

THE CREATION OF AN ENVIRONMENTAL CONSCIENCE (PART 2 OF 4): MAN - GOD'S STEWARD ON THE EARTH

Rating: 3.7

Description: Man, bearing the burden of moral responsibility, is responsible for utilizing the earth's resources with due consideration - resources which God has subjected to his every need.

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By: AbdurRahman Mahdi (© 2006 IslamReligion.com)

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“Behold thy Lord said to the angels: ‘I will create a khalifa on earth.’ They (the angels) said ‘Will You place therein one who will make mischief and shed blood? Whilst we do celebrate Your praises and glorify You with praises and sanctify Your (Name)?’ He (God) said: ‘I know what you know not.’” (Quran 2:30)

Mankind, through the father, Adam, was sent to earth as its *khalifah* – a term which simultaneously means: successor, steward, trustee, viceroy, and guardian. That is, man was made responsible for utilising the earth's resources with due consideration; resources which God has subjected to his every need.

“God is He Who has created the heavens and the earth and sends down (rain) water from the sky, and thereby brought forth fruits as provision for you; and He has made the ships to be of service to you, that they may sail through the sea by His Command; as (likewise) He has made rivers to be of service to you. And He has made the sun and the moon, both constantly pursuing their courses, to be of service to you; and He has made the night and the day, to be of service to you.” (Quran 14:32-33)

“See you not (O humanity!) that God has subjected for you whatsoever is in the heavens and whatsoever is in the earth, and has completed and perfected His Graces upon you, (both) apparent and hidden? Yet of mankind is he who disputes about God without knowledge nor guidance nor an illuminating Book!” (Quran 31:20)

Thus, the earth has been created with a definite cause and affect: to facilitate humans in fulfilling the purpose with which they were themselves created: to worship and serve their Creator.

“And I (God) created not the jinn (spirit-like creatures) and humans except they should worship Me (alone).” (Quran 51:56)

Although the creation of the heavens and the earth is actually greater than the creation of humanity in the Sight of God [see Quran 40:57], humans bear a responsibility that the heavens and earth do not. In fact, God did offer to entrust to the heavens and the earth moral responsibility. However, they understood the weightiness of what was being asked and so respectfully declined. Adam, however, accepted to bear moral responsibility on behalf of humanity. Alas! unlike their father, many of Adam's descendants were and are unfaithful, incompetent and unwilling to remain true to their obligations.

***“Truly, We did offer the trust and moral responsibility to the heavens and the earth and the mountains, but they declined to bear it and were afraid of (failing to discharge) it. But man bore it. Verily, he was unjust (to himself) and ignorant (of the results).”
(Quran 33:72)***

When man does faithfully discharge his trust by obeying and worshipping God in accordance with his primordial nature, he attains God's Pleasure and reward; when he does not, he is in need of His Forgiveness. Incidentally, the only reason a person does succumb to false and oppressive desires is because that person is allowing himself to be misled from his nature; straying away from the straight path and onto the crooked road taken by the enemy of God and man alike: Satan.

“He (Satan) said: ‘See! This one (man, Adam) whom You have honored above me, if You give me respite till the Day of Resurrection, I will surely seize and mislead his offspring - all but a few!’ (Quran 17:62)

“And he (Satan) said: ‘I will take an appointed portion of your slaves; I will surely mislead them, and surely, I will arouse in them false desires; and I will surely order them to slit the ears of cattle, and surely, I will order them to change the nature created by God.’ And whoever takes Satan as a protector instead of God has surely suffered a manifest loss. He (Satan) makes promises to them and arouses in them false desires; and Satan's promises are nothing but deceptions.” (Quran 4:118-120)

So, after learning a most important reality about the natural environment and our place in it, which is that, other than mankind (and the *jinn*), all the creation, animate and inanimate, is inherently obedient to God and in harmony with itself, we also learn how man can reclaim his innocent natural state: by serving and obeying God. And from the great many and praiseworthy acts of obedience is our behaving responsibly with the world around us. A world that, for the purpose of this discourse, can be divided into two principle realms or resources: the subjects of the animal kingdom and their natural habitats.

“God is the One Who has subjected to you the sea, that ships may sail through it by His Command, and that you may seek of His Bounty and be thankful. And (just like) He has subjected to you all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth; it is all as a favor and kindness from Him. Verily, in it are signs for a people who think deeply.”

(Quran 45:12-13)

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