

so his statement, populists on both sides succeed in occupying and poisoning the discussion. Of little help is also the indifferent attitude of the West toward the rulers of the wealthy Gulf states who were courted in the past in order to get cheap oil or to sell weapons. Unfortunately, however, Abdel-Samad's criticism of the West looks, at times, somewhat mechanical. His use of the term 'Americanisation', for instance, is applied by him as a synonym for 'lack of culture'.

In closing, Abdel-Samad's book tries to offer a 'third way' in the current polarised debate. It does not contain recipes for conflict resolution. It does, however, offer a comprehensive explanation of the processes that must take place in order to allow Muslims to connect intellectually with the realities of the present. In spite of the sensational title of the book and at times with too many references to his personal vita, *Der Untergang der islamischen Welt* should be taken as a valuable contribution to the current Islam-debate in the West, and it is hoped that there will be soon translations of it in English and the relevant Middle Eastern languages.

Notes

1. <http://www.taz.de/1/leben/buch/artikel/1/ich-bin-zum-wissen-konvertiert/> (accessed on 25 March 2011).
2. Apparently, in deliberate reminiscence to Oswald Spengler (1880-1936), the German historian and philosopher and author of *Der Untergang des Abendlandes* (The fall of the West), published in 1918.
3. Syracuse NY: Syracuse University Press, 1997.
4. See Thilo Sarrazin, *Deutschland schafft sich ab: Wie wir unser Land aufs Spiel setzen* ['Germany does away with itself: How we are gambling with our country'] (Munich: Deutsche Verlagsanstalt, 2010, 11th printing, 2010), and the review by Christoph Marcinkowski in *Islam and Civilisational Renewal* 2, no. 4 (July 2011).

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The Royal Aal Al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought (RABIIT), the publisher of this volume, has become better known throughout the world as an institution dedicated to the pursuit of meaningful interfaith dialogue on a global scale. Perhaps its most well known initiative is *A Common Word*, the historic global Muslim-Christian interfaith initiative which has brought together leading Muslim and Christian scholars and public figures from all parts of the world and generated a series of dialogues held in major cities of the West and the Islamic world.

One of the events in this series of dialogues is the symposium entitled “Islam, Christianity, and the Environment” held at the site of Jesus Christ’s baptism in Jordan. The symposium brought together a small, but distinguished group of Muslim and Christian scholars to discuss how each religion views the environment.¹ The booklet under review comprises four papers that were presented at the symposium – two by Muslim scholars and two by Christian scholars.

The first paper (pp. 1-17) by Dr Ingrid Mattson, Professor of Islamic Studies and Director of the Macdonald Center for Islamic Studies and Christian-Muslim Relations at Hartford Seminary in Hartford, Connecticut, United States, is entitled “The Islamic View on Consumption and Material Development in Light of Environmental Pollution.” Mattson made history when she became the first female President of the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA, 2006-2010).

The second paper (pp. 19-24), “The Protection of Animals in Islam” is by Dr Murad Wilfried Hofmann, a German Muslim with deep acquaintance with the Islamic world, especially in North Africa, who was once one of his country’s top diplomats.

The third paper (pp. 25-38), “Basic Demands Established in the Christian Bible to Assume Responsibility for the World,” is by Dr Martin Arneht, a Protestant theologian who is currently Lecturer for Old Testament Studies at the Ludwig-Maximilians Universität of Munich, Germany.

Finally, the fourth paper (pp. 39-86), “Christian Conceptions of Creation, Environmental Ethics, and the Ecological Challenge Today,” was contributed by Dr Dietmar Mieth, a German expert on Christian Mysticism, Narrative Ethics, Social Ethics, and Ethics in the Sciences. He is currently Fellow of the Max Weber Centre for Advanced Studies at the University of Erfurt, Germany.

Dr Mattson’s paper is essentially concerned with the ethics of consumption in Islam. She deserves praise for highlighting the extremely important issue of consumption in a Muslim-Christian dialogue on the environment. She is absolutely right in identifying the consumption culture of modernity as a root cause of the environmental crisis. She describes modern consumption as “wasteful” or “excessive” (p. 4). “Greed, selfishness and avarice,” she argues, “are not distinctly modern characteristics,” but modern greed has “new technologies, materials and methods of production” at its disposal to help deliver its unlimited material needs and maintain its wasteful consumption culture (p. 8). Modern consumption fueled by this greed is destructive to the environment because it demands “the intensive exploitation of the environment to optimize the use and impact of such technologies” (p. 8). “Our consumption of goods is not like consumption in modern times [...] it is more fraught with moral peril due to the nature of some of the goods and products that have been developed in modernity, and the methods by which they have been produced” (p. 7).

Dr Mattson calls for an alternative to the consumption culture of modernity that will be based on ethical principles and values. This brings her to the Islamic ethics of

consumption which she describes as resting on three pillars. “First, what is consumed must be lawful and wholesome” (p. 4). She is of course referring here to the qur’ānic ideas of *ḥalāl*¹ (‘lawful’) and *ṭayyib*² (‘wholesome’). “Second, one must give the poor their share in one’s wealth; money and good remain ‘impure’ until what is owed upon them as *zakāt* is paid.” Third, “one is not permitted to be wasteful with one’s goods.” Her paper seeks to explain the meaning and significance of these qur’ānic pillars of consumption ethics to humanity’s present attempts to deal with the environmental crisis.

Dr Mattson acknowledges the problem of determining in practical life what actually constitutes “excessive or wasteful consumption,” particularly at the community level. However, she still feels that the three pillars of consumption ethics, when observed together with the qur’ānic doctrine of balance and moderation and the Islamic idea of the subordination of desire to intellect and conscience, would go a long way in helping to moderate consumption and minimise waste. She is to be congratulated for her well-argued plea for a spiritually-based moderate consumption culture for our times.

Dr Hofmann’s article is basically about the qur’ānic view of animals. Though very brief – just five pages long and the shortest of the four – it contains precious messages for the contemporary world, especially for Westerners who know very little about the Islamic view and appreciation of animals. Issues of animal protection and animal rights have gained new importance in the thinking of contemporary Westerners. Out of ignorance, some Westerners view the traditional Muslim method of animal slaughtering as clear proof that Muslims have a culture of cruelty to animals.

In this context Dr Hofmann’s article is especially welcome, what more coming as it is from a native Western Muslim. Out of the many Qur’ānic references to the animal world, he chose to highlight the idea of animal species that exist as communities like that of humans,³ the honey of the bee as a medicament,⁴ the divine care of all animals,⁵ the story of Prophet Salih intervening to prevent the abuse of a she-camel,⁶ animal sacrifice,⁷ animal hunting,⁸ and the consumption of pork.⁹ Dr Hofmann added to all these qur’ānic references the Prophet’s love of cats. It is rather unfortunate that he made all these references without further clarification that could shed further light on the issue of Islamic treatment of animals.

Dr Martin Arneth’s paper is essentially about the biblical notions of man as an image of God serving as the theological foundation of Christian responsibility for the world in biblical times. It seeks to explain the origin of the concept in the monotheism of the Old Testament and its evolving meaning particularly following the Noachidic flood disaster. Originally, the idea of man as an image of God carries the meaning of man as “the representative of God within creation” (pp. 34, 37). However, in the post-flood understanding, the idea has expanded in meaning: “the concept of man as an image of God is now connected to universal rules, the so-called Noachidic laws, and can be considered as a religious starting point for the idea of the specific dignity of man” (pp. 26, 37).

In Dr Arneth's explanation we find that each understanding of the concept is linked to a different relationship between man and creation. In the original understanding of man as an image of God as found in the creation story in Genesis, man was allowed to dominate animals, but not to eat them (p. 34). However, after the flood he was permitted to eat them (p. 36). Dr Arneth admits that the biblical command "Be fertile and increase, fill the earth and subdue it" could very well be "misunderstood as a very dangerous command, a dangerous invitation to plunder the Earth" (p. 38). In his view, the biblical concept of man is important to be discussed in dialogues between different religions and cultures.

Dr Dietmar Mieth's paper is the longest and the most philosophical. It discusses several Christian conceptions of creation and theological approaches to a religious experience of creation, the moral principles of Christian environmental ethics, and the implications of the contemporary ecological challenge to Christian religious thought. It is not easy to grasp Dr Mieth's discussion if one does not have exposure to contemporary Christian theological and ethical thought. However, Muslims interested in comparative natural theology and comparative environmental ethics can gain useful information and insights from his quite comprehensive paper, especially in trying to understand the contemporary Christian concern with the environment. However, a significant portion of the paper's content, particularly the one dealing with process theology and the contending ethical perspectives on the environment, is open to Islamic criticism.

In sum, the book is a welcome addition to the still small volume of literature on interfaith dialogue on the environment. Of additional value to the book is the Appendix, "Joint Statement on the Uppsala Interfaith Climate Manifesto 2008," endorsed at the symposium. This is a call to believers from all faiths to do their utmost in supporting initiatives which protect the environment.

Notes

1. IAIS Malaysia too has staged a very well received event on Islam and the environment which featured a public lecture by Professor Bahar Davary of the University of San Diego in the United States; see <http://www.iais.org.my/en/events/recent-events/338-islam-and-environmental-ethics.html> (accessed on 29 September 2011).
2. Qur'an 2:168: "O humankind! Eat of what is on earth, lawful and wholesome; and do not follow the footsteps of the Evil One, for he is to you an avowed enemy."
3. Ibid., 6:38.
4. Ibid., 16:69.
5. Ibid., 29:60.
6. Ibid., 7:73.
7. Ibid., 5:2; 22:33-37.
8. Ibid., 5:1, 4, 94.
9. Ibid., 2:173; 5:3.