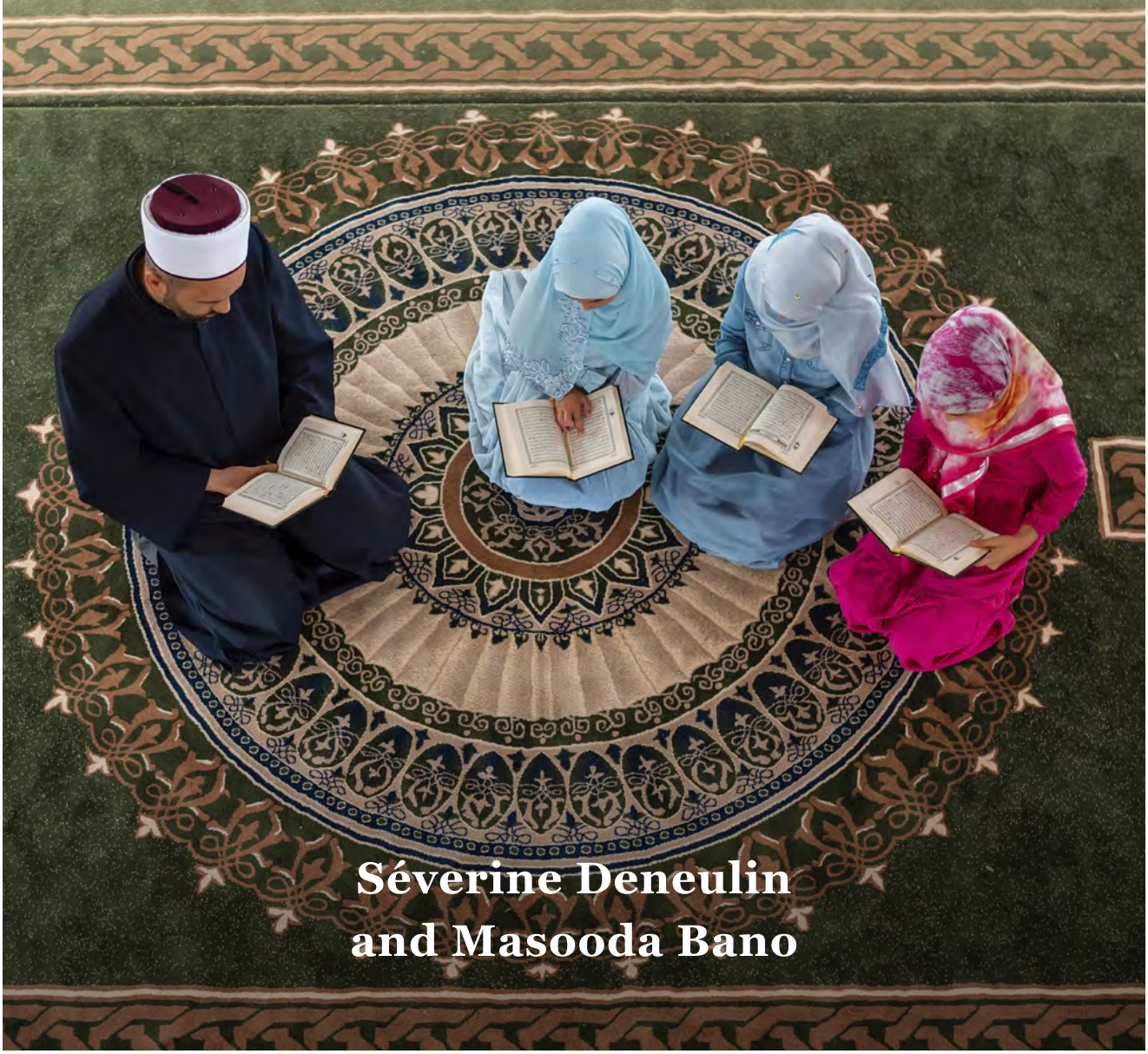
Chapter 4:
Ecological Ethics and Practices



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1. Introduction

In December 2015, 196 countries signed an Agreement during the UN Climate Change Conference in Paris to cut down carbon emissions to limit the global temperature increase to 1.5°C above preindustrial levels. The Agreement stated that carbon emissions must decline by 43% by 2030 (UNFCCC, n.d.). Emissions have instead continued to increase since the Agreement was signed (UNEP 2023). Climate scientists of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) have stressed that preventing every decimal point of temperature rise makes a difference, that every ton less of carbon emitted matters.

With oil, gas, and coal estimated to currently account for 86 percent of global CO_2 emissions (UNEP 2023), the transformation of our energy systems is paramount to limit global warming (IPCC 2023). However, the transition away from fossil fuels is not environmentally neutral. The production of an electric car is estimated to require more than twice the amount of copper than a conventional car, as well as new materials such as lithium, nickel, zinc, and rare earth minerals (IEA 2021). Solar panels require large amounts of copper and aluminum, wind turbines copper, zinc, and rare earth minerals, and battery storage copper, cobalt, nickel, lithium, rare earth minerals, and aluminum (IEA, n.d.). The International Energy Agency (IEA 2024) has calculated that demand for transition minerals will increase by 400% by 2040 to meet carbon emissions reduction targets. This implies intensification of mineral extraction, with the risk of intensification of the negative socio-ecological consequences of mining, such as land dispossession, displacement, deforestation, biodiversity loss, soil, water, and air contamination, violence, violation of civil and political rights, violation of labor rights, and health damage, among others (Bebbington 2023, Business and Human Rights Resource Centre 2024). Moreover, large solar and wind parks are often accompanied by deforestation, biodiversity loss, land dispossession, loss of livelihoods, and human rights violations.[1]

In addition to these challenges of the need for a drastic cut in carbon emissions to address climate change, there is also the challenge of addressing pollution and biodiversity loss, what the UNFCCC (2022) has called the "triple planetary crisis," and which are areas where urgent and drastic actions are as much needed as for climate change. How should faith communities respond to this triple crisis? How can carbon emissions be cut while paying attention to the social and ecological consequences of the transition to low-carbon forms of energy, including biodiversity loss and contamination? The previous chapters in this volume have discussed the rationale for Christian and Muslim communities to take ecological action based on their theologies of creation and theological anthropologies, and the summons for ecological conversion found in both traditions. This chapter focuses on the teachings, principles, and prescriptions which are found in the Christian and Muslim traditions and could serve as guidance for ecological action. Which ethical guidelines do the Christian and Muslim traditions give about what leading a moral life implies in the context of the triple planetary crisis? How are these guidelines developed further in the present context?

Following this introduction, the second section seeks to answer these questions from the perspective of Christian ethics within the Catholic denomination, and in particular *Laudato Si'*, as it is a roadmap for ecological action in other Christian denominations too (cf. Chapter 1 "Theologies of Creation"). It also explores some guidelines from *Laudato Si'*s follow-up encyclical *Fratelli Tutti* [Brothers and Sisters All]*: On Fraternity and Social Friendship*, as *Fratelli Tutti* develops some of the themes of the joint declaration on *Human Fraternity* signed by Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar Ahmad Al-Tayyeb in 2019. The

1. See Klingler et al. (2024) for Brazil, Dunlap (2021) for Europe, and Ghosh, Bryant, and Pillai (2023) for India.

declaration starts "in the name of God who has created all human beings equal in rights, duties and dignity, and who has called them to live together as brothers and sisters" (Pope Francis and Grand Imam Al-Tayyeb, 2019). Through this opening statement, the declaration signals that upholding human dignity is the foundational principle of a moral life in both the Christian and Muslim traditions. It has received renewed emphasis in the joint declaration on *Fostering Religious Harmony for the Sake of Humanity* signed by Pope Francis and the Grand Imam of Jakarta Istiqlal Mosque, Nasaruddin Umar, in 2024 (Pope Francis and Grand Imam Nasaruddin Umar 2024). The second section unpacks this foundational principle and its implications for ecological action based on the teachings and guidelines of *Laudato Si'* and *Fratelli Tutti*. It starts with discussing how the foundational principle of respect for human dignity is set against the interconnectedness of all life. It then explores the kind of attitudes such a moral life implies, known as the "ecological virtues," and examines some instruments available within the Christian tradition to foster these virtues, such as liturgical, spiritual, and ecclesial practices. It concludes by identifying some of the structural challenges which hinder the practice of ecological virtues and ways of overcoming them.

The third section delves into the Muslim tradition and Islamic ethics within the Sunni tradition, as it is the largest Muslim denomination. It points to the Islamic tradition as offering a comprehensive framework for moral behavior, which naturally leads to environmental preservation (as has already been explained in detail in the earlier chapters). It emphasizes balance and moderation in all aspects of human behavior, as outlined in the Qur'an, and promotes simple living, as exemplified in the life of the Prophet of Islam (*sīrat al-nabī*). Additionally, it underscores the importance of preserving life and ensuring intergenerational equity in the use of natural resources, which are integral to the core goals and objectives of the shariah (*maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*). The section further explains how the five pillars of Islamic faith can provide practical mechanisms for achieving a lifestyle that, when adhered to in true spirit, inherently supports environmental preservation. It concludes by questioning why the potential of these principles is not widely recognized or implemented within Muslim societies and communities, aiming to identify possible mechanisms to enhance their application.

The fourth and final section of this chapter summarizes the common ethical guidelines for ecological action in both the Christian and Muslim traditions, namely the fundamental principle of respect for human dignity and for other species, a focus on everyday practices of ecological care and the cultivation of the ecological virtues of humility, thanksgiving, moderation, and solidarity, and rituals and spiritual practices as instruments for the cultivation of ecological virtues. It discusses some differences of emphasis which reflect their respective social and political contexts, namely political love and social and political action as an expression of solidarity in the Christian tradition, and personal piety and individual everyday actions in the Muslim tradition. It concludes with some of the challenges faced by members of the two traditions to translate these ethical guidelines into ecological action and social transformation, and ways of overcoming them.

2. Christian Perspectives

2.1 Human Dignity through a Multispecies Lens

That humans are made in the image of God, and the inalienable dignity of each human being which derives from it, is the foundation of a moral life, and the foundational principle of ecological action (see Chapter 2 "Theological Anthropology"). As the Catechism of the Catholic Church states, "living a moral life bears witness to the dignity of the person" (Pope John Paul

II 1992, §1706). The Universal Declaration of Human Rights is one of the most comprehensive expressions of this affirmation of the inalienable dignity of each human being, irrespective of religious belief, color, sex, age, nationality, disability, sexual orientation, or other. The Second Vatican Council (1965, §41) saw in the affirmation of human rights an "extraordinary opportunity for more effectively recognizing human dignity and universally promoting it as a characteristic inscribed by God the Creator in his creature." *Fratelli Tutti* talks, among others, of the right to food as part of human dignity (§189), the right to health (§109), the right to decent work and adequate housing, and the right to land (§127). It links human dignity to the integral development of the human person: "Every human being has the right to live with dignity and to develop integrally; this fundamental right cannot be denied by any country" (§107). By integral human development, it understands the full development of the person in all the dimensions that constitute their humanity—material, spiritual, social, psychological, cultural, and others.

Human beings do not flourish on their own. By virtue of their inherent relational character imprinted on them by their Creator, the dignity of each human person is connected to that of others. Failing to act in recognition of the dignity of another person is a violation of one's own dignity. This is why *Fratelli Tutti* argues that practices such as that of financial speculation on the price of food and throwing away tons of food while others go hungry are not practices of human dignity because they violate the right to food of others (§188). This also applies to other practices which violate other human rights, such as the pursuit of market efficiency and profits, which might undermine another person's right to health (§109). The demands of human dignity are intimately connected to solidarity. Practices that are based on greed and selfishness and an economic model based on profits at all costs undermine one's own human dignity because they undermine another person's dignity (§22). In the context of this chapter we could add practices of high carbon emissions, which intensify global warming and undermine the dignity of those who experience most of the consequences of climate change, such as more extreme droughts, floods, storms, and heatwaves and their devastating impacts on people's lives and livelihoods (IPCC 2023), or practices of intense farming and the consumption of products resulting from intense farming methods causing biodiversity loss and contamination (UN Nutrition, n.d.).

The reason *Fratelli Tutti* gives as to why failing to respect another person's dignity is undermining one's own is that "we were created for a fulfilment that can only be found in love" (§68). It sees the meaning of human dignity in not being indifferent to suffering. This affirmation of human dignity is the springboard to "the rebirth of a universal aspiration to fraternity," for we are "children of the same earth which is our common home," "brothers and sisters all" (§8). The *Document on Human Fraternity* also links human dignity to solidarity:

> Faith leads a believer to see in the other a brother or sister to be supported and loved. Through faith in God, who has created the universe, creatures and all human beings (equal on account of his mercy), believers are called to express this human fraternity by safeguarding creation and the entire universe and supporting all persons, especially the poorest and those most in need. (Pope Francis and Grand Imam Al-Tayyeb 2019)

In recent years, the Catholic social tradition has with *Laudato Si'* extended the foundational principle of human dignity toward what it calls a "situated anthropocentrism," which

recognizes that "other living beings have a value of their own in God's eyes" (§69) (see Chapter 2 "Theological Anthropology"):

> The Judeo-Christian vision of the cosmos defends the unique and central value of the human being amid the marvelous concert of all God's creatures, but today we see ourselves forced to realize that it is only possible to sustain a "situated anthropocentrism". To recognize, in other words, that human life is incomprehensible and unsustainable without other creatures. For as part of the universe … all of us are linked by unseen bonds and together form a kind of universal family, a sublime communion which fills us with a sacred, affectionate and humble respect. (§89)

It follows, therefore, that caring for each creature is part of affirming human dignity, too, given this "sublime communion" which ties all species together. Being indifferent to biodiversity loss, desertification, and the melting of glaciers and ice caps is an undermining of human dignity, too, as is being indifferent to the human suffering caused by global warming. As *Laudato Si'* puts it,

> everything is related, and we human beings are united as brothers and sisters on a wonderful pilgrimage, woven together by the love God has for each of his creatures and which also unites us in fond affection with brother sun, sister moon, brother river and mother earth. (§92)

Borrowing from eco-theologian Celia Deane-Drummond's work *Theological Ethics through a Multispecies Lens* (Deane-Drummond 2019), we could name this foundational principle of a moral life "human dignity through a multispecies lens," which affirms the dignity of each human being and the flourishing of all other creatures. The belief that humans have been made in the image of God, with "humanity as the only life form capable of self-conscious reflection" (Deane-Drummond 2019, 166), entrusts us with a special responsibility, a "narrative of uniqueness" within another narrative of interconnectedness with all other creatures, for human flourishing is intrinsically connected with the flourishing of the nonhuman world. This is why, Deane-Drummond argues, our decision-making needs to take into account this complexity of interrelationship between all creatures (see also Chapter 2 "Theological Anthropology").

2.2 Cultivating Ecological Virtues

A moral life guided by the foundational principle of "human dignity through a multispecies lens" entails developing certain moral attitudes that bear witness to this principle, which *Laudato Si'* calls the cultivation of ecological virtues (§88). Virtues, in their classical sense, are dispositions to act toward the good life of oneself and others. Christian ethicist Daniel Daly (2021, 133) defines a virtue as "an operative habit that enables a person to consistently, easily and joyfully relate well to God, herself, other persons, and the created world"; a virtue "is about the quality of the person's relationality." Ecological virtues are, therefore, habitual attitudes and actions that are oriented toward the dignity of the human person and the flourishing of other species.

In his analysis of *Laudato Si'*, Joshtrom Isaac Kureethadam (2016; 2019, 181–210) identifies the following ecological virtues: praise, gratitude, care, justice, work, sobriety, and humility. As is implied by the title of the encyclical, "Praise Be" in Old Italian, the language of St. Francis of Assisi, humans have been created in the image of God, and from a theological

viewpoint, "the very existence of creation, and of each and every creature, is to render glory and praise to God" (Kureethadam 2019, 183). Humans are therefore invited to fall in love with creation, to acquire the habits, as *Laudato Si'* puts it, of relating to the world as a "joyful mystery to be contemplated with gladness and praise" rather than merely as a "problem to be solved" (§12). Humans need to acquire the habits of approaching nature with awe and wonder, for "if we no longer speak the language of fraternity and beauty in our relationship with the world, our attitude will be that of masters, consumers, ruthless exploiters, unable to set limits on their immediate needs" (§11). Learning to stop and stand in awe and contemplate the mystery of creation is a safeguard from treating creatures as objects to be used and abused (§215). A moral life implies keeping a weekly day of rest, of re-centering the sabbath (see Chapter 1 "Theologies of Creation"), stopping our daily activities in order not to neglect a dimension of contemplation, of receptivity and gratuity, and to remind ourselves that everything cannot be reduced to productivity and usefulness (§237). From this attitude of awe, wonder, and praise follows an attitude of thanksgiving. *Laudato Si'* invites every person on the planet to recognize that everything, human life and the Earth itself, is a gift (§5, §159, §220). Such habits of gratitude can be fostered by small practices of thanksgiving, such as giving thanks before meals in recognition of the gift of the Earth and human hands (§227).

A third ecological virtue that Kureethadam highlights in *Laudato Si'*, and which he contrasts with the language of stewardship which has dominated Christian ecological discourses, is that of care. Noting that *Laudato Si'* only refers to "being good stewards of creation" twice (§116, §236), he argues that the shift from stewardship to care signals a much greater attention to interconnectedness and an affective relationship with creation. Good stewards are accountable and responsible for administering the goods entrusted to them, but they do not need to be connected at the affective level in the goods entrusted in order to be good stewards. If one enters into a relationship of care with creation, one also opens oneself to compassion and suffering with others who suffer.

As mentioned earlier, upholding the principle of human dignity through a multispecies lens implies not being indifferent to the suffering of another person and that of other creatures. Like the Samaritan in the biblical parable who carries the wounded person along the road on his own animal to the innkeeper to tend to his wounds (cf. *Fratelli Tutti* § 56), *Laudato Si'* invites us all to take the other person's suffering unto ourselves, "to dare to turn what is happening to the world into our own personal suffering" (§19). Given that our lives are tied together, Pope Francis concludes in *Fratelli Tutti* that "our only course is to imitate the Good Samaritan," and that "any other decision would make us either one of the robbers or one of those who walked by without showing compassion for the sufferings of the man on the roadside" (§67).

This compassion and care for others at the interpersonal level is expressed not only in small everyday gestures of love—*Laudato Si'* gives the examples of "avoiding the use of plastic and paper, reducing water consumption, separating refuse, cooking only what can reasonably be consumed, showing care for other living beings, using public transport or car-pooling, planting trees, turning off unnecessary lights" (§211)—but also to the political level (§231). The promotion of human rights are such expressions of political love (§22) (see Chapter 7 "Public Theologies"). Kureethadam talks of this political love as the ecological virtue of justice, which we could also name the virtue of solidarity, both intra- and intergenerational, "since the world we have received also belongs to those who will follow us" (*Laudato Si'*, §159). *Fratelli Tutti* extends this solidarity beyond humans to include the Earth itself (§8). In *Laudato Si'*

as in *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis emphasizes that the cultivation of ecological virtues at the personal and interpersonal level needs to go hand in hand.

Linked to the ecological virtue of solidarity, or justice, is that of work, not any kind but the kind of work which promotes the dignity of humans with a multispecies lens, and "partakes in God's own work to maintain our common home" (Kureethadam 2019, 199). *Fratelli Tutti* underlines the importance of decent employment to "provide everyone with the opportunity to nurture the seeds that God has planted in each of us" (§162). *Laudato Si'* underlines the dignity of work (§127–128) as a service to the common good (§129), and emphasizes the value of manual labor and craftsmanship in the monastic tradition as "spiritually meaningful" (§126) by encouraging a closer connection with nature and sober lifestyles.

Sobriety and humility are the remaining ecological virtues that Kureethadam (2019) singles out. Like the other virtues, the practice of sobriety derives from the foundational principle of human dignity with a multispecies lens. Cultivating sober lifestyles and moderation in our consumption of energy, etc. is part of respecting the dignity of others. Such sobriety, *Laudato Si'* points out, when chosen freely, is "liberating," it is "a way of living life to the full," it is about finding satisfaction and happiness in the "many different possibilities which life can offer" such as "fraternal encounters, music and art, contact with nature" (§222).

All ecological virtues rest on the foundational virtue of humility, which is "the mother of all ecological virtues" (Kureethadam 2019, 206). Practicing humility is recognizing our limits, that we are neither God nor our own image but God's image, that humans are not the crown of creation, but the sabbath and celebration of God are the crown (see Chapter 1 "Theologies of Creation"); it is rejecting the temptation to "become enthralled with the possibility of limitless mastery over everything" and "exclude God from our lives or replace him with our own ego" (*Laudato Si'* §224).

This focus on the cultivation of ecological virtues is also underlined by other Christian denominations. In its document "Cultivate and Care: An Ecumenical Theology of Justice for and Within Creation," the World Council of Churches points out the centrality of the "cultivation of virtues such as humility, temperance, justice, mercy, and love," which "lead Christians to recognize that the goal of creation is the glory of God, not the glory of human beings" (WCC 2022, 21). Kureethadam (2019) does not discuss mercy, but mercy and forgiveness are also central ecological virtues in *Laudato Si'*, and are linked to ecological conversion, i.e., asking forgiveness when we have caused ecological harm and turning away from harmful actions (see Chapter 3 "Ecological Conversion").

2.3. Instruments of Ecological Virtues

Similarly to the five pillars of Islam as tools for cultivating ethical everyday action (see Section 3), liturgical, spiritual, and ecclesial practices are central elements within the Christian tradition for cultivating ecological virtues. First, through liturgical worship, believers affirm God as Creator, they remember that they are not made in their own image but in God's image, and commit to orient their lives to the praise and glory of God. *Laudato Si'* talks of the sacraments as a "privileged way in which nature is taken up by God to become a means of mediating supernatural life. […] Water, oil, fire and colors are taken up in all their symbolic power and incorporated in our act of praise" (§235), with the Eucharist as an "act of cosmic love" as "it embraces and penetrates all creation. The world which came forth from God's hands returns to him in blessed and undivided adoration" (§236). The liturgy of baptism and symbolism of water has been in some contexts an important vehicle for the cultivation

of political love and for mobilizing communities to protect water resources when threatened by extractive projects.[2]

Liturgical seasons such as Lent and Advent can also be instruments for the cultivation of ecological virtues. In Lent, Christians are reminded that they are "dust and shall return to dust," as per the liturgy of Ash Wednesday, which marks the start of the journey toward Easter. They are asked to practice fasting, almsgiving, and prayer, and to repent from wrongdoings. In a manner similar to mosques such as the green Iftar (see Section 3), a network of churches in Europe have taken on fasting from ecologically harmful habits, such as excessive plastic use, a meat-based diet, and water- and energy-intensive consumption, and have taken on almsgiving as giving to ecological restoration.[3] In Advent, Christians prepare to celebrate Christmas and the mystery of God's incarnation. The season of Advent can be an important instrument to celebrate in joyful sobriety, and witness that joy and fulfilment does not come from overconsumption (§223).

Not an official liturgical season yet but widely practiced as an ecumenical movement across churches globally is the season of Creation, which starts on the World Day of Prayer for Creation on September 1 and runs till October 4, the feast of St. Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of ecology. The initiative came from the Orthodox Church in 1989 and has now extended to all the Christian denominations (Season of Creation, n.d.). The World Council of Churches as well as the Catholic Church have now embraced a liturgical season of Creation to foster ecological virtues (LSRI 2024; see also Chapter 5 "Ecological Pedagogies").

Prayer, fasting, almsgiving, and rituals are not the only instruments for cultivating ecological virtues. In similar ways to the Muslim tradition (see Section 3), small everyday ecological actions are seen as spiritual practices of worship and praise of God. *Laudato Si'* gives the examples of "a person who could afford to spend and consume more but regularly uses less heating and wears warmer clothes," and of "reusing something instead of immediately discarding it." These small actions, *Laudato Si'* argues, are "an act of love which expresses our own dignity" (§211), as is collective action. Getting involved in social and political dynamics to foster ecological care, such as campaigning for a fossil fuel nonproliferation treaty or debt cancellation for low-income countries to liberate funding for climate adaptation, is a spiritual practice too (§231).

Pilgrimages are not a pillar of the Christian tradition as the *ḥajj* is to Islam, but pilgrimages can be important instruments too for the cultivation of ecological virtues and the practice of social love. In the Brazilian Amazon and the Mexican region of Chiapas, for example, Christian communities have mobilized around the practice of pilgrimage to prevent biodiversity loss caused by mega-infrastructure projects (Deneulin et al. 2024). In the Amazon especially, the memory of martyrs, of those who have been murdered because of their defense of the environment, is often appealed to as a source of inspiration as they are exemplary models of following Jesus (Deneulin et al. 2024, 111).

These liturgical and spiritual practices are ecclesial practices, that is, they are fostered by community celebration, sharing, and mutual support. Among these ecclesial practices, the communal practice of discernment, of examining situations, pondering various courses of action, and deciding together which course to take is essential to the cultivation of ecological virtues. Which actions should a church congregation or religious institution take toward reducing its carbon footprint and addressing biodiversity loss? How can they balance different

2. See the work of the Commissions for the Life of Water of the Catholic Archdiocese of Caquetá in the Colombian Amazon (Deneulin et al. 2024).
3. In the United Kingdom, these are churches linked to the LiveSimply parishes initiative within the Catholic tradition (CAFOD, n.d.). In the Anglican tradition, they are linked to the Eco-Church project (A Rocha UK, n.d.).

needs? There are no ready-made answers. Each religious organization will have to respond according to context. It may for example not be practically feasible for all buildings owned by a religious institution to have a heat pump; there may be limited financial resources to insulate a graded listed building. Religious organizations which own land also have a greater responsibility to use the land in a way which fosters biodiversity, though they may be constrained by long-term lease agreements. Material constraints are however not the main challenge to the practice of ecological virtues.

2.4. The Challenges

A major challenge that Christian ethics has long discussed is the interaction between people's virtuous actions and the structures in which they live, which has been coined as "structures of sin" (Pope John Paul II 1987, §36). The habits and dispositions operate at the individual and interpersonal level, but they are supported, or undermined, by structures which operate at the macro and structural level. Taking the example of the sabbath and a weekly day of rest, in a context of lack of affordable housing, limited public services, and low-pay employment, parents may have no other option but to work seven days a week to make ends meet. Or taking the example of carbon emission reduction, with train fares frequently more expensive than airfares in Europe, choosing environmentally friendly modes of transportation can have a financial cost. An economic structure which does not heavily tax high-carbon-emission modes of transport and does not sufficiently subsidize low-emission ones is a "vicious structure" that does not facilitate the cultivation of the ecological virtue of praise or care. Daly (2019, 167) argues that structures are only "virtuous" or "vicious" metaphorically, as "only persons have moral agency and are capable of acquiring moral character," but can be called as such because they contribute to the development of people's moral character by constraining or enhancing their agency. A minimum legal amount of paid holiday, or taxing air transport to subsidize rail transport, could be regarded as a virtuous structure which facilitates the cultivation of ecological virtues.

This is why *Laudato Si'* emphasizes the power of collective action, or what it calls social love, to transform such vicious structures into virtuous ones. It warns that small gestures of love and mutual care are insufficient if not accompanied by actions which change macro-relationships (§231). As *Fratelli Tutti* notes, "it is an act of charity to assist someone suffering, but it is also an act of charity, even if we do not know that person, to work to change the social conditions that caused his or her suffering" (§186). It is one thing to help people who have lost their houses and livelihoods to severe storms or floods rebuild their lives, and another to undertake political action for countries to adopt a fossil fuel nonproliferation treaty or adopt policies to subsidize reductions in energy consumption and carbon emissions. *Fratelli Tutti* underlines that the virtues of care for other beings, human and other species, and of justice (or political love) need each other, for the motivation to change relationships at the macro level always starts with a response to suffering of creatures who have a face (§115), such as children who suffer illnesses or birds which have no insects to feed on because of agricultural pesticides.

Another challenge which *Fratelli Tutti* mentions is the growing political polarization (§156–162). This political polarization has also penetrated Christian churches. To counter these divisions, *Fratelli Tutti* develops further the argument of *Laudato Si'* of the need to grow in awareness of a shared common home and mutual belonging. It underlines the need to cultivate a "culture of encounter," so that political life can be centered around healthy debates on how to advance the common good and promote the dignity of each human being through a multispecies lens rather than around "slick marketing techniques primarily aimed

at discrediting others" (§14): "To speak of a culture of encounter means that we, as a people, should be passionate about meeting others, seeking points of contact, building bridges, planning a project that includes everyone" (§216). In their joint declaration, Pope Francis and Grand Imam Al-Tayyeb (2019) urged for a "dialogue among believers," which "means coming together in the vast space of spiritual, human and shared social values." This plea has been renewed in the 2024 joint declaration. Pope Francis and Grand Imam Umar (2024) call for "the values shared by our religious traditions" to be promoted "in order to defeat the culture of violence and indifference afflicting our world." The next section distills ethical guidelines for a moral life within the Muslim tradition to then bring the Christian and Muslim perspectives into dialogue.

3. Muslim Perspectives

3.1 Introductory Remarks

Like all major religious traditions, Islam encompasses multiple groups, even within Sunni Islam, which is the largest denomination globally. Unlike the Catholic tradition, Sunni Islam lacks a central authority. Therefore, efforts to translate core Islamic ethics into environmental principles to address the triple planetary crisis are left to the individual initiatives of scholars or specific institutions. This has resulted in the absence of a unified document similar to *Laudato Si'*. However, the past decade has seen increasing efforts by individual scholars and institutions to operationalize Islamic ethics in relation to environmental protection and integrate them into everyday actions (Llewellyn et al. 2024).

At the national level, Indonesia has gained particular attention for its multilevel initiatives led by both the government and individual religious actors and institutions (see also Chapter 5 "Ecological Pedagogies"). These include the development of eco-friendly mosques, youth engagement in litter picking and cleanliness programs organized by Islamic youth groups, and the launch of Islamic bonds specifically aimed at funding eco-friendly projects (Fikri and Colombijn 2021; Hinz 2022; Rochmyaningsih 2020; Silalahi 2022; *The Economist* 2022; UNDP 2018). In terms of advancing the conceptual debate, the royal family of Qatar supported the Center for Islamic Legislation and Ethics (CILE) located in Doha, which is one example of an institutionalized effort to make Islamic ethics relate to contemporary challenges, including ecological ones, by bringing together scholars of Islamic texts and scholars of contemporary contexts (CILE, n.d.). Recently, a joint initiative involving platforms from various Muslim countries, in collaboration with international development agencies, has led to the launch of a significant document: *Al-Mizan: A Covenant for the Earth* (Llewellyn et al. 2024). This covenant is the product of a large group of international scholars and institutions from diverse Islamic backgrounds and offers an Islamic perspective on addressing critical issues such as climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution (see "Introduction" of this volume).

Thus, despite the absence in Sunni Islam of a central religious authority actively promoting ethical engagement with ecological issues, there is a growing momentum within the broader Muslim world. This movement is driven by multiple institutions, scholars, and researchers who are drawing on Islamic teachings to advocate for a more ethical relationship with the Earth. The consistency in messages emerging from these various efforts highlights how environmental protection aligns with core Islamic ethical principles. All highlight how an Islamic moral framework places a central emphasis on cultivating an ethical self as a core goal for believers. This ethical self is shaped not only by fulfilling Islamic ritual obligations

but also by practicing *adab* (respect) toward fellow human beings and all living creatures, as well as in the use of natural resources.

The discussion in this section is thus geared to demonstrate that when an Islamic ethical framework is followed in its true spirit, a believer's actions will naturally align with the principles of environmental and multispecies protection. However, the challenge lies in ensuring the widespread application and awareness of these teachings, especially in an age where secular influences, but also the history of the colonial era, have greatly distorted the classical methods of transmitting Islamic knowledge (Bano 2017, 2020; Hallaq 2018; Hefner and Zaman 2007).

3.2 Islamic Ethics and Environmental Stewardship

The Qur'an teaches that the human being has responsibilities on Earth and toward the living beings on it. This responsibility is most explicitly stated in the often-quoted verse: "Then We made you their successors (stewards) in the land to see how you would act" (Qur'an, 10:14). This behavior is understood to encompass actions not only toward fellow human beings but also toward all living species and natural resources (Haq and Wahab 2019; Kamali 1999). Moreover, as noted in numerous studies on Islamic environmental ethics (al-Mansi 2013; Haq and Wahab 2019; Kamali 1999; Llewellyn et al. 2024; Yaakob et al. 2017), the Qur'an employs a vocabulary deeply engaged with references to nature, frequently highlighting it as a blessing to humanity. For example:

> 'He is the One' Who has made the earth a place of settlement for you and the sky a canopy; and sends down rain from the sky, causing fruits to grow as a provision for you. (Qur'an, 2:22)[4]

As for the earth, We spread it out and placed upon it firm mountains, and caused everything to grow there in perfect balance. And We made in it means of sustenance for you and others, who you do not provide for. (Qur'an, 15:19–21)

Similarly, elaborating on human responsibility to care for the Earth, Prophet Muhammad stated, "The world is sweet and green (alluring) and verily Allah is going to install you as vicegerent [/steward] in it in order to see how you act" (Sahih Muslim 2742).

It is important to note that, while humans are given responsibility, this does not imply that other species or nature are devoid of agency. Qur'anic allegory often refers to them as living beings: "Indeed, We offered the trust to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they declined to bear it and feared it; but man undertook to bear it. Indeed, he was unjust and ignorant" (Qur'an, 33:72). This verse conveys that humans accepted God's trust, gaining authority in the process, but this authority comes with immense responsibility and the burden of accountability.[5] The gift of rationality makes humans responsible for their actions, for which they will be held accountable, including their use of natural resources and treatment of other species.

Khaled Abou El Fadl, one of the most influential contemporary scholars in Islamic studies, explores the centrality of cultivating an ethical self as the primary individual responsibility in Islam in a paper on Islamic ethics written for CILE (Fadl 2017). He argues that humans must meet God's expectations by following the righteous path, which involves a continuous moral struggle to live by the high ethical standards outlined in the Qur'an and shariah (Islamic law), as well as the lived example of Prophet Muhammad. Fadl (2017) notes that, according

4. All translations of Qur'anic verses are sourced from Quran.com (https://quran.com/en).
5. See *Al-Mizan* (Llewellyn et al. 2024) for a more detailed exploration of the implications for humanity in accepting God's trust.

to Muslim legal theory, the purpose of Islamic law is to seek the righteous path—to strive to approach it as closely as possible and, in doing so, to achieve the welfare of the human collective. In Islamic law, the term "achieving the welfare of the people" is meant to signify that the pursuit of abstract values such as justice, compassion, and mercy should translate into concrete and tangible benefits for humanity (Ozdemir 2003b; Fadl 2017).

This perspective directly aligns with Islamic ethical guidelines concerning human relationships with the Earth and other species. In Islamic law, human well-being depends on the responsible use of natural resources, ensuring that collective human welfare is maintained while preserving the environment (al-Mansi 2013; Haq and Wahab 2019). The preservation of natural resources is valued not only as a good in itself but also as essential for sustaining life on Earth, an overarching objective of the shariah (see below). In recent times, there has been a growing emphasis on approaching debates from the lens of "the goals of the shariah" (*maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*) rather than adhering strictly to specific legal rulings of earlier scholars (al-Mansi 2013; Haq and Wahab 2019). This shift aims to ensure that the shariah continues to provide optimal solutions for contemporary needs. The term *maqāṣid* refers to purposes, objectives, principles, intents, or ends. The methodological focus of debates on the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* is to emphasize the core Islamic legal principle, which is to preserve the social order of communities and ensure their well-being by eliminating all forms of corruption in human activity (al-Mansi 2013; Kamali 1999).

There are five core objectives of the shariah, as defined in scholarship on the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah*: safeguarding life, faith, intellect, lineage, and wealth (al-Mansi 2013; Haq and Wahab 2019). Islamic law is meant to regulate human actions and interactions in a way that protects these rights for all individuals. Authors writing on Islamic environmental ethics from the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* perspective argue that central to this conception of law is the preservation of the environment, care for the Earth, and the protection of other species, as human flourishing in all five areas depends on the preservation of the Earth and its ecosystems (al-Mansi 2013; Haq and Wahab 2019).

This understanding has led recent scholars to argue that the *maqāṣid al-sharī'ah* approach and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are aligned in their core principles (al-Mansi 2013; Haq and Wahab 2019; see also Chapter 3 "Ecological Conversion"). Whether viewed through the lens of debates on cultivating an Islamic ethical self or through Islamic legal theory, the central tenet of Islamic moral discourse is the emphasis on maintaining "balance" by following a moderate path (al-Mansi 2013; Haq and Wahab 2019; Kamali 1999; Llewellyn et al. 2024; Yaakob et al. 2017). This concept of balance is reflected in the naming of *Al-Mizan: A Covenant for the Earth*, as *al-mīzān* means "balance"—a principle explicitly articulated in the opening verses of the well-known Qur'anic "Chapter of the Merciful" (*Sūrat al-Raḥmān*).

> *The Most Merciful,*
> *Taught the Qur'an*
> *Created Humankind*
> *Taught him Eloquence*
> *The sun and the moon move in precise calculation*
> *and the stars and the trees prostrate*
> *and the heaven He raised and imposed the balance (mīzān)*
> *That you not transgress within the balance (mīzān)*
> *and establish weight in justice and do not make deficient the balance (mīzān)*
> *(Qur'an, 55:1–9)*

Many other verses emphasize the importance of moderation and responsible consumption, avoiding the exploitation of resources. For instance:

> *He is the One Who produces gardens—both cultivated and wild—and palm trees, crops of different flavours, olives, and pomegranates—similar 'in shape', but dissimilar 'in taste'.*
>
> *Eat of the fruit they bear and pay the dues at harvest, but do not waste.*
>
> *Surely, He does not like the wasteful.*
> (Qur'an, 6:141)

Deeper conceptual debates are, however, not the primary source of guidance for Muslims who do not have the literacy or the required training to engage with higher-level scholarship.[6] However, the fundamental principles—especially the emphasis on moderation in actions, including the use of natural resources, and the respectful treatment of all living beings—are integral to the teachings of all Muslim societies, as they are core messages in the biography of the Prophet (*sīrat al-nabī*).[7] This understanding is primarily shaped by the example of the Prophet's life, which serves as a foundation of Islamic consciousness for all Muslims. Detailed teachings about his life are an integral part of basic Islamic education and are regularly reinforced through mosque sermons across Muslim societies.

3.3 Obligation to Care for the Earth and Other Beings Demonstrated through the Prophet's Life

The Qur'an explicitly instructs Muslims to follow the example of Prophet Muhammad, who is regarded as the epitome of ethical behavior (Qur'an, 3:31–32; 4:69; 33:21). For Muslims, understanding Islamic ethics means striving to emulate his actions in their lives (Schimmel 1985). As a result, environmental preservation and the fair treatment of all species naturally become integral to Islamic moral conduct, as Prophet Muhammad's life exemplifies these principles in every aspect (Nadwi 2014; Schimmel 1985).

Prophet Muhammad lived a simple life, minimizing consumption without being stingy or denying himself all pleasures. While he enjoyed meat occasionally, his regular diet primarily consisted of simple foods such as barley, milk, and dates, all consumed in moderation. He even advised leaving the stomach half-empty after meals. This simplicity extended to his overall lifestyle—his wives' living quarters were modest, and his clothing was simple. Among his companions, it was common practice to patch old clothes or shoes to extend their use, not merely out of necessity but as a conscious effort to avoid waste, much like the modern spirit of recycling. Perhaps the most significant example of his emphasis on moderation in the preservation of natural resources is found in his teachings on the ritual cleansing before each of the five daily prayers (*wuḍū'*). This practice involves washing various parts of the body, which, if done without care, could lead to excessive water use. The Prophet provided clear guidance on using only the optimal amount of water necessary for cleanliness, without waste. He demonstrated this through his own *wuḍū'* practice and actively instructed others to do the same. As highlighted in a narrative about the Prophet's practices (*ḥadīth*), when passing by

6. There is an extensive literature on lay piety in Muslim societies, which is characterized by its devotional nature, with a primary focus on reciting or memorizing the Qur'an rather than delving into complex *fiqh* (Islamic jurisprudence) or theological texts. For an accessible introduction to that literature, see Bano (2017).
7. For recommended introductory references for a Western audience on the extensive literature on the *Sirah* of the Prophet, including works specifically designed for children, see, among others, Lings (2006), Nadwi (2014), and Schimmel (1985).

a companion performing ablution, Prophet Muhammad asked, "What is this extravagance?" The companion replied, 'Can there be any extravagance in ablution?" The Prophet responded, "Yes, even if you are on the bank of a flowing river" (Sunan Ibn Majah, 425).[8]

Prophet Muhammad was known for his deep care and compassion toward animals. He provided guidelines on their proper treatment, emphasizing the gentle and respectful care of all animals. His teachings frequently highlighted the importance of good treatment of animals, illustrating that such actions could lead to high status with God and entry into heaven, while mistreatment could result in severe punishment. For example, Ibn Umar, a companion of the Prophet, reported a tradition attributed to the Prophet: "A woman was punished on account of a cat. She kept it captive until it died of hunger, and so she entered hellfire because of it" (al-Mansi 2013). In another *ḥadīth*, it is said, "A prostitute was forgiven by Allah because, upon seeing a panting dog near a well about to die of thirst, she took off her shoe, tied it to her head-cover, and drew water for the dog. So, Allah forgave her because of that" (Sahih al-Bukhari 3321). The significance of this *ḥadīth* is particularly striking, given that sex outside of marriage, as in prostitution, is considered one of the major sins in Islam. Yet, the act of compassion toward an animal was enough to earn divine forgiveness, underscoring the profound importance of kindness to all creatures.

While Islamic ethical principles leave no room for cruelty toward animals, they do not condemn the rightful slaughter of animals for human consumption. This is why Prophet Muhammad is known to have emphasized the importance of treating animals with the utmost care during the process of slaughter: "Verily Allah has enjoined goodness to everything; so when you kill, kill in a good way and when you slaughter, slaughter in a good way. So every one of you should sharpen his knife, and let the slaughtered animal die comfortably" (Sahih Muslim 1955a). This balance between human consumption and animal treatment is subtly embedded in the aforementioned verse (Qur'an, 10:14) that declares humans as stewards of the Earth. Human beings are entrusted with the care of the Earth and all living species due to their faculty of reason (al-Mansi 2013; Haq and Wahab 2019). This role is both a privilege and a burden of responsibility, which justifies the use of other species and natural resources for the growth and well-being of individuals and societies. However, as emphasized in the *ḥadīth* and demonstrated by the Prophet's actions, the principle of moderation in all matters must be adhered to (al-Mansi 2013; Haq and Wahab 2019). Animal slaughter should be limited to essential needs, avoiding wasteful consumption, and natural resources should be used optimally to prevent depletion (Ozdemir 2003a).

3.4 Rituals as Tools for Cultivating Ethical Everyday Actions

In addition to the broader ethical principles concerning the Earth and other species found in Islamic scholarship and the practices of the Prophet, the five core pillars (*arkān*) of Islam themselves serve as active tools for cultivating pro-environmental behavior. The first pillar, the declaration of faith in one God and belief in the prophethood of Muhammad (*al-shahādatayn*), could serve to remind Muslims to devote their lives to actions that please God by following the Prophet's example. If Muslims consistently keep this understanding in mind, they might emulate the Prophet Muhammad's lifestyle, which as discussed above, emphasizes optimal and sustainable consumption. The second pillar, the five daily prayers, serves as a constant reminder for believers to stay on the "straight path," which includes maintaining ethical self-discipline in all aspects of life, including interactions with nature and

8. *Hadīth* quoted in this chapter, unless otherwise cited from a specific publication, are sourced from the online database Sunna.com (https://sunnah.com).

other species. The third pillar, fasting during the month of Ramadan, similarly encourages habits of self-control and restraint from overconsumption. *Zakāt*, the compulsory charitable tax on income, along with other forms of charitable giving such as *ṣadaqah* and *khayrāt* and the establishment of charitable endowments (*waqf*) (Dallh 2023), provide mechanisms which can be used for mobilizing resources to support projects aimed at environmental preservation or the protection of animals and plants—projects that are highly valued in Islam. While *zakāt* and *khayrāt* typically involve financial contributions, *waqf* is a particularly powerful tool when actively used to mobilize significant resources for environmental projects. *Waqf* refers to the endowment of resources, usually land or property, for a cause in perpetuity (Yaakob et al. 2017). The irrevocable nature of this decision means that *waqf* endowments can be established to support specific environmental causes. Forest land or other natural resources can be dedicated as *waqf* properties by individual owners as well as states, ensuring that once designated as *waqf* land, their status cannot be altered by those overseeing the *waqf* or by future governments for commercial purposes (Yaakob et al. 2017). Similarly, the pilgrimage to the Kaʿbah in Mecca (*ḥajj*) fosters a sense of human unity, where individuals from diverse backgrounds—regardless of class, race, or nationality—come together as equals. It serves as a powerful platform for raising awareness and fostering collective consciousness around important causes among Muslims worldwide. The pilgrimage to Mecca has long been emphasized in the writings and biographies of both classical and contemporary Islamic scholars as a profound expression of Muslim brotherhood. During the *ḥajj*, one cannot harm any living thing, and a person is required to be in harmony with the rest of creation (Llewellyn et al., 2024). Lastly, the remembrance of God (*ẓikr Allāh*), though not officially one of the five pillars, is central to Islamic ritual practices and is carried out daily by many Muslims. It fosters a deeper connection with God, providing the strength needed to live by the high moral standards required of an ethical human being in Islam.

3.5 The Challenges

If, as discussed above, the Islamic ethical framework—rooted in the Qur'an, sunnah, and shariah—is inherently aligned with fostering environmentally friendly behavior that utilizes natural resources and other species for human well-being without causing harm or undue pain, a key question arises: why have Muslim countries not become models of pro-environmental behavior? One obvious reason is the rise of the secular age, as Charles Taylor (2007) has argued, where even if faith persists, its ability to influence individuals' actions in everyday life is significantly diminished. This challenge is faced by all religions. However, in the case of Islam and the adoption of environmental ethics, there is an additional challenge stemming from the transformations in the Islamic education system during the colonial period.

Historically, the science of Islamic ethics, or "morals and etiquette" (*Akhlāq* and *Adab*), constituted one of the most important Islamic sciences in the premodern Islamic tradition. Premodern Islamic schools for children (*maktabs/madrasas*) taught Islamic ethics through texts but equally through practical demonstration. This educational training was viewed as a necessary prerequisite or essential learning components for the acquisition of knowledge for higher education (Hefner and Zaman 2007; Metcalf 1984). This was due to the nature of Islamic ethics as a demonstrative science that regulated every aspect of a person's behavior. The inculcation of *Adab* ("manners/etiquette") within the child in classical Islamic scholarship started with teaching them to respect and adopt proper behavior toward teachers and all elders as well as guiding them to follow appropriate behavior in every aspect of daily life, including how and when a person should speak (e.g., greetings, how to ask questions),

behave (when to sit, play, etc.), and treat members of one's family or religious authority (e.g., obedience to parents) (Metcalf 1984). In contrast, *Akhlāq* ("morals") were mostly concerned with the demonstration of proper conduct through the internalization of religious virtues that are taught through exhortation, storytelling, or personal experience (Trevathan 2021). The Islamic conceptualization of *adab* and *akhlāq* was also central to the emphasis on "spiritual purification" *(tazkiyah*) literature within Sufi scholarship in Sunni Islam (Mohamed 2023).

In his highly influential masterpiece *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn* ("Revival of the Religious Sciences") read to this day, Muḥammad al-Ghazālī (d. 1111),[9] one of the most revered Sunni mystics and scholars, focuses on how to achieve spiritual purification through cultivating virtuous behavior. The virtues promoted include patience and forbearance, moderation, repentance, gratitude, kindness, love, and brotherhood. These are studied alongside manners and proper etiquette; in this regard, al-Ghazālī's *Iḥyā*' also details etiquette for different aspects of life, such as eating, earning, marriage, and travel, and underlines the significance of ritual purification. Together, *Akhlāq* and *Adab* teachings were geared to inculcate strong Islamic ethics within the students to shape their everyday actions. Sufi teachings emphasize cultivating these values at the deepest levels of consciousness and embodying them through everyday actions, interactions with others, and one's relationship with God (Mohamed 2023).

During the colonial period, Islamic schools were displaced from their prominent role as the primary institutions where Muslims acquired knowledge for social, political, and economic matters, as well as spiritual matters (Bano 2017, 2020; Hefner and Zaman 2007). Western educational institutions took over children's education. This led to a divide between the "material/spiritual" in the Muslim mindset which did not exist until then (Bano 2017, 2020; Hallaq 2018). Actions related to the modern world became associated with Western education, while Islamic education became narrowly focused on learning to perform basic rituals. This shift resulted in a decline in the moral and ethical discipline that Islamic education was intended to instill in the daily lives of the Muslim public. As a result, even devout Muslims tend to turn to religion primarily for spiritual concerns detached from economic and social life, seeking closeness to God and securing the afterlife, rather than looking to religious teachings for solutions to contemporary issues, including major environmental challenges.[10] Many perceive these issues as too complex to be addressed by individual self-discipline alone. Furthermore, Muslim states and many religious leaders have not yet widely embraced the need to integrate environmental awareness into religious teachings.

The case of Indonesia illustrates how environmental awareness, once initiated, can rapidly gain momentum and lead to significant action. Islamic teachings, which emphasize the cultivation of an ethical self and care for the Earth, are being integrated into religious practices. Influential leaders like Imam Nasaruddin Umar, head of the Istiqlal Mosque in Jakarta, have taken practical steps such as installing solar panels and promoting conservation, turning mosques into models of environmental stewardship (Silalahi 2022; *The Economist* 2022). The Indonesian Ulema Council has supported these efforts by training clerics to promote peatland restoration and issuing environmental edicts (*fatwa*s), which have successfully raised awareness about conservation issues (Rochmyaningsih 2020). The "EcoMasjid" initiative, combining Islamic teachings with sustainable practices, has seen over one hundred mosques registered, and the concept of "Green Islam" is gaining traction, particularly in Java

9. For the contents of the *Ihyā'*, see Fazl-ul-Karim (1993, volume 1, 6; volume 2, 5; volume 3, 5).
10. Even in a state like Saudi Arabia, there has historically been a division of authority: the "ulama" oversee the regulation of the social sphere, while the affairs of state and economy are managed by state functionaries who rely on Western consultants to address modern-day realities (Jones 2015; Mouline 2014).

(Rochmyaningsih 2020; Silalahi 2022; *The Economist* 2022). These efforts demonstrate the potential for Islamic principles to drive environmental conservation in Muslim communities.

Lasting change, however, is difficult to achieve, as also visible in the case of Indonesia. Despite these grassroots initiatives, the country remains a major global emitter of greenhouse gases and continues to clear rainforests for palm oil, minerals, and infrastructure projects (Global Forest Watch n.d.). Muslim religious authorities in Indonesia have yet to pronounce on these matters. Despite some nationwide momentum from environmental initiatives, including those led by Islamic scholars and some mosque leaders, systemic change will require building broader societal pressure to prioritize environmental concerns. While progress is slow, the efforts to raise Islamic awareness of individual responsibility for environmental preservation are promising.

3. Perspectives in Dialogue

The ethical guidelines that both the Christian and Muslim traditions contain for leading a moral life in the context of the triple planetary crisis are strikingly similar. Through illustrative examples, this section summarizes the points of encounter and differences in emphasis. These could offer fruitful avenues for strengthening interfaith collaboration for reducing carbon emissions, reversing biodiversity loss, and reducing soil, water, and air pollution, as well as for addressing the challenges that both traditions face in putting their ethical guidelines into action.

Both hold respect for human dignity and concern for the flourishing of other species as fundamental. This implies that resources, including energy and food, are to be used in such a way as to uphold the inalienable dignity of each human being and respect for other species. A moral life is one where one's actions are mindful of their consequences on other people's lives and the balance of ecosystems. Every ton of carbon emissions contributes to global temperature rises. Each kilo of food produced through intensive agriculture and the use of pesticides contributes to biodiversity loss and contamination. Therefore, careful and prayerful consideration needs to be given to how faith communities and their members consume and use energy, how they use the land they own, and how they consume food and travel. When shifting to renewable energy, consideration also needs to be given to the ecological and social costs of extracting transition minerals. For example, how ethical is it to buy an electric SUV, bearing in mind the large quantities of mineral resources required to produce it, and the consequences for people and ecosystems in these extraction zones?

Examples of Christian and Muslim communities mobilizing to reduce carbon emissions are many. In the United Kingdom, Catholic and Anglican dioceses and other religious institutions are monitoring the carbon emissions involved in their use of buildings, modes of transport, and the food they consume, and taking practical action such as more efficient heating systems, building insulation, solar panels on church roofs, carpooling to attend weekly liturgies, and sourcing locally produced and seasonal food, to name but a few (see for example Eco-Church, Eco-Diocese, and other programs under the umbrella of the Church of England, or the LiveSimply parishes, Guardians of Creation projects, and other programs in the Catholic Church of England and Wales). During the season of Creation 2024, Christian churches mobilized to press governments to sign a fossil fuel nonproliferation treaty, and many have also been running fossil fuel disinvestment campaigns (Laudato Si' Movement, n.d.). The Laudato Si' Action Platform (n.d.) in the Catholic Church, launched in 2021 and an initiative of the Vatican Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, is a global

space to catalyze ecological actions across parishes, schools, universities, hospitals, and a large array of other Catholic organizations.

Within Muslim communities there is also evidence of growing efforts to cut carbon emissions. Building eco-friendly mosques, which draw on sustainable construction material and natural lighting, are becoming popular in some Muslim-majority countries (Ummah for Earth, n.d.), such as Indonesia, as well as among Muslims living in the West, such as represented by the Cambridge Central Mosque (n.d.). Investing in permaculture or running cleanliness programs led by Islamic institutions or actors are other examples. Zaytuna College, the first Muslim liberal arts college in Berkeley, California, for example, encourages its students to take the Permaculture Design Certificate course (Zaytuna College 2024). It covers the application of permaculture principles to areas such as food production, home design, construction, energy conservation, and generation, while also exploring alternative economic models and legal strategies that support permaculture solutions. Similarly, the Global Muslim Climate Network (GMCN) is a Muslim environmental organization founded in 2016 aimed at promoting renewable energy and redistributing wealth from oil-producing nations to poorer countries. It was formed following the 2015 Islamic Declaration on Global Climate Change (see "Introduction" in this volume), with leadership from groups like the Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Science, GreenFaith, and Islamic Relief Worldwide. GMCN has worked to make mosques more energy-efficient and is training imams to promote environmental awareness. It has also called for the conservation of water during cleaning rituals and for reducing plastic waste at the annual pilgrimage to Mecca. Additionally, the network advocates for ending conventional fuel use, halting oil pipeline construction, and encouraging oil-producing Muslim nations to transition to renewable energy and support poorer nations in combating climate change. Similarly, *Al-Mizan* is being used by some countries, such as Jordan, as a blueprint for sustainability, integrating its principles into national strategies to promote environmental stewardship and sustainable development.

Both Christian and Muslim perspectives emphasize the cultivation of ecological virtues as central components of faith, of being faithful to "the straight path" in Islam and being faithful to the Gospel and Jesus' teachings in Christianity. In both, rituals can and do play an important role in nurturing the cultivation of ecological virtues, instilling practices of moderation, sobriety, solidarity, care, and humility. Both perspectives underline everyday practical actions that demonstrate these virtues as constitutive of a moral life. We also observe a new interpretation of their sources for facing current ecological challenges. In Christianity, there is a re-interpretation of the "Gospel of Creation" to offer a theological analysis of environmental degradation. There is a shift toward a "situated anthropocentrism" and a recasting of classical accounts of the virtues and of ritual and ecclesial practices toward love of the Earth. Similarly in Islam, there is a deeper engagement with the Qur'anic messages about nature, and a following of the environmentally friendly and sustainable practices of the Prophet. Both Christian and Muslim traditions use central figures whose behavior they seek to model. It is very common for Muslims to desire to follow closely the Prophet's actions. And the Prophet's relationship with other species and attitudes toward natural resources such as water are central to shaping current efforts aimed at promoting ecologically sustainable lifestyles in Muslim communities. Christians seek to model their behavior to the spirit of the life of Jesus, and the lives of those who have followed Jesus closely, such as saints like St. Francis of Assisi, from whom *Laudato Si'* is inspired (§1–2, 10–12), or St. Theresa of Lisieux and her "Little Way" of following Jesus through everyday small deeds (*Laudato Si'* §230).

From the ethical guidelines found in *Laudato Si'* and *Fratelli Tutti*, one observes a greater focus on political love in Christianity, whereas there is a greater focus on individual action in Islam. However, this seeming lack of political expression could also be viewed as the result not so much of interpretations of Islamic texts but of the fact that Muslims are a minority in Western countries, and that Muslim communities are often marked by prejudices about political radicalization and terrorism. When they do get involved in policy advocacy and climate political action, they tend to model Christian political activism, such as the Global Muslim Climate Network mirroring Christian Climate Action, and to join interfaith climate political action initiatives such as Faith for the Climate (n.d.). However, Muslims in Muslim-majority societies are largely still under authoritarian rule (which some attribute to Islam and others to the lingering consequences of colonial rule) (Kuru 2019). It is therefore more difficult for religious organizations or individuals to mobilize around ecological concerns and contest policy decisions that are ecologically harmful. Thus, it is not that Islam does not support collective action or political processes for socio-ecological change, but that the contexts in which Muslims live (minority and experiencing prejudices in Western democratic contexts, and authoritarian rule in Muslim-majority contexts) are not conducive to the expression of political love. This wider political context has meant that there has been a greater focus on everyday practical action (at individual or mosque level) than on collective political action.

One of the great challenges for both Christian and Muslim traditions to release the untapped potential of their classical sources and ritual practices for a fundamental shift in energy consumption at the individual, household, institutional, and government level is structural. While Christian religious leaders have taken action at the most senior level (e.g., Pope Francis, Patriarch Bartholomew, World Council of Churches), religious leadership at the level of local churches is sparser, with some churches very active and others less or not at all. In the Muslim context, there are no equivalent religious leaders, but those who have taken action, such as those visible in Indonesia or eco-mosques, remain few in number. When religious scholars like Imam Tayyeb from Al-Azhar participate in international platforms, it is difficult to determine whether their involvement is self-initiated, as they are normally only responding to invitations that come from specific states or international organizations. As yet, it remains unclear whether the al-Azhari network is effectively spreading these teachings through its extensive network of mosques. For the wider Muslim faithful to adopt the Islamic pro-environmental messages contained in the Qur'an, a consistent discourse around this topic has to be promoted through the mosques, the Friday sermons (*khutbas*), and teaching lessons to children, teenagers, and adults. Similarly, the *khutbas* delivered at the Kaaba in Mecca or during the *ḥajj* rarely address this concern, despite these being important platforms for raising awareness of the urgency of this issue within the global Muslim community.

Despite these challenges, a movement is rising and there are many shoots of hope. Although many current efforts, particularly in the Muslim context, have yet to reach their full potential—such as the possibility to further leverage the al-Azhari mosque network to spread the environmental message—the involvement of prominent Muslim scholars in global partnerships marks a promising start. Beyond religious leaders and imams, academics writing on Christian and Muslim perspectives on environmental challenges actively contribute to public discourse by raising awareness through media outlets, which can easily be sensitized to include environmental concerns from a religious viewpoint. Further, fostering interfaith collaborations, especially at the global level, is crucial for accelerating momentum, with international development institutions playing a vital role in strengthening these initiatives.

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