

God and the sustainability of the earth: interpreting Islamic traditions

In the Holy Qur'an, God is the Creator of everything, the Sustainer of life on Earth and the One who balances creation. God has made humans his *khalifah* – trustees, guardians or vicegerents – on Earth. Muslim attitudes to the creation are worked out from the verse in the Qur'an, answering the question: what does it mean to be God's trustee in caring for the world he made?

- With a partner, read the Quranic text and the eight interpretations around it. For each one, say to your partner at least one practical difference it would make in the life of a Muslim – how would they act as a result, and why?
- Decide together which interpretation is most likely to have an impact on a Muslim and why. There is no single right answer – it depends on all kinds of factors – but think carefully and offer explanations.

<p>A. All good Muslims should thank God for their lives – it's God who created us.</p>	<p>B. This verse shows clearly why Muslims, along with people of other faiths, should treat the Earth with respect – it's because God made it, so we have no right to spoil it.</p>	<p>C. It is understanding our role as guardians of the balance of the Earth established by God that leads some Muslims to campaign for ecological causes, to be eco-workers for God's world.</p>
<p>D. 'The Explanation' is '<i>al-bayan</i>' – speech, thought, reason; you can read it as a way of looking at human science – good Muslim scientists submit their knowledge to God, and recognise that God alone is the 'All Knowing'.</p>	<p>'The All Merciful has taught the Qur'an. He [God] created man and taught him the Explanation. The sun and the moon run their measured circuits, the stars and the trees bow themselves. Heaven – He raised it up and set the Balance. Transgress not in the balance.'</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Qur'an, 55:1–7</p>	<p>E. Nature is balanced by God, and by all other species – it is only humans that corrupt the world and destroy the balance. It is part of our submission to God that we keep the balance of life too.</p>
<p>F. In this verse, even the trees bow to God – but humans often don't; they corrupt the Earth instead. God is merciful, but will judge.</p>	<p>G. 'The Balance' that God has set may be the scales of justice that are to be used on the Day of Judgment.</p>	<p>H. God's blessings include all that is good in nature and creation. We should not disown or deny these blessings, but cherish them and rejoice in them. Good Muslims will love nature.</p>

- Use Professor Demiri's explanation (p. 20) and this information to write a 75-word summary of your understanding of 'Why Muslims care about the environment'.
- Swap summaries with a partner – what did they get that you missed?
- What is similar and different between this Islamic worldview and your own? What influences your worldview?

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