

ISLAM AND ECOLOGY

by Marjorie Hope and James Young

Seyyed Hossein Nasr sees at the center of Islam a charge to protect the natural world -- a world that reflects the higher reality of the transcendent God.

MARJORIE HOPE and JAMES YOUNG are a husband-and-wife writing team who have traveled in more than eighty countries. This article forms part of a book-in-progress on the potential for an effective ecological ethic in several major religions, tentatively entitled *The New Alliance: Faith and Ecology*.

The Qur'an' and the *Hadith* are rich in proverbs and precepts that speak of the Almighty's design for creation and humanity's responsibility for preserving it. For many Muslims, citing these is enough to prove that Islam has always embraced a complete environmental ethic. Others are more critical. They readily acknowledge that the guidelines are all there in Islamic doctrine.

Tawhid (unity), *khilafa* (trusteeship), and *akhirah*

(accountability, or literally, the hereafter), three central concepts

of Islam, are also the pillars of Islam's environmental ethic. But they add that Muslims have strayed from this nexus of values and need to return to it.

Many of the Qur'anic verses cited by Muslims bear a striking resemblance to passages in the Bible, and portray a similar view of creation. "Praise be to Allah who created the heavens and the earth and made light and darkness" (Q.6:1). Later, in Q.6:102, we glimpse the principle of unity: ". . . . There is no God but He, the Creator of all things." The dignity of all creation is proclaimed: "The seven heavens and the earth and all therein declare His glory: there is not a thing but celebrates His praise. . ." (Q. 17:44).

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