁴³ An example of this is the exponential increase in human caused CO₂ and other green house gas emissions since the beginning of the industrial revolution in contrast to entire 650 milenium before. See <https://www.acs.org/content/acs/en/climatescience/greenhousegases/industrialrevolution.html> accessed on April 1, 2018.

⁴⁴ Damian Carrington, (29 August 2016), "The Anthropocene Epoch: Scientists Declare Dawn of Human-Influenced Age," *The Guardian*, accessed April 1, 2018.

⁴⁵ While not the subject of this paper, it is interesting to note that Post-industrial colonization by European nations and to a lesser degree, America, of much of the rest of the world including the “Muslim world” took on an entirely new direction, in terms of the efficiency of its militaristic expansion empowered by the technology and machines invented as result of the Industrial Revolution. Resource extraction, in particular that of fossil fuels required to energize these machines, enabled subjugation of entire nations and peoples being taken to a whole new level. While research needs to been done to validate this hypothesis, but to my thinking this points to a linkage between the domination of peoples through the modern colonization and domination of the earth. It suggests that the same forces who rape, pillage and destroy the earth herself through unregulated extraction resource removal can with impunity destroy life upon the earth, including human life. If this holds true then the response to climate change issue needs to be linked to the processes of de-colonization currently underway in order to succeed.

*Spring*⁴⁶. In the mid 1950s, before Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* was published and before Lynn White's essay was published, Seyyed Hosein Nasr delivered a series of lectures on environment and cosmology titled "Man and Nature" which later were published in part in some of his books⁴⁷. Nasr is considered to be the foremost living representative of perennial school of philosophy and by some as the most important living philosopher on the planet today⁴⁸. He is also widely recognized "as one of the most important Islamic intellectual of our time" and the first Muslim and Islamic intellectual to address the environmental crisis⁴⁹.

Nasr's thought and vision operates from a classical Islamic religious weltanschauung. Beginning with a universe that consists of the Signs of *Allah*. He holds that this traditional and uncorrupted world view held in large part by the pre-Enlightenment/ pre-Industrial age peoples was replaced by Newtonian physics with its material-mechanical clock-work universe and financed by the invisible hand of Adam

⁴⁶Eliza Griswold, "How 'Silent Spring' Ignited the Environmental Movement" September 21, 2012, accessed April 1, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/23/magazine/how-silent-spring-ignited-the-environmental-movement.html>.

⁴⁷ There is no single work of Nasr's that presents his entire approach to the environmental crisis and encapsulates all of his lectures on the subject including those given at the University of Chicago in 1967. In fact much of his more direct insights, reflections and analysis of this subject are only available through recordings and transcripts of his lectures and speeches. One such lecture was a keynote I had attended which he had given at an Environmental Conference sponsored by Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology in 2012 in which Nasr autobiographically recounts his scholarship and work on the environmental crisis and during which he specifically stated that his work preceded that of Lynn White and Rachel Carson. Two of his major written works which include much of his thinking and scholarship on this subject are: *The Encounter of Man and Nature- The Spiritual Crisis of Modern Man*, (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1968) and *Religion and the Order of Nature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

⁴⁸ From Keith Critchlow, as quoted by Tarik M. Quadir in *Traditional Islamic Environmentalism: The Vision of Seyyed Hossein Nasr* (New York: University Press of America Inc., 2013), 28.

⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 5.

Smith's Wealth of Nations -Capitalist economy. The result of which was a new "religion" of scientism⁵⁰ .

For Nasr the core of the current ecological crisis is fundamentally a crisis of values that can not be fixed by technology and modern science. As he stated "the environmental crisis has deep spiritual, philosophical, and religious roots and causes. It is not merely the result of bad engineering, for as soon as nature became an 'it', there was bound to be this [crisis]."⁵¹ As a neo-traditionalist, one who holds Islam's traditional and classical teachings have the answers to the challenges of the modern world, Nasr believes that the destruction of the ethical and spiritual vision of nature at the hands of the modern world done in the name of growth, development, and so called "progress" is the basis for the crisis, for to be modern (in this sense) is to destroy nature. In his lectures/books Nasr brought out various concepts and ideas grounded in some heretofore forgotten and overlooked Islamic scholarship of the classical period of Islamic civilization which have modern environmental applications and ecological implications. In this regard he stated "The significance of the vast Islamic scientific tradition for Muslims and especially for young Muslims today is not only that it gives them a sense of pride in their own civilization because of the prestige that science has in the present day world. It is furthermore a testament to the way Islam was able to cultivate various sciences extensively without becoming alienated from the Islamic world view and without creating a science whose application would destroy the world of nature and the harmony

⁵⁰ Nasr defines scientism as "a totalitarian ideology that generalizes the worldview derived from modern science... according to its tenets, anything that modern science cannot study is either unreal or irrelevant." "Chapter 1- God is Absolute Reality and All Creation His Tajalli (Theophany)", *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Religion and Ecology* Edited by John Hart p. 9.

⁵¹ "A conversation with Seyyed Hossein Nasr (March 14, 2007), accessed April 1, 2018, <https://sistershalaqah.wordpress.com/2007/03/14/quotes-from-a-conversation-with-seyyed-hosseini-nasr/>

that must exist between man and the natural environment⁵².” In a word, traditional Islam had developed a “sacred science.” Though these concepts are not unique to Nasr, he is credited by Quadir and others with being the first in exploring these central eco-themes and eco-concepts which were present in Islam’s sacred texts a new. His teachings on Islam and the Environment that came out of his 1950s lectures have since been expanded and expounded on by others including Fazlun Khalid⁵³, Ibrahim Ozdemir, Yasin Dutton and others. These eco-theological teachings include:

All things *Shahid* (the Visible world) or *Ghayb* (Unseen World)⁵⁴ are Allah’s (God’s) *Ayat* (Signs) and act as evidence and witnesses to His existence and unity⁵⁵.

Ayats (Signs) are devices which while important in and of themselves serve a greater purpose in that they point toward that which is greater than them – Allah (God) who is both transcendent and immanent at the same time. Hence all things in the universe are manifestations of God, and are all from God⁵⁶.

In the lexicon of *Usul Ilm*, the epistemological foundations of the sources of knowledge in Islam, such knowledge is contained in *kitabain*. This is the two books

⁵² Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *A Young Muslim's Guide to the Modern World* (Chicago, IL.: Kazi Publications Inc., 1994), 22.

⁵³ It is interesting to note that Islam’s teachings on the environment and ecology as espoused by Nasr who is a strong supporter and practitioner of *Sufism* (Islamic mysticism) has found acceptance and is referenced in the works of Islamic environmentalists like Fazlun Khalid, a scientist by education and training who is oriented toward the other end of Islam’s theological and ideological spectrum, namely the *Wahabi-Salafi* – literalists (although Fazlun might not agree with the characterization of his thought as such). This intra-faith coming together of traditional theological and ideological adversaries on environmental issues and collaborative work for protections of the planet is something that requires further study.

⁵⁴ Science notes that 97% of the stuff of the universe is dark matter and dark energy and that this controls the 3% that is visible. “Dark Energy, Dark Matter,” NASA, accessed 4/1/2018, <https://science.nasa.gov/astrophysics/focus-areas/what-is-dark-energy>

⁵⁵ Nasr, *Man and Nature – The Spiritual Crisis of Modern Man* (London: George and Allen, 1968), 94-97.

⁵⁶ Nasr, “Chapter 1- God is Absolute Reality and All Creation His Tajalli (Theophany)”, *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Religion and Ecology* (Edited by John Hart), 4-5.

authored by the Creator, *Kitab al-Wahy*, or the Book of revelation which includes the Quran and other Holy scriptures and in particular those given to *Ahlu'Kitab* (Peoples of the Book) through their *Rusul* Messengers and the Book of Creation called by different names by different scholars (I prefer – *Makhloq* (nature and natural world and phenomena) referred to by Nasr as “the Cosmic Quran”⁵⁷. In the Islamic conceptualization, these two books are written in the linguistic formulation of *Ayats*. Hence as the *Ayat* (verses) of the Holy Quran are to be revered and not desecrated, denigrated (or maliciously burned by the Book burners)⁵⁸, similarly the *Ayats* (signs) verses of the cosmic book are not to be desecrated, denigrated and burned. Instead, just like the Quran itself, these Signs in Nature need to be read, or explored and experienced not only through the physical senses and reflection but also studied through science and scientific method and analysis as a means of knowing the Cosmos and the Creator, our world and therefore ourselves as well.

These two modes of human knowing, Divine Revelation from on high and observed phenomena in the physical universe, inform one another and are mutually supportive and reinforcing. With these concepts, Nasr laid the philosophical framework of what came to be called Islamic ecology and environmentalism. Building further on Nasr’s pioneering work and philosophical framework the following eco-concepts and theological insights can be derived. First, human beings and other creatures relate to one

⁵⁷ William Chittick, “*The Essential Seyyed Hossein Nasr*” (Bloomington. IN: World Wisdom Inc., 2007), 191.

⁵⁸ Book burners have existed throughout human history. Among the most notorious were the Nazi’s. Even here in the USA we have book burners, like the infamous Florida Pastor Terry Jones who sought to burn Qurans. Steven Nelson, “Quran-Burning Pastor Terry Jones’ Arrest Could Be Unconstitutional, Experts Say,” *US News & World Report*, September 12, 2013, <https://www.usnews.com/news/newsgram/articles/2013/09/12/quran-burning-pastor-terry-jones-arrest-could-be-unconstitutional-experts-say> .

another through Him in the first sense as their mutual Creator – *Al-Khaliq* (we are *Makhluk*) and in the second and more important sense and at some higher level as fellow worshipers (*al-Ibaad*).

As I understand it in the language of the Quran, the relationship and inter—mutuality and connectivity of humans and fellow creatures/worshippers is captured in the Quranic verses “*Hablu’(minal) Allah wa Hablu’(minan) naas* – Cable/life line connects us to Allah along the vertical plane and cable which connects us to rest of creation on the horizontal plane. Each one conditions and is conditioned by the other. These relationships of mutuality⁵⁹ in turn create *Huquq – Allah* mutual rights, duties and obligations between human kind and *Allah* and *Huquq al-Ibaad* - human kind and the rest of creation “worshippers” - “the Universal Congregation” – which is the manifestation of *Ihsaan* – Excellence in Islam.

Islam and the Human Animal

Islam like all religious traditions is culturally manifested and experienced. Its teachings and its practice, like its adherents, are by no means mono-theological or monolithic. there are a basic set of common beliefs However, to which the overwhelming majority of members of this faith community⁶⁰, irrespective of their race, ethnicity or geographic location, have subscribed to and have adhered to throughout history. These beliefs and practices, when combined, form the basis of a unique ethos and

Weltanschauung which is recognizable for the most part by Muslims the world over. The

⁵⁹ The Prophet (AS) said “All of creation are the dependents (*ayalul’Allah* literally family of Allah) and Allah loves most those who are best to his dependents/family.” This term *Ayalul’Allah* is rarely used in Prophetic *Hadith*, but its use here emphasizes the organic and familial connectivity of all creation. Each and every of His creatures have purpose, function and unique role to play in the Divine cosmic order.

⁶⁰ The Arabic term for majority consensus/practice of both laity and scholarship (to greater or lesser degrees) is *jumhoor*. Needless to say, this term is subject to a spectrum of definitions in its particulars and carries with it religious as well as legalistic implications.

scheme of life envisaged by Islam is a complete whole that revolves around the central concept of divine unity/oneness – *Tawheed*. For the believing Muslim, Islam is not a mere appendage to life, it is life itself. The Unity of *Allah* has several corollaries, including the unity of all religions (not uniformity or unanimity), the unity of humanity with all its diversity (not sameness) and the unity of Creation. The universe and all it contains originates from the power of the Word, the active singular Will from which all creation came, *Kun faYaKun* – “be and it is” (Quran 36:82)⁶¹. The Quranic version of the Creation narrative is one whose cast of characters is not unlike what is found in the Hebrew scriptural narrative. However, certain themes and some details stand in contrast to the Hebrew Torah or the Christian Pentateuch versions, and hence form the basis for a different theology. Briefly, in the Quranic narrative (and this part is essentially the same as one of the narratives in the Hebrew scripture - Genesis 2), *Allah* forms Adam (*AS*) from earth and water (clay) (Quran 15:16)⁶² and infuses him with His *Ruh* (soul/spirit)

⁶¹ Reflecting on the notion of “Be and it is” Nasr observes “The Gospel of John asserts, ‘In the beginning was the Word’ by which the world was created, while the Quran, referring to how the world was created states ‘God said, Be! And there was.’ The world began with the Divine Word, which means consciousness at the highest level. Therefore, one could say ‘In the beginning was consciousness.’ We did not evolve into a state of consciousness, as metaphysically absurd theories of human evolution assert. We began with a state of consciousness and so did nature.” Nasr, “Chapter 1- God is Absolute Reality and All Creation His Tajalli (Theophany)”, *The Wiley Blackwell Companion to Religion and Ecology* (Edited by John Hart), 7.

⁶² An affirmation of the linkage and relation of Adam (*AS*) and by extension Hawa (Eve)(*AS*) and their human progeny to the earth and fellow creatures can be found in the five names/epithets used for Adam (and by extension humans) in the *Qu’an*. Namely: *AdeemulArdh* (created from dirt/earth) created from *Silsilah min teen* (best of the dirt (*Quran* 23:12) and made in *Ahsaneetaqweem* (the best of molds (*Quran* 95:4). Adam (*AS*) is not distinguished by the dirt of his creation which he shares with the other Earthly creation as much by his *Tarbiyyah*– training/upbringing; and his resulting status as being *Khalifa* (vicegerent (*Quran* 33:72)). This means he does more than *Tasbeeh* (Glorification of *Allah*) and *Tahleel* (Declaring *Allah’s* Unity) which both the *Malaika* (Angels) and the rest of *Makhlook* (Creation) all do. Adam(*AS*) (and by extension all human beings) took on *Amanah* (trust) to be the caretaker of the Earth as *khalifa* (*Quran* 2:30; 33:72). However, unfortunately, as being *Insaan* (human) he has a propensity for *Nassyhan* (forgetfulness) of his *Ahd* (covenant) but in the end if he/she mends his/her ways through *Tawbah* (repentance) he/she will be called *Bashar* (glad tidings and good news) for all the Earth and *Allah’s* Creation.

(Quran 15:29).⁶³ *Allah* creates *Hawa* (Eve) (*AS*) to complement and be a companion of Adam (*AS*) (Quran 4:1). The purpose of the creation of Adam (*AS*) and *Hawa* (*AS*) and their progeny (humanity), as enunciated by *Allah* to the *Malaika* (Angels), was to place a *Khalifa* (Steward-vicegerent-trustee-care taker) on the Earth (Quran 2:30)⁶⁴ Adam (*AS*) and *Hawa* (*AS*) and their progeny were ennobled (Quran 17:70)⁶⁵ by this appointment and granted *Aql* (intellect/reason) and limited free will to choose, which distinguished them from all the rest of earthly creation, with whom they shared common physiological and biological origins. Adam (*AS*) and *Hawa* (*AS*) were subsequently tempted by an envious and jealous *Jinn*⁶⁶ named *Ibliees* (later to be called – *Shayton* – Satan), to disobey *Allah*'s command and were subsequently sent to Earth, as was *Shayton* and his cohorts. *Shayton* asked and was granted respite by *Allah* until the End of the World and was allowed to do his best to tempt and to cause human beings to deviate from *Allah*'s worship and obedience⁶⁷. At the end times, human and *jinn*-kind and the entire universe will be

⁶³ *Ruh* (soul) is the essence of life and being. In Islam, its exact nature is unknown (Quran 17:85). What is known is that it emanates forth from *Allah* by His command. It is good and pure and has a celestial existence prior to its joining in the womb with the physical body of the fetus. Its permanent departure from the body at the time of death results in irrevocable death. It has been the focus of much philosophical discourse and meditation, especially amongst the Sufis and mystics. In the Hebrew Scriptures, animals also are enlivened by God's *ruah*, not so in the Quran

⁶⁴ The Arabic word *Ardh* (Earth) appears in the *Qur'an* 448 times. In the *Hadith* it is mentioned that "Earth is made a place of worship (a sacred place) and a source of purification and in another place the Prophet Muhammed (*AS*) stated "Protect the Earth, for it is your mother. No one commits a good or evil deed except that she will report it to her Lord on the Day of Judgment" (*Quran* Exegesis, Chapter 99)

⁶⁵ The Arabic word used is *Karamna*, which means honored by and for the special role and function for which one was selected. In modern religio-political terms, it could be best translated as the inherent dignity and worth of the human person.

⁶⁶ *Jinn* or Genie – is another of *Allah*'s creations. According to *Islamic* tradition, they are created from a smokeless fire (Quran 15:27) and are endowed with special abilities commensurate with their fiery origins. They too have been given the intellect and reasoning and limited free will to choose. They have families and communities of their own and co-exist with human beings on the earth in a parallel dimension. Some choose to be evil. They are named *Shayateen* – Satans. Others choose to believe and are called Muslims. They are not Angels or Fallen Angels as described by Christian theology. Angels, another creation of *Allah*, are created from a pure light and though having special powers are not endowed with the Free Will to choose and are faithful and obedient servants of *Allah*.

⁶⁷ *Quran* (7:11-25 and 15:31-44).

destroyed⁶⁸. After some time, humans and *jinns* will be recreated and stand individually in judgment for their deeds and motives before *Allah* on the Day of Judgment⁶⁹. The arrogance of *Shayton* is echoed in the way his human and non-human followers mistreat and abuse the earth and all that comes from it including vegetation and food crops. Those whose *Mizan* (balance/scale) is heavy with good deeds committed while on and upon the earth shall be admitted into Paradise/Heaven forever, and those whose balance/scale is heavy with bad deeds committed while on and upon the earth shall be admitted into Hell. Some salient features of the *Quranic* version of the Creation narrative and its eschatological implications for human nature are as follows:

- In the *Quranic* narrative Adam (*AS*) and Hawa (*AS*) and humanity's coming to earth is the *raison d'être* for human creation and existence in the first place. While the immediate reason for their being sent to the Earth was *Shayton's* deception and incitement to disobey *Allah's* command (of which both Adam (*AS*) and Hawa (*AS*) were guilty, but later forgiven by *Allah* due to Adam's and Hawa's *Tawbah* (Repentance)), coming to the Earth was part of the Divine meta-narrative of humanity's existence and purpose as is the effective management of her resources and provisions including nurturing life enabling food production/consumption practices.

⁶⁸ In summary, the end of times in Islam is something that is brought about by Allah as part of His will and Divine Plan. From the perspective of human beings, Muslims are instructed per the Hadith of the Prophet Muhammed (*AS*) to plant a sapling that is in their hand. This is similar to a story from the Talmud. In both cases the coming of the end days are not to be met by indifference and lack of concern or care for the earth by humans as is found in some Christian eschatological teachings.

⁶⁹ *Quran* (3:185 and 39:68-71). The *Quran* uses the Arabic term *Ajr* – which literally translates as “wages” or “earnings” to emphasize the idea that the hereafter is where humans will be paid in full for their works while living on the earth.

- The earth is a creation of *Allah* and home for humanity and other creatures. The Earth and this worldly life is primarily a place of struggle and strife, testing and examination. The noble purpose is to be aimed toward fruitful and beneficial existence (which at the most basic level is cultivation and nurturing of the earth) and cultivating good deeds and actions through the social network or relationships that will enable access to Paradise. The body need not be broken for the spirit to be freed; nature need not be destroyed for humanity to advance and succeed. Instead the body and nature are to be carefully conditioned and prudently directed by the mind toward enabling the human species and all of earthly creations to achieve relative harmony and mutually sustained functionality⁷⁰.
- Human beings, while being above earthly creation in rank (owing to intellect/reason and limited free will), share in common with the rest of creation their organic/physiological composition and therefore need not be in conflict with creation, but must work to ensure the Earth and her resources are conserved so that life on the planet continues to be sustainable.
- Human beings are free to choose and are therefore individually responsible and accountable for their actions. They must choose a path of sustainability and care for the earth and all her inhabitants. The *jinn* also possess free will. The devil *Shayton* himself will stand in Judgment before *Allah* and be burned in hell for his sins. He does not have dominion over hell, contrary to views of certain strains of Christian theology.

⁷⁰The *Quranic* term *Mizan* or balance is what is meant here. That balance is inherent in the cosmic order and ecological environment as much as it is to be inherent in spiritual and ethical values. The *Quran* states that there is enough provision on the earth for humanity and creation if properly managed and not squandered *Quran* 74:12 and 17:70.

- Those responsible for the wrong are accountable and punished for the wrong, and not others. The child is not responsible for the sins of the father. Hence, original sin is not a valid excuse for humanity's predicament, as it is in some parts of the Christian tradition, or the permanent subjugation and enslavement of one group by another owing to ethnicity, race, or socio-economic class/caste location. Human caused global climate change and the resultant environmental degradation including that of the food production system must be corrected to avert destruction of life itself. This needs to be realized by both Muslims and others as well.
- The *Quranic* narrative clearly posits human beings as *Khalifa*—stewards or care takers--with the ability to freely choose and the capability to act upon and bring into service (*Taskhir*) the rest of creation (nature) on the earth. It may be useful at this point to briefly contrast/compare the term *Taskhîr* which is sometimes translated as “to subjugate or to have dominion over” with the concept of “Dominion” as found in the Hebrew scriptures which serves the basis for what has come to be referred to in certain Christian teachings as “Dominion theology” (Genesis 1:28). *Taskhir* is the verbal noun of *sakhara* which means to bring something into service, to compel something to be of service to something else while not in any compromising its own self-worth or self-benefit, to make something subservient. In the *Quranic* view, the subjugation or compelling to service is being caused in the first sense by the Creator – *Allah* for the benefit of human beings and other creatures. To the limited extent that humans have some role in compelling the service of others for their benefit it should be with the view

and purpose of making a certain thing follow a certain course in obedience to the laws of nature and *Allah* (not man made laws). With this delegated power comes the individual and collective responsibility and accountability for such actions.

The fact that all groups of living beings owe their existence directly to *Allah* and therefore stand on the same footing is beautifully expressed in the verse "...There is no beast that walks on the earth and no bird that flies on its two wings which is not *Allah's* creatures like yourselves. No single thing have we neglected in our Decree (Quran 6:38)." Here the *Quran* refers to non-human communities of creatures as being "*Ummams*" (organized nations/societies) like yourselves (human). This verse gives some idea of the sanctity in which all life is held in Islam, or what Thomas Berry refers to as the "rights of living species"⁷¹. These religiously grounded understandings and the corresponding mindset that they are intended to develop in a Muslim are critical as we frame and explore in detail Islam's teachings on ethical eating and food production/consumption in the forthcoming section. For only through the taking of the life and consumption of other creatures can human life continue. The Quran points out that each and every creature *alima salahtah wa tasbeeha* (knows its own mode of prayer and way of glorification of the Lord) (Quran 24:41). And since all types of earthly life, as pointed out here, are conscious believers in and worshipers of Allah and not merely soulless spiritually void flesh and vegetation - the sum total of their nutritional (and economic) worth. The act of taking that which is made sacred must by necessity be conducted in a manner which properly honors the life that is taken.

⁷¹ Thomas Berry, *The Great Work: Our Way into the Future* (New York: Bell Tower, 1999), 111.

Faith in Action

The real-world implementation of much of these core concepts in Islamic environmental philosophy would not be realized in real world applications till much later, through a new generation of Muslim environmental activists. In the United States, this began in an observable way in the early 2000s as different independent sporadic grass roots efforts sprang up in different cities and urban centers around the nation, such as Washington, DC. In many cases these sporadic efforts were spearheaded by young Muslim Americans, often coming out of academic study in the fields of environmental sciences/engineering and urban planning and inspired by various forms of environmental activism on campus during their student days. They sought to organize at the local community level various types of voluntary “green” initiatives grounded in some of the aforementioned Islamic environmental philosophy and concepts. By in large these activities focused on creating awareness through education and training that sought to develop and “green” Muslim religious attitudes and practices by rooting them in these eco-conscious teachings of the Quran and the eco-friendly practices of the life example of the Prophet Muhammad(AS). For as Nasr observed “What’s important is how people build and contextualize the phenomenon of climate change in and around their belief set⁷².” Many of these initiatives naturally adopted the nomenclature and name “Green Muslims” not because of organizational affiliation with one another or connection but simply because it fit and represented what they were about. These initiatives were highlighted in one of the first such books on this subject titled: *Green Deen: What Islam*

⁷² John Wihbey, “Green Muslims,” *Eco-Islam and Evolving Climate Change Consciousness*, April 11, 2012, accessed April 1, 2018, <https://www.yaleclimateconnections.org/2012/04/green-muslims-eco-islam-and-evolving-climate-change-consciousness/> accessed 4/1/2018.

Teaches about Protecting the Planet by Ibrahim Abdul-Matin⁷³. Unfortunately quite a few of the initiatives he highlighted in his book have for various reasons (including lack of proper succession planning and financial resources) closed down and have ceased to exist.

Grass roots organizations/networks and associations like DC Green Muslims⁷⁴, and Green Muslims of New Jersey (GMNJ)⁷⁵ and other similar independent grass roots efforts⁷⁶ were among the pioneers of this type of religious environmental work. In my conversations with past and current leadership of these organizations, I found that while their basic religious eco-theology was the same, their organizational structures, focus areas and priorities were very much determined by the geographic locations of their

⁷³ Ibrahim Abdul-Matin, *Green Deen: What Islam Teaches about Protecting the Planet* (San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2010).

⁷⁴ Green Muslims-DC was established in 2007. Here is a link to an interview with the founder Sarah Jawaid on the PBS Religious News Weekly – Religion and Ethics: “News: Green Muslims on PBS!,” accessed on April 1, 2018, <http://www.greenmuslims.org/news-green-muslims-on-pbs/>.

⁷⁵ I am the current Chair and along with Faraz Khan were Co-founders of the Green Muslims of New Jersey (GMNJ) in 2010. GMNJ is a grass roots community association/network created by a group of Muslims in central Jersey who were concerned about the negative impacts to the environment during Ramadan. Our aim is to educate people about the importance of environmental stewardship, or “going green”, in Islam and implement ideas and strategies to solve problems regarding waste and over consumption. <https://www.facebook.com/GreenMuslims.NJ/> accessed 4/1/2018.

⁷⁶ A couple other early Green Muslim initiatives which are still actively engaged in Islamic environmental work are: Wisconsin Green Muslims (formerly known as the Islamic Environmental Group of Wisconsin), founded and directed by Huda Alkahf, which is a volunteer environmental justice group formed in 2005, to educate its members, the Muslim community and the general public about the Islamic environmental justice teachings, and to apply these teachings in daily life and to form coalitions with others working toward a just, healthy, peaceful and sustainable future. <https://wisconsinmgreenmuslims.org/> accessed 4/1/2018 and In Canada Khaleafa.com was founded and organized by Muaz Nasir in 2011 to help and empower the Muslim community of Canada to play an integral role in tackling ongoing environmental challenges that face the planet. By working together with other faith groups and environmental organizations, Khaleafa.com seeks to proactively create a healthy and sustainable future. <http://www.khaleafa.com/> accessed 4/1/2018.

work, community culture and their target groups/audiences⁷⁷. DC Green Muslims, for instance, focused on reaching out and recruiting individual young Muslim environmental activists, many of whom were frustrated with the slow pace of organizational change and lack of serious concern and interest on the part of long time established and entrenched area Masjid leadership on environmental related issues. DC Green Muslims made a deliberate decision to focus their efforts and resources on developing Islamic environmental awareness and education campaigns, eco-practices. One striking example was their hosting of a “Zero-waste” communal *Iftar*, the meal that breaks the fast during the Islamic month of Fasting, *Ramadan*, which to my knowledge was a first such occurrence in America. . *Ramadan* is a month long communal spiritual undertaking which includes daily fasting and communal evening *Iftars* - fast breaking meals followed by special nightly prayers (*Salatul Taraweeh*). They encouraged the attendees who were on an average night about 20-30 young adults to bring their own plates, cups and utensils. They did not permit any paper or disposable products including Styrofoam plates to be brought. At the end of the *Iftar* they collected the untouched food and had it delivered to local needy families (they called it “leftars”) and their organic waste was composted in a local community garden. While this activity was quite successful in this setting with a

⁷⁷I believe an indication of the collective significance and impact of the work of these various grass roots Green Muslims initiatives across USA over the past decade or so are reflected in a recent Pew Research poll. According to that poll, 62% of U.S. Muslims say that for them, personally, “working to protect the environment” is an essential part of their faith and Muslim identity (this was not the case previously). This is higher than the share of U.S. Christians who said protecting the environment is essential to their Christian identity in response to a similar question (22%). See “U.S. Muslims Concerned About Their Place in Society, but Continue to Believe in the American Dream,” *Pew Research Center*, July 26, 2017, accessed April 1, 2018 <http://www.pewforum.org/2017/07/26/findings-from-pew-research-centers-2017-survey-of-us-muslims/>.

small group, its application to area Masjids was not feasible given the size of and diversity of their congregations. DC Green Muslims directed their outreach toward college students and recent college graduates, those who often were disconnected and disaffected Muslim youth activists, and individuals who were largely found themselves on outside or peripheries of the Masjids and Islamic Centers in the DC area⁷⁸. Because of the social location of their members, much of their programming took place outside Masjids and included a major component of political environmental activism that might not have been possible within the traditional Masjid context. Green Muslims of New Jersey (GMNJ), which I co-founded with Faraz Khan in 2010 and now currently chair, adopted a different hybrid community focused approach⁷⁹. Our strategy sought to network and engage young individual Muslim environmental activists (the target group of Green Muslims of DC) and bring them into relationship with established Masjid leadership in the region through specific jointly developed programs which focused on development of Muslim ritually connected eco-friendly practices at the community level in the Masjids. In 2011 GMNJ worked to develop and then launch its Green Ramadan Initiative (GRI) – under the theme “*Ramadan* - When Less is More” at three Central New Jersey Masjids. It is a special time when the community comes out consistently in larger than normal numbers and is especially open to religious instruction and teachings. By 2012, the number of participating Masjids in the program had doubled to six and included

⁷⁸ Several of these individuals later became involved and active in the “Unmosqued” phenomena, a movement which sought to create an Islamic community without the use of the traditional community center, the Mosque. The movement founders viewed many mosques as being overly conservative, backwards and unwelcoming, leading them to “unmosque” themselves. Here is a link to a documentary on this phenomenon in the Muslim Community: <http://www.unmosquedfilm.com/about/>.

⁷⁹ GMNJ’s Mission statement in part reads: “We are Muslims in NJ who are striving to help communities and organizations to be more environmentally conscious through implementation of an ethic of conservation and self-restraint when it comes to the use of energy, food, water consumption following the *Sunnah* of our beloved Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and Islamic teachings in Hadith and Quran.” accessed April 1, 2018, <https://www.facebook.com/GreenMuslims.NJ/>.

Masjids in Pennsylvania and New York. The outreach was done primarily through producing the first nationally broadcast informational webinar on Greening *Ramadan* which was co-hosted with GreenFaith, an international interfaith environmental organization founded in 1992⁸⁰. The Green *Ramadan* Initiative (GRI) was designed to help Masjids religiously and effectively curb and reduce the amount of waste and environmental damage that is created during the month of *Ramadan* by utilizing the 3-Rs of sustainability-- Reduce, Re-use, Recycle. Later this was expanded to become the 5-Rs of sustainability and consumption by adding Rethink and Refuse to the front of the list of principles. These principles were applied across four critical focus areas of usage/waste: *water, food, energy, and transportation*. Masjids who signed up for the program committed to inform and educate their congregation members utilizing various informational /educational materials including PSAs and Posters provided by GMNJ. In each of these areas participating Masjids were provided with detailed information/educational resources and promotional materials, along with hands-on training to enable them to conserve resources and curb waste in these areas. GMNJ provided information and easy to access/use resources on Islam's teachings⁸¹ and on environmental agencies and organizations. They worked closely with Masjid leadership and their Imams to educate their congregants about the importance of environmental

⁸⁰ See Imam Zaid Shakir and Ibrahim Abdul-Matin, 2012 GMNJ/GreenFaith Green Ramadan Webinar, accessed November 1, 2017, <https://greenfaith.webex.com/ec06061/eventcenter/recording/recordAction.do?theAction=poprecord&AT=pb&isurlact=true&renewticket=0&recordID=5554407&apiname=lsr.php&rKey=02a6b2e366700bf1&needFilter=false&format=short&&SP=EC&rID=5554407&siteurl=greenfaith&actappname=ec06061&actname=%2Feventcenter%2Fframe%2Fg.do&rnd=2866445337&entactname=%2FnbrRecordingURL.do&entappname=url01081>.

⁸¹ For resources and info on GMNJ Green Ramadan Initiative (GRI), see <http://greenmuslimsnj.blogspot.com/>.

conservation and not wasting in Islam and to implement actions and strategies to successfully address these matters.

In the area of **water** usage and consumption, participating Masjids committed to:

(1) Adopt the Prophetic example of *Wudu* (Ritual ablution) – this meant using no more than two cups of water to make their ablution before prayer; (2) Put in place various policies to limit if not put an end completely to the use of disposable water bottles and replace them with re-useable water bottles; (3) to retrofit to the extent financially feasible their faucets and toilets with water reducing and motion sensor fixtures. In the area of **food** participating Masjids committed to: (1) In keeping with the Prophetic Diet to move toward more of a plant based and less meat rich *Iftar* meal; (2) Utilize non-disposable plates, cups and cutlery if dish washing facilities were available, if not to put an end to usage of Styrofoam plates and cups and instead opt for compostable plates and cups; (3) Provide servers for the *Iftar* meals so as to limit the amount of potential food wastage on plates; (4) Remind and constantly message the congregation of the Quranic teachings and Prophetic practices (discussed in detail later in this paper) that waste of food is *haram* – forbidden in Islam; (5) Put in place recycling programs including bins and also where possible provide for the composting of bio-degradable organic food mass. In the area of **energy/transportation** participating Masjids committed to: (1) Encourage car-pooling to the *Masjid Iftars* and nightly prayers; (2) Put in place a LED/CFL bulb replacement policy; (3) Conduct an energy audit of their facility and make the recommended changes and fixes as financial capability allows. These areas were targeted because of the large amounts of waste often associated with the *Iftar* meals and the direct way in which this was in contradiction to the conservation practices and ethical eating habits of the Prophet

Muhammed (AS). GMNJ's GRI program/campaign was quite successful among those Masjids who participated and committed to the program.

In summarizing the experiences of one of the first three Masjids in the GRI 2011 Program, Islamic Society of Central Jersey (ISCJ) President Arif Patel stated:

“GMNJ through its Green Ramadan Initiative (GRI) really brought visible and tangible awareness to our ISCJ community particularly in Ramadan. It led to some fundamental shifts in the way we had to change our “behavior” in terms of supplies, food quantities and recycling. Even now, I am reminded of the good work anytime I see someone with their ISCJ water bottle, which we had provided free of charge as a replacement for disposable water bottles. These campaigns resonated with everyone because not only were it the right things to do but it was in clear alignment with our Islamic teachings and prophetic traditions⁸².”

After Ramadan, GMNJ sought to expand its activities and environmental programming to include: Monthly “*Mashee*” or guided Spiritual-Eco Hikes, Earth Hour and Earth Day activities and inter-faith environmental actions. A natural and organic sharing of experiences, information and best practices among and between various members of these local Green Muslim organizations followed shortly after by joint planning for more regional and national co-operative action. This resulted in jointly organizing at the national level, the first ever panel session at the annual Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) Convention in DC in 2013, the largest annual gathering of Muslims in America. It focused on Islam's Eco-teachings and the Environment, and has since become a regular

⁸² Arif Patel (President of the Islamic Society of Central Jersey (ISCJ) Board of Trustees - South Brunswick, New Jersey), email message to author, April 15, 2012.

feature of ISNA's conventions. This annual session became a means and venue through which individual Muslim environmental activists and local Green Muslim organizations from around the country could come together in person, network, strategize, plan and coordinate their efforts for the coming year.

During these annual gatherings ISNA's leadership began to take notice of the growing interest on behalf of their members and convention attendees in environmental issues. After various meetings and discussions with Green Muslim leaders and activists present, a Green Masjid Task group was established in 2015 under the auspices of ISNA's standing Masjid Development Committee — whose "Greening Our Masjid Ramadan" program was modeled on the GMNJ program. By 2017, over 50 Masjids in 27 States (including two Masjids from England and Africa) had formally joined the program⁸³. The Green Masjid Task group has developed an informational booklet designed to assist Masjids in going green⁸⁴. The booklet, distributed nationally, also outlines future plans and projects of the Task group. Several are already underway: ISNA's Annual Green Masjid awards and specialized informational/action oriented webinars on Islam's teachings on various topics such as water conservation, renewable energy and gardening. The Green Masjid Task group has also begun offering specialized workshops around the country dedicated to providing information, resources and expert advice on how to be more energy efficient and eco-friendly that are designed to enable Masjids to retrofit their facilities. At the same time, the ISNA Green Masjid Task group also provides professional technical experts to assist communities in new Masjid

⁸³ This is a humble beginning given the fact that there are over 2,000 Masjids across the USA, but interest and participation is steadily growing. See the website of the Islamic Society of North America, accessed April 1, 2018, <http://www.isna.net/greenramadan/>.

⁸⁴ The ISNA green mosque booklet: accessed April 1, 2018, <http://www.isna.net/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Green-Masjid-booklet.pdf>.

construction based on Islamic green design principles and LEED best practices (providing of course if the local zoning boards allow the construction of these new Masjids)⁸⁵. In the coming year, the Task Force plans to launch the first ever multi-area – multi-year Green Mosque Certification program similar to Green Sanctuary Certification programs that are run by other national religious denominations⁸⁶.

Beyond just the local level and national levels, global Muslim environmental events and actions were occurring as well. At the international level, at a historic meeting in Istanbul, Turkey (August 17-18, 2015) of over 60 Muslim scholars, academics from the sciences as well as the social sciences, environmental activists, and humanitarian workers from over twenty countries met and adopted the Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change⁸⁷. Originally the brainchild of Fazlun Khalid, founder of the Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences (IFEES)⁸⁸ in the 1990s, the drafting

⁸⁵ A far cry in practice from the hallmark of America's system of separation of Church and State. A Pew Research Forum report on the efforts by many communities across the USA to utilize local zoning laws to prevent the purchase and/or expansion of Mosques in their neighborhoods, found that while that these same laws were also used in the cases of Churches and other houses of worship seeking the same, the reasons for the objections to Mosques went well beyond the traditional objections of: traffic, noise, parking and property values and included the Islamophobic issues like Islam itself, Shariah and Terrorism. The report also found that often these issues and objections were fermented and organized with the help and support from outside Islamphobes and their well funded organizations and networks. See "Controversies Over Mosques and Islamic Centers Across the US" *Pew Research Center*, September 27, 2012 <http://www.pewforum.org/files/2012/09/2012Mosque-Map.pdf>.

⁸⁶ Green Sanctuary Certification Programs are usually multi-year programs designed to make Houses of Worship eco-conscious in terms of their values and beliefs and eco-friendly in terms of their facilities and practices. Such program usually require participating institutions to do: eco-themed worship services, incorporate environmental themes into religious education, offer faith based eco-events, 'green' their building operations, and advocate and educate around the issue of environmental justice. Among faith communities the Unitarian/Universalists have been leaders in this since 1989 <https://www.uua.org/environment/sanctuary>. Inter-faith Sanctuary Certification Programs have also been developed by GreenFaith <http://www.greenfaith.org/programs/certification>. There is also an effort underway lead by Drew University Theo School under the Direction of Professor Laurel Kearns to provide Green Certification to Seminaries as well. <https://www.greenseminaries.org/>.

⁸⁷ <http://islamicclimatedeclaration.org/islamic-declaration-on-global-climate-change/> accessed 4/1/2018.

⁸⁸ According to the IFEES website their mission and purpose is "Reconnecting people to the natural world through Islamic teachings." They are "dedicated to the maintenance of the Earth as a healthy habitat for future generations of humankind as well as other sentient beings." IFEES was founded by Fazlun Khalid

of the document had numerous false starts over the years, but began in earnest at the start of 2015. Describing the work of IFEES and its founder Fazlun Khalid, Richard Folz observes “Perhaps the most significant effort to date to promote Islamic environmentalism worldwide has been the work of the Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences (IFEES)⁸⁹.” During this period the original draft was circulated and commented on by successive small select groups of Muslim environmental activists and academics and religious scholars from various parts of the globe. I was honored to be a consultant to the Drafting team that worked on the final versions of the Declaration which we wanted to be released prior to COP 21 meetings in Paris. This bold grassroots initiative was finalized and formally launched at the aforementioned meeting in Istanbul organized by various frontline responders including masjid leaders, imams, congregations, humanitarian organizations, various NGOs--such as GreenFaith, Islamic Relief Worldwide, the Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences, Climate Action Network (CAN) International, OurVoices campaigns-- and others. As with any such an unprecedented internationally diverse multi-person/group undertaking there were many areas of active discussion and quite a few areas of disagreement. The disagreement was not so much on scriptural sources owing to the general acceptance by the drafters of the core Islamic environmental precepts and principals as articulated previously and their agreement on the Quranic verses and Prophetic teachings upon which these teachings were based. Rather the areas of disagreement focused on issues of translation of Arabic scripture/texts, organization, format, layout, length, design and

who has been described as "the single most active 'Islamic' environmentalist alive today" and Grist Magazine included him as the only Muslim among fifteen world leaders in religious environmentalism, calling him "the foremost expert on ecology from an Islamic Perspective." www.ifees.org.

⁸⁹ Richard Folz, "Islam" in *Oxford Handbook of Religion and Ecology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 217.

structure of the Declaration. There was also disagreement as to what principles needed to be highlighted. A case in point, after much back and forth in the end, it was decided because of its similarity in language to Judeo-Christian theologies of Dominionism to leave out specific mention of the Quranic eco-concept of “*Taskhir*” (subjugation).

The Declaration was formally presented to the President of the United Nations General Assembly just prior to the historic signing by 175 parties (174 countries and the European Union) of the COP 21 Paris Agreement⁹⁰ on April 22, 2016 (Earth Day) in New York City. This also marked the official launch of the Global Muslim Climate Network (GMCN), aimed to primarily promote and advance the objectives and goals of the Declaration⁹¹. Specifically, the Islamic Declaration on Climate Change affirms the UN position that aims to limit global warming to 2, or preferably, 1.5 degrees Celsius, through the reduction and limitation of the anthropogenic burning of fossil fuels and the resultant greenhouse gas emissions into the atmosphere. The Declaration calls for a rapid phase-out of fossil fuels and a switch to 100% renewable energy, as well as increased support by the major greenhouse gas emitters (the geo-political global north – the so called Developed Nations and China) for vulnerable communities (geo-political global south – where much of the global Muslim population reside). Wealthy oil-producing

⁹⁰ COP21 also known as the Paris Climate Conference was the culmination of International efforts begun at the RIO Earth Summit in 1992 where the first step toward an international political response to climate change began. The UN Framework on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was established and in 2015 at the COP 21 a historic international agreement was reached to put in place specific goals by country to reduce Green House Gas (GHG) emissions with the aim of keeping global warming under 2* C. <http://www.cop21paris.org/about/cop21> accessed 4/1/2108.

⁹¹ Global Muslim Climate Network (GMCN), which I was one of the founders and currently serve as a member of its Board and Steering Committee, states on its facebook page “Our mission is to act on the Islamic Declaration on Climate Change call “on all Muslims wherever they may be... to tackle habits, mind-sets, and the root causes of climate change, environmental degradation and the loss of biodiversity in their particular spheres of influence, following the example of the Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him), and bring about a resolution to the challenges that now face us.” <https://www.facebook.com/Global-Muslim-Climate-Network-1093227517434837/> accessed 4/1/2018.

nations (of which the USA is now top)⁹² are urged to phase out all greenhouse gas emissions by 2050⁹³.

The Declaration invites all people, leaders and businesses to commit to 100% renewable energy in order to tackle climate change, reduce poverty and achieve sustainable development. This in fact is a call for divestment from fossil fuels though it was not specifically stated as such in the Declaration and hence needed a separate specific Islamic scholarly work to present and highlight the case for Divestment. This was a project I was honored to do (See Appendix A: Islamic Case for Divestment).

With the UN climate negotiations looming, many global religious groups were working on statements to indicate their support. The crafting of the Islamic Declaration began well before the release of Pope Francis' encyclical letter: *Laudato si: On Care For Our Common Home*, but its final form and structure were informed by the Pope's encyclical⁹⁴. In a similar vein, the language of the Union Theological Seminary environmental statement borrowed language and approaches from both the Islamic Declaration and the Buddhist Declaration on Climate Change as well as using them as a model to assist them in structuring their statement. Cross-pollination of ideas and messaging is so critical for effective interfaith action in the world we all share – our

⁹² The United States is now the number one producer of oil with 15% of the world's oil production followed closely by Saudi Arabia, Russia, Canada and Iran.
<https://www.eia.gov/tools/faqs/faq.php?id=709&t=6> accessed 4/1/2018.

⁹³ Recently Saudi Arabia has publically announced its plans to invest \$200 billion in what portends to be the world's largest solar project to date. It remains to be seen if this will materialize given the poor track record on actualizing of similar announcements made by the Saudi's regarding solar and renewable energy projects in the past. Nick Cunningham, "Saudi Arabia Spending \$200B to Build the World's Largest Solar Project" USA Today, March 29, 2018,
<https://www.usatoday.com/story/money/energy/2018/03/29/saudi-arabia-spending-200-b-build-worlds-largest-solar-project/470102002/>

⁹⁴ For a useful link to the complete *Laudato Si* with insightful running commentary by Joe Carter of the Action Institute published on June 18, 2015, see <http://blog.acton.org/archives/79408-a-guide-to-laudato-si-a-section-by-section-summary-of-pope-francis-encyclical-on-the-environment.html>, accessed April 1, 2018.

common home – as Pope Francis put it. In general, the Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change has received a warm welcome by the international community in particular at the United Nations and its agencies and worldwide press coverage. Having both Muslim religious authorities and Muslim majority national governments sign on to the Declaration in totality has been challenging given various issues not the least of which is the importance of and reliance on oil and the petro-dollar on the part of both oil producers and those who receive various financial and other benefits from the oil production including many NGOs and humanitarian organizations. There are signs that these challenges are not dead ends or road blocks given the recent announcements by Saudi Arabia and other petro producing Muslim nations that they are investing in renewable energy and energy technologies. Only time and measureable action on the ground will tell how sincere these public announcements are.

At COP 22 in Morocco, GMCN and others worked to focus the efforts of the national religious institutions of Muslim majority countries toward Greening their Masjids⁹⁵. These efforts were all directed at reducing climate change, which can seem remote and far away to some. But by far the most intimate and regular way that we as humans interact with the rest of the created world, throughout history and across geographies, is through the food we produce, consume, or waste. In the next sections I will seek to explore this subject area in greater detail.

⁹⁵ The COP 21 Paris Agreement was a complete document that set out the overarching goals and framework for international climate action. But setting out the details is a longer process, which the countries participating in COP22 in Marrakech attempted to do. Unfortunately because of the unexpected results of the US Elections with Trump being elected as POTUS during the COP negotiations many of the final decisions and details on the loose ends left by Paris were pushed off for deciding on until 2018. <https://unfccc.int/marrakech-climate-change-conference-november-2016> accessed 4/1/2018.

Food Ethics: An Overview

We must eat to live; this is without doubt the basic biological/ecological reality. Failure to secure basic foodstuffs which are both safe for human consumption and nutritious in value is a failure to realize life itself as the foundation of all human rights⁹⁶. Food sustainability (providing for the needs of the living while simultaneously securing similar rights for future generations) and food safety/food security have a variety of definitions, depending on who is doing the defining. The UN based World Health Organization (WHO) defines food security in three dimensions: 1) Food availability - in sufficient and consistent quantities; 2) Food access - the ability to procure nutritious food stuffs; and 3) Food use – the proper use/consumption of food based on nutritional literacy and safe handling/cooking techniques as well as adequate water and sanitation⁹⁷.

An axiom to this proposition is the requirement to efficiently, effectively, and fairly manage and take care of our food sources, food production and its distribution. In addition, we must actively and conscientiously moderate our food consumption practices – how we eat – in order to both live well and survive as the human species, and have other species survive. It is all about re-setting matters in proper balance and sacred relationship with one another, what the *Quran* names as *Mizan*. The Christian theologian Norman Wirzba captured this conceptualization succinctly when he observed that food is about relationships “that join us to the earth, fellow creatures, loved ones and guests, and ultimately God⁹⁸.”

⁹⁶ The United Nations already recognized and integrated the concept ‘The Right to Food’ into the UN Declaration of Human Rights in 1948 (Article 25). (<http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/>), accessed June 24, 2013.

⁹⁷ <http://www.who.int/trade/glossary/story028>, accessed December 15, 2013.

⁹⁸ Wirzba, *Food and Faith*, 4.

These sacred relationships have been disrupted at all levels by the behemoth of the modern post WWII agro-industrial food complex that has reduced food to its economic denominator and radically transformed it into a mere commodity and industrialized our food production and eating practices⁹⁹. The net result of this complex process is that our food consumption falls far short of providing for our wellbeing by helping us to grow healthy and strong; instead it is making us physically, mentally and spiritually sick¹⁰⁰. I will now focus on ways in which various Islamic teachings regarding food, its production, processing and consumption can be re-imagined and understood by Muslims in today's complex world, with the view to articulate a food ethic that seeks to re-set the balance and redirect and re-orient the relationships between Muslims, their Creator, the food they consume and the world that they participate in and share with others. I draw upon the extensive Islamic teachings on the subject as the basis for constructing the elements of this ethic, which I shall put in conversation with various concepts and ideas put forth by the leading Christian "food" theologian, Norman Wirzba.

Muslims' eating connection

Historically, Muslims framed their relationship with food according to their *Shariah* (Sacred Law)¹⁰¹. This is derived from their sacred texts of the *Quran* and

⁹⁹ Ibid, 22.

¹⁰⁰ As one of many proofs of this malady, Shannon Jung relates the following statistics in his essay "Eating Intentionally" that in the USA 2/3 of adults are overweight and 1/3 are obese. 15 % of children ages 6-19 are overweight and American's despite living in "the land of plenty" have the highest rates of depression on the globe." See Shannon Jung, "Eating Intentionally," in *Justice in a Global Economy: Strategies for Home, Community and World*, ed. Pamela Brubaker, Rebecca Peters, and Laura Stivers (Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006), 50.

¹⁰¹ The Arabic dictionary defines *Shariah* as meaning "a waterway that leads to a main stream, a drinking place, and a road or the right path." From this meaning, the word *Shariah* was used to refer to a path or a passage that leads to an intended place, or to a certain goal. *Shariah* (Sacred or Divine Law), conceptually, refers to a set of rules, regulations, teachings, and values governing the lives of Muslims. However, these rules and regulations, contrary to how they are often described by many non-Muslims, cover every aspect

Hadith/Sunnah of the Prophet Muhammad (AS). As mentioned earlier in Islamic teachings, the linkage of doing one's religious duty to *Allah* through proper service and interaction with one's fellow human beings and other creatures is essential and clearly established.

The age old saying “we are what we eat” is not only biologically true in that our bodies catabolize the complex and diverse foods that we ingest into their base elements, nutrients, minerals, vitamins, etc., but also in that our spiritual essence as well as our individual and communal identity is formed by the act and process of food consumption. Who we are, what we are about and what we value are largely intertwined with our intimate relationship with our food and associated eating/consumption behaviors and practices. In a deep sense, eating is a primary language or currency of any culture. As Wirzba astutely observes, “It is helpful to recall that eating is a language and a lens through which a culture communicates and clarifies its values, structures and priorities. What we eat, how we prepare and serve it, and who we eat with are markers that define one group as distinct from another¹⁰².” This identity formation is particularly true and apparent for people and faith communities who have strongly established religious traditions and practices that directly regulate the particulars of their diet and food production and intake.

Wirzba's “eating lens” is not only useful in its application to contemporary understandings and analysis of culture, but can also be found in other related academic disciplines, in particular as one seeks to look to past peoples and civilizations as a means of understanding their current cultural and religious practices. For example,

of life. *Shariah* embraces worship, morals, individual attitude and conduct, as well as the political, social, economic, criminal, and civil spheres.

¹⁰² Wirzba, *Food and Faith*, 170.

archeologists, in their research and field work of past civilizations and peoples, have begun to pay closer attention to this phenomenon, namely, the integration and linkage of the religious, spiritual and economic dimensions of life and food production/consumption patterns in their analysis. Tim Insoll, in the *Archeology of Islam*, discuss these connections in particular as it pertains to Muslims. As important as a practical recognition of Muslim diet from archeological remains, he argues, is the manner in which the whole spectrum of food and drink can function socially, both in the creation of Muslim identity and within Muslim life because “the religious, the symbolic and the economic are all inextricably combined¹⁰³. This historically grounded assessment still holds true for our present contains and reflects our past as far as linkage of the religious, symbolic and economic aspects of food production and consumption are inter-related.

Modern Agricultural-Industry – An Ecological Snapshot

In the post WWII period, we are faced at various levels with what can be described as a food production/consumption crisis¹⁰⁴ This may seem contrary to the dominant narrative of how the increased usage of artificial fertilizer, herbicides and pesticides enables us to “feed the world.” Our agro-industry driven consumer-oriented lifestyle is fast causing the carrying capacity of our ecological systems to reach the breaking point as these chemical inputs wreak havoc on ecosystems, species, and our own bodies. According to the Roman Catholic priest and famed eco-theologian Thomas

¹⁰³ Grant as quoted in Timothy Insoll, *The Archaeology of Islam* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), 101.

¹⁰⁴ Selection and employing of terms and terminologies is always a tricky business. The term ‘consumption’ implies ‘consumer’ and ‘consumerism’ and that which is consumed (food) are designated as a commodity. Wirzba points out correctly that this modernist commodification of food mentality is part of the problem and that instead food needs to be viewed ethically as a gift from the Creator. This is a theme that we take up later in this paper. Taken from Wirzba, Norman *Interview*, <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/2010/07/16/july-16-2010-norman-wirzba-extended-interview/6663/> accessed June 24, 2013.

Berry, this industrial economy is based on the waste and pillage of the natural world and is dominated by trans-national economic corporations which seek control over natural resources. This stands in contrast to respecting its natural capacity, limitations and diversity of the natural world¹⁰⁵. Michael Pollan, the author of *An Omnivore's Dilemma*, reminds us that our current agricultural food chain is based primarily on corn and soy which have permeated nearly all of the processed foods we consume in addition to the livestock we consume, for which corn is the primary feed. Taken together, these two staples account for up to 80% of our overall daily caloric intake¹⁰⁶.

From a general ecological perspective, everyone and everything has their place in the food chain, although this has changed through time as contemporary humans are rarely prey; this defines our relationship with nature and all creatures living therein. Broadly speaking, a food chain can be described as both a pathway and method through which the energy that is stored by plants as a result of the biological solar energy conversion process of photosynthesis is passed along through the ecosystem in a series of traceable steps to humans at the top of this chain. As scientist Ursula Goodenough explains: "Organisms that cannot do photosynthesis – like us--depend on the products of photosynthesis for survival: we ingest these products as food and then extract their energy in enzyme-mediated reactions collectively called metabolism¹⁰⁷." Ecologists have traditionally depicted this relationship between eaters in what is called a "Pyramid of Numbers¹⁰⁸." As one moves up the pyramid to higher and more complex life forms

¹⁰⁵ Berry, *The Great Work*, 11.

¹⁰⁶ Michael Pollan, "Where Does Your Food Come From?" April 19, 2007, in *Word for Word APM*, podcast, accessed June 24, 2013, <http://wordforword.publicradio.org/programs/2007/06/08/>.

¹⁰⁷ Ursula Goodenough, *The Sacred Depths of Nature* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1998), 27.

¹⁰⁸ "Pyramid of Numbers" is a concept of consumer layers originally put forth by Charles Elton in his classic (1927) book *Animal Ecology*. This concept has been since modified and expanded into "Pyramid of

(trophic level), more is required to be eaten in order for sufficient life sustaining energy to be produced. Simply put, many diverse plants and herbage are required to be consumed in order that a single herbivore may live and many herbivores must be consumed in order that a single carnivore may live and many kinds of plants, herbivores and carnivores must be consumed so that a single omnivore like humans may live. The ecological reason for this is that at each step in the process, energy is diminished through usage or loss. Upsetting the proportional numeric relations at any level in the pyramid, in particular at its base, as is taking place with the over-reliance on the two staple crop sources, endangers the entire structure and carrying capacity or the ability of the environment to sustain its population, particularly in a healthy fashion.

Food chains are multiple and interconnect with each other at various links in the chains. In doing so, they become a collection of strands in a much larger and more complex web. Philosophically speaking, it is this very understanding of the intimate integration and inter-connectivity of humans and fellow living organisms coupled with their mutual consumption of and food/energy sourcing of each other that has been disrupted by modernist notions of a dead matter earth. Misguided conceptions and application of individuality, independence and self-sufficiency of the human species has been driven by global Western cultural hegemony. As Berry observed, "...our Western culture long ago abandoned its integral relation with the planet on which we live¹⁰⁹."

As an example, let us take a snapshot of the demographics and topography of food sources and consumption patterns in the United States. About 60% of America's

Biomass" and "Pyramid of Energy" which are more realistic. However, the Pyramid of numbers is still used and sufficient for explaining structures. Robert Leo Smith, *Ecology and Field Biology*. (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 1996), 191-192.

¹⁰⁹ Berry, *The Great Work*, 147.

land area is devoted to either crops or livestock grazing, often greatly diminishing the land's ability to support wild life¹¹⁰. The production of feed for animals who are then consumed by human accounts for 18% of water consumption. Two billion tons of animal waste is produced a year. This is over ten times the solid municipal (human) waste generated by humans¹¹¹. Despite this huge agricultural production of meat, poverty, hunger and famine continue to grow both here and abroad¹¹². This pattern of food-associated practices is unsustainable as it is devouring the very foundational natural resources (land, water, etc.) and conditions upon which it is constructed and dependent on. As Michael Pollen observes:

“Our current food systems show clear indication of unsustainability and therefore urgent changes and reforms need to be made in contemporary food chains. Indicators of food unsustainability are high-intensity animal production, production out of season, high greenhouse emission, energy use, water consumption and waste of industrial-agro manufacturing

¹¹⁰ Michael Brower and Warren Leon, *The Consumer's Guide to Effective Environmental Choices* (New York, NY: Three Rivers Press, 1999), 55.

¹¹¹ *Ibid*, 58.

¹¹² In the United States, more than one out of five children lives in a household with food insecurity, which means they do not always know where they will find their next meal. According to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), 16.7 million children under 18 (among 35 million in total) in the United States live in this condition – unable to consistently access nutritious and adequate amounts of food necessary for a healthy life. (<http://feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/impact-of-hunger.aspx>, accessed on June 24, 2013). According to the USDA in a paper titled “Feeding the Hungry and Reducing Solid Waste Through Food Recovery,” “More than a quarter of America’s food, or about 96 billion pounds of food a year, goes to waste – in fields, commercial kitchens, manufacturing plants, markets, schools, and restaurants. ... much of this could go to those who are hungry and need it. Furthermore, the nation spends an estimated \$1 billion a year to dispose of excess food.” In a nutshell, that means for every person more than 300 pounds of food is discarded. wow According to the EPA, “In the US, roughly 30-50% of food produced for consumption ends up in landfills each year.” (as quoted in Khan, Mohammed, p.8). This given the fact that there are over 870 million people worldwide who are categorized by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization as being chronically hungry and undernourished: <http://www.fao.org> accessed June 24, 2013.

systems. These factors clearly contribute to global warming and further pollution of the planet¹¹³.”

Muslim Americans, a small but increasingly important minority segment of the population, are both contributors to and victims of this unsustainable life style. They are also significant players in terms of their role vis-à-vis their co-religionists in other parts of the world since they are based in the epicenter of the world’s Western hegemonic powerhouse. This is evidenced by the fact that due to various historical/political and economic factors the intellectuals of much of the Muslim world are either educated and/or situated within the West in general and America in particular (English being the new lingua franca of the world). Various scholars such as the late Ismail al-Faruqi refer to this phenomenon as the “brain drain” of the Muslim world.¹¹⁴ This accounts for the disproportionately high number of scholars and Muslim religious leaders based in America and Europe who are listed in various annual compilations of the world’s most influential Muslims¹¹⁵. As with all Americans, there is a crying need among Muslims for their reform in terms of food consumption patterns and a return to a more religiously driven, ecologically sensitive lifestyle.

¹¹³Michael Pollan, “Where Does Your Food Come From?” <http://wordforword.publicradio.org/programs/2007/06/08/>.

¹¹⁴ Late Ismail Faruqi was a Palestinian American Philosopher and Scholar of Religion. Founder and Chair of the Islamic Studies Program at Temple University and the founder of the International Islamic Institute for Thought. He was a prolific writer with over 100 scholarly articles and 25 books. Widely recognized by his peers as an authority on Comparative Religion, Kate Zebiri observed that he has produced the most exhaustive Islamic treatment of Christianity by a Western Muslim. Jane Smith called him “Muslim father of the dialogue.” On the issue of “brain drain” Faruqi observed: “The whole Muslim world is pouring its —human butter— into the jars of America and Europe, and it is doing so in the constant flow that is known as the —brain drain.” Ibid., 333; and Charles Fletcher, “Isma’il Al-Faruqi (1921-1986) and Inter-faith Dialogue: The Man, The Scholar, The Participant,” (PhD Thesis, McGill University, 2008), 77, http://digitool.library.mcgill.ca/webclient/StreamGate?folder_id=0&dvs=1524677193982~466.

¹¹⁵ The Muslim 500- The World’s 500 Most Influential Muslims <http://themuslim500.com/campaign-2017/Announcing-m500-2017.html> accessed 4/1/2018.

Halal/Tayyib (Permissible/Wholesome) vs. Haram (Prohibited)

It is in keeping with this spirit that Islam, as part of its comprehensive guidance, stipulates how animals are to be treated, what animals can be used for food by humans and how meat is to be made *Tayyib* (pure and wholesome)¹¹⁶. A general directive on food, addressed to all humanity, is contained in the following verse: “O humankind! Eat of what is *Halal* (lawful, permissible) and *Tayyib* on earth and follow not Satan’s footsteps for, verily he is your open enemy and bids you only to do evil and to commit deeds of abomination...” (Quran 2:168-169). Here, human beings are asked to partake of the vast store of good things which *Allah* has prepared for them. They are cautioned neither to eat everything indiscriminately nor to deny themselves, in the manner of ascetics, of what is lawful and good. As human beings, we, like other animals learn and are conditioned from a young and tender age within the contexts of our families and households concerning what to eat (and what not to eat) and how to eat it (or not).

Muslims are commanded in the *Quran* to eat that which is *halal* (lawful) and *Tayyib* (wholesome) and to avoid that which is *haram* (forbidden). In Arabic, the word *halal* means permitted or lawful and it applies to all human actions and social/economic transactions (*Amal*), including but not limited to matters of food, as well as to acts of worship (*Ibadah*). It is defined as an action/matter for which no clear prohibition (*haram*) has been mentioned and therefore is permissible and lawful in *Sharia*. Religiously, it is a

¹¹⁶ *Tayyib* is a general term for pure and wholesome that is used in reference to various aspects of nature or nature connected phenomena. For example in a Hadith the Prophet Muhammed (AS) stated that the earth itself is *Tayyib* or wholesome and complete.

method of taxonomy and classification of actions of people and things, objects they need, i.e. food, dress, etc¹¹⁷.

Halal is one of two religious book ends on a shelf and spectrum of classification/categories determined by the Muslim scholars and Jurists over time, the other book end being *Haram* (forbidden/sacred), the opposite of *halal*. *Haram* refers to that action/matter which is clearly prohibited and forbidden and will result in punishment in this world and the next if deliberately acted upon. In between these two major classifications are a gradated plethora and range of categories (in some cases the categories themselves are subject to debate) that are constructed by scholars through detailed definitions.

A general operative and guiding principle in Islam is: “Everything is *halal* unless it is specified as *haram*.” When it comes to Islam’s dietary regulations as they pertain to declaring foods *halal* and *haram*, one of the main criteria of the Holy *Quran* is whether the foods are *Tayyib* (wholesome) or not: “...He (the Prophet) makes lawful (*halal*) to them the good things (*Tayyib*) of life and he forbids them (makes *haram*) the bad things (*Khabitha*)...” (Quran 7:157). *Tayyib* here is defined as that which is good and wholesome.

¹¹⁷*Halal* as a category applies to more than just food. Worldwide it is a \$700 billion food industry servicing the needs of 1.6 billion Muslims or nearly 20% of the entire global food industry (www.ifanca.org). In such a lucrative market the possibilities of greed driven fraud and corruption abound. In fact one site survey of *Halal* establishments in the United States found that around 50% of the products labeled as *Halal* were not. The need for regulation of the exponentially growing *Halal* sector with greater efficiency and transparency and *Halal* compliance has resulted in Muslim-Americans working with State authorities to develop legislation making it a crime to sell food falsely labeled as *Halal*. California and Michigan recently joined New Jersey, Illinois and Minnesota in passing so called “*Halal* bills.” (Similar legislation for kosher food already exists in many states.). Evans, Abdalhamid, “Globalization of *Halal*”, *Halal Consumer* (www.ifanca.org, Spring 2013), 11. More information on the *Halal* industry and governmental regulation can be found in a detailed paper on the subject. Please see <http://leda.law.harvard.edu/leda/data/375/Marei.pdf> accessed on June 24, 2013.

For animals to be *halal* for human consumption there are a set of basic legislated requirements. Namely that the *Dhabiha/Zabiha*¹¹⁸ (animal which is intended to be slaughtered/sacrificed) usually refers to domesticated *halal* animals/livestock, which include cattle, sheep, goats, camels and poultry. These must also be *Tayyib* – i.e. not physically handicapped or defective; not a baby who is still nursing nor a mother who is nursing her child; one that is raised under humane conditions. Many define these conditions to include being able to engage in their natural behavior in a clean, safe environment sometimes referred to as “free range” and thus not the product of cramped shoulder-to-shoulder warehouse factory farming conditions such as Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFO). They should be fed grass/vegetarian/organic feed (no animal by-products); and this should also be free from artificial hormones and antibiotics¹¹⁹. The linguistic meaning of *Tayyib* allows in my opinion for consideration of other factors that go into the production and processing of food, including the ethical, just and fair treatment of the farm workers and laborers that plant and harvest the plants and animals, and the larger fair trade practices for all those involved in the entire process from farm to fork. Muslim feminists like Kecia Ali and others have made the case for expanding the meanings and the technical definitions of Islamic terms like *Tayyib*, *Halal* and *Haram* when it comes to dietary issues. She argues that animal welfare and ecological concerns that arise out of the modern CAFO and factory slaughter systems make the case for Muslim vegetarian ethics despite the lawfulness (*halal*) of meat-eating

¹¹⁸*Dhabiha/Zabiha* –is a *masdar* – gerund -Verbal/Noun. It refers both to the act (method) of sacrifice and ritual slaughter as well as to the animal intended to be sacrificed/ritually slaughtered.

¹¹⁹80% of antibiotics used in the USA are fed to livestock (grew from 18 million pounds in 1999 to nearly 30 million pounds in 2011) in low sub therapeutic doses to help them grow more quickly in overcrowded – shoulder-to-shoulder - CAFO (Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations) conditions. Results in anti-biotic resistant bacteria “super-bugs” like MRSA. Barry Estabrook, “Growing Resistance,” *Eating Well Magazine* (June 2013), 50.

in Islam. Other scholars like Magfirah Dahlan-Taylor argue that beyond dietary issues and a desire for Muslim consumers to eat *halal*, there is a need to connect to the political questions of food justice that also includes consideration of labor and wealth inequality¹²⁰. I concur and assert here that an expansive linguistic meaning of *Tayyib* needs to be adopted. More expansive religious meanings and understandings of *Tayyib* by Muslim religious scholars in the modern world need to be affirmed since these issues were not part of the equation in a simpler less globalized world. Collectively as a result of these practices, livestock are viewed as far more than merely their price at market or nutritional value and caloric content. They have a distinctive consciousness and spiritual worth that also needs to be appropriately assessed and valued as well. For example, Abu Rabi'a records that among the (*al-Aarob*) Bedouin of the Negev desert (Palestine), the significance of the flocks of animals is much more than merely economic: "The flock is the connecting link not only between men, but also between men and God, prophets, saints and pious people¹²¹." A clear manifestation of the inter-life-dependence, mutuality and inter-connectivity of human and domesticated animals and their linkage to the Divine and pious.

One of the most important of the fifty names and epithets that the *Quran* gives itself is that of *Al-Muhaiman*, which means Discriminating Judge. In keeping with this quality, i.e. the *Quran* as a guide to judging and discerning when it comes to whether food is *Tayyib* and *halal*, one must consider those things which when added to the mix make it *haram* and no longer *Tayyib*. According to the *Quran* these include: *najas* (that

¹²⁰ Willis Jenkins, Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim, Editors, *Routledge Handbook of Religion and Ecology* (London, UK: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2016), "Islam Norms and Practices by Zainal Abidin Bagir and Najiyah Martiam", 82-83.

¹²¹ Timothy Insoll, *The Archaeology of Islam* (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1999), 101.

which is impure, unclean, contaminated), *rijis* (that which is dirty, filthy), and *khabeeth* (that which is bad, repugnant, and harmful). All of these *Quranic* terminologies need to be revisited by qualified Muslim scholarship in conversation with technical experts in the various fields related to agriculture and domestic animal production including chemists and veterinarians and expanded to include, as appropriate, new substances and meanings in keeping with the modern agricultural practices including, but not limited to, pesticides and genetic modification. Broadly speaking, these pollutants and contaminants cause that which is *Tayyib* (clean and healthy) to be physically and spiritually altered and these characteristics are then passed on in some way to those who ingest it. As believers in the *Quran* are required to be in a state of physical and spiritual purity and cleanliness when praying, ingesting any of the referenced contaminants may have the result that their prayers and other acts of worship are religiously void and not accepted by *Allah*.

As was mentioned earlier, each organism in the food chain is interlinked. In principle, Islam posits that each and every creature in these chains is naturally and inherently clean and wholesome because they are created by *Allah*. This however does not mean that everything is clean and wholesome for everything else to eat. All creatures have unique and different labels and realities of cleanliness that apply to them as they have varied and distinct dietary requirements that are natural for their own being and existence. Humans may believe themselves to be *Tayyib* and *Zaki* (clean), but in fact they are not clean or wholesome for other human beings to eat. Cannibalism has, by in large, been viewed by the majority of human societies and civilizations as abhorrent and criminal. Yet, if we look further down the food chain, humans (and for that matter other land animals) upon death are clean and wholesome enough for the likes of wild predators,

scavengers and insects to feast upon. Those very same insects, while not clean and wholesome for us to eat, are in fact clean and wholesome enough for fish, animals and birds to eat, many of which are in turn are clean and wholesome for us to eat. And so, the drama of the circle of life continues to play itself out over and over again. Eating habits, it can be said, are not only a reflection of the people engaging in them, but also at a deeper level inform their mental and spiritual status. Those who opt to eat that which is clean and wholesome are thought to have a proclivity and propensity to embody the qualities and characteristics of that which they consume. the opposite holds true as well. Islamic teachings posit that what I consume becomes not only a part of my body, but also affects my soul and being – my (whole) self. I am what I eat in totality. Islam views our bodies like all creation as *Amanah*, a trust, and as trustees over our bodies and as creation, we must render back the trusts we have been given faithfully to the One who gave them to us. Our bodies are the homes of our souls (*Ruh*), and what affects the body affects the soul. By allowing that which is *Haram* to enter the body, we stand in danger of imperiling our very souls.

Halal/Haram Food - the specifics

Following the directive to all of humanity as quoted in the Quran, “O you people! eat of what is on earth lawful and good; and do not follow the footsteps of the evil one for he is to you an avowed enemy” (*Quran* 2:168), the following specific directive is addressed to the believers in particular:

“Oh, you who have attained faith! Eat of the good things which We (*Allah*) have provided for you as sustenance, and render thanks unto *Allah*, if it is truly Him that you worship. He has forbidden to you only carrion

(*al-maytah*), and blood (*al-dem*), and the flesh of swine (*lahma khunzeer*), and that over which any name other than *Allah*'s has been invoked, but if one is driven by necessity - neither coveting it or exceeding his immediate need – no sin shall be upon him, for behold, *Allah* is the Forgiving, the Merciful.” (*Quran* 2-172-173).

In this verse, *Allah* commands the believers to eat of the good things He has provided and encourages them to give thanks as is due. However, four categories of food are explicitly forbidden:

- (1) *Al-Maytah* - Dead animals
- (2) *Al-Dem* - Blood
- (3) *Lahma Khunzeer* - The flesh of swine
- (4) Animals slaughtered/sacrificed in a name of other than *Allah*.

In the following verse in this series of verses, which is in keeping with one of the universally accepted primary methods and techniques of Holy scriptural exegesis, namely the utilization of Scripture to clarify and explain scripture, more specifics/clarifications are provided, such as elaborating upon the category of “dead animals” mentioned in the aforementioned verse:

“I do not find within that which was revealed to me [anything] forbidden to one who would eat it unless it be a dead animal or blood spilled out or the flesh of swine - for indeed, it is impure - or it be [that slaughtered in] disobedience, dedicated to other than *Allah*. But whoever is forced [by necessity], neither desiring [it] nor transgressing [its limit], then indeed, your Lord is Forgiving and Merciful.” (*Quran* 6:145)

Here, the flesh of the swine is described as *rijsen* (loathsome), and animals over which any name other than *Allah* is invoked is described as *fisqan* (a sinful offering).

Similar prohibitions are stated in *Surah Maida*, the table spread (Quran 5:3), “Forbidden to you is carrion, and blood, and flesh of swine, and that over which any name other than *Allah*’s has been invoked, and the animal that has been strangled - asphyxiation (*al-mukhanaqah*).” The latter, whether deliberate or accidental is implied in this text. This is also interpreted to include those animals that are killed by drowning in water or chemical gassing as in common practice in the meat industry. The verse continues “or beaten to death” (*al-mawqudhah*), which in the modern slaughtering practices, can be understood to include electric shock and gun shots that could deal a fatal blow before the animal’s throat is knife cut. In addition to the relevance of this verse for modern animal slaughter, the verse continues, “or killed by a fall” (*al-mutaraddiyah*), implying death that results from a broken neck or concussion. This would include the modern means of breaking an animal’s neck through and through. Finally, the verse mentions, “or gored to death (*an-natihah*), or savaged by a beast of prey (*MaaAkala Al-Saba'u*), save that which you yourselves may have performed *dhabiha* (sacrifice) on it (while it was still alive).” These last two categories can also include animals that are caught by hunting with hunting animals (and are not really the subject matter of this paper) “and forbidden to you is all that has been slain on idolatrous alters.”

This expanded definition of *maytah*- dead animals, disallows various types of slaughter methods currently in use in the industrial slaughter as employed by the abattoirs in the so-called humane killing process. As mentioned previously Muslims are taught through the *Quran* that all animals should be treated with respect and well cared for as

creatures with consciousness and intelligences and who form organized social communities (*Ummam*) like themselves (Quran 6:38). It is with this awareness in mind that the goal, while slaughtering an animal, is to minimize the amount of pain the animal will endure. When an animal is slaughtered, the throat, esophagus and jugular veins are cut and the blood is allowed to drain from the animal¹²². Muslims are prohibited from consuming animal blood and blood byproducts¹²³. Hence, one can see how the abiding of the proper slaughter methods would prevent much of the inhumane treatment presently acceptable in the meat industry.

The taking of any life that is made sacred by the Creator (*al-Khaliq*) *Allah* can only come about if the permission of the One who brings forth life and causes death is ascertained. This is a weighty matter that includes a conscious and deliberate intentionality (*niyat*) as well as abiding by the method of death that is sanctioned by the Creator and adhered to by the one carrying out the act of slaughter/sacrifice itself. This is accomplished by invoking the name of *Allah*, saying the *bismillah*, at the time of slaughter, and also prior to eating that which has been killed, in order to justify the nourishment and therefore existence of the one whom eats and ingests it. This is similar to the sentiment expressed by Christian theologian, Norman Wirzba: “For food is a gift of God given to all creatures for the purposes of life’s nurture, sharing and celebration.

¹²² It is worth mentioning at this point that increasing numbers of Muslims in the West engage in what has been called D-I-Y-U (Do It Yourself *Udhiyya*) or sacrificing the animal themselves with the whole family present. This is particularly popular during the great religious holiday of *Eid’Ul Adha* which commemorates the sacrifice of Prophet Ibraheem (Abraham- AS) and his son Ismael (Ishmael – AS) when Muslims follow in this tradition and sacrifice a sheep, goat, cow, camel, etc. as a sign of obedience and commitment to the commands of *Allah*. Through carrying out and witnessing the sacrifice first hand, families develop a deeper and visceral appreciation of the importance and sanctity of all life and the farm to fork process. Kiran Ansari, “Do-it-Yourself Udhiyah Sacrifices on the Rise in the USA”, *Halal Consumer* (www.ifanca.org Fall 2012), 13. Though growing in numbers general acceptance of this type of activity by American Muslims still seems a long way off.

¹²³ The exception being provided by the Prophet (AS) for the liver and spleen – which in Arabic are referred to as *al-Dem* (Blood) because these organs are engorged with blood.

When it is done in the name of God, eating is the earthly realization of God’s eternal communion-building love¹²⁴.” In this way, according to Wirzba – “...we become worthy of the deaths of others when we eat them... we honor a life that we are eating... and in that way...are able to honor the Creator...¹²⁵.”

As Dr. Yusuf Qaradawi has discussed at length in his widely cited work on halal and haram, *The Lawful and the Prohibited in Islam*, Muslim scholars and jurists over the centuries have put forth the wisdom and possible reasons for the prohibition of eating animals that have died of natural causes (not being slaughtered or hunted by humans), including the following list that he gives:

- 1) it would be an anathema to the dignity, nobility and honor (*karamna*) bestowed by *Allah* upon human beings;
- 2) there is a lack of intentionality (in the death) – to act with a specific purpose and intention in mind followed by effort and subsequent action;
- 3) animals which die a natural death due to either some acute chronic disease, or ingesting poisonous plants, old age or starvation, may have flesh that is harmful and dangerous for human consumption;
- 4) it takes away a means of food and provision for *Allah*’s creatures who feed upon the dead and;

¹²⁴Wirzba, *Food and Faith*, preface.

¹²⁵ Taken from Norman Wirzba’s Religion and Ethics Newsweekly Interview (<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/2010/07/16/july-16-2010-norman-wirzba-extended-interview/6663/>) accessed June 24, 2013.

5) this prohibition is in fact an incentive for those who are responsible to care for the animals (farmers, and the like) to protect them against mistreatment and disease¹²⁶.

These rules apply specifically to the impermissibility of the consumption of “dead” animals. They do not affect the use of the dead animals’ skin (hide), bones, hair, wool, etc. which, with the exception of swine, are permissible for other uses.

In summary then, the prohibited food and meat for Muslims to consume, as detailed in the verses of the Quran referenced above, are the following:

- pork or pork by products
- animals that were dead prior to slaughtering
- animals not slaughtered properly or not slaughtered in the name of *Allah*
- blood and blood by products

In addition, the following foods, drinks and meats are also prohibited in other *Quranic* verses and Prophetic *Hadiths* for Muslims to consume:

- alcohol – all intoxicants
- carnivorous animals
- birds of prey
- land animals without external ears

Everything from the sea is *halal* (permissible) irrespective of kind/type or method of slaughter¹²⁷. Taken as a whole, the aforementioned provide a set of detailed “halal”

¹²⁶Qaradawi’s statement here merely reflects that a person happening across a dead animal, without knowing how it had died or by whom and then eating it would be akin to a wild animal (scavenger) who would do the same. This is unbecoming of the Divinely imparted dignity of human being. In Islam, *Niyat*, intention is a necessary component and precursor for any action or act of worship to be accepted provided of course the act, the worship is conducted in accordance with the form stipulated in the *Shariah* – Sacred law. Yusuf Al-Qaradawi., *The Lawful and the Prohibited in Islam*. trans. Kamal El-Helbaway, (Indianapolis, IN: American Trust Publications, 1985), 43.

guidelines and a framework for a basic ethic for the humane treatment and consumption of domesticated livestock. Increased understanding and awareness of Islam’s teachings and practices on such matters may provide a helpful resource for the contemporary food movement as it seeks to balance the food consumption and the dietary needs of the growing human population with that of the humane treatment (and slaughter) of animals raised for that purpose. For Muslims, in industrialized nations, acceptance and adherence to these guidelines and “best practices” will allow them to live in better accord with their faith in this new world.

Muslims Habits and Islam’s Ethical Eating Teachings of Al-Ghazali

Food and its manner of consumption can serve as markers or badges that distinguish one people from another. Food consumption is an active agent of communal inclusion/exclusion. If “what we eat” defines who we are and who are those like us, then “how we eat” is an indicator of our moral and ethical values. It is worthwhile to recall that both terms in their dictionary definitions, namely, “ethics” (etymologically from the Greek *ethos, ethike*) and “morality” (etymologically from the Latin *mos, mores*), mean customs or sacred customs of the people. As Wirzba notes in a different context, the lack of attention to these manners and ways of eating renders human beings in a type of exile. He does not mean, by this, being dislocated from one’s ancestral home. Rather “it means that the ways and manners of our being anywhere do not exhibit a harmonious fit – a problem of moral and spiritual discernment... the inability to live peaceably, sustainably,

¹²⁷ Mention should be made of the classification of some jurists in particular within the Hanafi *Madhab* (school of jurisprudence) of certain types of shellfish as being *Makrooh* (disliked), which falls short of *Haram*. This seems to have resonance with similar Kosher Laws of the Jews. This opinion is not one that is accepted by the other major schools of *Islamic* jurisprudence (Maliki, Shafee, Hambelli, Jafiri, Zaidiee). It is also contested by other reputed scholars in the Hanafi *Madhab* as well.

and joyfully in one's place¹²⁸." To a great extent, these ethical insights occur and religious traditions are communicated around the table spread during meals. It is in this place through which moral and spiritual discernment are inculcated thru ethical eating, mindfulness and mannerisms.

In his Magnum Opus, *The Revival of the Religious Sciences*, the great eleventh century jurist and mystic, Abu Hamid Al-Ghazali (1058-1111)¹²⁹, whose scholarly works are being revisited today by many Muslim scholars and academics¹³⁰ as providing new insights into modern Muslim problems and challenges, describes the principles of conduct in daily life¹³¹. In the prologue of one of its chapters titled: *Book on the Ethics of Eating*¹³², he hierarchically links together the anticipated ultimate re-encounter (after leaving the Garden) between human beings and their Creator (on Judgment Day) with knowledge (*Ilm*) and deeds (*Amal*). These two fundamental components of human beings, which are the keys to eternal salvation or damnation, are in turn enabled through a healthy body. He emphasizes this point further by recalling that one of the righteous predecessors has said: "Eating is of the religion, the Lord of the Worlds has instructed us regarding it, as He said: '...eat of the good things (*Tayyib*) and do righteous deeds.'" the

¹²⁸ Wirzba, *Food and Faith*, 72.

¹²⁹ "Al-Ghazali is known as one of the most important Islamic philosophers in Islamic history, and is seen as the most important Muslim to have lived after the Prophet Muhammed (AS) himself. He would influence not only Islamic philosophers and theologians, but also medieval Christian and Jewish thinkers such as Aquinas and Maimonides." <http://www.philosimply.com/philosopher/al-ghazali> accessed on 4/1/2108.

¹³⁰ "Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (1058-1111) is the most famous theologian-mystic of Islam and the equivalent of Thomas Aquinas in Christianity and Maimonides in Judaism. His contribution to the formation of Islamic thought and mysticism is incalculable and hence the source of inspiration and guidance for Muslims as they face the challenges of the modern world" lecture notes from Professor Timothy Winter who is Shaykh Zayed Lecturer in Islamic Studies at the University of Cambridge, from May 2015 Conference, Washington, DC.

¹³¹ Abdul Hamid Al-Ghazali *Al-Ghazali's Ihya Ulum-al—Din Revitalization of the Sciences of the Religion*, trans. Zidan, Ahmad (Cairo, Egypt: Islamic Publishing, 1997).

¹³² *Ibid.*, 205-219.

pinnacle of these righteous deeds is worship. Muslim jurists, not unlike jurists of other faith and secular traditions, place a high value on a type of precedence (*stari decics*). This conception is derived in large part from a Prophetic tradition which states that the best of generations is the generation of his companions (*Sahabah*), followed by the generation after them (*Tabiee*) and the generation after them (*taba-Tabiee*), and after that the subsequent generations may compete (in religiousness/goodness) among each other. The Arabic term for these three generations of pious predecessors is *Salafi Salih*, not to be confused with the more modern *Salafi* movement, often associated with the theology and actions of the Saudi regime, Bin Laden and his followers, and others who adhere to their strict interpretation of Islam. According to Al-Ghazali, religious eating precedes religious action and is a necessary element in its manifestation, success and validity/acceptance¹³³. He further elaborates that “a healthy body can only be achieved if healthy food is taken in due proportion at the due time.” He contrasts this type of conscientious “human” eating with that of animals, which “graze incessantly in the fields,” a distinction that sometimes gets blurred when humans and animals engage in similar behaviors¹³⁴.

He then proceeds to break down the ethics, activity and manners of eating into four chapters, the first of which addresses individual eating, while the other chapters deal with various aspects of communal eating. Chapter One, “Requisites of Eating” is further divided into three sections: “Before Eating,” “During Eating,” and “After Eating.” The next chapter, entitled “Additional manners to be observed when eating in a gathering,” is further divided into seven sections, and following chapters concern, “The Manner of

¹³³ This can be understood as being the “something more” which Wendell Berry, as quoted by Norman Wirzba, was referring to, when in the *Gift of Good Land*, he said: “To eat is still something more than to maintain bodily functions.” Wirzba, *Food and Faith*, 70.

¹³⁴ Abdul Hamid Al-Ghazali, *Al-Ghazali's Ihya Ulum-al—Din*, 205.

Presenting Food to Guests,” and “On the Manners of Hospitality.” What follows is a selective compilation of his writings from that first chapter, appended as needed with the particular *Sunnah/Hadith* that serve as proof text for the ethical practice being described, as cited from Al-Baghawi – *Mishkat Al-Masabih*¹³⁵. Also where appropriate I comment and reflect on the implication and ethical import of the stated Prophetic practice from this widely referenced classical text of Islam’s teachings on ethics and behavior, including explanatory references and insight from Norman Wirzba as may be the case. Food production and consumption is an act of worship.

Before Eating

In this section Al-Ghazali comments that “The food must be lawful (*halal*) and good (*tayyib*) and gained in a lawful (*halal*) way¹³⁶.” The lawful (*halal*) mentioned here is inclusive of both the type of food that is consumed, as well as the method of slaughter employed in the case of animals (which was discussed in detail previously), and harvest in the case of plants. Al-Ghazali was writing for Muslim audience who were already conversant and knowledgeable with these basic terms and their meaning. His precept is also connected to economic considerations, on the part of the consumer in terms of how he/she earned the money with which they are paying for the food, as well as the fairness of wages and working conditions under which the producers of the food, including the farmers, farm workers and all those involved in the transport and processing of the food from farm to market, were subjected to. Al-Ghazali highlights this economic aspect by including reference to the following *Quranic* verse: “O you who believe! Do not devour

¹³⁵ Al-Baghawi, *Mishkat Al-Masabih*, trans. James Robson, (Lahore, Pakistan: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf Publishers, Ltd., 1981).

¹³⁶ This section is abstracted from: Abdul Hamid, *Al-Ghazali’s Ihya Ulum-al—Din*, 207-208.

your wealth among yourselves falsely, but trade fairly by your mutual consent. And do not kill yourselves...” (Quran 4:29). Many Muslims have in their “lived religion” both ignored their own methods of income generation, and instead narrowly focus on the kind of animal itself and the method of its slaughter, and have ignored the manner and method by which it was raised, handled and treated on the way to the slaughter house. This top down approach of framing the food chain dynamics is also a reflection of the broader trends in food commodification and of the contemporary scene, earlier described by Norman Wirzba, which results in “...a diminished sense for the depth and breadth of the relationships that constitute a food item (by the consumer)¹³⁷.”

Part of the practices before eating also includes the practice of wudu, as Al-Ghazali comments: “The Prophet said: Ablution before eating dispels poverty, and ablution after eating purifies you from the minor sins¹³⁸.” *Wudu*, ablution, the ritual washing and purification of oneself with water, is both a pre-requisite and ongoing requirement for the validity of *Salah* – Islam’s daily ritual prayers, as well as the ritual elements of the Hajj – the pilgrimage to the *Kaaba* in Mecca, two of Islam’s five required pillars of religion. The performance of ablution, established by the Prophet Muhammed (AS), *prior* to the apparently routine and mundane act of human eating, elevates this act to an intentional act of worship, in and of itself. *Salah*, which is the hallmark of Muslim religious and spiritual practice, was characterized by the Prophet Muhammed (AS) as *Mirajul Mumin* (the ascension and communion of the believer with Allah). In this sense,

¹³⁷ Wirzba, *Food and Faith*, 22-23.

¹³⁸ It is interesting to note that this statement of the Prophet about ablution is said to originally be in response to a similar Torah practice that was brought to his attention by one of his close *Sahaba*, Salman al-Farsi. “Salman said he read in the Torah that the blessings of food consists in ablution after it, and when he mentioned that to the Prophet he said, ‘The blessing of food consists in ablution before it and ablution after it.’” Al-Baghawi, *Mishkat Al-Masabih*, trans. Robson, James (Lahore, Pakistan: Sh. Muhammad Ashraf Publishers, Ltd., 1981), 892.

through the act of eating, a Muslim engages in a type of sacred and holy communion with the Creator, via the food which has been provided by His Grace¹³⁹.” The very act of eating itself is transformed into a thoughtful, prayerful devotion and spiritual exercise for the Muslim, whereby, as Norman Wirzba observes in a related Christian context, “...people learn to become prayerful in their eating¹⁴⁰.” This can also be understood as an act of gratitude (*Shukr*) and respect for the food, whereby one is able to fully obtain the blessings contained within the food, both physical/caloric and spiritual. The Quran mentions: “And whatever of blessings and good things you have, it is from Allah” (Quran 16:53). This is also in keeping with the Quranic notion that sincere expressions of gratitude lead to an increase of *Allah’s* many favors, whereas ingratitude leads to the opposite. The *Quran* also mentions: “And (remember) when your Lord proclaimed: ‘If you give thanks, I will give you more (of My Blessings); but if you are thankless, verily, my punishment is indeed severe’” (Quran 14:7). The re-enactment of *wudu* after the meal is to purify minor sins, which would include acts of omission/commission with respect to the etiquettes and mechanics associated with the consumption of food itself¹⁴¹.

Modern medical conventions and health practices, which were largely unknown over 1,400 years ago during the Prophet Muhammad’s (AS) time, emphasize the personal and public health benefits of the washing of hands before eating, as well as prior to food preparation. One commonly encounters health department mandated signs to this effect posted in public/employee bathrooms of restaurant and supermarket establishments, yet

¹³⁹ Norman Wirzba characterizes this as a “natural communion” when he says: “Eating joins people to each other, to other creatures and the world, and to God through forms of ‘natural communion’ too complex to fathom.” Wirzba, *Food and Faith*, 2.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid. 33.

¹⁴¹ There exists a general broad classification of sins by Muslim scholars: *Akbar*: major sins for which a punishment is prescribed, and *Asghar*: minor sins for which repentance is required. For a more detailed discussion see Abdul Hamid Al-Ghazali, *Al-Ghazali’s Ihya Ulum*, 431-432.

how often do such rules go unapplied, and how harmful are the potential consequences of such skin rashes. This is one more example of the thoroughness of Islamic food ethics that it extends beyond the food consumed.

Al-Ghazali's text also gives instructions that as to how to eat: "Food should be placed on a tray upon the floor, this is the way that the Prophet Muhammed (AS) used to eat his food. While he sat eating, the Prophet Muhammed (AS) frequently joined his knees and feet just as one who prays would, except that one knee was over the other, and one foot over the other foot, and he would say: 'I am only a servant; I eat and sit as he does'¹⁴²." While sitting on chairs and eating at a table is not prohibited in Islam, the posture of sitting on the ground while eating, in addition to causing one to connect in a visceral way with much of the world's impoverished masses, who Christ refers to "as the least of these" and who have no table to eat at, brings one closer in a physical sense to the earth and one's earthly origins, and brings an added proximity to the food which itself was the product of the earth. The Prophetic reasoning given for this posture of humility (*Tawadhu*) to be adopted in the presence of food practically emphasizes the Islamic notion of servitude in contrast to that of dominion. Sitting thus is also, as Al-Ghazali describes, akin to one of the Muslim postures in *Salah*, known as the *Jalsa* position (sitting with one's thighs on one's calves), situated between the two *Sajdas* (prostrations) as a reflective pause, during which one is encouraged to follow the Prophetic example, by remaining silent, or better yet, utter the following supplication: "O God forgive me, and have mercy upon me."

¹⁴² And it was narrated that Prophet (AS) said: "I eat as a slave eats and I sit as a slave sits." (Narrated by Abu Ya'laa, 8/318) This hadeeth was classed as saheeh (authentic) by al-Albaani in *al-Silsilat al-Saheehah*, 544, <https://islamqa.info/en/9894>, accessed on December 3, 2017.

There are also instructions in the text for how much food to take: “The intention of eating should be to take provision for the purpose of fulfilling the religious duties, not just for enjoying the food for its own sake.” As the well-known adage begins “We do not eat to live....” Food and drink preparation, and subsequent consumption, is not to be a hobby, past time, or ala the Food Cable TV stations, a spectator sport. Michael Pollan, in “Out of the Kitchen, onto the Couch” describes how the average American spends less than thirty minutes per day on food preparation (a reduction by half in the last forty years), while at the same time showing considerable interest in the great variety of cooking shows now available on cable TV’s Food Network¹⁴³. In contrast, as mentioned previously for Al-Ghazali, the purpose of eating should be towards enabling the body to physically worship the Lord, as part of the comprehensive concept of *Ibadah* (worship) in Islam, which includes ritual worship as well as work and the mundane activities of life.

In this section name it al-Ghazali decries the consumption of luxury foods (read expensive goods consumed by the higher socio-economic classes) and highlights the importance of bread when he says, “We have been commanded to respect bread... and we should not belittle it. If you have bread in your hand and the *Azan* (call to prayer) is given, do not attend the prayer until you eat the bread if there is time. The Prophet Muhammed (AS) said: “If the call for the evening prayer is given while the supper is laid down, start the supper¹⁴⁴.” Norman Wirzba, in his book, *Food and Faith*, devoted over thirty pages in various sections on the subject of “bread”, which has long been central to many cultures. He categorizes it variously as “a ‘simple’ food,” and “a staple of life, one

¹⁴³ Pollan’s essay is discussed by Wirzba, *Food and Faith*, 190.

¹⁴⁴ <https://islamqa.info/en/9794> . accessed on April 1, 2018.

of the basic ingredients that keep biological and social life on the move¹⁴⁵.” He posits that human history itself can in part be deciphered through the four major narratives or histories of bread, which taken together “requires us to move far beyond a particular ‘slice’ (itself a Anglo-Euro-centric term) to include the material, biological, social and divine sources that feed into every bite¹⁴⁶.” Bread, he concludes “has a life and history that circulates through the lives of many (human and non-human) others, contributing to either their life or destruction¹⁴⁷.” Interesting though being world’s apart . belonging to different faiths and centuries Wirzba’s echoes that of Al-Ghazali’s view, who embraces the multiplicity of significances of this simple and ordinary staple as being so central to the life of a Muslim, when he underscores the responsibility to “respect” it¹⁴⁸. Later in his work, Al-Ghazali quotes another related saying of the Prophet Muhammed (AS), who said: “Honor the bread, for God, High and Exalted, has sent it from the Blessings of Heaven¹⁴⁹.”

Al-Ghazali also draws the Muslim’s attention to bread and its importance and interconnectivity to *Salah*. Taken literally and out of context, one could understand from the Prophetic saying referenced that eating supper (including bread) supersedes the *Salah* itself. This, however, is not the case. Rather, the admonition of the Prophet Muhammed (AS) is more correctly understood to encourage the completion of one act of worship, namely the religiously performed and intentional act of mindful and ethical eating of

¹⁴⁵ Wirzba, *Food and Faith*, 12.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 13.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 17.

¹⁴⁸ Many peoples in and around the Mediterranean, including my ancestors from Bosnia and Herzegovina and my wife’s family from Alexandria, Egypt, eat bread with every meal. In tradition and in daily life, bread is held to be a divine gift from God. In the Egyptian dialect the term *aysh* is used for bread, which means "life itself." The classical Arabic term for bread is *khubiz* .

¹⁴⁹ Abdul Hamid Al-Ghazali, *Al-Ghazali’s Ihya Ulum-al—Din*, 209.

food, in order to facilitate and enable the other act of high worship, *Salah*, through the peace of mind that comes with not being hungry. In this connection, As Al-Ghazali places a great deal of import on bread which we will revisit other aspects of later in his work.

Al-Ghazali concludes the section on individual eating with an appeal to communal eating: “The Prophet Muhammed (AS) said: ‘Gather around your food, God will bless it for you¹⁵⁰.’” In this way, as Norman Wirzba observes, “food ceases to register as fuel or as a commodity. Eating becomes a sharing in (and with each other) and a sharing of the blessings of God¹⁵¹.” It is a blessing that physically increases the quantity of the food with more people joining in the meal. As the Prophet (AS) said, “One person’s food is enough for two, two persons’ food enough for four, and four persons’ food is enough for eight¹⁵².” Filial connectivity and communal identity are re-emphasized through the religious rite of “breaking bread” together. To combine and re-purpose the old adage “the family that prays (and eats) together, stays together.”

Al-Ghazali, Section 2: On Manners during Eating¹⁵³

This section of Al-Ghazali’s treatise, unlike the previous one, is not organized and divided into specifically numbered subsections. Rather, it loosely weaves together a variety of Prophetic eating practices, not unlike the unstructured manner in which partaking of a meal around the table spread often takes place. He asserts: “When the table spread is set it should be said: ‘In the Name of God, render the food favorable and praiseworthy and cause it to have the favor of Paradise.’ Though not specifically

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 213.

¹⁵¹ Wirzba, *Food and Faith*, 33.

¹⁵² Al-Baghawi, *Mishkat Al-Masabih*, 888.

¹⁵³ This section is abstracted from Abdul Hamid Al-Ghazali, *Al-Ghazali’s Ihya Ulum-al—Din*, 210.

attributing this statement to the Prophet Muhammed (AS), it can be understood as being related by Al-Ghazali as coming from the Prophet (AS), as is the case with similar descriptions in this section. This is also borne out by numerous other similar statements made by the Prophet Muhammed (AS) on this issue¹⁵⁴.

Deliberate failure on the part of the Muslim to begin the meal with the recitation of this formula not only deprives the food and act of eating of its blessings, but also brings on potentially devastating spiritual consequences. In a related saying, the Prophet Muhammed (AS) said: “The devil considers food lawful for him when God’s name is not mentioned over it¹⁵⁵.” The devil in fact joins and partakes of the meal and becomes one’s eating companion¹⁵⁶. If the failure to mention God before beginning the meal was due to forgetfulness, then upon remembering one’s neglect, the Prophet Muhammed (AS) directed: “When one of you eats and forgets to mention God over his food he should say, ‘In the name of God, at the beginning (Alpha) and at the end of it (Omega)¹⁵⁷.’” The *Islamic* liturgical form of “Grace” in its order, form and construction as described here, seems to be unique among the Abrahamic faith traditions and is in keeping with the previously referenced Wirzba admonition “...Food is a gift of God given to all creatures for the purposes of life’s nurture, sharing and celebration. When it is done *in the name of*

¹⁵⁴ One of many such Prophetic sayings is as follows: “Umar b. Abu Salama said: ‘I was a boy under the protection of God’s messenger, and as my hand used to roam at large on the dish he said to me, ‘Mention God’s name, eat with your right hand, and eat from what is next to you.’”(Bukhari and Muslim). Al-Baghawi, *Mishkat Al-Masabih* trans. James Robson.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, 887.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 886. At the end of a long narration that begins with the admonition to begin one’s actions, including the meal, with the name of God, the Prophet says “...and when he (the person) does not mention God at his food he (the devil) says (to himself), ‘You have found a place to spend the night and have an evening meal.’” (Muslim).

¹⁵⁷ Ibid, 891.

God, eating is the earthly realization of God’s eternal communion-building love¹⁵⁸.” So a Muslim actualizes this realization of “communion-building-love” through applying this practice mindfully.

In the rest of this section, Al-Ghazali proceeds to detail the basic table manners the Prophet (AS) engaged in while eating and doing so while seated on the floor. Included in this are the following advice: “The Prophet never found fault with food. If he was pleased with it, he ate it, if he disliked it, he left it¹⁵⁹.” This practice not only affirms respect and honor for *Allah*’s blessing, the food, but also makes for the continuity of good fraternal and social relations, as the food was served and eaten from a common plate shared by all. This set-up allowed for the untouched food to become part of rest of the leftover food to be eaten in the future and not thrown out and wasted. Cleaning one’s plate of food eliminates the wasting of food. According to the USDA, “If merely 5% of food discards were recovered, 4 million additional Americans could be fed each day¹⁶⁰.” Bread, like all non-liquid food, should be eaten from the outside towards the center. In this regard, Al-Ghazali quotes the Prophet Muhammed (AS) as saying: “Eat from what is near you.” In addition to the literal and practical meaning of this Prophetic statement, Ibrahim Abdul Metin holds that this could also mean to eat that which is locally grown and produced. A call for Muslims to be “locavores”¹⁶¹. He continues by saying “the bread should be eaten from the outside edge inwards, not broken in two to reach the middle first. When the outside is finished then the middle can be broken or eaten. Bread

¹⁵⁸Wirzba, *Food and Faith*, preface.

¹⁵⁹ Abdul Hamid Al-Ghazali, *Al-Ghazali’s Ihya Ulum-al—Din*, 213.

¹⁶⁰ Mohammed Khan, “Waste Not, Want Not,” *Halal Consumer*, (www.ifanca.org, Spring 2012), 10.

¹⁶¹ It is estimated that food that in the USA, food on average travels 1,200 to end up on our plate. These are often referred to as “food miles.” Notes from Ibrahim Abdul Metin lecture, September 2012 ISNA Convention.

should not be cut with a knife¹⁶².” This culinary eating practice and enactment speaks to larger Islamic conceptualizations of societal structures and relationships. As Wirzba notes, “How we make bread, how we share and distribute it, are of profound moral and spiritual significance because every loaf presupposes decisions that have been made about how to configure the social and ecological relationships that make bread possible¹⁶³.” Al-Ghazali continues: “As for drinking, the manner for it is to take the cup and say: ‘In the name of God,’ and one should sip the water not gulp it. The Prophet said: ‘Sip the water do not gulp it’ ... One should not drink standing or reclining¹⁶⁴.” Every act including drinking should be done in a slow, mindful and prayerful manner, not in the chug-a-lug hasty manner which can often be observed in informal settings. The Prophetic admonition “not to drink standing” is particularly challenging in our modern age when many things from water bottles to water fountains are designed in such a way as to encourage drinking while on the run. To conscientiously implement this practice in a sustained way during the course of the day requires a tremendous will and determination and change of habits. Such a practice would, by necessity, force one to slow down and be more mindful.

Al-Ghazali: On Manners after Eating¹⁶⁵

This section follows a similar format and construction to the previous one. Al-Ghazali admonishes: “One should stop eating before feeling satiated by the food, then

¹⁶²The commonly accepted practice and norm of proper Anglo-Euro-centric formal table manners is one in which proper utensils (spoon, fork and knife) and their positioning around the plate at the table is of great import. In fact, such table settings are often linked in the West to “civilized behavior” and social class. Hence, their absence in the eating habits and table manners of many non-Western and non-European cultures is often held to be a mark of their backwardness and lack of civilization, providing another justification for their collective subjugation and “civilizing” through the imperial-colonial enterprise.

¹⁶³ Wirzba, *Food and Faith*, 17.

¹⁶⁴ Abdul Hamid Al-Ghazali, *Al-Ghazali's Ihya Ulum-al—Din*, 211.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 212.

one should lick the fingers and then wipe them with a cloth, wash them, one should pick up fallen crumbs. The Prophet said: ‘Whoever eats what has fallen from the tray lives in abundance and God saves his children from harm¹⁶⁶.’ While not a Muslim, the famous American romantic and naturalist Henry Thoreau issued a related condemnation in his well-known treatise *Walden*: “The gross feeder is a man in the larva state; and there are whole nations in that condition, nations without fancy or imagination, whose vast abdomens betray them¹⁶⁷.” Needless to say, eating to one’s heart content as the saying goes, is not in keeping with this Islamic ethic. In addition, the using of one’s hands and fingers is another means of viscerally reconnecting to food, which is God’s blessing, through the physical sense of touch and speaks to the type of food one eats and how it is prepared. Finger licking good is truly good for self. This is related to the Prophetic practice of “picking up the fallen crumbs” that accidentally fall down on the ground as one is seated at the place that has been normally set aside for sitting. This type of eating challenges the so-called cultural practices of high society and its “civilized behaviors.” Those who view it as dirty and beneath them to pick up the fallen scraps from the earth forget the fact that the food itself was a product of the very dirt they now hold in disdain. In general, the Muslim ways of eating illustrates a very different attitude toward food, one that is more physically connected. Al-Ghazali concludes this section by again referring to the Prophet: “When he finished he said: Praise be to God! God, You are worthy to be praised. You have fed, sated, given drink, and quenched thirst; praise

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., 212.

¹⁶⁷ Henry David Thoreau, *Walden* (Radford, VA: Wilder Publications, 2008), 215.

belongs to You, who cannot be denied, Who is eternally present, and who is indispensable¹⁶⁸.”

Revival of Islamic practices regarding ethical and mindful eating as discussed in great detail by al-Ghazali in this section and their modern day application are necessary for Muslims (and possibly others) to recognize and realize through their own eating and consumption practices an Islamic ethic of eating. I believe that it is through the re-adoption of these practices mindfully that Muslims will be able to re-construct their relationship with food in a more healthy ways -as it was meant to be - and in the process re-connect with Allah, each other and the rest of creation in a constructive and mutually beneficial and life sustaining way.

In summary then, a contemporary Islamic food ethic and ethical eating is a mindful and prayerful one. It is one which begins long before the food reaches one’s plate and consumption. It begins with a recognition of the sacredness of all life forms and that they be *Tayyib* – grown and raised in a wholesome manner (not injured because of abuse or otherwise, organic feed that by definition is non-GMO, not given hormones/anti-biotics and free range and not CAFOS) and cared for until harvest (humanely by fairly and justly treated workers/labor in accordance with fair trade principles) and in the case of animals, that they be sacrificed according to methods sanctioned by Islamic law. Further, the content of one’s food plate (including what it is made of, so that it is not Styrofoam or one-use plastic or paper) should be proportionately more vegetarian than meat and preferably eatable in a single sitting (preferably on the floor in humility) without waste and excess (*Israf*). The partaking of meals be treated as a religious rite,

¹⁶⁸ Abdul Hamid Al-Ghazali, *Al-Ghazali’s Ihya Ulum-al—Din*, 214.

akin to *Salah* (daily prayer), from making *wudu* (ablution) prior to eating, to beginning with *Bismillah* (in God's Name), to eating together and concluding with a prayer of thankfulness, praise and blessing. Sadly, this Prophetic model for ethical eating and food consumption is not practiced in totality. Muslims, and other peoples of faith and conscience need to make *Tawbah* - repentance and return to a mindful, prayerful and more ethical way of food eating and consumption practice.

A Way Forward

It is reported in the Holy Bible that John the Baptist (Prophet *Yahya (AS)* in the *Quran*) used to repeat often the expression "Repent, for the kingdom of the heavens has drawn near" (Matthew 3:2). After his encounter with John (Isa (AS)), it is reported "From that time on, Jesus commenced preaching and saying: 'Repent, you people, for the kingdom of the heavens has drawn near.'" (Matthew 4:17). If we understand the effects of Satan's rebellion to include his incitement of the Children of Adam (*Bani Adam* in the *Quran*) to disconnect from and pollute and desecrate the earth, or to quote Thomas Berry "the abandonment of our integral relation with the planet on which we live¹⁶⁹", then true repentance requires making amends for our sinful acts upon and against the earth and our fellow creatures, and reintegrating ourselves properly back into the circle of life. In the *Islamic* conceptualization of *Tawbah* (repentance), which literally means "to return or turn back," lays the basic components to provide a practical mechanism for this return.

Al-Ghazali defines repentance as, "Knowledge (of the sin), remorse and the intention to refrain from committing the sin in the present or in the future, and the will to make amends for the past; these three consecutive definitions are called 'repentance'¹⁷⁰."

¹⁶⁹ Berry, *The Great Work*, 147.

¹⁷⁰ Al-Ghazali, Abdul Hamid, trans. and bridges by Zidan, Ahmad, *Al-Ghazali's Ihya Ulum-al-Din*, 427.

He then recalls the statement of one of his learned and pious predecessors (*Salifi Salih*), Sahl ibn Abd Allah al Tostari, who links repentance and its acceptance to the consumption of *Halal* food when he says, as quoted by Al-Ghazali, “Repentance is replacing blameworthy actions by praiseworthy actions, and this will not be achieved except by seclusion, silence and eating what is lawful¹⁷¹.” The *Islamic* conceptualization of *Tawbah* as outlined within the *Quranic* creation narrative and developed further in the Prophetic Hadith is applicable: An act requiring *Tawbah* is one that is carried out with intent against another and/or his/her person/property for which damage is clearly evident as damage is the essential mark of liability in *Islam*¹⁷². That the Children of Adam have carried out violent acts upon and against the earth and its inhabitants is incontrovertible. This is evidenced by the disruption of the natural order, processes and balance inherent in the natural world. This is most clearly manifested by climate change, which according to a 2007 UN report is deep and widespread, and according to the eminent theologian Sallie McFague, is the result of “our high energy consumer life style which is sending the earth into potential disaster¹⁷³.” This is of critical import as it directly impacts our food security for ourselves and future generations by reducing our access to diverse food sources and disrupting the food chains necessary for life. The act, according to the *Islamic* conception, is done in violation of a clearly articulated and understood injunction (by the originator of the injunction and potential perpetrator of the offense), for which punitive measure is understood to be taken.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 428.

¹⁷² *Quran* (42:20).

¹⁷³ Sallie McFague, *A New Climate for Theology – God the World and Global Warming* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2008), 2.

The *Quran* states “Corruption doth appear on land and sea because of (the evil) which men's hands have done, that He may make them taste a part of that which they have done, in order that they may return.” (Quran 30:41). In this sense, the legal principle *nulla poena sine lege* (no punishment without breach of pre-existing law) applies. Punishment is applied for the violation of the injunction. Here self-regulation is not enough as an empowered oversight by governmental or other authority which has the power to compel is necessary to ensure that “the punishment fits the crime” and is fairly and justly implemented.

Further, contrition for the wrongful action is needed by the perpetrator, including wasters, polluters and misusers, both we as individuals and the global corporations that are guilty of this. This needs to be followed by Restitution/compensation is given to the victim (or in the case of murder – surviving family members/heirs) of the wrongful act. Finally, acceptance and forgiveness of the aforementioned on the part of the aggrieved is required and a return to a new normalcy.

Implied in the concept of *Tawbah*, as outlined above, is that *Tawbah* is essentially a promise for the future, not merely an expression of sincere regret for the past. This promise or oath is based on a commitment to avoid in the future what resulted in a sin/mistake in the past. This commitment must have at its core a spiritual and revelatory experience, or a “new revelatory experience” as Berry refers to it¹⁷⁴. An experience that at the basic level resets our relationship with that part of creation and the Divine that we intimately interact with daily: our food. Muslims and others would be well served by putting back into practice the Prophetic food ethic and mindful eating as discussed in this

¹⁷⁴ Berry, *The Great Work*, 165.

paper, “from farm to fork”, and thereby imbibe a philosophy and practice that may result in what Berry refers to as “...a new revelatory experience taking place, an experience wherein human consciousness awakens to the grandeur and sacred quality of the earth process¹⁷⁵.” And allows us once again, as Norman Wirzba points out, “to enter into communion with and be reconciled with each other. To eat with God at a table is to eat with the aim of healing and celebrating the memberships of creation¹⁷⁶.” And so it should be.

Afterthought: On Wealth and Energy Access Distribution

An oft referenced *hadith* by Muslims involved in the environmental “green” movement, is as follows: The Prophet Muhammed (AS) said: "*Indeed the world is green and sweet, and indeed Allah has left you to remain (as Khalifatul ard – Stewards or more correctly guardians and caretakers of the Earth and its resources) to see how you behave. So, take care of the world, beware of the world*¹⁷⁷." In another *hadith*, he (AS) observed a timeless truth and worldly reality when he said, “*People have common share (arfaq) in three (things). Grass (herbage/vegetation for ourselves and the animal world domesticated and wild) water and fire (including electrical power - sourced by fossil fuels and other sources of non-renewable and renewable energy).*¹⁷⁸” According to Islamic *Fiqhi* (juridical) terminology, *arfaq* is that which is held in common or common usage so that all humans (and I would also hold that in many cases non-humans as well) have an inalienable right to benefit from them and to expect their prudent use and equitable distribution.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid, 106.

¹⁷⁶ Wirzba, *Food and Faith*, 11.

¹⁷⁷ Al-Baghawi, *Mishkat Al-Masabih*, 905.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., 909.

The question then that arises is “who” has the right to determine that access to those non-renewable resources, their distribution and consumption. The historic record on this matter is dismal. Most if not all of the conflicts throughout human history, whether at the communal, regional, national or international level can be directly or indirectly tied to the fair access and/or just control over these finite life sustaining resources. Simply put, our problem as humans is that we are not sharing these common resources equitably, neither horizontally (among the living human and non-human beings, in particular between the geo-politically developed countries of Global North and the developing countries of the under-developed Global South) nor vertically (among the yet to be born – intergenerational equity) thru implementing ecologically conscientious environmentally friendly and sustainable development practices and policies. A more equitable and just distribution of wealth which includes the right to the physical driver of wealth that is equitable clean-energy access for all is what I understand to be the worldly goal of Islamic economic justice and not necessarily the elimination of all economic classes of rich and/or poor¹⁷⁹.

¹⁷⁹ The categories or classes of rich and poor as used throughout this paper are problematic and, to some extent, arbitrary like their corresponding category of Social class – that elusive combination and amalgam of income, education, occupation and wealth. For each society has its own psychosocial way of indexing and designating rich and poor. I also hesitate to utilize Marxian class structures and labels (Capitalist, Bourgeoisie, etc.) for they too are value laden and ultimately socially constructed and determined. Factoring into the mix quality of life and spiritual/religious variables only complicates the defining process further. The essential is not being found in names or in forms or slogans, but in content and substance. Even in Islamic jurisprudence, the qualifying of an individual as poor is difficult to reach consensus upon. Opinions vary as do bench marks for determination of who is poor. What is certain is that each society at a given time forms a general consensus as to which members it considers rich and poor respectively, and that these determinations are tied primarily, though not exclusively, to monetary and economic considerations. Poor to my mind is part of a broader grouping which in Arabic is *Ajaza* or literally “weak” and includes those “who ask” and those “who don’t ask”, the elderly, protected peoples (*Dhimmies* – non-Muslims in an Islamic polity), the terminally ill, blind, handicapped, orphans and prisoners. Priority in the giving of charity (*Sadaqah*) is to one’s family relations. Numerous Hadith emphasize this, including the Prophet (AS) being reported to have said, “The best charity is that which leaves competence; and begin with those for whom you are responsible (through blood relations).” (Bukhari) He (AS) also is reported to have said, “The

According to this conception, the rich are not necessarily rich because they deserve it or have some innate qualities and/or abilities that others do not. They are not rich, as Weber points out in his examination of the Protestant ethic based on how the uncertainty of salvation came be interpreted by Calvinist Protestants, because they are “the elect and blessed of God.” Similar statements can be said in the case of the poor, in juxtaposition—they are not poor because they are cursed or abandoned by God¹⁸⁰. The Quran states, “Spend from that which We (*Allah*) have provided you” (Quran 2:254) and “in their wealth (the rich, the haves) is recognized the rights of the poor (the have nots).” (Quran 70:24-25). These verses and similar verses imply the following: the wealth of the rich is a gift (provided) by *Allah*. The wealth of the rich contains what is sufficient for the basic needs of the poor. The poor are entitled to their share of *Allah's* provision which has been entrusted to the rich and the rich are obligated to provide that share to the poor¹⁸¹. Provision – wealth includes both monetary (capital), and non-monetary skills/training and labor/employment. Both the rich and the poor shall continue to co-exist until the end time, but the make-up of those who belong to these classes is not fixed and changes over time. Religious exhortation, education and social pressure shall be utilized to ensure the aforementioned is realized, but when all else fails the coercive

most excellent Dinar a person spends is the one he spends on his family.” (Muslim) Al-Baghawi. Mishkat al-Masabih , p. 410.

¹⁸⁰ Mention should be made of a certain type of fatalistic view of the world which has reared its head at various periods in the history of Muslim peoples – most often coming to the fore during times of oppression/occupation This view having some sort of basis in certain *Quranic* verses and *Hadith* holds that one’s socio-economic circumstances in this world are pre-ordained and therefore there is no use in attempting to change it. In the words of one dispossessed Bosnian father to his son upon Serbian forcible usurpation and appropriation of their ancestral lands “this world belongs to the Dushman (Non-believers). The Hereafter belongs to us.”

¹⁸¹ It is interesting to note that in addition to some of that which has been mentioned previously regarding the rich being required as a matter of religious obligation to care for the poor, Muslim jurists have held that should a poor person die in a wealthy person’s house from starvation, the owner of the house is required to pay *diyya* – monetary compensation to the family of the deceased poor person in an amount equal to what he/she would have to pay had he/she murdered the person.

power of the state shall be brought to bear upon the rich when they fail to uphold their religious, ethical and moral obligations to the poor¹⁸².

In a vivid way, the social relationship and economic gap between the rich and the poor can serve as a good barometer of the relative level of social justice in a particular society. If relations between the rich and the poor are set right, then the gap between the two shall also be reduced and oppressive structures of dominance shall be mitigated and made more just. My understanding is that Islam seeks to decrease that gap and intensify the relationship through various means

Even through death and the subsequent journey to the afterlife, Islamic teaching puts forth a multi-generational plan for shrinking the gap between rich and poor and for the upward mobility of the poorer sections of society up the rungs of the economic ladder. The right of *Salahtul Janazah*, the Funeral Prayer, is categorized according to Islamic Jurisprudence as *Fardul Kifaya* – a communal obligation. In other words, if any of Muslims perform it, the entire community worldwide living and dead is absolved of the obligation before *Allah*. If no one performs it, the entire community, worldwide, living and dead, is held responsible before *Allah* for this sin of omission. It is also recorded in various traditions that the more people who attend and participate in the Funeral Prayer, the better it is for the deceased in receiving the fullness of God's grace and forgiveness. After the prayer is conducted, the congregants are urged by the *Imam* to cancel and forgive any and all debts that were owed to them by the deceased during

¹⁸² A wise saying in this regard is found in books of Islamic jurisprudence: "If education by preaching (*wa'adh*) does not suffice nor counseling of the Guided Ones (*Murshid*), then what else remains but the whip of the Judge (*Qadi*)."

his/her life.¹⁸³ If they are unable or unwilling to do so they are requested to present evidence of the debt to the surviving family members so that arrangements can be made for its payment out of the estate of the deceased prior to distribution of the inheritance to surviving heirs.

In the case of the deceased being among the poor and destitute, wealthy members of the community (and in the case of an Islamic state, the state treasury – *Baytul Maal*¹⁸⁴) are encouraged to step forward and pay off any outstanding debt on behalf of the family of the deceased. In this way, Islam seeks to eliminate the burden of financial debt of the deceased being passed down to surviving family members. After the burial of the deceased, the surviving family members come together for the distribution of the estate according to the will of the deceased. Islamic laws of inheritance (*al-Mirath*¹⁸⁵) are quite specific and detailed, if not complex. In summary it can be said that these laws are designed to ensure that immediate family members (*Wuratha: Ashab al-Fara'id*) irrespective of gender, and in particular the progeny are guaranteed a specified minimum

¹⁸³ The Prophet Muhammed(AS) strongly encouraged this type of behavior when he(AS) said “The one who grants a respite to one who is in straitened circumstances or who remits his debt will be taken by *Allah* under His Protection” (Bukhari and Muslim). Al-Baghawi. *Mishkat al-Masabih*, p. 621.

¹⁸⁴ The term *Baytul Maal* (literally “House of Wealth”) was used by the Prophet Muhammed(AS) to denote the State treasury administered by the Caliph of Islam. Its sources of funding were diverse and included *Zakat* collections. The Prophet (AS) is reported to have said in this regard quoting from the Holy Quran “I am closer to the believers than their own selves (Quran 33:6)”, so if any of the believers (indigent) dies leaving a debt I shall be responsible for paying it, and if anyone leaves property it is used to remit his/her debt and the remainder goes to his/her heirs.” (Bukhari and Muslim). Al-Baghawi. *Mishkat al-Masabih*, 623.

¹⁸⁵ The Quran states “From what is left by parents and those nearest related, there is a share for men and a share for women, whether the property be small or large, - a determinate share.” (Quran 4:7). The Prophet is reported to have said, “*Allah* has made the *Zakat* obligatory simply to purify your remaining property, and He made inheritances obligatory that they might come to those who survive you.” (Abu Dawud) Al-Baghawi. *Mishkat al-Masabih*, 374. The *Sharee* (Religious/legal) definition of *Mirath* is “inheritance to be divided from the property of the deceased among his/her successors” (see Abdur Rahman Doi, *Shariah: The Islamic Law* [Ta Ha Publishers, 1984], 271). It also gives the rules which guide as to who inherits and who is to be inherited, and what shares of the estate go to what heirs.

share, which is not contestable. Not everything is transferred to the oldest son, primogenitor fashion.

Appendix A: The Islamic Case for Divestment

In keeping with the Declaration, the GMCN focused on making the Muslim religious case for divestment from fossil fuels assets and the transition to a clean energy economy by re-investing part of those assets into renewables. The ethical case for divestment from fossil fuels was put forth in a unique collection of essays on energy ethics from diverse faith traditions entitled *Light for a New Day* published by GreenFaith and released and shared at COP 22¹⁸⁶. This included an essay by the author of this paper titled: “Indeed the World is Green and Sweet...But Walk Softly on The Earth: Towards an Islamic Energy Ethic and Praxis” in which I outlined the religious case from the perspective of the *Shariah* (Islam’s Sacred Law) for divestment from fossil fuels¹⁸⁷. The scope of global fossil fuel divestment has more than doubled over the past two years, with institutions, faith based organizations, corporations, colleges and universities and individuals controlling upwards of \$5.3 trillion in assets pledging to divest¹⁸⁸. ISNA announced its pledge to divest at the 2016 COP 22 in Morocco, where countries, as well as organizations were announcing similar pledges and plans. The host country, Morocco announced that 700 Masjids were fully powered by renewable energy and that the other 15,000 would convert to renewable sources well within the next few years. Jordan committed to follow a similar path as well.

This call for divestment from fossil fuels was responded to by ISNA as well with ISNA’s Announcement by its President, Dr. Azhar Aziz wrote, “According to Islam’s

¹⁸⁶ Erin Lothes,, ed., *Light for a New Day – Interfaith Essays on Energy Ethics*
[Http://www.greenfaith.org/programs/Light%20for%20a%20New%20Day%20%20Interfaith%20Essays%20on%20Energy%20Ethics](http://www.greenfaith.org/programs/Light%20for%20a%20New%20Day%20%20Interfaith%20Essays%20on%20Energy%20Ethics) accessed 11/1/2017.

¹⁸⁷ <http://www.greenfaith.org/programs/Light%20for%20a%20New%20Day%20%20Interfaith%20Essays%20on%20Energy%20Ethics/complete-booklet-of-essays> accessed 11/1/2017.

¹⁸⁸ [Https://gofossilfree.org](https://gofossilfree.org) accessed 4/1/2018.

most basic and fundamental teachings, human beings have been uniquely charged with the great responsibility of being Guardians and Caretakers of the Earth. It goes against the overall service based mission of the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) to invest in fossil fuel companies whose operations and products cause such grave harm to humanity and to Creation¹⁸⁹.”

The broader logic of divestment from a Muslim perspective, which finds resonance in the teachings of many other faith traditions, is affirmed by the broad life-enabling and life-protecting Higher Objectives of Islam’s Sacred Law – known as *Maqasid Shariah*, sometimes referred to as categories or essentials (*al-darurah al-khamsah*) which are: preservation of (*hifdh*) ; faith (*Deen-Ibadat*); life (*nafs*); lineage/posterity- family (*Nasl*); intellect (*Aql*); and wealth/material resources/property (*mal*), and that these were to be protected as absolute priorities. One of Islam’s most highly respected theologians, Abu Hamid al-Ghazali (450 AH), wrote, “For whatever ensures the safeguard of these five principles serves public interest and is desirable, and whatever hurts them is against public interest and its removal is desirable¹⁹⁰.” To respect these fundamental commitments ensures that one’s Islam is complete and sound; to do otherwise is to violate the *Sharia* and compromise one’s Islam. In short, financial investments should be reflective of Islam’s values and teachings as guided by life enabling/life protecting *Shariah* – Islam’s Sacred Law.

¹⁸⁹ www.isna.net/press accessed 4/1/2018.

¹⁹⁰ “The Higher Objectives of Islamic Law” Dar Al-Ifta Al-Missriyya, www.dar-alifta.org/ accessed 4/1/2018.

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