THE ROLE OF RELIGION IN ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES: DISASTROUS OR CONSTRUCTIVE

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Abstract- Environmental crises are spreading on an alarming rate, and this has created genuine concern among many people – concerns about man's and other creature's future and survival. Clearly, people's mentality and outlooks affects their behavior in the environment; therefore, in order to understand and handle the environment crisis it is imperative to focus on people's epistemological perspectives. It is claimed that religion adversely affects environmental crisis, be it Islam, Christianity Or Jewism. Lynn White, for example, argues that Christianity divides man and nature; it regards man as of a superior, exceptional moral stand and hence encourages human beings to abuse nature. Thus he suggests that to address the problem, either religion should be modified, or that another religion be practiced, a religion that has more regard for environment. There are various references in Islamic sources that encourage man to shape and improve natural environment. Both in the Quran and Hadith, man and other creatures are regarded as signs of God; the universe moving towards a resolute purpose and the resurrection of all creatures including animals (SURA Takvwir, Verse 5) suggest that all creatures are sacred and significant in their own right (Sura Kahf, Verse 47 and Sura Ana'am, Verse 39). Some verses in Quran suggest that man is of a supreme stand in the universe and that he is God's vicegerent, but all these verses also hold man responsible with regard to the benefits he attains from nature. Being God's vicegerent, man is supposed to construct nature, never to destroy it, and benefit from its resources in moderation. As God's vicegerent, man is to appreciate and respect the universe and its realities (Sura Baghara, Verses 31033). Thus man should also obey the creator of the universe and seek the best interest for creatures of the world. This paper aims to argue that adding to environmental crisis is not exclusive to followers of Abrahamic religions. It is misunderstanding religion and disregarding its true nature that harms the environment the most. The solution would be a re-adjustment of perspectives.

Keywords- Resurrection, Environmental Crisis, God's Vicegerent, Abrahamic Religions.