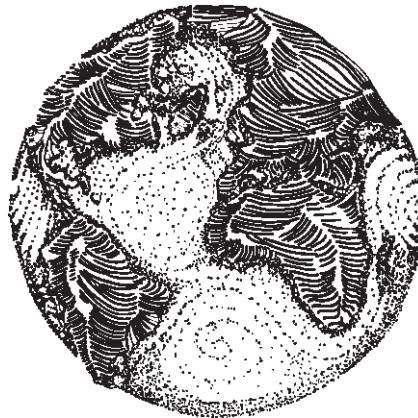


YOU OLD
— *the whole world* —
IN YOUR HANDS



— — *In gratitude for Religions for Peace on the occasion of the 9th World Assembly | Vienna | November 20-22 | 2013* — —

*We're moving quickly from a world where we push nature around to a world where nature pushes back—with far more power.
But we've still got to live on that world, so we better start figuring out how.*

BILL MCKIBBEN

Approximately 600,000 deaths occurred worldwide as a result of weather-related natural disasters in the 1990s, some 95 percent of which took place in developing countries.

WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

Rising sea levels — an outcome of global warming — increase the risk of coastal flooding and could cause population displacement. More than half of the world's population now lives within 60 kilometers of shorelines.

UNION OF CONCERNED SCIENTISTS

Greetings from Christina Lee Brown

On Monday, September 30, 2013, just a few days before this tool kit was sent to the printer, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published its 2013 report on climate change. This report represents a global effort, prepared by 209 Lead Authors and 50 Review Editors from 39 countries and more than 600 Contributing Authors from 32 countries. It has particular relevance to us, religious leaders who advocate for Peace, because Peace on Earth cannot co-exist with the global turbulence that accompanies climate change, affecting access to water, clean air, and food as well as to health and economic stability. To promote Peace on Earth we must understand the interdependence of all life, earth and human, and its intricate, mysterious interconnection with all the life that is, was, or will be in the future. HRH Charles the Prince of Wales described the challenge that we face when he said “if we fail the Earth, we fail humanity.”

This task of stemming the tide of climate change is large, but it is not impossible. The IPCC report insists that climate change is caused by human behavior; where there is the will to do so, this behavior can change. As people of faith who value the gift of life, we can and must make the changes in our own behavior that threaten the well being of life on our planet, and then encourage our followers

to do the same. Now is the time to join wholeheartedly in the Religions for Peace Global Interreligious Sustainability Movement in partnership with the Sustainability Revolution that is defining a new age, replacing that brought on by the Industrial Revolution. This new age is defined by a new paradigm of consciousness, structured upon reverence for all life and replacing the materialistic mode of thought sustained in the developed countries throughout the past 200 years of industrialization.

To promote the Sustainability Movement, I want to present to each of you as a gift this tool kit containing articles, poems, factual findings, and a bibliography of books and articles, websites, interfaith organizations, and movies, all of which have been selected for the purpose of helping you become an effective agent for change among your followers. Contributors to the tool kit represent our rich religious diversity and its vast potential to lead the way in making ours the Age of the Sustainability Revolution. As the producer of the tool kit, I want to acknowledge my appreciation to all of its contributors as well as to all the scientists who contributed to the IPCC and other reports, whose findings have awakened us to the need to reclaim reverence for our sacred air, water, and soil.

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I am most pleased to present this toolkit to you, and I ask that you consider it a serious call to action in support of the Religion for Peace Global Interreligious Sustainability Movement. It is my fervent hope that each of you will find appropriate and efficacious ways for leading your followers in this Movement. Despite the critical global predicament that we face, I continue to hope. I have confidence that the religious leaders gathered in this Assembly can create Peace on Earth by leading an international movement of responsible stewardship emanating from your commitment to your beliefs and values and from your admirable sense of wonder at the gift of life and its remarkable story through the millennia.

Yours in Peace and Hope,
Christina Lee Brown

*The more we exploit nature, the more our options are reduced until we have only one:
to fight for survival.*

MORRIS UDALL

The Earth is our origin, our nourishment, our educator, our healer, our fulfillment.

THOMAS BERRY

When one tugs at a single thing in nature, he finds it attached to the rest of the world.

JOHN MUIR

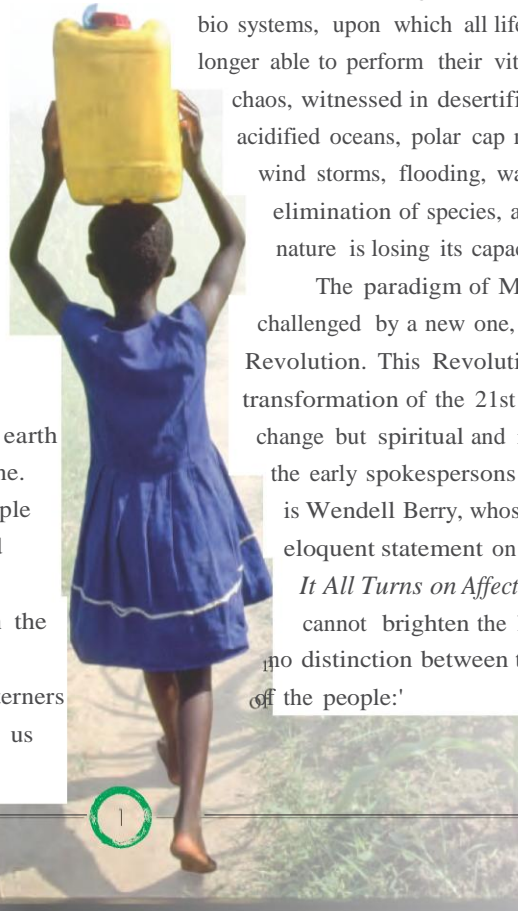
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The Sustainability Revolution

Toward the end of the 18th century, around 1780, the Industrial Revolution began in the Western world, introducing Modernism, an ideology which eventually shaped the lifestyles and values of the Westernized world. So thoroughly did the changes embodied in Modernism transform people's assumptions and desires that it has been appropriately described as a Revolution. Concepts of speed, mobility, efficiency, and consumerism- all values deriving from the machine – molded the thought and ideals of the modern person. When the transformation was complete, Westerners had lost any perception of an intrinsic unity of all life within Nature and could scarcely envision a relationship between earth life and human life beyond a mechanical or consumerist one. Today, according to the late Thomas Berry, C.P., many people are incapable of experiencing the sacred in the cosmos, and because of this, the modern period is filled with angst and alienation from the earth, and a basic disenchantment with the world.

The disconnection from Nature that occurred as Westerners pursued what they conceived to be a better life has brought us



instead to the brink of global annihilation. The Earth's diverse bio systems, upon which all life hinges, are shutting down, no longer able to perform their vital services. The result is eco chaos, witnessed in desertification, destroyed rain forests, acidified oceans, polar cap melting, soil erosion, wildfires, wind storms, flooding, water shortages, air pollution, elimination of species, and much more. It is clear that nature is losing its capacity to sustain life on Earth.

The paradigm of Modernity is today being challenged by a new one, called the Sustainability Revolution. This Revolution anticipates the most profound transformation of the 21st century, directing not only social change but spiritual and religious change as well. One of the early spokespersons for the Sustainability Revolution is Wendell Berry, whose most recent and perhaps most eloquent statement on the subject is made in his essay, *It All Turns on Affection*, wherein he says, "land abuse cannot brighten the human prospect. There is in fact no distinction between the fate of the land and the fate of the people."

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This basic tenet of the unity of all life, human and earth, is foundational to the Sustainability Revolution, and is thoroughly explored in HRH Charles the Prince of Wales' inspiring work, *Harmony: A New Way of Looking at Our World*. Prince Charles makes repeated reference to the Sustainability Revolution, which he sees as the only hope for the planet. In agreement with Wendell Berry, he starkly affirms that "if we fail the earth, we fail humanity." At this point in history, Prince Charles reminds us, we cannot pretend "that we do not know about the problems we are creating." Given the information that the scientists and others of our day have gathered, our only rational as well as moral choice is to take action to stem eco-destruction, becoming foot soldiers in the Sustainability Revolution.

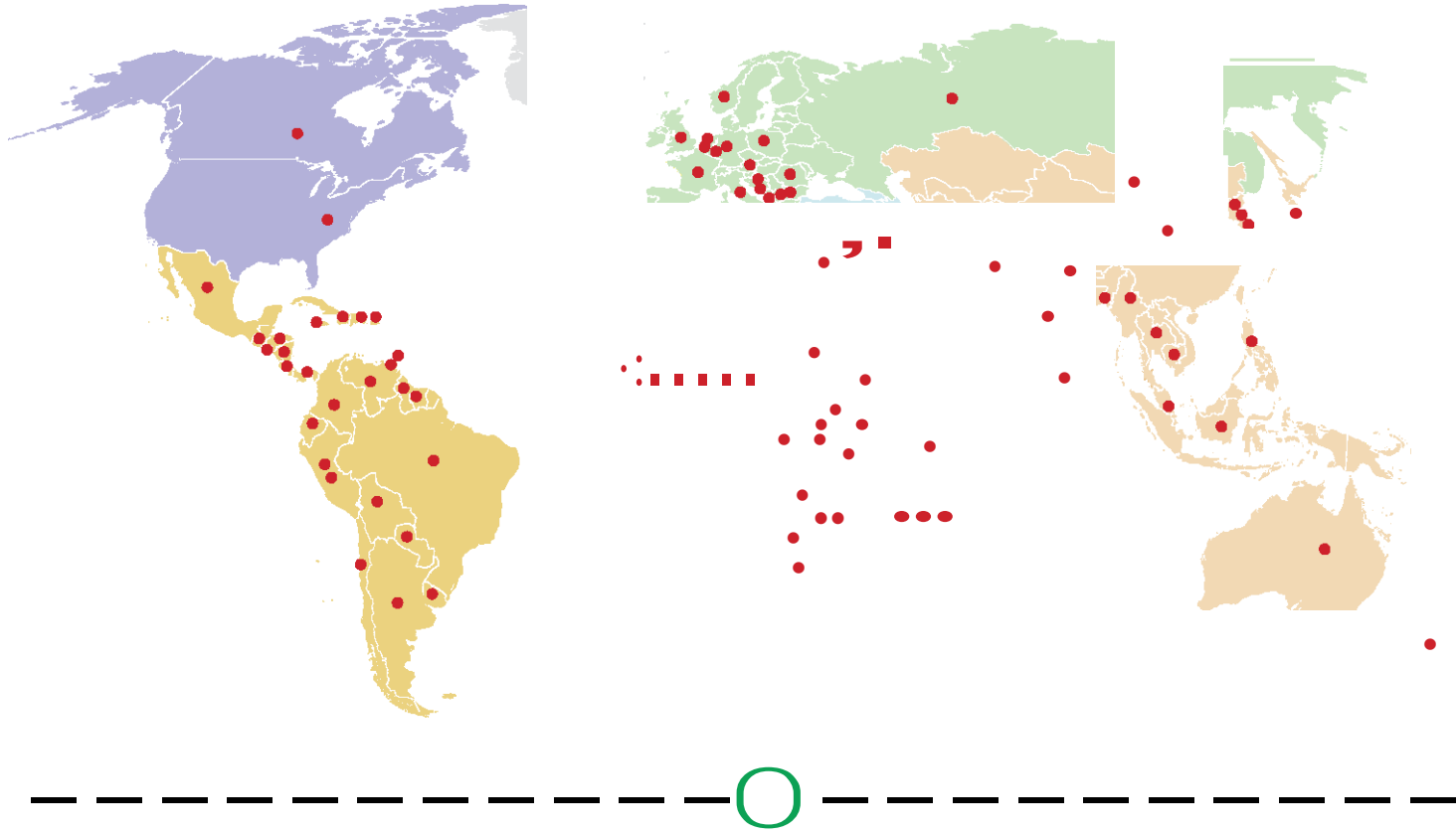
Perhaps no group of concerned persons around the globe has responded more effectively to the eco-crisis of today than have the theologians who have created the field of eco-theology, pioneered by Thomas Berry, C.P., and today enriched by scholars in all faith traditions. Certainly the work of scholars in this field is in part a reaction to the current ecological crisis, but even more importantly, it is an acknowledgement of the findings of current research in the sciences of biology, genetics, geology, astrology, psychology, anthropology and others. These findings demand a new understanding of the origins

of life and consciousness, which must be found, according to Berry, in a deep understanding of the story of the evolving universe, which takes us back over 13 billion years. In this context, revealing the unity and interdependence of all life, we can discover, Berry says, a guide for our own effective functioning as individuals and as a species. A monumental contribution to this re-discovery of the human species within the unity of Nature is the film, *Journey of the Universe*, the collaborative effort of evolutionary philosopher Brian Thomas Swimme and historian of religions Mary Evelyn Tucker.

The Sustainability Revolution cannot be viewed as a matter of choice by serious-minded adults today. We come back to the words of Wendell Berry and Prince Charles: Failing the Earth means failing humanity, destroying our children's future as well as our own. Current science does not permit us to persist in the delusion that we live on the Earth; we live, in fact, within the Earth with myriad other life forms and systems, all interconnected and interdependent. While the reality of life is beyond our grasp in its immensity, it is nonetheless awesome to ponder.

The Sustainability Revolution is struggling to banish the Industrial Revolution and replace its empty promises of a good life with substantial insights into the sacred mystery of life. Adopting the assumptions and desires of this Revolution will make us participants in it. This is both the challenge and the privilege of our age.

Map of Religions for Peace – Inter-religious Councils



Born to Belonging: Praying the Primal Elements

By Larry L. Rasmussen

We would all be well advised to listen to the counsel of Wendell Berry, who has been for the past 50 years America's foremost teacher on the subject of the wholeness of creation. "To cherish the remains of the Earth and to foster its renewal," he warns, "is our only legitimate hope for survival." There is no more effective way to cherish the remains of the Earth than first, to recognize the primal elements of earth, air, water, and fire as sacred and therefore worthy of reverence. Then, as we perceive more deeply the wholeness of creation, we understand as well that we have been born to belonging to the sacred primal elements, of which we are composed and without which we could not live.

From the moment we are born until our death, we need air. Likewise water. Our body mass is, like the planet's, 70 percent water. As the descendents of Adam, whose name derives from the Hebrew word, *adama*, meaning soil, we are groundlings, earthlings, the good clods who became the cultivators. We are creatures of dust, a little water, and the breath of God. Our identity is in our belonging to the sacred elements, a heritage that unites us with a past stretching back millions of years; yet, this identity has current implications as well. We live in a period of transition from an industrial-technological civilization to an ecological civilization, a

transition that some have called the greatest that humans have ever faced. This transition marks the emergence from the Holocene Age to the Anthropocene Age.

The Holocene Age has hosted all the human civilizations ever known. Its salient characteristic? Relative climate stability. The Anthropocene Age, the age of the human, is distinguished by the high impact of human activities on the surface processes of the planet, whether on dry land, in and under the seas, oceans, and other bodies of water, or across the dome of heaven. The uniqueness of the Anthropocene Age is global geophysical change, change sufficient to effect what Bill McKibben has termed "a tough, new planet." Ours is not the same planet our ancestors knew. Humans have not been on this "tough new planet" before, and we are ill prepared to adapt to it. Our world is hot, flat, diminished, and crowded. Our reach extends to places where few humans dwell – in the oceans, high into the atmosphere, into the polar regions. Our presence is large, but our resources and biodiversity, even species, are diminishing. Nature on this diminished planet seems to be more vulnerable than it once was, reaching what Marilynne Robinson has called "the end of its tolerance of our presumptions."

The pathway to ecological civilization will not be easy, but we can take direction from Thomas Berry's principle that "planetary health is primary and human well-being derivative." We need to proceed from disenchantment with nature as a repository of resources to enchantment with nature's mystery and spirit. We need to re-envision economics, with the principle of long-term ecological sustainability replacing that of short-term growth that benefits relatively few people, and we need to insist upon policy that integrates the impact of climate change, poverty, energy, food, and water with decision-making on all levels.

Central and fundamental to making a healthy transition to ecological civilization is an effective religious and moral transition. In Ethics, this requires a shift from a focus on the self to one on the ecosphere as the relational matrix of our lives. Human creatures, embedded as nature in nature, are inseparable from the rest of nature, from which we have evolved, upon which we depend, and whose fate we share. The goal of ethics in the Anthropocene is to render what we might call "creation justice," which acknowledges not only the moral claims made by human beings but those of soil, air, water, and fire (energy) as well as those of future generations of both human and otherkind. In the new order, it is a matter of

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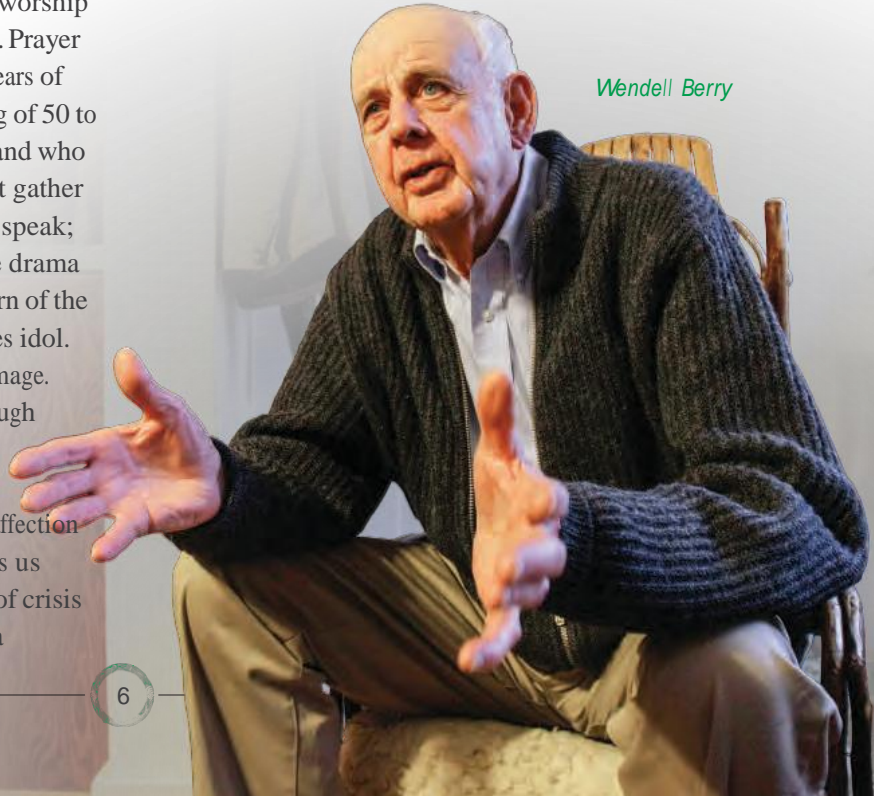
justice that the primal elements regenerate and renew on their own slow terms. We humans, along with all earth life, are bonded to the primal elements and they to us; we have all been born to belonging.

The religious transition to the new age calls for honest, enlightened leadership, capable of teaching us to pray and worship as denizens of the tough new planet of the Anthropocene. Prayer and God-talk that do not encompass all 13 to 15 billion years of the universe's pilgrimage to date and the immense wheeling of 50 to 100 billion galaxies, each swimming with billions of stars and who knows how many planets; prayer and God-talk that do not gather in all species come and gone, as well as those leaving as we speak; finally, prayer and God-talk that do not embrace the whole drama of life in all its misery and grandeur is simply quaint. Shorn of the universe, the worship of God is worship of a human species idol. It is God rendered in our own smudged and diminished image.

Wendell Berry would say that our transition to the tough new planet that is now our home must "turn on affection," on cherishing the remains of the Earth and nurturing its renewal. His Holiness the Dalai Lama's word for this affection is compassion, which brings happiness to others and makes us happy as well. They know, as we know, that this is a time of crisis for our world and for us who belong to it. Yet, this is also a

time of hope that promises a different Earth faith bearing moral-spiritual energy unlike any that we have experienced, and a new Earth ethic appropriate to a deeply altered world, which can lead to a new system of creation justice. We were born to belonging to this new Earth, and its great challenges and possibilities are ours.

Wendell Berry



In our world, we need a clear awareness of the interdependent nature of nations, of humans and animals, and of humans, animals, and the world. Everything is of interdependent nature.

I feel that many problems, especially man-made problems, are due to a lack of knowledge about this interdependent nature.

HIS HOLINESS THE DALAI LAMA

The earth has been created for me as a mosque and as a means of purification.

THE PROPHET MUHAMMAD

Nothing is farther removed from traditional Islamic spirituality than the raping of the earth in the name of man's earthly welfare and without consideration of the welfare of the whole of creation.

FROM *ISLAMIC SPIRITUALITY: FOUNDATIONS*, EDITED BY SEYYED HOSSEIN NASR

Ten Hindu Environmental Teachings

By Pankaj Jain, Ph.D.

Hinduism is remarkably diverse in its theologies and cultural traditions; yet, the Vedas, Upanishads, Puranas, Sutras, and other sacred texts of Hinduism consistently refer to the worship of the divine in nature. Such has given rise to the Sanskrit mantras recited by millions of Hindus for centuries to revere their rivers, mountains, trees, animals, and the earth. Although Hinduism can be described as a universe of beliefs and practices, ten important teachings on the environment can be discerned which are generally embraced by all Hindus:

1. **Pancha Mahabhutas** (The five great elements) create a web of life that is shown forth in the structure and interconnectedness of the cosmos and the human body. Hinduism teaches that the five great elements (space, air, fire, water, and earth) are all derived from prakriti, the primal energy. Each of these elements has its own life and form; together the elements are interconnected and interdependent. The Upanishads explains the interdependence of these elements in relation to Brahman, the supreme reality, from which they arise: “From Brahman arises space, from space arises air, from air arises fire, from fire arises water, and from water arises earth.”

Hinduism recognizes that the human body is composed of and related to these five elements, and connects each of the elements to one of the five senses: the nose to the earth; tongue to water; eyes to fire; skin to air; and ears to space. This bond between our senses and the elements positions us within the natural world, inseparable from it.

2. **Ishavasyam** — Divinity is omnipresent and takes infinite forms. Hindu texts, such as the *Bhagavad Gita* (7.19, 13.13) and the *Bhagavad Purana* (2.2.41, 2.2.45), contain many references to the omnipresence of the Supreme divinity, throughout and within nature. Hindus worship and accept the presence of God in nature. For example, many Hindus think of India’s mighty rivers — such as the Ganges — as goddesses. In the *Mahabharata*, it is noted that the universe and every object in it has been created as an abode of the Supreme God meant for the benefit of all, implying that individual species should enjoy their role within a larger system, in relationship with other species.

3. **Protecting the environment** is part of Dharma. Dharma, one of the most important Hindu concepts, has been translated into English as duty, virtue, cosmic order, and religion. Protecting the environment for the Hindu is an important expression of dharma. In a number of rural Hindu communities, safeguarding ecosystems such as forests and water is reverence for creation, or dharma, rather than an optional environmental activity. These traditional Indian groups do not see religion, ecology, and ethics as separate arenas of life but rather a part of their dharma to treat creation with respect.

4. **Our environmental actions** affect our karma. Karma, a central Hindu teaching, holds that each of our actions creates consequences — good and bad — that constitute our karma and determine our fate, including the place we will assume when we are reincarnated in our next life. Moral behavior creates good karma, and our behavior toward the environment has karmic consequences. Because we have free choice, even though we may have harmed the environment in the past, we can choose to protect the environment in the future, replacing environmentally destructive karmic patterns with good ones.

5. **The earth — Devi** — is a goddess and our mother and deserves our devotion and protection. Many Hindus touch the floor before getting out of bed every morning and ask Devi to forgive them for trampling on her body. Millions of Hindus create kolams daily — artwork consisting of bits of rice or other food placed at their doorways in the morning. These kolams express the Hindus' desire to offer sustenance to the earth, as the earth sustains them. The Chipko movement — made famous by Chipko women's commitment to “hugging” trees in their community to protect them from clear-cutting by outside interests — represents a similar devotion to the earth.

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6. **Hinduism's tantric and yogic traditions** affirm the sacredness of material reality and contain teachings and practices to unite people with divine energy. Hinduism's tantric tradition teaches that the entire universe is the manifestation of divine energy. Yoga, derived from the Sanskrit word meaning "to yoke" or "to unite," refers to a series of mental and physical practices designed to connect the individual with this divine energy. Both these traditions affirm that all phenomena, objects, and individuals are expressions of the divine, and contemporary Hindu teachers have used them to denounce the exploitation of the environment, women, and indigenous peoples.
7. **Belief in reincarnation** supports a sense of the interconnectedness of all creation. Hindus believe in the cycle of rebirth, wherein every being travels through millions of cycles of birth and rebirth in different forms, depending on their karma from previous lives. So a person may be reincarnated as a person, animal, bird, or another part of the wider community of life. Because of this, and because all people are understood to pass through many lives on their pathway to ultimate liberation, reincarnation creates a sense of solidarity between people and all living things.

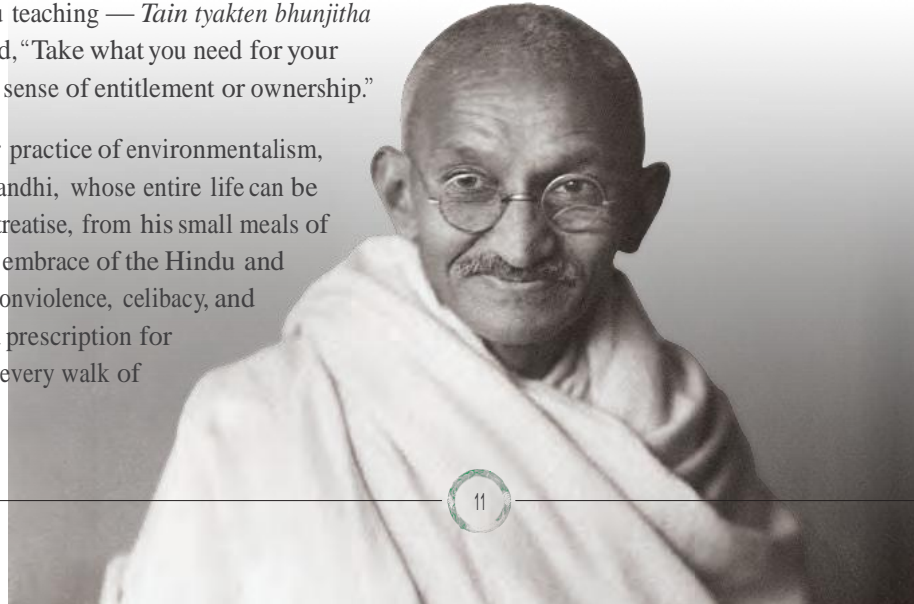
8. **Non-violence — ahimsa** — is the greatest dharma. Ahimsa to the earth improves one's karma. For observant Hindus, hurting or harming another living being damages one's karma and obstructs advancement toward moksha — liberation. To prevent the further accrual of bad karma, Hindus are instructed to avoid activities associated with violence and to follow a vegetarian diet.

9. **Sanyasa (asceticism)** represents a path to liberation and is good for the earth. Hinduism teaches that asceticism — restraint in consumption and simplicity in living — represents a pathway toward moksha (liberation), which treats the earth with respect. A well-known Hindu teaching — *Tain tyakten bhunjitha* — has been translated, “Take what you need for your sustenance without a sense of entitlement or ownership.”

10. **Simple living**, another practice of environmentalism, is demonstrated in Gandhi, whose entire life can be seen as an ecological treatise, from his small meals of nuts and fruits to his embrace of the Hindu and Jain values of truth, nonviolence, celibacy, and fasting. His life was a prescription for environmentalism in every walk of life.

(Acknowledgement: Adapted from the essays by Christopher K. Chapple, O. P. Dwivedi, K. L. Seshagiri Rao, Vinay Lal, and George A. James in *Hinduism and Ecology: The Intersection of Earth, Sky, and Water*; and Jainism and Ecology: *Nonviolence in the Web of Life*, both published by Harvard University Press. Thanks also to the essays by Harold Coward and Rita DasGupta Sherma in *Purifying the Earthly Body of God: Religion and Ecology in Hindu India*, published by SUNY Press).

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The common values that most of the world's religions hold in relation to the natural world might be summarized as reverence, respect, restraint, redistribution, responsibility and renewal.

MARY EVELYN TUCKER

Why have we developed ethics for homicide and genocide, but not for geo-cide?

LARRY RASMUSSEN

The earth is the LORD'S and all it holds, the world and those who live there.

PSALMS 24:1

*The greatest challenge facing our society ...
is to shift from a culture based on consumption to a culture based on caretaking.*

SCOTT RUSSELL SANDERS



A Sermon for the Birthday of the World (abridged) Rosh Hashanah 2006

By Rabbi Joe Rooks Rapport

As a young man, living in the Northwoods, a place so beautiful that it is called “God’s country,” I learned to appreciate the beauty of the earth, in Jewish terms, as a reflection of God’s wonder. And now, I look back on this landscape as a universal song of a God who calls us all, God’s children, to guard and to serve all creation. All of us have a role in the protection of the planet we all share. And to be reminded once again of that connection, we need only turn to the very first pages of the Torah, to the story of how Adam came from Adamah (Genesis 2:7-10 & 15).

When taken more directly from the Hebrew, these passages might read like this: “Then the LORD God formed Adam, [the first human being] out of the dust of Adamah [out of the earth herself], and breathed into its nostrils the breath of life; and Adam became a living soul. And the LORD God planted a garden eastward, in Eden; and there God placed Adam, the work of God’s hands. And the LORD God planted, Adamah, the earth, with every tree that is pleasing to the sight, and good for food; the Tree of Life also in the midst of the garden, and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. And a river flowed forth out of Eden to ever water the garden;

and from thence it was parted, and became four great streams... And the LORD God placed Adam in the Garden of Eden to guard and to serve her.”

Environmentalism runs deep within our Biblical tradition. We learn this from “the beginning,” from the story of our creation and our connection to the Earth. In the beginning, God planted two trees in Eden. The tree of Eternal Life, a symbol of the abundance of nature, an Eternal source of sustenance for all of us who live in this garden we call the earth. But, God planted there also the tree of Knowledge of Good and of Evil, and therein lies the challenge. From knowledge we have learned to love. From knowledge we have also learned to bend the laws of nature to our will and to draw ever more valuable resources from our earth. Through knowledge we have created a world that can provide for us in an abundance which shames Eden for its fruitfulness. And yet it is a forgetful knowledge which we have learned — a knowledge unconnected to the source of these blessings that have been placed in our knowing hands; a forgetfulness of the God who creates and sustains this earth, day by day, despite our abundant calls upon its resources.

And we have forgotten, too, our link to the land, our tie to this earth, and our common cause in the preservation of this source of all the blessings in our lives.

As it says in the Midrash, The Ancient Legends of our People, “God led Adam around all the trees of the Garden of Eden.” And God said to Adam: “See My works, how good and praiseworthy they are? And all that I have created, I made for you. [But] be mindful that you do not spoil and destroy My world—for if you spoil it, there will be no one left to repair it.” (Midrash Kohelet Rabbah 7:13)

The tree of knowledge bears fruits, both of good and of evil. Sustainable development means nothing more than eating of the fruits of goodness without tasting from the fruits of evil which spawn a forgetfulness of the source of all that is good. The lessons we can learn from the sacred text of our people and all peoples who look out upon the stars, who feel the sands slip through their fingers, who recognize the wonder of our world in many ways, teach us of our kinship with all human life and our connection to the Creator who has brought us forth unto life.

I want to show you a rock, which is a piece of Mount Sinai. I carried this rock myself from the mountain's very peak, a souvenir from my first journey to the land of our beginnings in the days when the Sinai was still a part of that Land.

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And while we are, none of us, so very sure that the Mountain we call Sinai today is, in fact, the place where our people received God's word, still in all, I have cherished this stone as a piece of my spiritual journey. Within each stone drawn from the Mountain's peak there resides the imprint of these tiny Trees of Life, a geological anomaly called "magnesium flowers," repeated again and again within the facets of each stone. These serve as a reminder of the Torah, our "Tree of Life." So, when I say that you are looking now at a piece of Mount Sinai, I mean more than this ancient rock which I hold in my hand. I mean that I am a piece of Mount Sinai, and so are you; that all of us have a task in the protection of that Tree of Life we all share.

We all stood at Sinai. We have learned that lesson each and every year on Yom Kippur. We read from the Torah, our Tree of Life, and the portion from which we read comes from this very moment at Mount Sinai when we, all of us, received God's words. *Atem nitzavim*, it begins: "You stand here this day before the Lord your God: you, your leaders, your tribal chiefs, your elders, your magistrates, every man of Israel, your children, your women, and the converts in your camp — from your woodcutters to your drawers of water. All of you have entered into this covenant before the Lord your God and have accepted upon yourselves this oath

that God is making with you this day..."

And it is not with you alone that I am making this covenant (we are told). I am making it both with those who are standing here with us today before the Lord our God, and with those who are not [yet] here with us today. (Deuteronomy 29:9)

We, all of us, stood at Sinai that awesome day. We, all of us, and the generations yet to come, stood there — along with every generation of our people — as we set our feet upon the path of Torah which has carried us forward even unto this day. We relive this moment each Passover when we recall that "each of us went forth out of Egypt," and we renew that bond each Yom Kippur when again we stand together, as we did once long ago at Sinai, to begin again on the path of Torah, to begin again on the path to the building of a better world. Standing on the stones of Mount Sinai, we are all connected to that moment of revelation when God gave us the Torah and called upon us to walk in its ways. Our faith, our tradition, our civilization, and our culture, they all come down to us from that day. And from that day, too, comes our commitment to be guardians of this planet we call our home. Not just from the story of Adam and Adamah, but from the celebration of this holiday of Rosh Hashanah, which we call Birthday of the World, and all the holidays we will celebrate throughout the year.

To follow the Jewish calendar is to listen to the earth. Passover comes in the first month of spring, when the first buds appear on the branches of the trees. Repentance comes when the leaves begin to turn, reminding us that it is time to turn from our wanderings back to the path of faith. Hannukah, the feast of light, is celebrated during the Winter Solstice, when darkness envelops our world. The earth sets the time for all of the High Holidays. All we need to do is listen to the earth.

And every Sabbath we celebrate these two essential themes: our Exodus from Egypt. and the creation of the Earth; our first halting steps on the path to Mt. Sinai and our longing to return to the Garden from which we once came forth. The earth and Mt. Sinai, these are the foundation stones of our faith, and together they speak these words, "Protect the planet which is your home". . .

May this year be a year of Renewal. May this year be a year of Healing and Repair. May this year be a year when we, Adam, all of us children of the living God, renew our connection to Adamah,



Sacred Air: Matter and Mystery

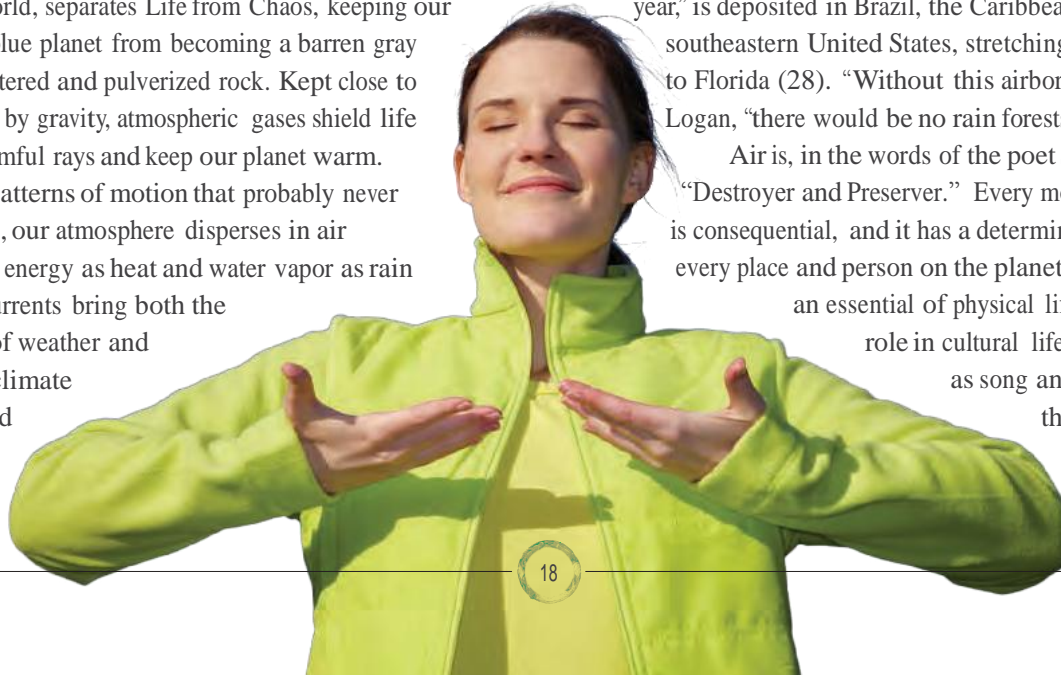
By Margaret Carreiro and Kathleen Lyons

Reflection on sacred air and our atmosphere inevitably draws us into the realm of mystery. We cannot see the air; yet, we know that we cannot live without it. The energy for all life is sustained by a cyclic exchange of gases in the air. What we exhale is the breath of life for other forms that in turn supply breath to us. Our atmosphere, the thin protective membrane of invisible gases enveloping our world, separates Life from Chaos, keeping our living green and blue planet from becoming a barren gray moonscape of cratered and pulverized rock. Kept close to the earth's surface by gravity, atmospheric gases shield life from the sun's harmful rays and keep our planet warm.

In constant patterns of motion that probably never repeat themselves, our atmosphere disperses in air currents the sun's energy as heat and water vapor as rain or snow. These currents bring both the unpredictability of weather and the reliability of climate needed to sow and reap crops and to sustain earth's vast migrations

on hoof and wing. William Logan, in his remarkable study entitled *Air*, points out that the trade winds transport dust from the Sahara Desert and the savannahs of Sahel across the Atlantic Ocean, supplying much of the iron and calcium and "more than half of the phosphorus that the ocean's plankton need to live." The dust that doesn't fall in the ocean, about "a billion metric tons each year," is deposited in Brazil, the Caribbean Islands, and the southeastern United States, stretching from the Carolinas to Florida (28). "Without this airborne dust," observes Logan, "there would be no rain forests in Brazil" (29).

Air is, in the words of the poet Shelley, "Destroyer and Preserver." Every move that it makes is consequential, and it has a determining impact upon every place and person on the planet. As preserver, air is an essential of physical life and plays a vital role in cultural life as well, expressed as song and music. It is also the sun's palette for coloring the earth in an otherwise dark universe.



Air can, however, be a destroyer as well as preserver. It harbors, in some cases for long periods of time, the gases, particulate matter, hydrocarbons, mercury, and other metals that are belched forth from the fossil fuels that human beings burn worldwide. The sampling site established at the Mauna Loa Observatory in Hawaii by Charles David Keeling has reported since its founding in 1958 a steady rise in the concentration of carbon dioxide, charted on the iconic graph that is known as Keeling's Curve. In 1958, the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere was 316 parts per million(ppm); on May 9 of this year, this figure climbed to an astonishing 400.03ppm.

The dramatic rise in carbon dioxide and other pollutants in the atmosphere has brought on what Alan H. Lockwood calls "sentinel events." Lockwood is a physician, and his primary interest is in the health consequences of pollution caused by the burning of coal. He recalls an event in 1948 that sickened almost half of Donora, Pennsylvania's population of 14,000 when toxic emissions from a nearby smelter were trapped, owing to atmospheric conditions. He cites as well the killer fog of 1952 in London, also attributable to emissions from the burning of coal, which accounted for the deaths of almost 12,000 people (3). Aside from causing these sentinel events, coal-derived pollutants claim each year the lives of tens of thousands of Americans alone, and cause hundreds of thousands

of illnesses, including asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), lung and other cancers, heart attacks, and other cardiovascular diseases such as stroke. Yet, to this day, about 45 percent of the energy used to generate electricity in the United States comes from burning coal.

It is particularly frightening to consider that air pollutants can have effects worldwide, punishing areas a half-world away from the pollution site. William Logan reports that after World War II, pollution from the Northern Hemisphere changed the behavior of the thermal equator, so that tropical rains fell from the sky before reaching the Sahel savannahs, becoming a contributing factor to the drought in this region of Africa. Carbon and methane gases emitted into the atmosphere stay there a long time, and because emission rates are vastly higher than removal rates, these gases are accumulating in the atmosphere and will affect climate the world over for generations to come.

When we see what we have done and continue to do to our sacred air and consequently to life and the quality of life on planet Earth, we cannot escape the conclusion that the resulting ecological problems are moral and theological rather than technological. We have created a lifestyle and an economy that are being sustained by compromising the integrity of the world created by God.

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This world was meant to be fertile, supporting life and redeeming life in a wondrous network of interactivity and interdependence, within an earthly theater of grace. Ellen Davis writes that the subject of human responsibility for insuring the fertility of the sacred earth is thematic in the Hebrew Scriptures. “Beginning with the first chapter of Genesis,” she affirms, “there is no extensive exploration of the relationship between God and humanity that does not factor the land and its fertility into that relationship” (*Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture*, 8). She continues by noting that good stewardship, or faithfulness to the covenant, is consistently imaged in lush verdure, while breaking the covenant through deeds described as idolatrous is depicted in thorns and briars (8).

As our world is increasingly described by the losses of the life and life-sources that it once had, it also becomes increasingly distanced from a sense of its sacredness. We speak of *deforestation*, *desertification*, of *mighty rivers that are drying up* — the Nile, Indus, Colorado, Yellow, the Yangtze river basin. The ensuing loss of life that affects all life in our interconnected and interdependent world is incalculable. The words of Jeremiah come to mind, as relevant to us today as they were to the Israelites of his day. Jeremiah does not

accuse his people of wanting to destroy the land, but of forgetting the Lord and their covenant with Him. Here are Jeremiah's words:

Hear the word of the LORD, O house of Jacob, and all the families of the house of Israel. Thus says the LORD:

What wrong did your ancestors find in me
that they went far from me,
and went after worthless things, and became worthless themselves?...
I brought you into a plentiful land
to eat its fruits and its good things.
But when you entered you defiled my land,
and made my heritage an abomination...
Be appalled, O heavens, at this,
be shocked, be utterly desolate,
says the LORD,
for my people have committed two evils:
they have forsaken me,
the fountain of living water,
and dug out cisterns for themselves,
cracked cisterns that can hold no water.

— Jeremiah 2:4-13

Seyyed ossein Nosr: Prophet of Peace

By Gray J-lenny Blakemore

Seyyed Hossein Nasr was one of the earliest responders to an endangered planet, having sensed that something was amiss in the early 1950s, when he was a student at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Harvard University. At this time, the beltway around Boston was being built, separating the city from the countryside. Nasr perceived in this the beginning of the end of an easy rapport between urban dwellers and the land that provided their sustenance and, at times, their place of peace. What Nasr saw in Boston was taking place throughout the Westernized world. Nature was being edged out of consciousness by "progress," fueled by engineering and technology responsible only to science, Nature's perceived Master.

Nasr began speaking publicly about this rupture between human beings and Nature in the late 1950s to audiences in Iran and at the Divinity School of the University of Chicago. From the outset, he saw the capitulation to progress as evidence of a spiritual failure, specifically a violation of Islamic principles of balance between human and Earth life. These principles serve as a foundation for justice, acknowledging the rights and limits of human beings, but also respectful of the integrity of Nature's

sacred life systems. Streams, air, and soil, for example, have a right to protection from defilement. These principles are expressed in the Qur'an and in multiple other Islamic sources, notably the philosophical texts of Sufism, scientific works dealing with the relationship of human beings and the natural environment, and art, designed to express the harmony between human and natural life.

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Muslim society, by and large, remains quite conscious of Islamic spiritual and ethical principles, reiterated in religious, scientific, and artistic sources. Moreover, Muslim society remains prayerful, in regular attendance at its mosques. Nasr points out that Muslims are observant of their beliefs on other matters, but most do not put Islamic principles on the natural environment into practice in their daily lives. This does not result from a denial of these principles but rather from external obstacles considered to be insurmountable.

Among these are the following:

1. The desire to gain a foothold in the global economic order encourages Muslim society to follow the Western model of pursuing environmentally damaging science and technology, rather than creating an Islamic counterpart faithful to its principles.
2. Western biotechnology, such as cloning and genetic engineering, present ethical as well as environmental issues that force a choice between fidelity to principles or being driven off the playing field of scientific research. The choice is often to stay in the game.

3. Widespread poverty, accounting for migrations from farm to city, creates expedient problems that defer attention from all else, such as living according to ecological values.
4. Some Islamic governments resist the challenge to their power that might come from green activists, even when these activists demand a return to the Islamic principles which the government upholds.
5. As is the case with people of faith worldwide, Muslims, by and large, fail to perceive the urgency of the ecological crisis.

While Nasr well understands the problems that Muslims are up against in adapting their current lives to the principles of their faith, he nonetheless proposes an urgent solution, mindful that amelioration of the ecological crisis cannot be postponed. The reversal has to begin with a restoration of a sense of the sacredness of Nature and promulgating this view, fundamental to Islam, throughout the Muslim world to all levels of society. Since the message already exists, and Muslims are predisposed to accept it, the challenge is dissemination, and this should require no more than a few years, thus responding to the urgency of the problem.

A second step toward the solution of the problem is the adoption of a curriculum in the schools that teaches the total impact of industrial and engineering changes on the air, water, and soil, as well as on the economic wellbeing of people far and wide. In countries wherein governments are intolerant of protest, teachers have an especially important role to play, even though they might be required to play their roles with finesse.

Seyyed Hossein Nasr has been teaching valuable lessons on a planet in crisis through lecture and scholarship for almost 50 years. He has convinced many that the problem is urgent and that, for Muslims in particular, it results from spiritual amnesia. This positions them to devote careful attention to his proposed solution to the problem within Islam. The first step is for Muslims to recover the memory of the sacredness of the air, water, and soil which sustains them and then to learn to reposition themselves in balance with Nature, living their lives accordingly.

Islam is the religion of over one billion people and is practiced in most of the countries of the world. A spiritual awakening among so many could stir believers in the entire interfaith world to join in proclaiming, in accord with their beliefs, the sacredness of water, soil, and air that sustains the awesome mystery of life on Earth. Salam. Shalom. Shanti. Pace. Peace.

This piece is indebted to an article written by Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "Islam, the Contemporary Islamic World, and the Environmental Crisis," in *Islam and Ecology: A Bestowed Trust*. Edited by Richard C. Foltz, Frederick M. Denny, and Azizah Baharuddin. #9 in the series *Religions of the World and Ecology*, edited by Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim (Cambridge: Harvard, 2003), pp. 85-105.



A I A - C SOIL , SKY

OF AGROECOLOGY VS INDUSTRIAL AGRICULTURE



BILLION

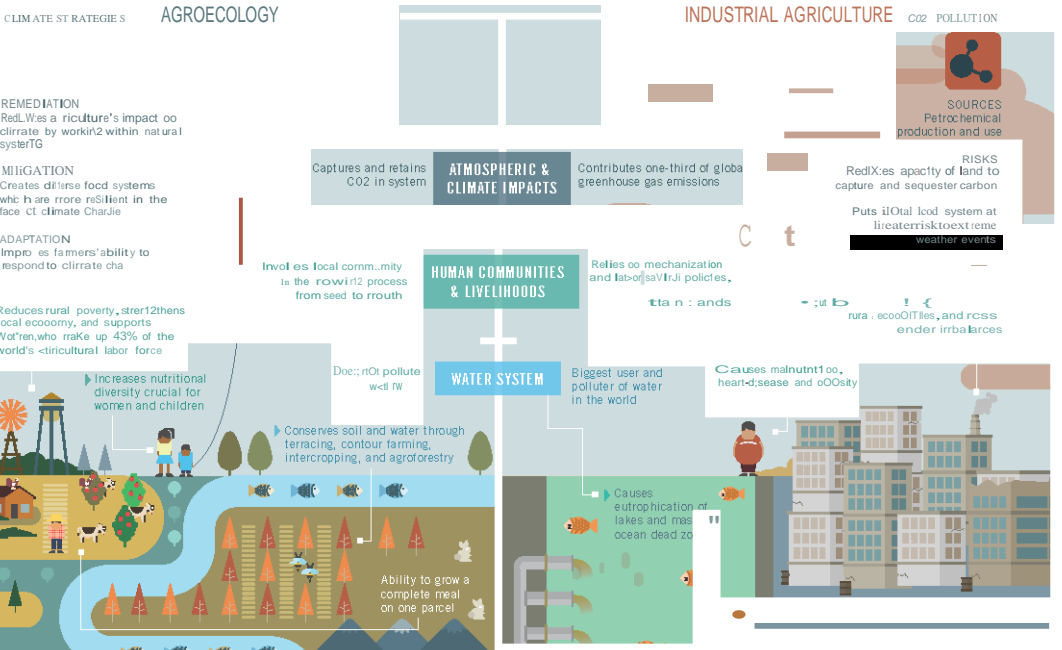
CURRENTLY, 1 BILLION PEOPLE IN THE WORLD ARE HUNGRY. ANOTHER BILLION OVER EAT UNHEALTHY FOODS.



ONE-THIRD

ONE-THIRD OF FOOD PRODUCED IS WASTED. THE PRODUCTIVITY OF NEARLY HALF OF ALL SOIL WORLDWIDE IS DECREASING.

In order to feed our world without destroying it, a holistic type of agriculture is needed, and we have a choice. Here we compare the current high-input industrial system with a renewed vision for agriculture: the agroecological system.



Kansas and Al Qaeda

By Thomas Friedman

I've spent the last few months filming a Showtime documentary about how climate and environmental stresses helped trigger the Arab awakening. It's been a fascinating journey because it forced me to look at the Middle East through the lens of Arab environmentalists instead of politicians. When you do that, you see the problems and solutions very differently. Environmentalists always start by thinking about the health of the "commons" — the shared air, soil, forests and water — that are the basis of all life, which, if not preserved, will undermine the whole society. The notion that securing the interests of any single group — Shiite or Sunni, Christian or Muslim, secular or Islamist — over the health of the commons is nuts to them. It's as laughable as pictures of gun-toting fighters strutting on the rubble of broken buildings in Aleppo or Benghazi, claiming "victory," only to discover that they've "won" a country with eroding soil, degrading forests, scarce water, shrinking jobs — a deteriorating commons.

Our film crew came to look at the connection between the drought in Kansas and the rise in global food prices that helped to fuel the Arab uprisings. But I stumbled upon another powerful environmental insight here: the parallel between how fossil fuels are being used to power monoculture farms in the Middle West and how fossil fuels are being used to power wars to create monoculture

societies in the Middle East. And why both are really unhealthy for their commons.

My teacher here was Wes Jackson, the MacArthur award winner, based in Salina, where he founded The Land Institute. Jackson's philosophy is that the prairie was a diverse wilderness, with a complex ecosystem that supported all kinds of wildlife, not to mention American Indians — until the Europeans arrived, plowed it up and covered it with single-species crop farms, mostly wheat, corn, or soybeans. Jackson's goal is to restore the function of the diverse polyculture prairie ecosystem and rescue it from the single-species, annual monoculture farming, which is exhausting the soil, the source of all prairie life. "We have to stop treating soil like dirt," he says.

Jackson knows this has to be economically viable. That's why his goal is to prove that species of wheat and other grains that scientists at The Land Institute are developing can be grown as perennials with deep roots — so you would not need to regularly till the soil or plant seeds. The way to do that, he believes, is by growing mixtures of those perennial grains, which will mimic the prairie and naturally provide the nutrients and pesticides. The need for fossil-fuel-powered tractors and fertilizers would be much reduced, with the sun's energy making up the difference. That would be so much better for the soil and the climate, since most soil carbon would not be released.

Annual monocultures are much more susceptible to disease and require much more fossil fuel energy — plows, fertilizer, pesticides — to maintain. Perennial polycultures, by contrast, notes Jackson, provide species diversity, which provides chemical diversity, which provides much more natural resistance and “can substitute for the fossil fuels and chemicals that we’ve not evolved with.”

Jackson maintains some original prairie vegetation. As we walk through it, he explains: This is nature’s own “tree of life.” This prairie, like a forest, “features material recycling, runs on sunlight, and does not have an epidemic that wipes it all out. You know during the Dust Bowl years of the ’30s, the crops died, but the prairie survived.” Then he points to his experimental perennial grain crops: “That’s the tree of knowledge.” Our challenge, and it will take years, he notes, is to find a way to blend the tree of life with the tree of knowledge to develop domestic prairies that could have high-yielding fields planted once every several years, whose crops would only need harvesting and species diversity could “take care of insects, pathogens and fertility.”

And that brings us back to the Middle East. Al Qaeda often says that if the Muslim world wants to restore its strength, it needs to go back to the “pure” days of Islam, when it was a monoculture unsullied by foreign influences. In fact, the “Golden Age” of the Arab/Muslim world was when it became a polyculture between the

8th and 13th centuries. Of that era, Wikipedia says, “During this period the Arab world became an intellectual center for science, philosophy, medicine and education. ...” It was “a collection of cultures, which put together, synthesized and significantly advanced the knowledge gained from the ancient Roman, Chinese, Indian, Persian, Egyptian, Greek, Byzantine and Phoenician civilizations.”

What is going on in the Arab world today is a relentless push, also funded by fossil fuels, for more monocultures. It’s Al Qaeda trying to “purify” the Arabian Peninsula. It’s Shiites and Sunnis, funded by oil money, trying to purge each other in Iraq and Syria. It’s Alexandria, Egypt, once a great melting pot of Greeks, Italians, Jews, Christians, Arabs, and Muslims, now a city dominated by the Muslim Brotherhood, with most non-Muslims gone. It makes these societies much less able to spark new ideas and much more susceptible to diseased conspiracy theories and extreme ideologies. To be blunt, this evolution of Arab/Muslim polycultures into monocultures is a disaster.

Pluralism, diversity and tolerance were once native plants in the Middle East — the way the polyculture prairie was in the Middle West. Neither ecosystem will be healthy without restoring its diversity.

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Walk on Water

By Hamza Yusuf-Hanson

Walk softly on the water that is this world.
Gently, with grace, glide to the shore of the unseen world
Where precious shells await.

Walk easily, with those who walked before.
Follow prophetic footsteps, traces left even on water.

Lighten your load, lest you sink.
Leave the world behind, then you will walk on water.
Leave chatter to the chatterers, then your feet will be held up by
water.

Abandon yourself,
Trust the Trustworthy,
Seek and be sought.
Then you can walk on water.

Do not drown in the desert of this world.
Softly walk on it, not of it, but in it.
On water you must walk.

Don't forget the Chosen One
Who long ago walked on worldly waters in Arabia,
A sea of sand, but water no less.
How he glided to the other side

Not content to walk alone, safe
While others drowned,
Like Jesus, he taught
For the last time
How to walk on water.

Come, let us
Walk on water!

Wildflowers in the Dining Room

By Cecily Jones, S.L.

I know you'll query me for names
and I'll identify the few I can:
black-eyed Susans, coreopsis, Queen Anne's lace,
bee balm. Even with my Golden Nature Guide
I cannot match these jewels for you.
But this I know: I have imported beauty
from beside our lake – flame-orange pennants
and creamy filigrees, those bright blue cups,
and, yes, a titled one, the wild wild rose.

The dearest treasure, though, I cannot share
unless tomorrow, very early, we go together
to the deep green water over which a tendrilled mist
will swirl in clouded drift, unless our hearts will hear
the stillness of a presence we can't name, unless we walk
the path where blackberry reeds may catch our clothes
(please pick a few for breakfast!) and the tan of grasses
will be burnished to a bronze in early morning sun.

Only the hoarsest hiccups of a frog and the plunking
of a turtle on its plunge into the lake may stun the silence
of this hour. We'll see spun filaments of silver making webs
from weed to weed, nameless blooms that skirt the water's edge,
and the scarlet tinge of tangled grape and stunted oak.
We'll pause a while beneath the paper sycamore
to listen to Earth's secrets there beside the lake.

No conveyance have I found to transport mystery, no
delivery of wonder. So if you cannot go with me in
awe at early light, I offer you these slight bouquets as
tokens of the wildness and samples of the wealth.

Look deep.



I would feel more optimistic about a bright future for man if he spent less time proving that he can outwit Nature and more time tasting her sweetness and respecting her seniority.

E.B. WHITE

Indigenous people from the Sentinelese to the Bushmen who roam the Kalahari Desert see the Earth as a living participant and ultimately a single living organism. "She," not "it," is the source of all nourishment, and as the Mother, her nourishment goes beyond providing food. They know that all that they dream, all that they say, comes from the Earth.

HRH CHARLES THE PRINCE OF WALES

The ecological crisis is a moral and even theological crisis because it is occasioned in large part by our adulation and arrogant use of scientific technology, so that we make applications without rigorous critical regard for questions of compatibility with natural systems, of the integrity of the world that God has made.

ELLEN F. DAVIS



*All things share the same breath –
the beast, the tree, the man.
The air shares its spirit
with all the life it supports.*

— CHIEF SEATTLE

Sacred Fire: Light of Compassion

By Elaine Prevallet, S.L.

The only hope, or else despair Lies
in the choice of pyre or pyre – To
be redeemed from fire by fire.

These words of T.S. Eliot in *Four Quartets* come back to me sometimes when I reflect on the condition of our world. We humans stand on a cusp of choice. A nuclear fire, or any number of catastrophic events or failures can destroy life as we know it on planet Earth; or a fire of compassion in our hearts can spark a universal compassion that draws us together into a new creation to face the future. Whether or not we are aware, we are, right now, in process of choosing: fire or fire.

Over these past decades, we humans have begun to understand and to speak of ourselves as members of one human family, related to all species that have preceded us on the planet – and beyond. But what is the role of the human species? What is our niche in the entire community of life? If we look closely at our own biological history, we can't escape observing an intricate and interdependent connection with the whole of creation. Each of us is participating in an on-going, emergent creation, part of a process so enormous we cannot grasp it. We are inescapably participants in a Larger Life.

Evolution shows us that the human brain has developed to include capacities of our ancestors the reptiles and mammals, and, in the neo-cortex, a new capacity for rationality and language, creativity, and compassion. We are gifted with **mirror neurons**. Even to see a picture of someone in pain can trigger an automatic resonance of pain within us. We are *wired for cooperative, compassionate behavior*. Feeling the pain of others sparks within us the cue to do something, to heal, to assuage, to remedy.

Stop for a moment and reflect on that development. Why are we gifted with this capacity? Why aren't we falling off our chairs in amazement? Why are we not stunned, overcome with reverence and gratitude for this miracle that has been worked within us? Why do we not even *notice* it?

Might it be that compassion is the **human niche** in the community of life? Compassion is a central motif of all religious traditions. According to the Dalai Lama, there is a Tibetan word which translated means "the inability to bear the sight of another's suffering." Observing another's suffering, Jesus responded in accord with the Jewish milieu into which He had been born, the covenant-bound social ethic handed down via the prophets.

