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THE SYMBOLISM OF WATER IN RELIGION

Proceedings of an interreligious conference
on water and religion
held at Haigazian University
on March 2, 2018

Edited by Wilbert van Saane

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INTRODUCTION

Wilbert van Saane

Water is overwhelmingly present in Lebanon's natural landscape, whether one explores the coastline, the snow-capped mountain ranges with their rivers and waterfalls, or the Bekaa Valley with its marshlands and lakes. Over the centuries, the flow and the drip of water have shaped some of the country's most spectacular sites, such as the Jeita Grotto and the Qadisha Gorge.

The beauty of the Lebanese waters makes their degradation all the more painful. The staggering levels of pollution are evident to anyone with eyes to see. Seawater and beaches are littered with discarded items and plastics. Rivers are contaminated with industrial waste and untreated sewage water.

In comparison to other countries in the region, Lebanon is a relatively water-rich country. If the poor quality and increasing scarcity of water are a concern for Lebanon, they are even more pressing in other parts of the Middle East.

Water is a common. Access to clean water is a right for all. The sixth sustainable development goal of the United Nations is "to ensure access to water and sanitation for all". Therefore, reflection on water usage should happen at various levels of society. Governments hold important keys to address the water issues of our days, but responsibility cannot be relinquished to them only. Every citizen is called to consider the value of water and use water in caring and responsible ways.

For many in the Middle East, the water crisis is an existential issue: it threatens their livelihood. Because religious faith plays an important role in the life of many in this region, water is also a religious matter. Water is viewed as a gift of the Creator to be cherished and enjoyed. Theological reflection on the water crisis is, therefore, essential.

All these factors prompted Haigazian University to convene a conference on water and religion. The aim of the conference was not merely to discuss in a rather pragmatic way how religious groups and faith-based organizations can contribute to the protection of water. From the very beginning, the intention was to dig deeper and look at the symbolic meanings of water in the different faiths of the Middle East, especially Christianity and Islam. Behind this was the conviction that cherished religious convictions can inspire change on very practical levels.

The conference took place on March 2, 2018 and was entitled “The Symbolism of Water in Religion”. It was an interdisciplinary meeting that combined scientific insights, theological reflection and reports of faith-based projects for environmental care. The speakers presented their material from different religious perspectives. This volume brings together the papers and presentations that were offered.

The structure of this book roughly reflects that of the conference. The first paper that was presented at the conference was designed to explore the urgency of the water crisis in the Middle East. This scientific presentation was followed by three surveys of the symbolism of water in sacred texts and rituals. After that, a faith-based project for rehabilitation and conservation was presented. Finally, a panel discussed the role of faith-based organizations.

The chapter on water symbolism in the Bible was not presented during the conference; it was written and added afterwards, because it was felt that the presentations on water in the Holy Quran necessitated a similar survey of the biblical use of water imagery.

This book is the first in a series of volumes on religion, education and contemporary concerns. The aim of this series is to present fresh perspectives on the contemporary relevance of religion in education, especially with regard to pressing issues such as environmental care, peacebuilding, and relief work.

Special thanks goes to Reine Youssef for her important role in planning and hosting the conference. Dr Antranig

Dakessian gave guidance and advice during the process of editing. We also thank the following individuals for their valuable contributions to the conference and to this book: Tarek Agile, Wadia Badr, Martin Bernhard, YePrem Boymoushakian, Jana El Haddad, Asadour Manjrian, and Rima Nasrallah.

On October 28, 2019, Chris Naylor, who contributed to the conference and this book, died in a tragic car accident in South Africa, along with his wife Susanna. Miranda Harris, a cofounder of A Rocha International, also lost her life in this accident. The Naylor family lived and worked in Lebanon from 1997-2009. Chris cofounded the work of A Rocha in Lebanon and oversaw the restoration program at the Ammiq Marsh in the Bekaa Valley, as well as the development of an environmental education project and a field research program that resulted in the identification of eleven important bird areas nationally. Since 2010 Chris served as the A Rocha International Executive Director, based in the UK. Chris and Susanna Naylor impacted the lives of many in Lebanon. They leave behind a legacy of passionate and effective faith-based conservation. This book is dedicated to their memory.



OPENING WORD

Paul Haidostian

Greetings distinguished guests, colleagues and friends, I welcome you to Haigazian University. As we open an interesting afternoon on a less-than conventional topic, I first thank Rev. Van Saane and Dr. Youssef for long months of planning and thank each participant for their preparations.

Now to “The Symbolism of Water in Religion”. The crisis of water and its shortage has been well-known in our region. Often, those who mourn the situation focus on matters of quantity, and list quantitative shortages and needs and attach to them gloomy predictions. What is usually left out of the equation is the question of quality, and the needed stewardship, conscientiousness and the local and regional strategies that should to be developed, funded and implemented. These are mentality questions much of the time, and we as educators are closely linked to the changes of mentality.

But religion in our region is also in crisis. Religion is seen as belonging, exclusion, laws, narrow otherworldliness, and limitations of domains.

Today, we are all here because we believe that the natural resources of earth, the sciences of our times, the faithful posture of the heart, and the wise calculations of the mind should be harmonized.

If some lenses on religion erroneously show signs of death, we know that the symbolism of water in religion is more related to life and purity than to the popular negatives associated with religion.

With that, I conclude my opening remarks and wish you stimulating and vital discussions.

OUR WATER... OUR GOLD?!

Reine Youssef

Water: a free service

We live on a planet that is unique in our solar system. It is unique because of the presence of water. Our planet is also called the blue planet. Seen from space it is blue, because of the abundance of water in all its shapes: liquid, solid, gas. A closer look reveals that 96 percent is salty water, ocean water; 1.7 percent is locked in ice gaps and another 1.7 in underground aquifers. The liquid freshwater resources that are readily available in streams, rivers and lakes are a tiny fraction of all water, less than 0.1 percent. Freshwater is a scarce resource.

Often I ask my students whether they have ever gotten billed by a tree. Trees render us a tremendous service. They produce oxygen through photosynthesis out of water, carbon dioxide, and minerals in the soil. Without oxygen we cannot survive; it is priceless. Trees also hold the soil in which we grow our food. They create microclimates that prevent temperatures from rising. They are also indispensable for the water cycle. The ecological economist Robert Constanza has estimated that the services rendered by one tree are worth \$ 276,000 per year. This is one example of the pro bono services that natural resources render to all of us. The same applies to water resources. Our scarce freshwater resources are constantly purified, recycled and distributed through the hydrological cycle. Our water offers us a service for free.

Unfortunately, human intervention disrupts the hydrological cycle. Such intervention occurs when humans overload the cycle with pollutants and draw more water than can be replenished. Over-pumping is a well-known problem in Lebanon, where many wells have become salty. Climate change

also affects the natural water cycle, because of extreme weather conditions.

Pressure on water resources

Some regions are rich in water resources, while others are poor. China is home to around 19 percent of the world's population, but the country has only 7 percent of the world's freshwater resources. Canada, on the other hand, hosts 0.5 percent of the world's population, but has 20 percent of freshwater supply. The distribution of water is not even, to say the least. Lebanon is a water-scarce country. There are various factors that compound the stress on its water resources. Population growth is a threat to water resources, as it is to every natural resource. Lebanon has a very young population. 50 percent is under 29 years of age. This means that there is a growing need for housing units and, therefore, a growing consumption of water. Urbanization is another factor that puts stress on the water resources. Half of the Lebanese population lives in the Greater Beirut area and more than 88 percent lives in urban areas. Economic growth also leads to an increasing demand of water. Finally, the Lebanese water supply is affected by climate change.

Lebanese water resources including springs, streams and rivers are estimated to have a capacity of 2,000-2,700 million cubic meters (MCM) per year. According to estimates the yearly demand will be 1,800 MCM by 2030. This means that the water needs of the country can be met. There are, however, two main challenges: the widespread pollution of Lebanon's waters and the substandard water infrastructure. Water pollution is caused by the discharge of sewage systems, for example off the coast at Ain Mreisse, where most of Beirut's sewers are directly discharged, without any treatment. In addition, the water cycle is polluted by domestic waste and industrial waste, including heavy metals such as chromium and lead. In order to meet the needs, Lebanon needs to expand its use of surface water. This may be done by building

dams or by transferring water from rivers. These are possible ways of responding to water stress.

The story of the Aral Sea is instructive. The Aral Sea used to be the fourth largest saline lake in the world. In the 1960s, the diversion of two rivers for the irrigation of the cotton fields, where cotton was grown for the uniforms of the Soviet Army, caused disaster. Water stopped reaching the Sea and it shrank immensely. Today an exposed seabed with no sign of animal life or plants extends for hundreds of kilometres. The wetlands of the area were eliminated causing many animal species, including fish and birds, to disappear from the area. This process took only around thirty years, a scenario as frightening as any science fiction movie. Fishing villages lie miles away from the water, testifying to the dying ecosystems and economies that relied on them.

The need for a response

As was argued, one of Lebanon's main problems is the pollution of its waters. The sewers are discharged without any treatment. Plans exist to build treatment facilities along the coastline and some plants have been deployed, but there is a long way to go. Scientist John Todd works with vegetation to treat wastewater. Instead of building expensive water treatment facilities, he argues, we can treat water with what he calls eco-machines. The wastewater is routed into ponds that have been planted with native species of plants that break down various pollutants. After treatment in several such basins the water is clean enough to be used for irrigation. No chemicals are added; nature is at work, using plants and microorganisms. Todd designed an eco-machine for the city of Fuzhou in China, home to six million people. His restorer canal solved the city's problem of an open sewer by using natural plant species.

In his book *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Survive* (2005), Jared Diamond identifies five factors that may lead to the collapse of civilizations. The first four factors are

human-inflicted damage of the environment; climate change; hostile neighborhoods; and the collapse of friendly trade partnerships. The fifth factor is the most crucial one, for it is the society's response to these four threats. This prompts us to ask ourselves: how will our society respond to the present challenges?

WATER SYMBOLISM IN THE BIBLE

Wilbert van Saane

Water is a pervasive and crucial metaphor in Christianity. It is difficult to express the Christian faith without any reference to water. This has been the case from the earliest beginnings of Christianity, as its ancient sources testify. Another chapter in this book discusses some texts from Christian history; here the focus is on the Bible. The rich use of water imagery in the Bible may provide new inspiration for environmental care in our age of pollution, degradation and extinction. Mapping the symbolic use of water in the Bible is, therefore, an important task of Christian theologians. This chapter contributes to that task.

Water imagery is used in nearly every Bible book, from Genesis to Revelation. The poets and authors use virtually all aspects of water, including water in seas, rivers, creeks, lakes, waterfalls, cataracts, wells, dripping water, rain, hail, snow, clouds, ice, floods, waves, vapor, springs, etc. Given the rich use of imagery, it is no surprise that water is used to convey multiple and layered symbolic meanings. The purpose of this chapter is to take stock and to describe biblical water symbolism in a somewhat systematic way. Rather than imposing a system from outside the Bible, we will trace water by following the overarching narrative of the Bible itself: creation, salvation and sanctification/completion. This flow and logic is beautifully expressed in a Christian hymn written by the American Methodist minister, R. Deane Postlethwaite (1925-1980). This hymn is often sung to the melody of 'Morning Has Broken'.

Water has held us, moved by creation.
Out of darkness, broke forth the light.
Up from the deluge, showing God's promise,
has come a rainbow, gladdening sight.

Water has saved us, as the sea parted
for Israel's children, walled on each side.
This love has held us, helped us in trouble,
on far horizons, God's cloud our guide.

Water has cleansed, bathed with forgiveness,
has, with clear blessing, washed sin away.
Jordan's strong currents, God's Son announcing,
made a beginning, baptismal day.

Water has touched us, fresh on our foreheads,
showing an inward, spiritual grace.
Into God's fam'ly we have been welcomed.
As sons and daughters, we take our place.

Creation and Water

The Bible writers shared the cosmology of the ancient Middle East. In this worldview, water was perceived as a threat to the balance of the world. The waters below and waters above the earth were always looming. This cosmology was, of course, based on observation: water came from above in the form of rain and welled up from below, gushing out of springs or drawn out of wells. Water represented chaos, the undoing and destruction of creation. This notion is taking on a new relevance in a time of melting glaciers and polar caps and rising sea levels.

The Genesis narrative expresses the process of creation in terms of this worldview. God's first act is to make the world safe from the destructive power of water by gathering the waters above the earth to prevent them from flooding it. "Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters, and let it separate the waters from the waters. So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And it was so. God called the dome Sky" (Gen. 1:6-8, NRSV; all

quotations in this chapter are from this translation). God then separated land from sea, in order for the land to be safe from the waters below the earth. “Let the waters under the sky be gathered into one place, and let the dry land appear. And it was so. God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together he called Seas. And God saw that it was good” (Gen. 1:9-10).

While the creation account in Genesis 1 shares in the ancient worldview of the region, it is also crucially different from it. The act of creation is not expressed in terms of pantheism and determinism, but rather in terms of divine freedom. The ancient Babylonian myth *Enuma Elish* tells how the god Marduk created sky and earth out of the body of the defeated goddess Tiamat. This implies a pantheistic view of creation, in which gods and natural phenomena are inseparable. The Genesis narrative, by contrast, attributes the origins of sky and earth to the divine word. The refrain of Genesis 1 is “and God said”. The divine word is also viewed as the way in which God sustains and controls the created order, including its water, as in Psalm 29:3: “The voice of the LORD is over the waters.” The Book of Job also makes a connection between God’s voice and breath and water in its various forms: snow, rain, ice and clouds (Job 37). Belief in creation (of water) by the word of God implies a separation between God and nature.

The Hebrew Bible reflects a growing understanding that God transcends the forces of nature, controls them, and sits enthroned above them (Psalm 103). Yahweh is neither a storm-god nor a river-god, but is free to give and withhold blessing through the forces of nature, including water. It is exactly because God is more powerful than the forces of nature, including the waters, that He is able to separate them and bring life out of them. The Second Letter of Peter suggests that it is important to remember that “by the word of God heavens existed long ago and earth was formed out of water and by means of water, through which the world of that time was deluged with water and

perished” (2 Peter 3:5-6) In other words, God’s word controls and upholds creation.

Creation is not only an act of God’s power, but also of God’s love. According to the Reformed theologian Karl Barth, the very purpose of creation is to be in a loving relationship with its Creator, which is expressed in the notion of the covenant. Because creation is essentially relational, the loving act of creating is the beginning of history and “the irruption and revelation of the divine compassion” (*Church Dogmatics* III.I.41, p 110). God’s intervention in the primordial waters, as part of that, is one of the first acts of God’s love.

The story of the flood conveys this message in a powerful way. After the devastating flood, God establishes a covenant with humanity and with every living creature. “I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth” (Gen. 9:11). In other words, God’s faithful love guarantees that history can begin and proceed and that the waters of chaos will be kept at bay. The rainbow is, of course, the sign of this covenant.

In front of the temple of Solomon stood another sign of God’s promise: a bronze vessel filled with water – the “molten sea” – whose function may well have been to represent the cosmic sea (1 Kings 7). If that was the case, its placement within the temple court was a powerful reminder that God had tamed the water and, driven by faithful love, made life possible.

Because of God’s faithful love water becomes a blessing rather than a threat. The powerful Creator who harnessed the waters is also the one who lovingly irrigates and refreshes the land by giving water in due season. The Hebrew Bible attributes the gift of rain to God. “He covers the heavens with clouds, prepares rain for the earth, makes grass grow on the hills” (Psalm 147:8). Jesus points out that rain is a sign of God’s faithfulness to all people, be they righteous or unrighteous (Matthew 5:45). The Bible also considers rivers as a special blessing for the benefit of all nature. “You visit the earth and water it, you greatly enrich it;

the river of God is full of water” (Psalm 65:8). The irrigating quality of rivers is part of the created order: “A river flows out of Eden to water the garden.” (Gen. 2:10) Elsewhere in this volume, Chris Naylor discusses the benefits of water for all creation according to Psalm 104.

Destructive Water

Just like water is both a negative and positive force in creation, water imagery plays a role in salvation in several distinct ways. Water symbolizes the powers from which people are saved; the process of salvation; and the goal of salvation, which may be characterized as sanctification, completeness or reconciled life.

The Hebrew Bible tells a number of different stories of salvation from and through water. In these stories water takes on an even more sinister role than the chaotic primordial water had: it becomes a symbol of death. The story of the flood, which has already been mentioned, is of course the paramount example of salvation from death through drowning. The water represents not only the undoing of creation, but also the divine wrath: “For my part, I am going to bring a flood of water on the earth to destroy from under heaven all flesh in which is the breath of life” (Gen. 6:17). Life is granted not only to a select group of humans – Noah and his family – but also to pairs from all animal species. These representative humans and animals have to make a new, better beginning on a newly created earth. New creation and salvation are at their closest here, held together by the conviction that God is faithful in His love for creation. God is, as we have seen, a covenant-maker. In its interpretation of the Noah story, the First Letter of Peter makes a connection between the flood and baptism and speaks of the patience of God (1 Peter 3:20-21).

In the pivotal Moses narrative, water also represents death. When the mother of Moses cannot hide her son any longer from the Egyptian oppressors who have ordered the killing of all male Hebrew babies, she makes him a basket and places it in the

river. She surrenders her child to the waters, perhaps hoping for miraculous salvation and a new lease of life. Little Moses is saved through the water, foreshadowing the salvation of his people through the water of the Red Sea (Ex. 2).

The story of the salvation of the Hebrew slaves through water is found in Exodus 14 and 15. After Moses stretches out his hands and God parts the sea “by a strong east wind all night,” the sea becomes dry land for the Israelites. They walk on a path of life surrounded by death, symbolized by “the waters forming a wall for them on their right and on their left”. God holds back death to give them new life. This is not the case for their Egyptian pursuers: “the waters returned and the chariot drivers, the entire army of Pharaoh that had followed them into the sea, not one of them remained” (Ex. 14:28).

The passing through the Red Sea and the parting of the waters of death are paradigmatic images of salvation and points of reference in the Bible. When Israel, led by Joshua, entered the promised land, “the waters flowing from above stood still” so that the people could cross “on dry ground” (Jos. 3). In the Elijah cycle the waters of the River Jordan are also “parted to one side and to the other” so that Elijah and his successor Elisha can cross on dry ground (2 Kings 2).

Perhaps the most poetic description of the destructive power of water is found in the Book of Jonah. After the disobedient prophet has been swallowed by “a large fish,” in whose belly he spends three days and three nights, he prays to God. In the prayer he anticipates his rescue from the forces of death, which are represented by the deep sea and its waves.

You cast me into the deep,
Into the heart of the seas,
and the flood surrounded me;
all your waves and your billows passed over me. (...)

The waters closed in over me;
the deep surrounded me;

weeds were wrapped around my head
at the roots of the mountains. (Jonah 2:3 and 2:5)

All the texts discussed above are essential background to understand the New Testament symbolism of water baptism. Jesus walks the way of his people Israel, including their way through the water. But Jesus' way is deeper: he does not escape destruction and death, but undergoes and then conquers them in his resurrection. It is no coincidence that Jesus is baptized in the Jordan River, going down into it and emerging from it to announce new life. This is a vivid demonstration of his identification with and fulfilment of Israel's story.

The Apostle Paul urges his readers to include themselves in this story of Israel and Christ by using the image of immersion in baptism: "Do you no know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? Therefore, we have been buried with him by baptism into death, so that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6:3-4).

Life-giving Water

While water represents the powers from which people are saved, water imagery is also used in a more positive way to describe the nature of salvation. Images that convey this draw on the life-giving and refreshing rather than the threatening, destructive qualities of water. One of the most powerful images, in this respect, is that of a water spring in rocky terrain. The thirst of the Israelites in the desert is quenched when God brings water from a rock, in response to their quarrelling (Ex. 17 and Num. 20). The Apostle Paul allegorizes this story and explains that "they drank from the spiritual rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ" (1 Cor. 10:4). Over the centuries, the water spring has been a favorite theme in Christian poetry and hymnology. The hymn 'Rock of Ages' by the Anglican priest and hymn writer

Augustus Toplady (1740-1778) is a good example. It alludes to the water flowing from the pierced side of Jesus after he died on the cross (John 19:34-35) and the theological interpretation of this in the First Letter of John (5:6-8), which identifies Jesus as the one who came by water and blood.

Rock of ages, cleft for me,
let me hide myself in thee;
let the water and the blood,
from thy wounded side which flowed,
be of sin the double cure,
save from wrath and make me pure.

The act of receiving and drinking water interprets salvation in a very pictorial way. Water scarcity has always been a problem for Palestine. In an arid land where people know what thirst is, the image of quenching one's thirst from an unexpected source speaks of grace, relief and renewed hope. The new life that God offers is like the quenching of an intense thirst. This type of imagery is found in several places in the Hebrew Bible. "As a deer longs for flowing streams, so my soul longs for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God." (Psalm 42:1-2) Water did not usually come for free, but God's faithful love did. Second Isaiah employs this metaphor of free water: "Ho, everyone who thirsts, come to the waters; and you that have no money, come, buy and eat!" (Is. 55:1). In his conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well, Jesus applies the metaphor of thirsting to his own work on behalf of the people: "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty" (John 4:13-14).

The cleansing quality of water is often used as an image for salvation, and also brings us closer to the notion of sanctification. Water is a cleansing, healing force in a story about a high-ranking Aramean officer, Naaman, whose skin disease drives him to such despair that he decides to go on a pilgrimage

across the borders, only to be told by the prophet Elisha to wash in the River Jordan (2 Kings 5). He immerses himself seven times and is healed, which prompts him to turn from polytheism to the one God. The Book of Acts tells a rather similar story of an adviser to the Queen of Ethiopia, who goes on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. He too experiences new life through immersion in the waters of the Jordan River when he is baptized by Philip, a leader of the early Christian community (Acts 8). In both stories water is a medium in the journey of individuals towards the saving knowledge of the one God.

Sanctifying Water

The Christian designation of the community of salvation is the “one, holy, catholic and apostolic church.” Water imagery is used especially in connection with the trait of holiness. Holiness is an attribute of God, but in the Bible also characterizes the human response to divine salvation. Holiness may refer to ritual cleanness, uncompromised individual ethics, and peace and justice on the level of the whole society.

In the Hebrew Bible, the sprinkling of water and washings are required in order to be ritually clean, for example after a death in the family (Lev. 19). Unlike some of his contemporaries, Jesus did not observe this rigorous code of ritual purity through washing. He did, however, call for internal purity. He made it very clear that to him external washing with water was not enough: internal sanctification was needed. This is how John the Baptist announced Jesus: “I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit” (Mark 1:8), or, as the Gospel of Luke has it, “with the Holy Spirit and fire”. In the ancient world, fire was perceived as a liquid. The image of a fire baptism implied that fire was, as it were, poured over a person’s soul, implying a deep moral purification or sanctification. This is what Jesus called for in his teachings and example.

When the Book of Revelation speaks of the crowds robed in white who have washed their clothes in the blood of the lamb, it evokes a similar notion of purification and dedication to God. The cleansed clothes are markers of those who have been faithful and internally devoted to Christ's example and teaching. The Book of Hebrews also employs the imagery of washing in the context of exclusive commitment to the crucified and risen Christ. Those who are dedicated experience inner forgiveness that affirms them and gives them confidence. "Let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water" (Hebr. 10:22).

Water imagery is also used to characterize the positive and proactive lifestyle of those who have experienced salvation. The conversation between Jesus and the Samaritan woman revolves around this change of life and behavior. After assuring her that she will never again be thirsty, Jesus tells her that the life of his followers is radically new: "The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life" (John 4:14). Here the metaphor of the spring or fountain is inverted. Those who trust in God do not only drink from the spring, which is Christ, but Christ becomes part of them in such a way that they themselves become water springs for others. "Out of the believer's heart shall flow rivers of living water" (John 7:38). The Gospel of John explains that this is due to the work of the Spirit in the life of believers, who fills them with a contagious joy and compassion.

Finally, water is a prominent metaphor in the Bible's eschatological visions of a reconciled and peaceful world. In these images, water is a power for holiness for all of society and indeed for all nature. The Prophet Ezekiel sees a river that springs from the renewed temple. This river flows eastward and enters a sea with stagnant water (perhaps the Dead Sea), where it makes the water fresh and good for fishing again.

Wherever the river goes, every living creature that swarms will live, and there will be very many fish, once these waters reach there. (...) On the banks, on both sides of the river, there will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither nor their fruit fail, but they will bear fresh fruit every month, because the water for them flows from the sanctuary.” (Ez. 47:9 and 12)

The Book of Revelation closes with a vision that is inspired by the Ezekiel text. Just like in Ezekiel’s prophecy a renewed Jerusalem and a renewed temple stand at the heart of the redeemed and reconciled creation. Blessing for all creation flows forth from this center, which represents God’s presence.

“Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city. On either side of the river is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations” (Rev. 22:1-2).

The text then continues to assure the readers that, in this reconciled and peaceful new creation, there will be no more darkness, “for the Lord God will be their light”. Thus, the Bible comes full circle and ends with the same assurance that it started with: God curbs the destructive force of water and guarantees water for blessing, fertility and refreshment.

Conclusion

The Bible writers use a wide range of metaphors to express humanity’s dynamic and existential relationship with water, both on the physical and the symbolic level. Water is a tangible reality that may threaten or bless human life, but also a medium that

expresses and mediates God's involvement with humans on a spiritual level. Water is a symbol of threat and destruction, but more often as a sign of God's blessing and salvation. The human willingness to receive God's gracious presence is likened to washing and thirst-quenching. Human life touched by grace becomes a source of new hope. This is symbolized by fountains and rivers flowing forth to bring blessing.

The Bible's rich symbolic use of water awaits further exploration by theologians, poets, scientists and activists. It offers profound images of the threatening and life-giving qualities of water, of God's power and care, and also of human responsibility and involvement. Over-all, biblical water symbolism impresses on us a message of much-needed, energizing hope in the face of today's ecological crisis.



الماء كمصدر للحياة في القرآن الكريم

حُسن عبود

هل هناك ضرورة ان نؤمن بان الماء مقدّس حتى نحترم حقوقه، حقوق الماء علينا؟ اذ يؤكد الله تعالى في القرآن الكريم ان الماء هو مصدر الحياة "وجعلنا من الماء كلّ شيء حيّ" (الأنبياء، 30)، وهو الذي خلق السماوات والأرض في ستة أيام وكان عرشه على الماء ليبلوكم أيكم أحسن عملاً" (هود، 7).

في هذه الورقة سنعرض أشكال الماء الواردة في القرآن الكريم ودلالاتها، من الخلق الى عنصر الحياة وقوتها التي يعطيها الله او يمنعها، وفي سرديات قصص صراع الأنبياء ومخاض أمهاتهم حين يحضر الماء سبيلاً للخلاص، الى ان يتحوّل الماء الى عنصر مستقر يفرض حاله على المؤمن في طقوس الطهارة والعبادة والصلاة.

مقدمة تمهيدية

يقول الإمام الشيخ محمد عبده (ت. 1905) في مقدّمة تفسير القرآن الكريم المعروف بـ"تفسير المنار" التالي: "أجمل القرآن الكلام عن الأمم وعن السنن الإلهية وعن آياته في السماوات والأرض وفي الآفاق والأنفس، وهو إجمال صادر عن أحاط بكل شيء علماً وأمرنا بالنظر والتفكير في الأرض لنفهم إجماله بالتفصيل الذي يريدنا ارتقاءً وكمالاً. ولو اكتفينا من

علم الكون بنظرة في ظاهره لكننا كمن يعتبر الكتاب بلون جلده لا بما حواه من علم ورحمة".¹

وحين ندخل عالم الماء في القرآن الكريم علينا ان نضع نصب أعيننا ان القرآن، وان يشير الى القواعد العلمية للظواهر الطبيعية والسنن الإلهية، الا انه ليس بكتاب علمي جاف بل هو آيات للتعبّد والتذكّر والتعقل بالإيمان، وما حاجتنا الى المعرفة بالقرآن الا لحاجتنا الى المعرفة بالله.² ومع هذا يختار القارئ من الغنى اللغوي الذي يشير الى أنواع الماء بدقة العالم بكل شيء. والماء هو مادة الخلق الأساسية بين يدي الله تعالى "وجعلنا من الماء كلّ شيءٍ حيّ" (معظم الأرض ماء و70% من وزن الإنسان ماء)؛ وكعنصر للحياة يُحي فيهِ اللهُ الأرضَ بعد موتها للذين يؤمنون بالحياة والموت ومن ثم بالبعث. والأرض تسقى من مادة واحدة هي الماء "يُسقى بماء واحد"،³ الا انه متعدد الحركة، من تنزيل الماء من السماء، الى الماء الجارية "الماء المعين"، الى الماء "العُور" التي تخزن في طبقات الأرض ويغيب فيها فلا ينتفع منه؛ وهناك البحر المسخّر طعامه والذي تجري فيه الفلك بأمر الله، وهناك الأنهار المسخرة للإنسان (سورة إبراهيم، 32). وحين تستحضر بكثافة قصص الأنبياء، من قصص نوح وإقلاعه في السفينة للنجاة مقابل غرق قومه الذين كفروا بالله، فاننا نتحسّس في البيان القرآني في خروج نوح وقومه مع كل زوجين اثنين، في فلك البحر، ان هذا الخروج هو كولادة جديدة ليصبح الماء رمزاً لخلاص الأنبياء. وكذلك يوعد المؤمنون بجنات تجري من تحتها الأنهار خالدين فيها أبداً.

1 الإمام الشيخ محمد عبده، تفسير القرآن الحكيم، تأليف السيد محمد رشيد رضا، القاهرة، مطبعة المنار، 1346.

2 المرجع نفسه، ص. 26.

3 "وفي الأرض قطعٌ مُتجاوراتٌ وِجَنَاتٌ من أعنابٍ وزرعٍ ونخيلٍ صنواً وغير صنواً يُسقى بماءٍ واحدٍ ونفصلُ بعضها على بعضٍ في الأكلِ إنّ في ذلك لآياتٍ لقومٍ يعقلون" (سورة الرعد، آ 4).

1. منهجية دخولنا الى عالم الماء في القرآن

ودخولنا عالم الماء في القرآن الكريم ليس بالأمر السهل كما حصل معي خلال هذه الأشهر الماضية التي كنت بها أقرأ آيات الله في خلق السماوات والأرض وإنزاله من السماء الماء: فعلياً ان **نحصى الآيات⁴** التي وردت في الماء بين السور المكية والسور المدنية، والمكي ما نزل قبل الهجرة والمدني ما نزل بعدها،⁵ وقد وردت في معظمها في السور المكية من بداية الدعوة الى الإسلام حين كان النبي (صلى) يبين أساس الدين وكتلياته من الإيمان بالله واليوم الآخر والملائكة والكتب والنبين ومن ترك الشرور والمعاصي الى فعل الخيرات، وإحدى طرق الإيمان التفكر في الكون وظواهره. وبعد ان أحصيت الآيات وموضعها في السياق الكرونولوجي للتنزيل، بدأت بقراءتها القراءة المتأنية لفهم **الكلمات التي أردفت مع الماء** (جاءت بعده) بالاستعانة بمفردات ألفاظ القرآن للعلامة الراغب الأصفهاني.⁶ فهناك الماء "المعين" الذي يجري ويسهل الحصول عليه والإنتفاع به، وضده الماء "العور" (المُنْهَبَطُ من الأرض) فلا ينتفع منه: "تبارك الذي بيده الملك وهو على كل شيء قدير ... قُلْ أَرَأَيْتُمْ إِنْ أَصْبَحَ مَاؤُكُمْ غَوْرًا فَمَنْ يَأْتِيكُمْ بِمَاءٍ مَّعِينٍ" (سورة الملك، 30). وهناك الماء "العَدَق" (الوفير) "وَأَلْوُ اسْتَقَامُوا عَلَى الطَّرِيقَةِ لَأَسْقِينَهُمْ مَاءً غَدَقًا" ايّ ماءً غزيراً (سورة الجن، 16). وقد سمّي الماء الشديد العذوبة الذي نشربه بالماء "الفرات"، "وأسقيناكم ماءً فراتاً" (المرسلات، 27) وضده الماء الشديد الملوحة والحرارة الذي سمّي الماء "الأجاج"، والنوعان - الفرات والأجاج - لا يمتزجان في البحر "وهو الذي مرج البحرين هذا

⁴ ورد "الماء" في 32 سورة مكية و8 سور مدنية بصيغة "الماء" وآية واحدة في كل من صيغة "ماءك"، "ماءها" "ماؤكم"، "ماؤها" ومجموع الآيات التي ورد بها الماء هي 48 آية مكية و15 آية مدنية.

⁵ "سواء نزل بالمدينة نفسها أو ضواحيها أو في مكة عام الفتح و عام حجة الوداع أو في غزوة من لغزوات" (انظر م. عيده، المرجع نفسه ص. 33).

⁶ الراغب الأصفهاني، مفردات ألفاظ القرآن، تحقيق صفوان عدنان داوودي ط. 3، دمشق: دار القلم، 2002.

عذب فُراتٌ وهذا ملحٌ أجاجٌ وجعل بينهما برزخاً وججراً محجوراً" (الفرقان، 25:35) اي هو بقدرته خلى وأرسل البحرين متجاورين متلاصقين بحيث لا يمتزجان.⁷ وماء "السلسيل" في الجتة في غاية السلاسة والسهولة من شدة العذوبة، "عيناً فيها تسمى سلسيلاً" (الإنسان، 18).⁸

وبعد الالتفات الى بعض الكلمات التي أردفت مع الماء علينا النظر الى الأفعال التي أكثر ما ظهرت مع الماء. فمع السماوات والأرض يرد فعل "الخلق" اما الماء فله فعل التنزيل الذي يتكرر ليؤكد أهمية الشتاء للشرب والري والزرع والدواب: "وأرسلنا الرياح لوقح فأنزلنا من السماء ماء" (الحجر، 22:15)، "وأنزلنا من السماء ماءً فأخرجنا به أزواجاً من نباتٍ شتى" (طه: 20:53)، "وأنزلنا من السماء ماءً بقدر فأسكناه في الأرض" اي بنظام وتقدير وحساب (المؤمنون: 23:18) "وأنزلنا من السماء ماء طهوراً" (الفرقان: 48) ويُسمى الماء المقطر بماء المطر بالماء الطهور.

2. الماء لإحياء الأرض.

علّ التنزيل المتّصل بحركة الماء من السماء الى الأرض ورد في معظم الآيات الكونية، وحركة التنزيل أساسية لاختزان المياه وتشعباتها، وفي إحياء الأرض بقاء الإنسان والنبات والحيوان.

فالماء المنزل من السماء هو للشرب وللشجر ولمرعى الإبل "هو الذي أنزل من السماء ماءً لكم منه شرابٌ ومنه شجرٌ فيه تسيّمون".⁹ وهذا

⁷ اليوم ظهرت مشكلة تملح مياه الخزان الجوفي ناتج عن الخلل بين مستوى مياه البحر ومستوى المياه في الخزان الجوفي الساحلي في لبنان. "وما يستوي البحران هذا عذبٌ فُراتٌ سائغٌ شرابه وهذا ملحٌ أجاجٌ" (سورة فاطر 35، 12).
⁸ انظر، "هل تعرف كم عدد أنواع الماء في القرآن الكريم؟ على الرابط:

<http://iswy.co/e13top>

⁹ ومنه شجرٌ فيه تسيّمون اي سُمّت لإلا في المرعى (النحل، 10).

الماء المُنزَّل من السماء "يُنْبِتُ لَكُمْ بِهِ الزَّرْعَ وَالزَّيْتُونَ وَالنَّخِيلَ وَالْأَعْنَابَ وَمِنَ كُلِّ الثَّمَرَاتِ إِنَّ فِي ذَلِكَ لآيَاتٍ لِقَوْمٍ يَتَفَكَّرُونَ" (سورة النحل ك 10-11). وفي سورة النبأ، "وأنزلنا من المُعْصِرَاتِ مَاءً تُجَاجَأُ لِنُخْرِجَ بِهِ حَبًّا وَنَبَاتًا، وَجَنَاتٍ أَلْفَافًا" (النبأ 14-16: 78) أي أنزلنا من السحب التي حان وقت إمطارها ماء السيل دافقاً منهمراً بشدّة وقوّة. وفي سورة الفرقان، "وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ الرِّيحَ بُشْرًا بَيْنَ يَدَيْ رَحْمَتِهِ، وَأَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً طَهُورًا لِنُحْيِيَ بِهِ بَلَدَةً مَيِّتًا وَنُسْقِيَهُ مِمَّا خَلَقْنَا أَنْعَامًا وَأَنْسَاءً كَثِيرًا." فالماء "الطهور" هو الذي يُحْيِي البلدة الميتة لا الماء الملوّث (سورة الفرقان: 48-49).¹⁰ وتشخص الأرض الميتة بصورة تمثيلية حسيّة رائعة وجديرة بالاعتبار، فإذا أنزل الله عليها الماء اهتزّت وربّت: "ومن آياته أنّك ترى الأرض خاشعةً فإذا أنزلنا عليها الماء اهتزّت وربّت إنّ الذي أحيّاها لمُحي الموتى إنّهُ على كلّ شيءٍ قدير" (فصلت 41: 39). وهذا الخشوع من جهة الأرض الميتة يحثّ الإنسان على التفكر بموته ان ماتت الأرض وبالتواضع أمام الله وخلقهِ. فالله يُحي الأرض بإنزال الماء من السماء، وحين يسأل الإنسان عن القادر على إحياء الأرض من بعد موتها فالإيمان بالله هو الجواب: "ولئن سألتكم من نزل من السماء ماءً فأحيا بها الأرض من بعد موتها ليقولن الله" (العنكبوت 29: 63).¹¹ ان الإيمان بالله وبقدرته على إحياء الأرض بعد موتها بتنزيله الماء، هو الأساس المنطقي لحجة كاملة للإيمان بالبعث، بأن الله كما أحيا الأرض بالماء بعد موتها قادرٌ ان يحيي الموتى.

ورؤيتنا بالمشاهدة الظواهر الطبيعية التي نتجت عن إنزال الله الماء ترد كثيراً بصيغة السؤال:

¹⁰ الماء الطهور "هو الطاهر في نفسه المطهر لغيره، فهو اسم لما يتطهر به، كالسحور اسم لما يتسحر به، والماء المطهر لأنه يطهر الإنسان من الوسخ والنجاسة. فثبت ان التطهير يختص بالماء."

¹¹ "وينزل من السماء ماءً فيحي الأرض بعد موتها" (الروم 24: 30) "وأنزلنا من السماء ماءً فأنبثنا فيها من كلّ زوج كريم" (لقمان 31: 10).

"ألم تر ان الله أنزل من السماء ماءً فأخرجنا به ثمرات مختلفا ألوانها؟"
(فاطر 27،35).

"ألم تر ان الله أنزل من السماء ماء فسلكه ينابيع في الأرض؟" (الزمر
21،39).

حتى ان المعاينة بالنظر تشير الى أدق الرؤية بالمشاهدة في تكوين الإنسان من النطفة التي هي ماء: "فليُنظر الإنسانُ ممَّ خُلِقَ، خُلِقَ من ماءٍ دافقٍ، يخرُجُ من الصُّلبِ والتَّرائبِ إنَّه على رَجْعِهِ لقادر" (الطارق 5-8: 86).
اي خلق من مني الرجل المتدفق،¹² فالإنسان كالأرض بحاجة الى الماء في عملية إخصاب الذرية، وهي في أولادنا هبة ورحمة من الله.

والماء الضعيف والحقير بضعف مكوّناته للعوامل الخارجية - بتنزيله بين ماء الرجل - يجعل في رحم المرأة في قرار مكين، فيتكون الجنين في رحم المرأة الى قدر معلوم، هي فترة الحمل، ليتذكّر المكذبين بدعوة النبي الى التوحيد والبعث، وبشاعرية دينية عالية، "ويلٌ للمكذبين ألم نخلقكم من ماء مهين فجعلناه في قرار مكين، إلى قدر معلوم فقدرنا فنعم القادرون، ويلٌ يومئذ للمكذبين، ألم نجعل الأرض كفاتاً، أحياءً وأمواتاً، وجعلنا فيها رواسي شامخات وأسقيناكم ماءً فُراتاً، ويلٌ يومئذ للمكذبين" (المرسلات 20-27).

لكن الماء كما هو للخلق والبعث للذين آمنوا هو أيضاً لتدمير الحياة للذين كفروا بآيات الله **فالماء المنهمر**، المتدفق بغزارة من السماء، سيهلك الزرع والحرث، "ففتحننا أبواب السماء بماءٍ منهمرٍ" (القمر ك: 11).
والماء الصديد شراب جهنم: "ورأته جهنمٌ ويُسقى من ماءٍ صديدٍ" (سورة إبراهيم ك، 16). وماء المهل: القطران مذاب من معادن وزيت مغلي: "وإن يستغيثوا يُغاثوا بماءٍ كالْمُهْلِ يشوي الوجوه" (الكهف ك: 29).

¹² الصابوني: ج3، ص. 544.

ويرد فعل "أمطرنا" ليس لإنزال الماء من السماء إحياءً للأرض بل هو للقصاص بإنزال الحجارة: "وأمطرنا عليها حجارة من سجيل (هود ك 11:82) "وأمطرنا عليهم مطراً فساء مطر المنذرين" (الشعراء ك 26:173 والنمل ك 27:58) "فأمطر علينا حجارة من السماء" (الأنفال م 8:32) "ولقد أتوا على القرية التي أمطرت مطر السوء" (الفرقان 25:40). ويتكرر فعل "أمطرنا" مرتبطاً بالأذى، من زمن مكة الى زمن المدينة، التي هاجر اليها النبي والمسلمون الأوائل، "ولا جناح عليكم إن كان بكم أذى من مطر أو كنتم مرضى أن تضعوا أسلحتكم... (النساء، 102).

3. اء البحر كماء البرّ مسخّر للإنسان ولخلاص الأنبياء الخروج الى البحر.

وكما للماء التي أنزلها الله من السماء إحياءً للأرض وللشرب والشجر والدواب، كذلك للبحر منافع للإنسان: "والفلك التي تجري في البحر بما ينفع الناس" (البقرة، 164) و"أحلّ لكم صيد البحر وطعامه متاعاً لكم وللسيارة" (المائدة، 96). فمياه البحر والأنهار مسخّرة للناس: "وسخّر لكم الفلك لتجري في البحر بأمره وسخّر لكم الأنهار" (إبراهيم 14:32)، والله هو الذي سخّر لنا البحر لنأكل منه لحماً طرياً "وهو الذي سخّر لكم البحر لتأكلوا منه لحماً طرياً" (النحل 16:14). وهذا التسخير لنا في البرّ والبحر هو تكريمٌ للإنسان: "ولقد كرّمنا بني آدم وحملناهم في البرّ والبحر" (الإسراء، 70:17).

وفي قصص صراع الأنبياء مع أقوامهم الذين يكذبونهم في دعوتهم الى الإيمان بالله - وهم في صراعهم وابتلاتهم - يمثلون صراع النبي مع قومه وابتلاته، يُلهم الأنبياء على اللجوء الى البحر هرباً من بطش أقوامهم، وكان الأنبياء في خروجهم عن أقوامهم الذين كفروا بالله، يحتاجون الى الماء لأجل الولادة من جديد. فنوحٌ يلجأ الى الفلك (السفينة) في البحر

هرباً من الطوفان الذي أنزل على أهله لكفرهم في مشهد بياني يعظم ما يحصل من حزن الآباء على فرقة الأبناء الذين تركوهم من خلفهم، في سردية مناداة إبراهيم ابنه ليعُدل عن البقاء وليخرج معه:

"وهي تجري بهم في موج كالجبال ونادى نوح ابنه وكان في معزل يا بُنيّ اركب معنا ولا تكن مع الكافرين (42) قال ساوي إلى جبل يعصمني من الماء قال لا عاصم اليوم من أمر الله إلا من رجم وحال بينهما الموج فكان من المعرّقين (43) وقيل يا أرض ابلعي ماءك ويا سماء أقلعي وغيض الماء وقضي الأمر واستوتت على الجودي وقيل بعداً للقوم الظالمين" (44). والماء الغيض هي لماء التي نزلت في أرض و غابت فيها.

وعلاقة النبي موسى بماء البحر هي كعلاقة نوح بها، علاقة قوية وعميقة ومصيرية، لأنها علاقة تبحر إلى عالم مجهول، والبحر له ظاهره وله باطنه: فهناك قصة إلقاء أم موسى له وهو رضيع في اليم (الماء) خوفاً من قتل فرعون له حين كان فرعون يقتل كل مولود ذكر من أبناء اليهودية. وقد رأينا ما يشابه هذا اللجوء إلى المصير الغامض في لجوء اللاجئين السوريين والإفريقيين إلى أوروبا في سفن صغيرة، وأحياناً يكتب لهم النجاة وأحياناً يغرقون. وقد ورد ذكر أم موسى في آيات تصف هول الأم على ولدها في خروج من هذا القبيل: "وَأَوْحَيْنَا إِلَىٰ أُمِّ مُوسَىٰ أَنْ أَرْضِعِيهِ فَإِذَا خَفْتِ عَلَيْهِ فَأَلْقِيهِ فِي الْيَمِّ وَلَا تَخَافِي وَلَا تَحْزَنِي إِنَّا رَادُّوهُ إِلَيْكِ وَجَاعِلُوهُ مِنَ الْمُرْسَلِينَ" 13.

وهناك قصة موسى مع العبد الصالح في "سورة الكهف" ورجوع الحوت (يعني السمكة) إلى البحر وافتقاد موسى لطعامه الذي رجع إلى البحر،

13 "وَأَصْبَحَ فُؤَادُ أُمِّ مُوسَىٰ فَارِعًا إِن كَادَتْ لَتُبْدِي بِهِ لَوْلَا أَن رَّبَطْنَا عَلَىٰ قَلْبِهَا لِتَكُونَ مِنَ الْمُؤْمِنِينَ وَقَالَتْ لِأُخْتِهِ قُصِّيهِ فَبَصُرَتْ بِهِ عَنْ جُنُبٍ وَهُمْ لَا يَشْعُرُونَ وَحَرَّمْنَا عَلَيْهِ الْمَرَاضِعَ مِنْ قَبْلٍ فَقَالَتْ هَلْ أَدُلُّكُمْ عَلَىٰ أَهْلِ بَيْتٍ يَكْفُلُونَهُ لَكُمْ وَهُمْ لَهُ نَاصِحُونَ فَرَدَدْنَاهُ إِلَىٰ أُمِّهِ كَيْ تَقَرَّ عَيْنُهَا وَلَا تَحْزَنَ وَلَنَعْلَمَ أَنَّ وَعْدَ اللَّهِ حَقٌّ وَلَكِنَّ أَكْثَرَهُمْ لَا يَعْلَمُونَ" (سورة القصص، الآية 10-13).

في إشارة رمزية الى باطن البحر، الموازي للطاقة في اللاوعي "الليبيدو" لدى الإنسان. والعالم النفسي غوستاف يونغ سبق وأعار انتباهنا الى أهمية هذا البعد من الطاقة الحياتية في اللاوعي الذي يصب فينا الحياة كالطعام. ومن ثم نعرف عن خروج موسى من مصر وانشقاق البحر له كرمز لولادة قومه من جديد:

"فأوحينا الى موسى أن اضرب بعصاك البحر فانفلق فكان كلّ فرق كالطود العظيم* وأزلفنا ثمّ الآخرين* وأنجينا موسى ومن معه أجمعين* ثم أغرقنا الآخرين* إنّ في ذلك لآية وما كان أكثرهم مؤمنين (الشعراء 62:26-67).

وكما خرج نوح عن قومه في البحر وخرج موسى ايضاً من مصر عن طريق البحر كذلك خرج النبي والمسلمون الأوائل من مكة الى المدينة في هجرة لقومه استمرت ثلاثين عاماً.

ومع رمزية البحر كخلاص للأنبياء يُصيخُ البحرُ بمياهه التي لا تحصى وحركته المستمرة مداداً لكلمات الربّ التي لا تنفذ: "قلّ لو كان البحر مداداً لكلمات ربّي لنفد البحر قبل ان تنفذ كلمات ربي ولو جئنا بمثله مدداً"* قلّ إنّما أنا بشرٌ مثلكم يُوحى إليّ أنّما إلهكم إلهٌ واحدٌ فمن كان يرجوا لقاء ربّه فليعملْ عملاً صالحاً ولا يُشركْ بعبادة ربّه أحداً (الكهف، 119-110). والشرك ليس بالضرورة عبادة الآلهات بمعنى الأصنام كأيام الجاهلية، فالشرك الذي نراه من أمامنا مثلاً، من الفساد في البر والبحر بسبب عبادة المال - من قبل إدماج البيزنس بالفعل السياسي في لبنان - جعل المال وليس الماء إلهاً جديداً من دون الله.

4. جنة المؤمن تجري من تحتها "الأنهار".

أما مدخل "الأنهار" (ورد في 48 آية مكية ومدنية)¹⁴ فقليلاً ما يرد بالمفرد "نهر"،¹⁵ ولا نجد الأنهار الا في الجنات بالجمع، تعظيماً لصور النعيم التي وعد بها الله الأبرار. وهذه الأنهار جارية دائماً اي لا تتوقف أبداً، اي لا تشخ. كما نرى اليوم في كثير من الأنهار اللبنانية الملوثة انها أصبحت مستنقعات، فالماء الجارية في الأنهار هو عنوان الحياة له، لذلك فالأنهار الجارية هي صورة الخلود في الجنة. وفي جريان الماء راحة للنفس بسبب خريز المياه في الأنهار لذلك أدرك المعماريون المسلمون وكبار الفقهاء في الحضارة الإسلامية ان تأمل الماء في الطبيعة او في فسقية البيوت وحتى في البيمارستان المستشفيات، أمر يبعث السكينة في النفوس والشعور بالأمان.¹⁶

وهذه الوعود بالجنات التي تجري من تحت الأنهار هي "للذين آمنوا وعملوا الصالحات"، وهي "للذين اتقوا عند ربهم" (آل عمران، 15) ول"من يطع الله ورسوله يدخله جنات تجري من تحتها الأنهار" (النساء، 13). وتتلازم وعود الجنات التي تجري من تحتها الأنهار للذين آمنوا وعملوا الصالحات بجزاء المغفرة (آل عمران، 136) وبالتوبة (المائدة، 85) وبنزع الغلّ عما في الصدور (الأعراف، 43). وقد سميت الجنات بجنات عدن، وعدن هي اليمن الجنوبية التي اشتهرت ما قبل الإسلام باليمن السعيد "أرابيا فيلكس"، "جنات عدن تجري من تحتها الأنهار خالدين فيها" (طه، 20:76). وفي جنات النعيم تنتوع الأنهار فهناك الأنهار من ماء غير آسن (أسن الماء يأسن: إذا تغير ريحُه تغيراً منكراً يعني المتجدد الخالي من الملوثات) ومن لبن لم يتغير طعمه ومن خمر لذة للشاربين وأنهار من عسل مصفى وعدّ للمتقين وضدها للذين كفروا

¹⁴ وردت في في 17 آية في 16 سورة مكية و31 آية في 17 سورة مدنية.

¹⁵ البقرة، 249 والقمر، 54، والكهف، 33.

¹⁶ إبراهيم البيومي غانم، "فقه المياه والصناعات الجميلة في التمدن الإسلامي"، الحياة،

22 ت(1916).

ماء الحميم فتقطع أمعائهم. "مثل الجنة التي وعد المتقون فيها أنهارٌ من ماء غير آسن وأنهار من لبن لم يتغير طعمه وأنهار من خمر لذة للشاربين وأنهار من عسل مصقى ولهم فيها من كل الثمرات ومغفرة من ربهم كمن هو خالد في النار وسقوا ماءً حميماً فتقطع أمعائهم" (محمد، 15).

وتستقر الأمور في المدينة بعد ان نجحت دعوة النبي محمد الى الإسلام وتستقر أمور المسلمين ومصائرهم، فيدخل الماء الى حياة المسلم والمسلمة اليومية في طقس العبادات. ويصبح للماء فقهاً يأخذ مجرى عملياً في "الوضوء" قبل القيام بالصلاة (النساء، 43) وفي غسل الوجوه والأيدي إلى المرافق وفي آداب الطهارة قبل الصلاة.

الخاتمة:

ان آيات الله في الخلق كانت عذبة ومعيناً وغدقاً وفراتاً ودافقةً وطهوراً وسلسبيلاً ومباركةً، وتشققت بين الصخور ينابيع وأنهار، وسخرت لنا في البر والبحر. لكن الفساد جاء من عندنا ونراه اليوم بتلويث أكبر نهر لبناني ينبع من أرضه ويجري في أرضه ويصب في بحره هو نهر الليطاني وتبنى المعامل حول الأنهار لتصب على ضفافه الملوثات فالفساد "ظهر (الفساد) في البر والبحر بما كسبت أيدي الناس".

في بداية هذا البحث وضعت سؤالاً: هل هناك ضرورة ان نؤمن بأن الماء مقدس؟ نعم هناك ضرورة لذلك حتى نحترم حقوق الماء علينا، وهذا تفكير ديني في الإسلام.

WATER AS A SOURCE OF LIFE IN THE HOLY QURAN¹⁷

Hosn Abboud

Introduction

Is it necessary for us to believe that water is sacred, in order for us to respect its rights? In the Holy Quran, God affirms that water is a source of life.

“We made from water every living thing.”
(*al-Anbiya*, 30).

“He it is Who created the heavens and the earth in six Days – and His Throne was over the Waters – that He might try you...”
(*Hud*, 7)

In this paper we will present the different forms of water that are mentioned in the Holy Quran. We will reflect on their meaning, from water in creation to water as source of life and power that God may give or take away. We will also explore the role of water in the narratives of the struggles of the prophets and the labor of their mothers, when water was a means for salvation. Finally, we will discuss the transformation of water into an indispensable element in the life of believers, especially in rituals of purity, worship and prayer.

¹⁷ This is a translation of the original ‘Al-Ma’ Kamasdar LilHayat Fi El-Quran El-Karim’. English renderings of Quranic verses have been taken from A. Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur’ān: Text, Translation and Commentary* (1946, 1978). Translators: Rima Nasrallah, Tarek Agile and Wilbert van Saane.

Preliminary remarks

In his introduction to the interpretation of the Holy Quran known as *Tafsir el Manar* (1905), Sheikh Mohammad Abdah says the following: “The Quran discusses the nations, the divine *sunna* and signs of the heavens and the earth, and things invisible and spiritual. It is the summation coming from the One Who surrounded everything with knowledge and ordered us to look at and think about the earth, so that we may understand it in its perfect and full detail. If we were satisfied to merely glance at the earth, we would be like a person who judges a book by its cover and not by what it contains in wisdom and mercy.”

As we enter the world of water in the Holy Quran, we need to focus our vision on the nature of the Quran and understand that it points to scientific foundations of natural phenomena and the divine *sunna*, although it is not a dry scientific book, but verses and signs for worship and remembrance and prudence in faith. Our need for knowledge of the Quran is coterminous with our need for knowledge of God.

Furthermore, the reader of the Quran is struck by the linguistic wealth that points to the different types of water. Indeed, there is amazing detail found in the Quran, like an all-knowing person. Water is the main element for creation in the hands of God Almighty. “We made from water every living thing.” (The majority of the world is made of water and 70 percent of our body mass is water.) According to the Quran, water is also an element for life that God uses in the resurrection of those who believe in life, death and the resurrection. Furthermore, the Quran points out that the earth is irrigated with one substance, which is water, even though its form varies from precipitation from the heavens to running water to underground water aquifers stored in layers of earth. Then there is the water of rivers and seas, which serve humans well. A close study of the stories of the prophets demonstrates that water is also a symbol of rebirth. A good example of this is the story of Noah, who boarded the ship of salvation while the people who blasphemed drowned. The

element of rebirth is manifest, especially in the exit of Noah and his family from the ark of salvation. The Quran also promises believers eternal life in the heavens, where rivers flow underneath.

Our method of the study of water in the Holy Quran

As we turn to the study of water in the Holy Quran, we have to distinguish between the Mekka- and the Medina verses on water. The Mekka verses are the ones that were given before the *hijra*; the Medina verses after it. Most of references to water appear in the Mekka verses, in the beginning of the Islamic *dawa*. While water is mentioned 32 times in the Mekka period, it occurs only eight times in the Medina period. In addition, water also occurs several times with a possessive pronoun (her, your).

Thus, water was mentioned most frequently when the Prophet (Peace Be upon Him) showed the foundations of religion and its characteristics: faith in God; belief in the Day of Judgement, the angels, the Book and the Prophets; the renunciation of evil; commitment to doing good; and that one of the ways of faith is pondering upon the universe and its phenomena.

After I had listed and ordered these verses in the chronology of revelation, I started studying them closely. I look especially at the words that followed the word ‘water’ by using the Dictionary of the Quran written by the scholar El Ragheb El Asfahani. I discovered that, on the one hand, there is *ma'in* water, which flows, is easily collected and used. On the other hand, the Quran also mentions *ghor* water, which runs underground and is does not benefit humans.

“Say: See ye? – If your stream be some morning lost (in the underground earth), Who then can supply you with clear-flowing water?”

(*al-Mulk*, 30)

In addition to that, there is also *ghadak* (plentiful) water.

(And God’s message is): “If they (the Pagans) had (only) remained on the (right) Way,
We should certainly have bestowed on them Rain in abundance.”
(*al-Jinn*, 16)

Potable, fresh water is called *al-furat*:

“And provided for you water sweet (and wholesome)?”
(*al-Mursalat*, 27)

Extremely salty and warm water is called *al-ujaj*. These two types, *al-furat* and *al-ujaj*, do not mix in the sea.

“It is He Who has let free the two bodies of flowing water: one palatable and sweet, and the other salt and bitter; yet has He made a barrier between them, a partition that is forbidden to be passed.”
(*al-Furqan*, 53)

This implies that God, in his eternal will and power, created two adjacent seas and yet they do not mix.

Furthermore, there is *al-salsabil* water in paradise, which is of the utmost smoothness, fluidity and freshness.

“A fountain there called Salsabil.”
(*al-Insane*, 18)

After considering the linguistic terms that followed water, we also need to look at the verbs that appear most frequently in connection with water. The verb “to create” is often mentioned, especially in connection with the heavens and the earth. Water repeatedly occurs with the verb “to pour down”, which confirms

the importance the Quran attaches to rain for drinking water, irrigation, agriculture and livestock. Here are some verses in which the verb “to pour down” is used to express how God supplies water.

“And We send the fecundating winds, then cause the rain to descend from the sky.”
(*al-Hijr*, 22)

“... and has sent down water from the sky. With it have We produced divers pairs of plants, each separate from the other.”
(*Ta Ha*, 53)

“And We send down water from the sky according to (due) measure, and We cause it to soak in the soil and We certainly are able to drain it off (with ease).”
(*al-Mu'minun*, 18)

“... And We send down pure water from the sky.”
(*al-Furqan*, 48)

Finally, precipitation of rain water is called *al-tuhur*.

Water gives life to the earth

The verb “to pour down”, which expresses the movement of water from the skies to earth, is mentioned in most of the cosmic verses. The movement of pouring is considered to be essential for the collection of water and its diversity; for giving life to the earth; and for the survival of humankind, plants and animals. So, water that pours down from the skies is for drinking, for trees and the herding of cattle.

“It is He who sends down rain from the sky: from it ye drink, and out of it (grows) the vegetation on which ye feed your cattle. With it He produces for you corn, olives, date-palms, grapes and every kind of fruit: verily in this is a sign for those who give thought.”
(*an-Nahl*, 10-11)

“And do We not send down from the clouds water in abundance, that We may produce therewith corn and vegetables, and gardens of luxurious growth?”
(*an-Naba'*, 14-16)

Thus, God says in the Quran that He poured water and abundant rain showers from the clouds in due time.

“And He it is Who sends the winds as heralds of glad tidings, going before His mercy, and We send down pure water from the sky,- That with it We may give life to a dead land, and slake the thirst of things We have created,- cattle and men in great numbers.”
(*Furkan*, 48-49)

The dead earth is personified in a wonderful and sensational scene that is worthy of consideration. When God sends water down to it, the earth shakes and sprouts:

“And among His Signs in this: thou seest the earth barren and desolate; but when We send down rain to it, it is stirred to life and yields increase. Truly, He Who gives life to the (dead) earth can surely give life to (men) who are dead. For He has power over all things.”
(*Fussilat*, 39)

The desolation of the dead earth prompts humans to consider their own death. There is a parallel here: the earth died in humbleness in front of God and his creation; yet God gives life to the earth by

sending rain from the sky. Similarly, when humankind asks who is able to give life to the earth after its death, only faith in God will be the answer.

“And if indeed thou ask them Who it is that sends down rain from the sky, and gives life therewith to the earth after its death, They will certainly reply, ‘God!’”

(al-‘Ankabut, 63)

Faith in God and his ability to give life to the earth, even after its death by sending down water, is the logical basis for a complete faith in resurrection. Just as God gave life to earth after its death through water, so God is also able to give life to the dead.

The form of a question is often used when the Quran discerns the divine gift of water in the natural phenomena. Two examples of such verses are:

“Seest thou not that God sends down rain from the sky?
With it We then bring out produce of various colors.”

(Fatir, 27)

“Seest thou not that God sends down rain from the sky,
and leads it through springs in the earth?”

(az-Zumar, 21)

The Quran even contains the accurate observation that man is created by means of water, namely the fluid male sperm.

“Now let man but think from what he is created! He is created from a drop emitted, proceeding from between the backbone and the ribs: Surely (God) is able to bring him back (To life)!”

(at-Tariq, 6-8)

In other words, man is created from the fluid male sperm. Humans, like earth, are in need of water in the process of

fertilization. In our children we see a gift and mercy from God. Humble and despicable water, which is present in the male fluid, is placed in the female womb; it becomes firmly attached and a fetus is formed during a period of gestation. The Quran describes this as a sign, which reminds those who reject the truth to come to *tawhid* and life. In high religious poetry, it is said:

Have we not created you from a fluid (held) despicable?
The which We placed in a place of rest, firmly fixed, for
a period (of gestation), determined (according to need)?
For We do determine (according to need); for We are the
Best to determine (things). Ah woe, that Day! To the
Rejecters of Truth! Have We not made the earth (as a
place) to draw together the living and the dead, and made
therein mountains standing firm, lofty (in stature); And
provided for you water sweet (and wholesome)?
Ah woe, that Day, to the Rejecters of Truth!
(*Mursalat*, 20-27)

However, just as water is for creation and new life for those who have believed, it is also for the destruction of life for those who have disbelieved the signs of God. An excessive torrent of water from the sky will destroy crops and vegetation.

“So We open the gates of heaven, with water pouring
forth.”
(*al-Qamar*, 11)

Putrid water is described as the drink of hell.

“In front of such a one is Hell. And he is given, for drink,
boiling, fetid water.”
(*Ibrahim*, 16)

There is also water that scorches: tar melted from metals with boiling oil.

“If they implore relief, they will be granted water, like melted brass, that will scald their faces, how dreadful the drink!”

(*al-Kahf*, 29)

The conjugation *amtarna* (“We have made rain”) does not occur in a context of sending water from the sky to revive the earth, but rather as punishment by sending stones.

“When our decree issued, We turned (the cities) upside down, and rained down on them brimstones, hard as baked clay, spread layer on layer.”

(*Hud*, 82)

“We rained down on them a shower (of brimstone); and evil was the shower on those who were admonished!”

(*ash-Shu'ara'*, 173)

“Rain down on us a shower of stones from the sky.”

(*al-Anfal*, 32)

“And they must indeed have passed by the town on which was rained a shower of evil.”

(*al-Furqan*, 40)

The conjugation *amtarna* repeatedly occurs in a context of harm, from the Mecca to the Medina period; the latter began when the Prophet and the first Muslims emigrated.

“But there is no blame on you if ye put away your arms because of the inconvenience of rain or because ye are ill.”

(*an-Nisa'*, 102)

Sea and surface water is put at the disposal of human beings, and facilitates the salvation of the prophets and their exodus to the sea

Just like the water that God sends down from the sky revives the earth, waters trees and quenches the thirst of animals, the sea offers benefits to human beings.

“In the sailing of the ships through the ocean for the profit of mankind.”

(al-Baqarah, 164)

“Lawful to you is the pursuit of water gain and its use for food for the benefit of yourselves and those who travel.”

(al-Ma'idah, 96)

Thus, the water of the sea and the rivers are placed at the disposal of human beings.

“It is God who hath created the heavens and the earth and sendeth down rain from the skies, and with it bringeth out fruits to feed you; it is He who hath made the ships subject to you that they may sail through the sea by his command; and the rivers hath He made subject to you.”

(Ibrahim, 32)

God has made the sea subject to us so that we may eat tender flesh from it.

“It is He who has made the sea subject, that ye made eat thereof flesh that is fresh and tender.”

(an-Nahl, 14)

This subjugation of the surface and sea water honors human beings.

“We have honored the sons of Adam; provided them with transport on land and sea.”

(Al-Isra, 70)

We now come to the narratives of the struggles of the prophets with their people. While the prophets were going through struggles and misery, their people denied their call to faith in God. Thus the prophets reflected the struggle of the Prophet with his people.

Amidst their struggles, the prophets are inspired to take to the sea in order to escape the assault from their people. It is almost as if the prophets, while fleeing their unbelieving compatriots, need water to experience new birth. Thus, Noah took refuge in the ark in the sea, escaping the flood that befell his people as a result of their unbelief. This narrative is a dramatic expression of the sorrow that befalls parents who get separated from their children, after leaving them behind. In the narrative, Noah calls on his son to change his mind about staying behind and to accompany him.

“So the ark floated with them on the waves, like mountains, and Noah called out to his son, who had separated himself (from the rest): ‘O my son! Embark with us, and be not with the unbelievers!’ The son replied: ‘I will betake myself to some mountain: it will save from the water.’ Noah said: ‘This day nothing can save, from the command of God, any but those on whom He hath mercy!’ And the waves came between them, and the son was among those overwhelmed in the flood. Then the word went forth: ‘O earth! Swallow up thy water! O sky! Withhold (thy rain)!’ And the water abated and the matter was ended.”

(Hud, 42-44)

Just like Noah, the prophet Moses had a strong, deep and existential relationship with water, which entailed sailing into the

unknown. The sea here has an apparent and a deeper meaning. When Moses was an infant, his mother placed him in the water for fear of him being killed by Pharaoh, who was slaughtering all new-born Jewish boys. Similarly, we have seen Syrian and African refugees resorting to perilous journeys in small boats. Some of them are destined to be saved, while other are destined to drown. Several verses describe the devastation of the mother of Moses over her child in such an exodus.

“So We sent this inspiration to the mother of Moses: ‘Suckle (thy child), but when thou hast fears about him, cast him into the river, but fear not nor grieve: for We shall restore him to thee, and We shall make him one of Our apostles.’”

(al-Qasas, 7)

There is also the story of Moses and the righteous slave in Surah *al-Kahf*, as well as the return of the fish to the sea. Moses’ request for his food – the fish – which had returned to the sea is a symbol of the guts of the sea, which is equivalent to the subconscious, the libido of human beings. Psychoanalyst Gustav Jung has drawn our attention to the importance of this dimension of the vital power in the subconscious that imbues us with life, like food. We also know of the exodus of Moses out of Egypt and the parting of the sea, as a symbol of the rebirth of his people.

“Then We told Moses by inspiration: ‘Strike the sea with thy rod!’ So it divided, and each separate part became like the huge, firm mass of a mountain, and We made the other party approach thither. We delivered Moses and all who were with him; but We drowned the others. Verily in this is a sign: but most of them do not believe.”

(ash-Shu'ara', 63-67)

Just like Noah and his people took to the sea and Moses and his people went out through the sea, so did the Prophet and the first

Muslims exit Mecca to Medina during the *hijra*, which lasted thirty years. In the symbolism of the sea as salvation to the prophets, the sea with its great and continuously moving waters becomes an extension of God's unending words.

“Say: ‘If the ocean were ink (wherewith to write out) the words of my Lord, sooner would the ocean be exhausted than would the words of my Lord, even if we added another ocean like it, for its aid.’ Say: ‘I am but a man like yourselves (but) the inspiration has come to me that your God is one God. Whoever expects to meet his Lord, let him work righteousness, and in the worship of his Lord, admit no-one as partner.’”

(*al-Kahf*, 109-110)

In this context, polytheism (*shirk*) is not necessarily idol worship, as in the days of ignorance, but a form of polytheism that we see today: corruption on land and at sea because of the worship of money – like mixing business and politics in Lebanon – making money, and not water, a new god apart from God.

Rivers run under the paradise of the believer

The term ‘rivers’ occurs in 48 Meccan and Medinan verses. Rarely do we read about a river in the singular form. Rivers occur in the context of paradises (in the plural) as a way to emphasize the bounty that God has promised the righteous. These rivers are perennial. They neither stop flowing nor will they deplete. In today's Lebanon we see many rivers that have been polluted and have become stagnant. Flowing water in the rivers are a symbol of life. Therefore, flowing rivers are an image of eternity in paradise. The flux and murmur of water gives rest to the soul. Muslim architects and the great lawyers of Islamic culture have understood this. They emphasized the contemplative power of water in fountains in homes and *bimaristan* hospitals, as this

brings peace and quiet to the soul. The following verses contain promises of paradises under which rivers flow:

“For the righteous are gardens in nearness to their Lord, with rivers flowing beneath; therein is their eternal home; with companions pure (and holy); and the good pleasure of God”

(*Al-Imran*, 15)

“Those who obey God and His Messenger will be admitted to gardens with rivers flowing beneath.”

(*an-Nisa*’, 13)

These promises of gardens with rivers flowing beneath are paired with the promise of forgiveness for the believer (*Al-Imran*, 136), repentance (*al-Ma'idah*, 85) and a removal of any lurking sense of injury (*al-A'raf*, 43). These paradises have been called the Garden of Eden. Eden is in South Yemen. Before Islam, it was known as Arabia Felix, the Happy Yemen.

“Gardens of Eternity, beneath which flow rivers: they will dwell therein, for aye, such is the reward for those who purify themselves.”

(*Ta Ha*, 76)

The rivers in these paradises are diverse. There are rivers that are not putrid, rivers of milk whose taste never changes, rivers of sweet wine, rivers of pure honey. The unbelievers will receive the opposite: boiling water that will cut up their bowels.

“(Here is) a Parable of the Garden, which the righteous are promised: in it are rivers of water incorruptible; rivers of milk of which the taste never changes; rivers of wine, a joy to those who drink; rivers of honey pure and clear. In it there are for them all kinds of fruit; and grace from their Lord. (Can those in such bliss) be compared to such as

shall dwell forever in the Fire, and be given to drink, boiling water so that it cuts up their bowels (to pieces).”
(*Muhammad*, 15)

Life in Medina stabilized after the success of the call of the Prophet Mohammad to Islam. The destiny of the Muslims was secured and, therefore, water entered the life of Muslims and Muslimas in their daily worship rituals. Water became part of jurisprudence and took on the practical function of ablution before the act of prayer (*An-Nisa'*, 43). The companions of the Prophet began to wash face and hands as a way to purify themselves before prayer.

Conclusion

God created water as a blessing and a sign. It has multiple functions and forms, reflected in a wealth of Quranic terms for water: *azba*, *main*, *ghadak*, *furat*, *dafika*, *tuhur*, and *salsabil*. The Quran describes water as gushing from the cracks of rocks and the sources of rivers. We are given water on land and in the sea.

Unfortunately, human corruption spoiled God's good gift. We see this today in the pollution of the biggest river in Lebanon that springs from and runs through its land and merges into the sea, the Litani River, along whose banks factories are built and in which dirt and pollution is being dumped. "Corruption has appeared on land and in the sea from the hands of people."

At the beginning of this paper I asked the question whether it is necessary to consider water as sacred. I can now answer this question affirmatively. Is there a necessity to believe that water is sacred? Yes, it is necessary, so that we respect the rights of water. I have demonstrated that it is fully in accordance with the Islamic faith to view water as a sacred gift from God.



الدين والمياه... وجهة نظر توحيدية

الشيخ سامي أبي المنى

وجهة النظر التوحيدية لا تختلف عن وجهة النظر الإسلامية والوجهة الدينية عموماً، فالتوحيد هو الحقيقة المتجلية في الأديان التوحيدية، ولا ينفصل عنها، وإذا كان لمذهب الموحدين "الدروز" خصوصية تتعلق بطبيعة هذا المسلك التوحيدي العرفاني الذي لا يدعو أن يكون كذلك، إذ ليس هو ديناً مستقلاً بذاته، فإن خصوصيته هذه تنبع من كونه مسلكاً ارتقاءً وتعمقاً في الآيات والتعاليم والمعاني وصولاً إلى حقيقتها وغايتها الأسمى، وتلك هي الحكمة وذلك هو التوحيد.

لقد أوصت الأديان جميعها بالمياه، كونها نعمة ربانية وهبها الخالق تعالى للإنسان ولجميع المخلوقات، فهي شريان الوجود النابض، ومصدر الحياة لكل الأتياء والمخلوقات. قال تعالى في القرآن الكريم: "أَوَلَمْ يَرَ الَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَنَّ السَّمَاوَاتِ وَالْأَرْضَ كَانَتَا رَتْقًا فَفَتَقْنَاهُمَا^ط وَجَعَلْنَا مِنَ الْمَاءِ كُلَّ شَيْءٍ حَيٍّ أَفَلَا يُؤْمِنُونَ" (الأنبياء، آ 30).

الماء سرٌ وجود الأحياء، والمكان الذي يوجد فيه الماء تزدهر فيه الحياة، وحيث ينعدم تنعدم. الماء عصب الحياة وأساس بقاء الكائنات والمخلوقات على وجه الأرض، وقد خلقه الله تعالى كافياً وافياً، فيما لو استعمل بالعدل والنصفة، إلا أن معظم الماء يذهب هدرًا، كما أن كثيراً منه يناله التلوث مما يجعل الاستفادة منه محدودة؛ الأمر الذي يهدد البيئة المائية ويخل بأساسها المتوازن الموجود منذ الأزل.

وإذا كان الله سبحانه وتعالى قد أوجد الكون بأسره من مختلف الأنواع والأجناس والعناصر، وجعل الإنسان العاقل سيده، بما ميّزه بنعمة العقل، وقد كرّمه وسخر له كل ما في الوجود لكي يتمكن من حفظ ما أنعم به

عليه، ولكي يكون قادراً على تحقيق إنسانيته والغاية من وجوده: "وَلَقَدْ كَرَّمْنَا بَنِي آدَمَ وَحَمَلْنَاهُمْ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ وَرَزَقْنَاهُمْ مِنَ الطَّيِّبَاتِ وَفَضَّلْنَاهُمْ عَلَى كَثِيرٍ مِمَّنْ خَلَقْنَا" (الإسراء، آ 70)، لذلك، فإن واجب هذا الإنسان أن يتعامل بحكمةٍ ودرايةٍ ومسؤوليةٍ مع ما وهبه الله من آلةٍ جسديةٍ ومن بيئةٍ طبيعيةٍ، وأهمها نعمةُ المياه، وألاً يُفِرِّطَ بها، لأنَّ الإسراف في الاستهلاك، كما الاعتداء على هذه النعمة الربانية وهدرها دون طائل، هو أمرٌ مخالفٌ للدين ولنظام الطبيعة.

الماء هو العنصرُ الأساسُ في الطهارة والنظافة، والأصلُ في الماء أن يكون طهوراً، لقوله تعالى: "وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَرْسَلَ الرِّيحَ بُشْرًا بَيْنَ يَدَيْ رَحْمَتِهِ وَأَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً طَهُورًا" (الفرقان، آ 48). كما أن من ثقافة الإسلام عدم جواز الصلاة من غير طهارة، والطهارة تكون بالماء أصلاً، وإذا تعدد فبالتراب. من هنا تأتي أهمية الحفاظ على نظافة المياه طهوراً، وهذا ما ينطبق على الديانات الأخرى، فاليهودية تكلمت في العهد القديم عن روح الله المرفرفة فوق المياه، وهي تأمر بتطهير الأيدي بالماء قبل تناول الطعام، والمسيحية تتحدث عن مياه نهر الأردن وبركتها، وقد تعمَّد فيها السيّد المسيح على يدي يوحنا المعمدان، وما زالت المعمودية تتمُّ بواسطة التغطيس بالماء.

أمّا الإسلام فقد وضع العديد من الضوابط والتشريعات التي تضمن الحفاظ على هذه النعمة الغالية من التلوث أو الهدر، فذكر بأهمية البحار والأنهار للحياة الإنسانية، بما تحتوي عليه من خيراتٍ وثرورات، بقوله تعالى: ﴿اللَّهُ الَّذِي سَخَّرَ لَكُمْ الْبَحْرَ لِتَجْرِيَ الْفُلُكُ فِيهِ بِأَمْرِهِ وَلِتَبْتَغُوا مِنْ فَضْلِهِ وَلَعَلَّكُمْ تَشْكُرُونَ﴾ (الجنّية، آ 12)، وقوله تعالى: ﴿وَسَخَّرَ لَكُمْ الْأَنْهَارَ﴾ (إبراهيم، آ 32)، كما أكد على أهمية الماء لحياة الإنسان والحيوان والنبات، فوجودها مرتبط بوجود الماء. قال تعالى: ﴿وَمَا أَنْزَلَ اللَّهُ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مِنْ مَاءٍ فَأَحْيَا بِهِ الْأَرْضَ بَعْدَ مَوْتِهَا﴾ (البقرة، آ 164)، ويقول عزّ وجلّ: ﴿وَهُوَ الَّذِي أَنْزَلَ مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً فَأَخْرَجْنَا بِهِ نَبَاتٍ كُلِّ شَيْءٍ﴾ (الأنعام، آ

99)، ﴿وَتَرَى الْأَرْضَ هَامِدَةً فَإِذَا أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْهَا الْمَاءَ اهْتَزَّتْ وَرَبَتْ وَأَنْبَتَتْ مِنْ كُلِّ رَوْحٍ بِهِيجٍ﴾ (الحج، آ 5).

إنَّ الماءَ الهاطلَ من السماءِ أو النابعَ من عيون الأرض له طبيعةٌ خاصةٌ أشار إليها القرآن الكريم في آياته البيِّنات، فهو «تَجَّ»، يعني صافياً نقياً: ﴿وَأَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ الْمُعْصِرَاتِ مَاءً ثَجَّاجًا، لِنُخْرِجَ بِهِ حَبًّا وَنَبَاتًا، وَجَنَّاتٍ أَلْفَافًا﴾ (النبا: 14-16)، وهو عذبٌ زلالٌ فيه الخيرُ والعافية: ﴿وَأَسْقَيْنَاكُمْ مَاءً فُرَاتًا﴾ (المراسلات: 27)، وهو مباركٌ: ﴿وَأَنْزَلْنَا مِنَ السَّمَاءِ مَاءً مُبَارَكًا﴾ (سورة قاف، آ 9)، وقد نبه القرآن إلى أن أيَّ إفساد في البيئة على وجه العموم وبيئة الماء على وجه الخصوص إنما هو من كسب البشر وتدخلهم السيء الذي أفسد البيئة وأخلَّ بأساسها المتوازن. جاء في القرآن الكريم: ﴿وَاشْرَبُوا مِنْ رِزْقِ اللَّهِ وَلَا تَعْتُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ مُفْسِدِينَ﴾ (البقرة، آ 60)، وقال تعالى: ﴿ظَهَرَ الْفَسَادُ فِي الْبَرِّ وَالْبَحْرِ بِمَا كَسَبَتْ أَيْدِي النَّاسِ﴾ (الروم، آ 41).

وإذا كان الخالق سبحانه وتعالى أباح لعباده التمتع بالطيبات أكلاً وشراباً ولبساً، ولكنه لم يدع الأمرَ بغير قيودٍ وضوابط، بل قيَّد الإباحةَ بعدم الإسراف، قال تعالى: ﴿لِيَبْنِيَ أَدَمَ خُدُوا زِينَتَكُمْ عِنْدَ كُلِّ مَسْجِدٍ وَكُلُوا وَاشْرَبُوا وَلَا تُسْرِفُوا إِنَّهُ لَا يُحِبُّ الْمُسْرِفِينَ﴾ (الأعراف، آ 31). ومثلما أكد القرآن الكريم ذلك، فقد أكدت السنة النبوية الشريفة كذلك على حماية بيئة الماء، معتبرةً "أن الناس شركاء في ثلاث: الماء والكلأ والنار"، كما نهت عن تلويث الماء الراكد أو الاغتسال فيه، وعن الإسراف في استخدام الماء، لقول الرسول الكريم: "لا تُسرف بالماء ولو كنت على نهرٍ جارٍ".

لقد خلق الله سبحانه وتعالى البيئةَ بمكوّناتها المتنوّعة، وجعلها أمانةً في أيدي البشر، وحرّم الإفسادَ في الأرض واستنزافَ البيئة، ومنها المياه والطاقة، لأن الإفسادَ في الأرض يهدّد التوازنَ الذي صنعه الله، حيث إنَّ

لكلِّ من المخلوقات وظيفةً مهمةً تتكاملُ مع غيرها لتؤلِّفَ نظامَ الحياة المتوازن، فإذا تأثَّر أحدها تأثَّر النظامُ العام.

لكنَّ وتيرة الإفساد والاعتداء على الطبيعة وعلى المياه تصاعدت منذ قرون، وازدادت مع ازدياد التطوُّر العلمي وانتشار ثقافة الاستهلاك والرفاهية المزعومة، والتسابق الصناعي، وقد تنبَّه كثيرٌ من المهتمِّين إلى خطر هذه الاستباحةِ والفوضى. فمنذ ما يزيد على الستين سنةً حذر كمال جنبلاط من خطر التلاعب بالطبيعة، قائلاً: "إنَّ العالمَ سائرٌ نحو الكارثة، إذا استمرَّ على ما هو عليه من انحدارٍ واستنزافٍ وإخلالٍ بنظام الطبيعة والحياة... والجنسُ البشري قد يكون في حالة اضطرابٍ وخطرٍ أكثرَ مما نستطيعُ تصوُّره، ويمكن أن لا يدرك الإنسانُ هذا الخطرَ إلا بعد أن يكون قد تجاوز به نقطة اللارجوع، أي حيث لا يعود يُفيدُ أيُّ تدبير"، لافتاً إلى أنَّ البشر يلعبون بمستقبلهم من خلال التلوُّث الذي ينشروته، والتدمير الذي ينتهجونه، و"الإبادة المنظمة" التي يستحلُّون استخدامها في مواجهة الحشرات والحيوانات والنباتات والأشجار، والهدر المفرط للمياه والطاقة، و"الخروج عن المألوف والمعقول والطبيعي"، و"الطموح المجنون" الذي يعتدُّون من خلاله على نظام الكون والحياة، وكان الإنسان في ذلك ينتحر وهو لا يدري، و"يجعلُ الطبيعةَ الحيَّةَ تنتحرُ معه"، ذلك لأنَّ الطبيعةَ ترتبطُ بالإنسان، كما ترتبطُ بعضها ببعض، في توازنٍ بيئيٍّ دقيقٍ وانسجامٍ وجوديٍّ بين الأرض والسماء، وتكاملٍ وتناغمٍ، أي ما نسميه نظاماً كونياً، أرادَه اللهُ سبحانه وتعالى على أدقِّ ما يكون، وهو ما عبَّرَ عنه جنبلاط في كتابه "أدب الحياة" بقولٍ للشاعر الإنكليزي طومسون: "إنَّكَ لا تستطيعُ أن تُحرِّكَ زهرةً دون أن تهتزَّ إحدى النجوم".

تَحسَّرَ كمال جنبلاط المفكِّرَ ونتحسَّرُ معه على تلك الأيام التي "لم تكن فيها المغروساتُ والمزروعاتُ تُرَشُّ بهذه الموادِّ السامَّةِ القاتلة لكلِّ شيءٍ تقريباً، سوى لجراثيم الأوبئة والأمراض التي تحتجبُ ثم تظهرُ أقوى وأقوى..."، وكأنَّه بتحسُّره على التناغم البديع الذي كانت تؤلِّفه المخلوقاتُ

المتنوّعةُ بألوانها وأصواتها ونظام حياتها، كان يستشعرُ آثارَ ذلك "الانسّاخ السامّ"، والاعتداءِ السافرِ على الطبيعة، ويتوقَّعُ النتائجَ الكارثيةَ لعدم احترام النُظْم البيئيةِ والطبيعيةِ وسننِ التكوينِ والحياةِ وتفاعلِ الأضداد، قائلاً: "يجب ألا ننسى أن الحياةَ هي وليدةُ توازنٍ وتناقضٍ معيّن، وتناسقٍ متكاملٍ في الوحدة، بين عناصرٍ كثيرةٍ مختلفةٍ خرجت من توازنها وتناقضها، هذه الحركة هي التي تُسمّيها "الحياة"، وهذا ما يحتاجُ، برأيه، إلى أدبٍ رفيعٍ في التعاملِ معه.

المشكلة تكمن في جهل الإنسان لحقيقة وجوده على هذه الأرض، وإذا بقي الإنسان على جهله هذا وعلى تعدياته اليومية على البيئة، فإنّ هذا الإنسان يساهم في سير كوكب الأرض نحو الفناء، نتيجة التوحّش اللإنساني والحضارة الاستهلاكية التي غزت العالم. أمّا العلاجُ الناجعُ فيمكنُ في احترام نظام التكوين والخلق، وفي إعمال العقل في التعاملِ معه، وفي التزام القواعد الأخلاقية في التعاطي مع الطبيعة والبيئة وكلّ ما خلق الله سبحانه وتعالى.

وحيث أنّ الماءَ هو العنصرُ الأهمُّ للحياة، فقد قُدِّس في العديد من الحضارات القديمة، وكان للماء في العقائد الأولى عددٌ من الآلهة اختُصَّ بعضها بالأنهار وبعضها الآخر بالبحار وبعضها بالغيوم والأمطار، وقرنه بعضها بالخصوبة، حتى أن المصريين القدماء مجّدوا نهر النيل كواحدٍ من آلهتهم، حتى قيل في ما بعد "إنّ مصرَ هبةُ النيل". وقد عُدَّ الماءُ "أحدَ أسرار الحياة، وهبةَ الله ونعمته، ووسيلةَ الإنسان للتطهّر والاستشفاء والاحتماء، ورمزَ التجدّد، لأن الماءَ أصلُ الحياة، حيث تتجلّى العلاقةُ الوجوديةُ بين الماء والحياة".

إنَّ أهمَّ قاعدة في الإسلام تتلخّص بقوله تعالى: "وَلْتَكُنْ مِنْكُمْ أُمَّةٌ يَدْعُونَ إِلَى الْخَيْرِ وَيَأْمُرُونَ بِالْمَعْرُوفِ وَيَنْهَوْنَ عَنِ الْمُنْكَرِ وَأُولَئِكَ هُمُ الْمُفْلِحُونَ" (آل عمران، آ 104). وفق هذه القاعدة حرص مسلكنا

التوحيدي المنبثق من الإسلام والذي يستبطن الحقائق التوحيدية المنزلة في الديانات السماوية كافةً وفي المسالك العرفانية المتنوعة، كما في الفكر الإنساني الموعَل في القدم، حرص هذا المسلك التوحيدي على وقاية البيئة من الأذى وأمر بالمحافظة على الثروة المائية وعدم تلويثها، زارعاً في داخل كلِّ إنسانٍ الشعورَ بالمسؤولية، فمن كان لديه إيمانٌ ووازعٌ ديني لا يُمكن أن يُهملَ بيئته، وبالتالي لا يُمكنُ إلا أن يساهمَ في حماية مجتمعه.

وإذ ينهى القرآن الكريم عن الإفساد في الأرض: "وَلَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ بَعْدَ إِصْلَاحِهَا ذَلِكُمْ خَيْرٌ لَكُمْ إِنْ كُنْتُمْ مُؤْمِنِينَ" (الأعراف، آ 85)، فإنَّ التعاليم الإسلامية تُوضِّحُ أن الذي يحافظ على بيئته ونظافتها ويرعاها ويُبعدُ الأذى عنها له جزاءٌ عظيمٌ عند ربِّه. وبحسب مسلك التوحيد لدينا، فالإنسان مؤلَّفٌ من روحٍ وعقلٍ وجسد، وعليه أن يتعاطى معها بحسب أولوياتها: وهي صفاء الروح وسلامة العقل وصحة الجسد؛ إذ هو مطالبٌ بالحفاظ على بيئته الإيمانية والأخلاقية أولاً لتمكينه من الحفاظ على بيئته الطبيعية، وبحفاظه على نظامه الداخلي يتمكّن من الحفاظ على النظام العام، أمّا إذا فرّط بنظامه ولم يحفظ توازنه واعتداله فإنه يُعرِّضُ نفسه والعالمَ من حوله للخلل. والإنسان، باعتباره خليفة الله تعالى في الأرض، عليه أن يلتزم بجملة مبادئ وقواعد تحكّم العلاقة بينه وبين بقية المخلوقات. وإذا كان الإنسان فعلاً سيّداً في الأرض، فذلك بفضل تميّزه بالعقل وقدرته على اكتساب العلم والمعرفة وإمكانية تسخير البيئة لتلبية حاجاته، وكلُّ ذلك يُعدُّ منحةً له من الخالق عزَّ وجلَّ، يجبُ تقديرها والحفاظُ عليها.

إنَّ علاقة الإنسان المؤمن بالبيئة هي علاقةٌ مودَّةٍ واحترام، تأبى الاعتداء والأذى، وترفض الاستنزاف والتدمير والإفناء. فالبيئة لم تُخلَقْ لجيلٍ دون آخر، ولا لمكانٍ دون غيره، واستنزاف البيئة يُعدُّ اعتداءً عليها وعلى حقوق الأجيال القادمة. بل إن الواجب الديني والأخلاقي يقضي باعتبارها نعمةً من الخالق أنعم بها على الإنسان، وسخرها لخدمته بما فيها من مياهٍ

وأفلاكٍ وهواءٍ وترابٍ وأشجارٍ وحيواناتٍ وتنوعٍ بيئيٍّ متكاملٍ، ظاهراً وباطناً: "أَلَمْ تَرَوْا أَنَّ اللَّهَ سَخَّرَ لَكُمْ مَّا فِي السَّمَاوَاتِ وَمَا فِي الْأَرْضِ وَأَسْبَغَ عَلَيْكُمْ نِعْمَهُ ظَاهِرَةً وَبَاطِنَةً" (سورة لقمان، آ 20).

المياهُ نعمة، فكيف نستفيدُ من نعمة المياه؟ كيف ننتعمُ بها ونحافظُ عليها؟ ما هو الموقفُ من التفريط بالمياه وهدرها؟ أسئلةٌ عديدة تُطرحُ في هذا المؤتمر وغيره، لكنَّ الإجابةَ واحدة، فكما تهتُرُ النجومُ بتحريكِ زهرة، كما قال الشاعرُ طومسون، فكذلك يتأثرُ الضميرُ الإنساني إذا ما سالت قطرةُ ماءٍ في غير محلِّها الصحيح. والحكمةُ التوحيديةُ تقول إنَّ مَنْ يرتكبُ الصغائرَ فإنه سيقعُ في الكبائر، ومَنْ لم يسألْ عن حبة حنطةٍ كيف يحفظُها ولمن يُطعمُها من الناس الجياع، فإنَّ الله لن يسألَ من أيِّ طريقٍ يدخلُها إلى جهنم. ومن لا يُشغلُ عقله في إفادة نفسه ومَنْ حوله من أبناء مجتمعه ومن البشرية جمعاء فإنه سيشتغلُ في الاعتداء على نفسه ومجتمعه وبيئته والعالمِ كلِّه، وشتانُ ما بين هذا وذاك.

كلُّ منَّا مسؤولٌ أمامَ نفسه أولاً، وأمام مجتمعه وأمام الله الذي خلقه، والمسؤوليةُ تبدأ من التربية: في العائلة، كما في المدرسة والجامعة، كما في الإعلام والمجتمع، كما في الخطاب الديني والمؤسسة الدينية. والدولةُ راعيةٌ لأبنائها ومسؤولةٌ تجاههم وعنهم وعن نظام عيشتهم، وعليها تقع المسؤوليةُ الكبرى في التخطيط والتوجيه والرعاية والمراقبة والمحافظة، ومتى كان الراعي صالحاً صلح المجتمع، أمّا إذا كان ربُّ البيت غائباً عن تحمُّل المسؤولية، فالبيتُ كلُّه في ضياع.

ومثلما أن التوحيد هو الحقيقةُ المُستودعةُ في الأديان جميعها، والحكمةُ هي الغايةُ من كلِّ كتابٍ منزلٍ وكلِّ فكرٍ إنسانيٍّ عميق، كذلك فالمياه هي نعمةُ الأرض وهبةُ السماء، بل هي الرابطُ بينهما، وهي مصدرُ الحياة والسبيلُ الأسلمُ لتحقيق غايتها، وإذا كان أوفرُّ هذه النعمةِ ما جرى منها على سطح الأرض أو انبسط لحملها أو استقرَّ عليها، فإنَّ أعذبها ما هو

في باطن الأرض وما تفجّر من عيونها، وكلاهما في الظاهر والباطن سبيلُ الإنسان إلى بلوغ الحقيقة، أي إلى عيش إنسانيته وتحقيق سعادته وسلامة مجتمعه وعالمه، وتلك هي فُرّة العين الحقيقية المقصودة في قوله تعالى لمريم: "فَكُلِي وَاشْرَبِي وَقَرِّي عَيْنًا فَأَمَّا تَرَيْنَ مِنَ الْبَشَرِ أَحَدًا فَقُولِي إِنَّي نَذَرْتُ لِلرَّحْمَنِ صَوْمًا فَلَنْ أُكَلِّمَ الْيَوْمَ إِنْسِيًّا" (سورة مريم، آ 26)، وذلك هو، أيضاً، الغاية من كلِّ طعامٍ وشرابٍ ومن كلِّ غداءٍ وارتواء.

وقفنا الله وإياكم لتحقيق ما نصبو إليه في هذا المؤتمر، وما نتوق إليه دائماً من بلوغ المستوى الأرفع في احترام ما يقول به الدين، وما يفرضه العلم والمنطق، وما تحنّمه علينا الحياة من مسؤولية إنسانية. والشكر، كلُّ الشكر لجامعة هايغازيان وللقيمين على هذا المؤتمر وللزملاء المشاركين وللحضور الكريم.

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RELIGION AND WATER: A *TAWHID* POINT OF VIEW¹⁸

Sheikh Sami Abilmona

A *tawhid* point of view¹⁹ does not differ from the Islamic perspective, nor from that of religion in general, for *tawhid* is the truth revealed in monotheistic religions and it does not separate from the religions. The Druze confession has its own particularity, which is the *tawhid* way of life – for this indeed is what it is: a way of life. It is not an independent religion, but it is a way of life, and it delves into religious teachings until we reach their higher reality and purpose. This is wisdom and this is *tawhid*.

All religions profess to believe in water as a divine grace given by the holy Creator to humankind and to all living things. It is the pulsing vein of existence and the source of life for all living creatures. The Most High said in the Holy Quran: “Do not the Unbelievers see that the heavens and the earth were joined together (as one unit of creation), before we clove them asunder? We made from water every living thing. Will they not then believe?” (*al-Anbiya*’, 30)

Water is the mystery of life. Where there is water, there is flourishing life; and where there is no water, there is no life. Water is the nerve of life and the sustaining presence of all living creatures on the face of earth. God created water in sufficient quantity, if used fairly and equally. But unfortunately, most of it

¹⁸ This is a translation of the Arabic original *al-din wa al-ma’*: *wajahu nadhar tawhidiye*. Translators: Jana El Haddad, Asadour Manjrian, Rima Nasrallah and Wilbert van Saane. The English rendering of Quranic verses is from A. Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur’ān: Text, Translation and Commentary* (1946, 1978).

¹⁹ As a major emphasis of the Druze faith, *tawhid* refers to both the attestation to the oneness of God, and within that divine context to the unity of the universe in all its domains.

is going to waste or getting polluted, which limits its benefits and creates an imbalance in water's perpetual existence.

God the Most High caused the universe to abound with a wealth of living creatures and elements and he gave reasonable human beings dominion over them. He distinguished human beings with the grace of reason and honored them by putting all that exists at their disposal, so that they can preserve what has been given to them by grace and accomplish their humanity and the purpose of their existence. "We have honored the sons of Adam; provided them with transport on land and sea; given them for sustenance things good and pure; and conferred on them special favors, above a great part of our creation." (*al-Isra'*, 70) Therefore, it is humanity's responsibility to wisely manage and work with what God has granted: the instrument of our body, the natural environment and, above all, the grace of water. Humans shall carefully make use of it, for if they abuse and waste it, it is as if they are irresponsibly violating this divine grace. Such behavior contravenes religion and nature's laws.

Water in the Holy Scriptures

Water is the main source of purity and hygiene. Water itself is pure in origin, as God said: "We send down pure water from the sky" (*al-Furqan*, 48). Islam prohibits prayer without prior ablutions, and purity originates from water. And if ablutions are not possible with water, they should be performed with earth. For this reason, water must be kept clean and pure. This applies to other religions as well. Water is important in Judaism, as the following examples show. The Old Testament mentions how the Spirit of God hovered over water. It also orders the washing of hands with water before having a meal. Similarly, for Christians the Jordan River is important, because Jesus was baptized there at the hands of John the Baptist. Baptism as full immersion in water continues to be essential to many Christians.

As for Islam, many regulations and laws were given to protect this precious grace of water from pollution and waste. Islam reminds believers that seas and rivers are essential to the life of humankind as sources of many goods. As the Most High says: “It is God Who has subjected the sea to you, that ships may sail through it by His command, that ye may seek of his Bounty, and that ye may be grateful.” (*al-Jathiyah*, 12) And in another place: “and the rivers (also) hath He made subject to you” (*Ibrahim*, 32). The Quran also stresses the importance of water as a source of life for humans, animals and plants. Their existence depends on the presence or the absence of water. The Almighty said: “Behold! in the creation of the heavens and the earth; in the alternation of the night and the day; in the sailing of the ships through the ocean for the profit of mankind; in the rain which God Sends down from the skies, and the life which He gives therewith to an earth that is dead.” (*al-Baqarah*, 164) Also, “It is He Who sendeth down rain from the skies: with it We produce vegetation of all kinds” (*al-Ana’am*, 99). And: “Thou seest the earth barren and lifeless, but when We pour down rain on it, it is stirred (to life), it swells, and it puts forth every kind of beautiful growth (in pairs). (*al-Hajj*, 5)

Water raining from above or welling up from below has a unique quality that the Quran describes in many verses. “And do We not send down from the clouds water in abundance, that We may produce therewith corn and vegetables, and gardens of luxurious growth?” (*an-Naba’*, 14-16) It is gentle and healthy: “and provided for you water sweet (and wholesome)?” (*al-Mursalat*, 27) It is blessed: “And We send down from the sky rain charted with blessing.” (*Qaf*, 9) The Quran warns that any harm to the environment in general and to water in particular causes destruction and disruption of the original balance of nature. “So eat and drink of the sustenance provided by Allah, and do no evil nor mischief on the (face of the) earth.” (*al-Baqarah*, 60) And the Most High said: “Mischief has appeared on land and sea because of (the meed) that the hands of men have earned.” (*al-Rum*, 41)

Although the Almighty Creator allowed believers to enjoy the bounty of food, drink and clothing, he did not leave us without

boundaries but ordered us to enjoy without indulgence. “O Children of Adam! wear your beautiful apparel at every time and place of prayer: eat and drink: But waste not by excess, for God loveth not the wasters.” (*al-Ara'af*, 31) Just like the Holy Quran affirms this, so the respectable Sunna insists on the protection of water, considering that “peoples are partners in three things: water, food and fire”. The Sunna also forbids pollution of stagnant water, washing with stagnant water, and overusing it. The Prophet said: “Do not overuse water, even if it is water of a flowing river.”

The disruption of the ecological balance

God the Most High created the environment with an abundance of different species and entrusted it to humans, forbidding devastation and exhaustion of the environment, including water and energy. Harming the environment threatens the balance that God made, in which every creature has a unique role and all these roles complement each other, so as to form one balanced system of life. A disruption in one of its parts causes a disruption to the whole system.

Damage and violation of the environment increased throughout the centuries as science and technology progressed. Moreover, the proliferation of consumerism, the culture of luxury, and competitive industries harmed the environment. Over sixty years ago, Kamal Jumblatt warned against the dangers of environmental degradation: “The world is moving towards disaster. If we continue to harm and disrupt the laws of nature and life, we might find ourselves in a situation far worse and dangerous than we can imagine. We might not be able to realize this danger until we arrive to a point of no return.”

It is puzzling to see how people are jeopardizing their own future through rampant pollution and devastation, and “organized annihilation,” with which they arm themselves in fighting bugs and plants and animals and trees; and the exhaustive wasting of water and energy and “the trespassing of norms and natural

boundaries,” and “the insane ambitions,” that they got accustomed to. Humanity is committing suicide without even knowing it, “and makes nature commit suicide with him too.”

All nature is interconnected with humans in a uniquely balanced ecosystem, an existential harmony between earth and heaven, a complementarity that we call a cosmic system. This system was desired, willed and intricately crafted by God in all its details. In his book *Ethic for Life*, the British poet Thompson said that we cannot move a flower without shaking one of the stars. Kamal Jumblatt, who was not only a politician but also a philosopher, lamented the bygone days when humans did not use agricultural chemicals to protect their crops. We lament with him. He compared such toxins to viral infections which are invisible at first, but later become manifest and grow stronger and stronger. Jumblatt deplored the disappearance of the beautiful harmony of manifold creatures with their different colors, sounds and life patterns. He sensed the effect of harmful poison and other harsh attacks on nature. He foresaw that the disrespect of nature and ecosystems would have disastrous consequences. It would attack the foundations of creation and life and it would disrupt the interaction of opposites: Jumblatt reminded his readers that “they should not forget that life is born out of the balance and interaction of opposites, which leads to a comprehensive coherence and unity.” He emphasized that we need to respect this delicate balance of different species and categories which we call life.

Human ignorance is the root cause of environmental problems. As long as there is ignorance there will be daily violations of the world’s ecosystems. At the present, human behavior is causing the rapid death of our planet, including the death of non-human species. Our consumer cultures are to be blamed. The remedy for all this is respect for creation while we interact with it. We need ethical guidelines for our interaction with nature and the ecosystems that God created.

Restoring the balance

Water is the most important element of life. Water was considered sacred in many ancient civilizations. Ancient pantheons included gods who were especially connected to the water of rivers, seas, clouds and rains. Some of them were linked with fertility. The ancient Egyptians even glorified the Nile River as one of their gods. Later, Egyptians used to say that Egypt is the gift of Nile. Water is considered to be one of the mysteries of life; a gracious gift of God; a means for the healing and protection of humans; a symbol of renewal. Because water is the origin of life, an existential relation between water and life emerged.

The foundation of Islam is summarized in *Al-Imran*, 104: “Let there arise out of you a band of people inviting to all that is good, enjoining what is right, and forbidding what is wrong; they are the ones to attain felicity.” In accordance with this verse, the *tawhid* way of life, which emerged from Islam and delves into the monotheistic truth revealed in all heavenly religions in all their manifestations as well as humanistic thinking of old, resolved to protect nature from harm. *Tawhid* thinking requires the protection of water resources and avoiding pollution. It plants in the heart of each person a sense of responsibility, so that anyone who has faith and religious zeal cannot ignore the environment and cannot but contribute to its protection.

The Quran forbids the corruption of the earth “To the Madyan people We sent Shu'aib, one of their own brethren: he said: ‘O my people! worship Allah. Ye have no other god but Him. Now hath come unto you a clear (Sign) from your Lord! Give just measure and weight, nor withhold from the people the things that are their due; and do no mischief on the earth after it has been set in order: that will be best for you, if ye have Faith.’” (*al-Ara'af*, 85) Thus, the Islamic teachings clarify that whoever protects the environment, keeps it clean, cares for it, and avoids harming it, may expect great rewards from God. According to the *tawhid* approach, humans consist of soul, mind, and body. Humans should, therefore, act in accordance with their priorities:

the purity of the soul and the sanity and the health of the body. They are also required to embrace ethics that enable them to protect the environment. Humans are called to tend to their internal wellbeing – the wellbeing of the soul – so that they can also tend to the wellbeing of their environment. However, when humans do not sustain their internal system and disrupt their internal balance, they risk the dissipation of their selves and their environment. Because human beings are God’s creation on earth, they must commit to all the divine principles that govern the relations among them, with their environment and other creatures. If human beings are indeed in control on earth – due to their distinctive quality of reasoning; their ability to gain knowledge; and their ability to use their environment to satisfy their needs; and if they consider all this as a gift from the Creator – they must appreciate and maintain the earth.

The approach of believers to the environment is friendly and respectful. They avoid harming nature and refuse to destroy it. Nature, it is to be remembered, was not created for one generation and one place. Environmental degradation does not only harm nature, but also violates the rights of future generations. Therefore, our religious and ethical duty requires us to consider the environment as a gracious gift from the Creator, who placed ecosystems at the disposal of humanity, including water, air, soil, trees, animals, and all other species, seen and unseen “Do ye not see that God has subjected to your (use) all things in the heavens and on earth, and has made his bounties flow to you in exceeding measure, (both) seen and unseen? Yet there are among men those who dispute about God, without knowledge and without guidance, and without a Book to enlighten them!” (*Luqman*, 20)

Accountability to ourselves and to God

Water is a gift. So how shall we benefit from it? How shall we maintain it? What are our attitudes towards wasting water? The

questions that we ask in this and other seminars are manifold, but the answer is one: the stars move by the movement of the flower, as the poet Thompson said. Thus, human conscience is influenced, even when one drop of water flows into the wrong place. And the *tawhid* wisdom says that whosoever commits small sins will lapse into big ones. If anyone does not care about a grain of wheat – cares about preserving it and using it to feed the hungry – God, in return, will not care that this person is destined for hell. Whosoever does not use his mind for his own benefit and the benefit of those around him, society and humanity, will spend himself in aggression towards himself, his society, the environment and the whole world. There is a big difference between those who mindfully care for creation and those who do not.

All of us are accountable: first to ourselves, and then to our societies and to God our Creator. Our responsibility begins by ensuring correct upbringing in families, schools and universities. The media and society are also responsible. Religious discourse and religious institutions play an important role. And major responsibility lies, of course, with the government. The government should care for its people and show responsible towards them and their lifestyles. On the government's shoulders rests the greatest responsibility in planning, guiding, monitoring and maintaining ecosystems. When the shepherd is righteous, the community will become righteous as well. But if the lord of the house is negligent, the household is lost.

Just as *tawhid* is the truth deposited in all religions, and wisdom the purpose of all revealed books and all deep human thoughts; so is water the grace of the earth and the gift of heaven; even more, it is the bond between them. It is the source of life and a sound means to achieve its ends. Water is the most abundant grace that flows on the face of the earth and carries the earth, so that it can rest on it. In its purest form it flows inside the earth and bursts from its sources. Both the visible waters on the earth and the hidden waters inside the earth are means for human beings to pursue their true destiny. Reaching our true destiny is: to live our

humanity in its fullness; to achieve happiness and safety for our societies, and for the world at large. This is what the Holy Quran means when it says: "So eat and drink and cool (thine) eye. And if thou dost see any man say `I have vowed a fast to (God) Most Gracious and this day will I enter into no talk with any human being.'" (*Maryam*, 26). This is also the purpose of all nutrition and quenching of thirst.

May God help us and help you achieve the aim of this conference. This is what we aspire: to attain the level of respect that religion requires; that science and logic impose; and that life demands from us in our human responsibility.



WATER AS A SIGN OF RECONCILIATION IN THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

Caleb Hutcherson and Wilbert van Saane

Water is a potential source of division and conflict in the Middle East. The increasing threats to water security and the existence of several transboundary water resources have caused conflict in the past and may do so again (Petersen-Perlman, Veilleux and Wolf 2017). In the case of Lebanon, there have been tensions with Israel over the Hasbani-Wazzani water system and with Syria over the Orontes River, as Farajalla (2010) demonstrates. He also shows that water has been a chief victim of violence and war, such as the 2006 war, which caused damage to the Lebanese water infrastructure and pollution of ground and marine water.

Religious groups may offer resources that help prevent and resolve conflicts and promote creation care. The majority of citizens of Middle Eastern countries, including Lebanon, identify themselves as members of religious groups. Religious leaders are opinion-leaders and wield considerable political influence. In light of the water stress in many parts of the Middle East it is, therefore, vital to revisit the sources of the different religious traditions, and to read the sacred texts with an ecological hermeneutic.

In this paper we explore the reconciliatory aspects of water symbolism in the Bible and in Christian traditions. In doing so, we argue that water imagery in the Bible has conciliatory and redemptive significance that has often been deemphasized by our respective Protestant traditions' hermeneutical tendencies and church practices. That being the case, we contend that a re-centered, holistic understanding of water ought to be recovered in evangelical theology and practice. To do so, we draw from a variety of Protestant and Baptist (and Orthodox) sources, in reflection of the multi-denominational context of ecclesial life in

Lebanon. Finally, based on this renewed evangelical Christian perspective of the reconciliatory power and material value of water, we will point to some implications of a more robust theology and practice concerning water that could support creation care and reconciliation in Lebanon and the Middle East.

Our contribution to the expanding field of ecotheology is specific and contextual. We will focus on water in Protestant theology and baptismal practice. We are concerned about water and conflict in the Middle East and especially in Lebanon, where we work in the service of evangelical churches. Our angle on this subject is historical-theological and missiological. Our theological position owes much to *76pera76n Dei* theology, which was revived in the theology of Karl Barth and which, in recent years, has been adopted and developed by a number of evangelical theologians. We understand *76pera76n Dei* as an essentially Trinitarian concept, which describes God as a relational being and conceives the world – human and non-human – essentially in terms of relations. Water is part of that network of creational relations, which God is at work reconciling to Himself (Wright 2013, 419-420). As we reflect from and on our evangelical tradition, we aim to treat this subject in an ecumenical spirit, aware of the importance of water symbolism in other religious traditions.

Water symbolism in Christian history

In the Bible, water takes on multiple meanings. At times, water is a power of chaos and destruction that threatens life, as in the story of the flood (Genesis 7). At other times, water enhances life and signifies fertility, salvation or peace. A few examples of these latter uses of water imagery are the rivers that irrigate the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2), the crossing of the sea (Exodus 14) and the twenty-third Psalm, whose poet famously wrote: “He leads me beside still waters. / He restores my soul.”

The key moment in the New Testament that involves water is the baptism of Jesus at the hands of John the Baptist. The Gospels describe this as a joyful, very physical event. It occurred in a liminal place, in international waters – Jordan River – and amidst creation. It brought together “all the people” (Luke 3:21). It was a moment of reconciliation between God, human beings and the non-human creation.

In its 2,000 years of history, the Christian tradition has dwelt heavily on the biblical water imagery in its songs, rituals, prayers, sermons and theologies. But nowhere is the symbolism of water as pervasively present as in Christian baptism. Baptist theologian Paul Fiddes (1996, 49ff) has brought the different biblical connotations of water into focus by pointing to five Christian motifs: birth, cleansing, conflict, refreshment and journey. He argues that, in the historical practice and theology of baptism, all these motifs are present. Fiddes goes on to explain that baptism does not merely *picture* these experiences of being in the world, but *enables* and interprets them as participation in God’s creative-redemptive work.

The baptismal theology of the early church emphasized the motif of birth and rebirth. In a sermon on baptism, preached on 6 January 380 CE, Gregory of Nazianzus explains that the Scripture recognizes three births: the natural birth, baptism and the resurrection (Hamman 1967, 89). These traditions often compare the waters of baptism to the womb of the church, out of which the believers enter into a new life. Bridal imagery also plays a role here, as in the Hymn of the Baptized of Ephrem the Syrian.

Your garments glisten, my brethren, as snow;
and fair is your shining in the likeness of angels.
In the likeness of angels you have come up, beloved,
from Jordan’s river, in the armor of the Holy Ghost.
The bridal chamber that fails not, my brethren, ye have
received:

and the glory of Adam's house today ye have put on.
(...)
Glory to them that are robed, glory to Adam's house!
In the birth that is from the water, let them rejoice and be
blessed!

Although the motif of birth and rebirth has not been absent in the later western theological tradition – Augustine was fond of the metaphor of the church as mother and baptism as her womb – it has laid more stress on the motif of conflict, especially the conflict of death and resurrection. The focus in baptism moved from the Incarnation of Jesus and his identification with the whole cosmos to the atoning death and resurrection, which were the ground for the justification of the believer. Baptism was increasingly viewed through the lens of Easter rather than Epiphany. In the fifth century, Pope Leo the Great advised that baptisms should no longer take place during the Feast of Epiphany, but rather at Easter and Pentecost: “It is appropriate that the power of baptism should change the old into the new creature on the day of the death of the Crucified and the Resurrection-day of the Dead.” (Hamman 1967, 232)

The Protestant tradition cemented this preference for the imagery of conflict and struggle between the powers of death and life. Protestant baptismal theologies included little reflection on Epiphany and the baptism of the Lord, so cherished in the eastern traditions. The Epistles of Paul to the Galatians and the Romans became favored texts to explain the meaning of baptism. Martin Luther consciously foregrounded the conflict motif: “Baptism, then, signifies two things – death and resurrection, that is, full and complete justification. (...) It is therefore indeed correct to say that baptism is a washing away of sins, but the expression is too mild and weak to bring out the full significance of baptism, which is rather a symbol of death and resurrection.” (Quoted in Hodgson and King, eds., 1985, 277) Likewise, in his *Institutes* (IV.15) John Calvin argued that baptism not only attested the forgiveness of

sins – the motif of cleansing and purification – but also showed “our mortification in Christ and new life in him”.

The Reformers vehemently resisted the idea that the water of baptism had any divine power in itself. They argued that the water of baptism, like the elements of the Eucharist, did not infuse grace and could not be characterized as *ex opere operato*, that is, effective when performed in a valid way. The Heidelberg Catechism, for example, raised the question whether the “outward washing with water itself washes away sins”. The answer was an emphatic no, for “only the blood of Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit cleanse us from all sins”. In Reformed thinking, baptism did not alter the fact that humans were sinners: justified sinners maybe, but still sinners. The water only *signified* washing. The conflict between death and new life was a life-time reality for Christians. In this conflict, baptism had a lasting significance. In Luther’s famous words: “The only way to drive away the devil is through faith in Christ, by saying: ‘I have been baptized, I am a Christian.’” (Oberman 1989, 105)

Desacramentalization and dualism

This brief survey of water symbolism in Christian history show two problematic tendencies in the portrayal of water (and nature along with it) in western Protestant theology: desacramentalization and dualism.

First, water was desacramentalized—that is the spiritual effect of the physical substance of water was devalued. This tendency was already present in Scholastic theology, which emphasized the exalted, rather than the incarnate, Christ and rationalized Christ’s sacramental presence with the help of Aristotelian philosophical categories. The Reformation launched a trajectory that radically revised sacramental theology, denying any sacramental value to the elements of water, bread and wine in themselves. These desacramentalizing tendencies contrasted starkly with the theology of the eastern churches, which continued

to emphasize the incarnation, while retaining a more sacramental, poetic and flexible approach. Conversations within the Ecumenical and Liturgical Movements of the twentieth century helped Protestants to recover a more sacramental understanding of baptism (Fowler 2002; Cross et al. 2007).

Second, and as a result of such desacramentalizing tendencies, Protestant baptismal theology became more vulnerable to a cosmological dualism. Dualism has been present in both western and eastern theologies throughout Christian history, but in the predominantly Protestant nations in Europe it arguably had more devastating effects, especially since the Industrial Revolution. In Protestant theology and praxis, dualism was perhaps also more concealed than in eastern baptismal rites, which included an explicit renunciation of the devil. In the following section, we will try to identify some aspects of Protestant baptismal theology that carried this dualistic tendency and are in need of revision.

Divisive dualism

Having traced historical motifs for the symbolism of water in the Christian tradition and identifying two major problematic tendencies in western Protestant theology, we now focus in on the specific problem of cosmological dualism in Protestant evangelical theology. Simply stated, holding to a cosmological dualism leads to a separation between creation and redemption. Redemption then becomes primarily concerned with the human soul; the rest of creation remains outside the economy of salvation. This tendency is not exclusive to western Protestant theology, a point that ecotheologian Michael Northcott helpfully makes when he traces its roots back to the presence of Platonic dualism in Augustine's writings (1996, 215). Then as now, dualism tempts us to neglect life-affirming water imagery in baptismal praxis and leads to destructive perspectives on the relationship between humans and the world (Ashworth 2007, 19).

In this section, we highlight the presence of this destructive dualism in various Protestant evangelical traditions.

To begin, it is helpful to point out that the Reformed tradition never had a negative view of creation itself. It presented “the book of nature” as a source of revelation. However, this notion did not penetrate the Reformed understanding of baptism. Even for the nature-loving Calvin, the world was merely a theatre for the glory of God: it displayed the glory of the Creator, but salvation lay beyond it. Consequently, Reformed baptismal texts and sermons articulated the washing of “our impure souls” and the incorporation into the death and resurrection of Christ in mildly dualistic ways. Northcott observes that, while “Calvin still held to the divine intention to restore creation as well as the souls of the elect in the future time of salvation, this view is eclipsed in the strengthening individualism and anthropocentrism of other and subsequent Reformation theologians.” (1996, 219)

In a similar way, the Lutheran tradition demonstrates dualistic tendencies. A good illustration is Luther’s flood prayer, which has been used in Lutheran and Reformed churches ever since Luther – who was of course an Augustinian monk – wrote it in the 1520s. While emphasizing the potentially holistic motif of the journey through water, this prayer has strongly dualistic related overtones. It highlights the destructive nature of water and interprets the baptism of Jesus in terms of the flood. The prayer explicitly states that, in the flood, God destroyed “the unbelieving world” and petitions that “all waters be a blessed flood”. It is worth quoting in full.

Almighty and eternal God, according to your strict judgement you condemned the unbelieving world through the flood, yet according to your great mercy you preserved believing Noah and his family, eight souls in all. You drowned hard-hearted Pharaoh and all his host in the Red Sea, yet led your people Israel through the water on dry ground, prefiguring this washing of your holy baptism.

Through the baptism in the Jordan of your beloved Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, you sanctified and instituted all waters to be a blessed flood, and a lavish washing away of sin. We pray that you would behold (name of candidate for baptism) according to your boundless mercy and bless him/her with true faith by the Holy Spirit that through this saving flood all sin in him/her which has been inherited from Adam and which he/she himself/herself has committed since would be drowned and die. Grant that he/she be kept safe and secure in the holy ark of the Christian Church, being separated from the multitude of unbelievers and serving your name at all times with a fervent spirit and a joyful hope, so that, with all believers in your promise, he/she would be declared worthy of eternal life, through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

It is notable that Luther's prayer makes no reference to the covenant that God established with Noah after the flood. "I establish my covenant with you that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of a flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth." (Genesis 9:11) The ecological implications of the post-flood covenant are evident and have been noticed by many theologians. In addition to that, although Luther's prayer mentions the sanctification of "all waters", it is a sanctification to serve as purification only. There is no reference to the quenching and refreshing qualities of water.

Likewise, the Baptist tradition has been vulnerable to a cosmological dualism. Baptist baptismal theology emphasizes the conflict motif, especially highlighting baptism as dying and rising with Christ through faith. The Baptist tradition of full immersion upon the confession of faith is a powerful enactment of this. From an ecological perspective, the practice of immersion in rivers, lakes and seas is promising. Baptism in the Baptist tradition often takes place in "living water". Yet Baptists too have fallen prey to a one-sided emphasis on the individual soul, overlooking the

communal aspects of the conflict motif as well as its more universal dimensions of confrontation with cosmic, systemic, political and economic powers (Fiddes 1996, 48; Ashworth 2007, 19).

We conclude this section with the observation that these dualistic theological tendencies are interwoven with evangelicals' practices of baptism. Like the theologies, these practices emphasize the conflict and purification motifs related to water in ways that often foster cosmological dualism and individualism. This emphasis on conflict and purification motifs comes at the expense of other motifs such as birth and rebirth, the journey, and refreshment that might help construct a more holistic and relational understanding of baptism and the water that is so central to its practice.

Reconciliation begins with repentance. Therefore, we acknowledge how our own traditions have engaged and sometimes perpetuated divisions among humans and between humans and non-human creation.

Reconciling baptismal water

Having outlined the dualistic tendencies, we now turn to the question of how Protestant evangelical baptismal theologies can recover a more conciliatory and holistic use of water imagery, one that promotes care for all of God's creation. In our view, the answer does not lie in exclusively foregrounding one particular motif or group of metaphors. That would mean an exchange of one lopsided baptismal theology for another. We advocate, rather, a new unlocking of the full range of biblical and historical water metaphors.

Holding the various motifs from the Christian tradition together, Paul Fiddes argues that water might be understood as "a place in the material world of 'rendezvous' with the crucified and resurrected Lord" (1996, 57). It is at and in the water where reconciliation takes place so that, in baptism, the whole person is

inaugurated into a “new web of relationships that God weaves with His whole creation” (Fiddes 1996, 59).

What are the characteristics of this “new web of relationships” that baptism signals and inaugurates? First, the ritual of *baptism knows no class or hierarchy*, but puts all on the same level. This becomes very clear in the baptism of Christ, which subversively and confrontationally took place in the wild, away from the centers of power (Perkinson 2017, 470-473). The evangelist Luke placed the baptism of Jesus and Jesus’ followers in a decidedly universal context. All needed baptism. And all were baptized in the same water. For Luke, there was no distinction between women and men, Jews and Gentiles, ministers and house slaves.

The Apostle Paul also presented baptism as a levelling ritual. In a context of divisions and quarrels, he asked the rhetorical question: “Were you baptized into the name of Paul?” (1 Corinthians 1:13) The assumption here was that all members of the Christian community of Corinth were equal, because all were baptized, not in the name of any apostle or teacher, but in the name of Jesus. No one could elevate themselves over others. Equality in baptism cleared the ground for reconciliation and unity. In order for equality to be established, the self needs to find its appropriate center. In the words of Miroslav Volf, “[t]he self is both ‘de-centered’ and ‘re-centered’ by one and the same process, by participating in the death and resurrection of Christ through faith and baptism” (Volf 1996, 70).

The second characteristic is that *baptism signifies reconciliation and inaugurates reconciled life*. Without equality there can be no reconciliation. Because all are fundamentally equal in humbleness and in their need of God’s grace, they can be reconciled. The water ritual is an appropriation of the reconciliation that Christ effected. It is a turning-point that marks the beginning of a common journey characterized by reconciliation with God, others and indeed all creation. This is vividly illustrated in the ancient practice of stripping candidates

for baptism prior to their immersion and clothing them in white afterwards (Beasley-Murray 1993, 61).

This understanding of baptism as reconciliation with God, others and creation is also found in the writings of Paul, which have often been read in a dualistic way. According to Paul, baptism signified that the old life – characterized by strife, power abuse, and conflict – had been left behind. Baptized followers of Jesus lived a life that was, instead, characterized by reconciliation (*katallage*). For Paul, reconciliation was not only a vertical, but also a horizontal affair; it has both individual and communal dimensions; all creation waits for and shares in Christ's reconciliation (Romans 8:19ff; Martin 1981, 119-120; Constantineanu 2010, 99-140). Paul's famous words on baptism in the Epistle to the Romans, which have often been taken to imply a cosmological dualism, are upon closer inspection intensely life-affirming and community-building.

We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. (Romans 6:2-4)

Third, *baptism unifies*. This idea builds on the previous two. Since all are fundamentally equal and, by baptism, enter a life characterized by reconciliation, all are fundamentally one in Christ. The river of baptism is no longer a boundary, but a nexus (Perkinson 2017, 472). The Epistle to the Ephesians states this unequivocally. "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling; one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all." (4:4-6) Even though Christian communities may have domesticated baptism, baptism is not an esoteric privilege for a few, but a hospitable ritual that extends to all nations and expresses the fundamental unity that Christ embodied. The

Gospel of Matthew concludes with this universal vision: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (28:18-19).

Thus, rather than a source of division and conflict, the water of baptism is a symbol of the fundamental equality of all human beings; of their reconciliation with each other and with all nature through Christ; and of the essential unity that Christ gives. Baptismal theology finds its biblical center not in a cosmological dualism that disregards matter, but in a vision of one creation being reconciled to God and to itself through Christ. Fiddes’ five water motifs – birth, purification, conflict, journey and refreshment – make much more sense when they are viewed against this background of reconciliation and unity rather than a soul-matter dualism.

It is the humble, tangible, material substance of water that reveals these truths. Staying on the shores is no good; we need to go “down in the river to pray” to learn these lessons. Through the centuries, Orthodox and Oriental theologies have far better preserved an understanding of God’s revelation in and through the material world. Evangelical churches need to renew their appreciation of the physical, material aspect of baptism. This includes embracing that God has seen it fit to ordain the use of water (material creation) for baptism (physical/spiritual regeneration). By reemphasizing the material aspect of water, a new joy may be found in the rebirthing, washing and refreshing aspects of the physical experience of encountering God by faith in the water of baptism.

Implications for creation care

In this final section, we contend that this re-centered Protestant baptismal theology, which we described above, has important implications for how we protect water, and the broader

ecosystem, in Lebanon. In what follows, we trace these implications and offer some practical recommendations for renewing liturgical, ecumenical and missional practices. Evangelical churches in Lebanon, although small in number, may thereby contribute to addressing and resolving conflicts and crises related to water and the environment.

Before outlining some of these implications, we reiterate that renewal starts with repentance. It is essential that evangelical leaders lead their communities in confessing that God's good creation has been and continues to be destroyed and that Christian communities are complicit. Our confession includes the acknowledgement that our one-sided theologies and Christian praxes have contributed to environmental degradation – or have at least not voiced enough protest against it. This cannot remain mere theory.

Liturgical implications

A re-centered baptismal theology will touch churches on a deep level, in their weekly worship. In most evangelical churches, water only has a place in worship when baptism is celebrated. This may take place quarterly or even less frequently, as opposed to Catholic and Orthodox worship, in which water is actively used on various occasions and ever-present at the entrance of many sanctuaries. A re-centered theology of water guides us towards incorporating water symbolism more frequently in our weekly services. Recovering symbolic practices such as foot-washing, anointing, blessings involving water, when accompanied by even a simple explanation of the full significance of water, can lead to transformed understanding and practice in the congregation.

Over the past decades, ecotheology has already led to the revision of Protestant baptismal texts and hymns. A good example of this is the following prayer found in *Common Worship*, published for the Church of England. In comparison to Luther's flood prayer it celebrates water as God's good gift and is remarkably comprehensive in its use of biblical water motifs,

including birth/rebirth, purification, refreshment, journey and conflict.

We thank you, almighty God, for the gift of water to sustain, refresh and cleanse all life. Over the water the Holy Spirit moved in the beginning of creation. Through water you led the children of Israel from slavery in Egypt to freedom in the Promised Land.

In water your Son Jesus received the baptism of John and was anointed by the Holy Spirit as the Messiah, the Christ, to lead us from the death of sin to newness of life.

We thank you, Father, for the water of baptism. In it we are buried with Christ in his death. By it we share in his resurrection. Through it we are reborn by the Holy Spirit. Therefore, in joyful obedience to your Son, we baptize into his fellowship those who come to him in faith.

Now sanctify this water that, by the power of your Holy Spirit, they may be cleansed from sin and born again.
(*Common Worship* 2006, 69)

Furthermore, by giving attention to how we perform baptism itself, we can enact a re-centered evangelical theology of creation. Local communities have also redesigned their baptismal spaces so as to reflect more accurately the various symbolic aspects of water. Liturgical scholar Benjamin Stewart describes how Lutheran churches in the United States have shaped baptismal fonts so as to evoke the image of an oasis, of water flowing on dry land and of deep, pooled water (Stewart 2011, 23-24) In his view, there is a need to make the rich water symbolism from our theological traditions visible and audible in worship. Throughout, the performative practices of the church – whether speaking, praying, or singing – are understood to actualize our theology of Creation. By imbuing these practices with a more holistic

theology related to water, we guide our communities to value all of God's physical creation.

Ecumenical/interfaith implications

The equalizing, reconciling and unifying nature of baptismal water, as described above, has unmistakable ecumenical and interfaith implications. As the story of the baptism of Christ in the River Jordan suggests, our participation in baptism may lead us to renew our relationship with others, even if they are inhabitants of the land across the river or across the sea. It is vital that we begin to view water bodies – rivers and seas – as God-given nexus rather than boundary. This awareness of sharing in water may lead to a new perception of “ownership” of water resources. It may also give us new perspectives on trans-Mediterranean migration.

Here in Lebanon, it should inspire evangelical communities to consider acting in common with “others”— other Christian and Muslim communities – to respond to our environmental crisis with a view to the common good. Churches and mosques may find that they have much common ground in their view of water as a gift from God for life and renewal. Too often, we act in self-interest rather than with a holistic view to the inter-related interests of all who share God's world (Weaver 2007, 50).

Following on from this, we argue that this holistic view of water should shape how we think about and pursue public policy related to water and the environment. In recent history, privatized, small-scale solutions to the environmental crisis in Lebanon seem to have been more effective than large-scale public projects. The danger in these privatized solutions is that we all carry with us is our own “inward bent,” the twisting of our interests that looks to our own material needs, protecting our “own” family and religious group at the expense of “others.” In turn, this lack of a sense duty to the common good puts pressure on water systems and perpetuates the water and ecological crisis. So, purely privatized solutions cannot be the only the solution. On the other

hand, centralized public projects have been problematic. Any centralized solution must involve transparency and accountability so that those at the margins of social, political, and religious power are not penalized or excluded. An interfaith coalition of people of faith might advocate and hold accountable our various “religious” politicians to consider and look after the needs of the people in Hermél, Akkar, or Chatilla as carefully as they do the people in downtown Beirut or the Baabda palace. It also means that no country or people in the Middle East may be excluded from negotiations about water and other natural resources. The resources are so scarce that we simply cannot afford to compete; we must cooperate.

Missional implications

Finally, this re-centered understanding of water has implications for how we evangelicals envision and practice mission. By drawing on a fuller symbolism in baptism, we proclaim that baptism is not merely a public confession or blessing that we receive; it is also a commissioning into participation with the Creator’s limitless love for and reconciliation of the whole of creation to Himself (Wright 2013, 419). The reconciling dimension of baptismal water is a reminder that non-human creation is equally part of that commissioning. In baptism, Christians envisage the reconciliation of “all things, whether on earth or in heaven” (Colossians 1:20). Historically, evangelicals in Lebanon have understood their mission in terms of witness, education, social and medical work. By renewing our understanding and practices related to baptism, we are also reminded that our mission of reconciliation includes the threatened, scarce, and polluted waters and environment of Lebanon. Borrowing a term from an ecumenical conference, baptismal water makes us envisage and work for an ecological healing or “eco-ciliation” (Matthey, ed. 2008, 83).

Practically speaking, this renewed perspective should transform our practice of “mission.” Our mission of reconciliation should seek to preserve and enhance the environment, as well as

coming up with strategies that reduce our impact and destruction the environment. Practically speaking, such reconciling work might begin with, though should not be limited to, conducting environmental audits of our practices and physical presence in our local communities. This allows us to become aware of and then turn away from the destructive ways we relate to our environment. Following on from this, we might continue by annually reviewing our performance, and also invite external accountability and constructive criticism from others. At both an institutional and individual level, we may well incur higher “short term” costs for caring for the environment. Recycling takes more effort than throwing away everything in the general vicinity of a green or gray bin on the street. Long-term water solutions are costlier in time, money, and effort, than the short-term “gray market” solutions. But, if we take seriously our mission of reconciliation, then we must act in ways that reconcile humans with our environment, protecting and restoring it, and ending our selfish destruction of it.

In addition, as we practice eco-ciliation, we must be motivated by “other” interest, rather than self-interest. This will require us to practice self-limitation, considering the needs of our “other” along with our own. In our system of governance, religious communities ought to hold our political leaders accountable if and when their policies serve to preserve personal or confessional power and benefit at the expense of the environment and other confessional groups. In all these ways, practicing eco-ciliation in Lebanon depends on people of faith and hope working together.

Conclusion

In this paper we explored some ways in which renewed understanding and practices related to water by evangelicals might contribute to protecting and caring for water and related ecosystems in Lebanon and the Middle East at large. We have

done this in a spirit of contrition, since we are convinced that reconciliation begins with confession. Christians cannot claim any moral high ground when it comes to creation care and reconciliation. Evangelical theologies and practices related to water have at times perpetuated carelessness towards the environment and a devaluation of water.

We have argued that the quest for life-affirming theologies requires a thorough rereading of the Scriptures and Christian history in the hope of overcoming dualism and recovering water imagery that serves more sustainable and reconciliatory Christian practices. By renewing a holistic, robust understanding of the symbolism of water, we might open up ecumenical and interfaith avenues of reconciliation. A renewed understanding of water imagery carries profound implications for our liturgical practices, for our interactions with other confessional groups, and for how we think about and practice God's mission of reconciliation in the world.

The underlying question we have explored is whether religion, for us that is our evangelical faith tradition, has anything to contribute to protecting the environment and resolving conflict over key resources like water. We have argued that, indeed, theology and religious practice can answer this question positively—but with a complex “yes.” To answer this question positively requires both a confession of the ways that evangelical theologies and practices have contributed to conflict and the degradation of the environment, as well as the ways that, in renewing our theologies and practices related to water, we might contribute to eco-ciliation – ecological healing and care based on who we understand God to be. By expanding and enriching our theologies and liturgical practices related to water, especially baptismal water, we can and should promote reconciliation in relationship to the environment for the benefit of all of God's creation.

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WATER, BRINGER OF LIFE FOR PEOPLE AND WILDLIFE

Chris Naylor

(God) makes springs pour water into the ravines;
it flows between the mountains.
They give water to all the beasts of the field;
the wild donkeys quench their thirst.
The birds of the sky nest by the waters;
they sing among the branches.
He waters the mountains from his upper chambers;
the land is satisfied by the fruit of his work.
He makes grass grow for the cattle,
and plants for people to cultivate—
bringing forth food from the earth:
wine that gladdens human hearts,
oil to make their faces shine,
and bread that sustains their hearts.
The trees of the LORD are well watered,
the cedars of Lebanon that he planted.
(Psalm 104, 10-16)

Water for wildlife and people

This Psalm, from the Bible, is a wonderful ancient song of praise drawing inspiration from the habitats of Mount Lebanon to praise God. Perhaps the most obvious thing we notice is that there is a clear link between God's blessing and water; God makes the springs pour water, and it is from this water that consequential blessings flow. But the question I would like to consider briefly is – who is the water for?

The Psalm speaks of God as provider. Throughout this Psalm, God gives: he makes springs pour water; he gives water;

he waters the mountains; he makes grass grow; he gives plants and so on. But who is it all for? In the second section of the Psalm the answer is for mankind. Plants are for people to cultivate; oil is to make the face shine. But the first answer, and the answer in the passage above is that God gives, God provides for the beasts of the field: the donkeys so they can quench their thirst; the birds of the air. In other words, this Psalm has a very integrated understanding of God's provision. Using water as a picture, the passage speaks of God providing for mankind, certainly, but for wildlife too.

We may think we know the Bible's stories well. We tend to think they are all about what God has to say to us and about us. We often overlook the wider creation when we zoom in on what we think is the only narrative in the Bible – that is the one that is all about people – all about us.

I will give you another example of what I mean, again using water. This time water is not the provider of life it is the great destroyer. Let's look at Noah, the ark and the flood. God sends a cataclysmic flood wiping out life on earth except the life preserved in the ark – Noah – his family and the animals. In the book of Genesis, after the flood, when God gave the rainbow as a sign who did he make the covenant with? The covenant that he would never again destroy the earth? Was it with Noah? Noah and his family? The whole human race? The answer is perhaps a surprise – the covenant was between God and the Earth. "I have set my rainbow in the clouds, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and the earth." (Genesis 9, 13) Now, I am sure humanity is included and so explicitly is "every living creature" But scripture actually says the covenant is between God and the Earth. God cares about the Earth – the Bible message is not all about humanity – it is not all about us.

Christian responses to the ecological crisis

Although it is true to say that through much of modern Church history “Care for Creation” has been lost as part of the Gospel message, today the church is again waking up to this more integrated, holistic – more authentically Biblical Faith. As an example the Anglican Communion set out in what it sees as the role of the Church one of the five marks of mission as: To strive to safeguard the integrity of creation, and sustain and renew the life of the earth.

As the environmental crisis deepens so Christian responses gain momentum. Many groups are involved in practical action. While theological enquiry is informing the pulpit, deeply held materialist attitudes in many Christian communities are slowly changing. Certainly the environmental crisis is deepening. Scientists now describe the present time as the Anthropocene. That is, the current geological age is viewed as the period during which human activity is the dominant influence on climate and the environment.

Currently, all environmental statistics are frightening. The WWF & ZSL (Living Planet Report 2014) catalogue a 52% decline in wildlife populations since 1970. That is a halving of life on earth in less than 50 years! But for freshwater wildlife populations the decline reaches a staggering 76% decline since 1970!

The case of the Aammiq wetland

It seems water is an early casualty in a landscape in crisis. That is certainly what I discovered when I lived in the Bekaa in the early 1990s when the Aammiq conservation project was born. Much of the water that sustains the Aammiq wetland in the West Bekaa starts as snow on the Barouk Mountain Ridge. The snow melts through the season to recharge the aquifer and then at the spring line burst out of the ground to form the pools that drain into the

wetland and eventually into the Litani River. As the water makes its way to the river, it creates habitats: open water, reedbed, flooded pasture, riverine, avenues of trees, and rich farmland. Historically the wetland covered a huge area all the way to Zahle but by the end of the Lebanese civil war only a remnant patchwork of seasonal pools remained, close to obliteration.

The Christian Conservation Organization “A Rocha” Lebanon, together with the landowners, local municipality, tenant farmers, the Ministry of the Environment and the neighboring Al Shouf Cedar Reserve worked to restore and protect the wetland for people and wildlife. Among the wildlife that depends on the Aammiq wetlands are huge numbers of migrating birds such as storks. The Aammiq wetland is particularly important as a roosting stopover for migrating birds on their pan-continental journey. But other species also benefit from the wetland: reptiles, amphibians, mammals, fish, and other birds. The natural flow of the river into the wetland profits people as well, especially in the following ways: it creates grazing areas for cattle; sponge for water for crops; a microclimate; soil health and maintenance of aquifers. Among the problems that had to be faced in the project were hunting, pollution, over-extraction of water, over-grazing, and habitat loss. Through years of hard work, A Rocha and its partners achieved that the wetland no longer dried up during the summer months, but contained water all year long.

The role of faith-based NGOs

What do faith-based NGOs bring to the water conservation story? I have thought long and hard about this question. One key component badly lacking in the world of conservation is hope. Faith brings hope and as faith-based conservation NGOs we need to bring it to the party. If you go to Aammiq you can join in that party and celebrate at Tawlet Aammiq. This eco-restaurant was born out of the A Rocha conservation project. Designed to provide an eco-tourist entry to the wetland and Shouf Cedar Reserve,

employment opportunities for the different sectarian communities of the West Bekaa and cash for the conservation of the precious habitats of marsh and mountain it is a place to celebrate, have hope and a great meal.

Returning to Psalm 104, there are five species animal mentioned by name that were breeding in Lebanon at the time the Psalm was written. Today three are extinct in Lebanon, one still migrates through but no longer breeds and one still breeds. But there is hope! The lion is extinct and is unlikely to be reintroduced! The wild donkey is extinct and the Bekaa plains are now too populated for it to be reintroduced. The wild goat or ibex still lives in Jordan and there are plans to reintroduce it as a wild animal to the Shouf Cedar Reserve. The white stork now regularly summers in Aammiq, if hunting remains under control there is no reason why it should not breed. The rock hyrax or coney is still found as a breeding mammal on the mountains of the Shouf.



PANEL: PRESSING ISSUES AND THE ROLE OF FAITH-BASED NGOS

The panel was moderated by Dr. Arda Ekmekji. The panelists were Dr. Désirée El Azzi, Dr. Nadim Farajalla and Mr. Björn Zimprich. This section includes the texts submitted by Dr. Farajalla and Dr. El Azzi prior to the conference. It also contains a transcript of Mr. Zimprich's presentation on a project in the field of water and religion in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. Finally, a short impression of the discussion is given.

The panelists were asked to address the following two questions:

1. *What are the most urgent/pressing needs when it comes to water in Lebanon?*
2. *What role do you see for (faith-based) NGOs in the protection and management of water?*

Faith-based organizations and water protection in Lebanon

Désirée El Azzi

Water and religion are closely linked throughout the history of Lebanon. As a testimony of this solid relationship, numerous prayers and rites revolve around water. Sadly, water is nowadays a struggling resource facing anthropic pressures (agriculture, waste dumping, industrial use, etc.) that lead to water scarcity and pollution.

The negative balance between the annual water requirements in Lebanon (average daily requirement of 300 L/inhabitant) and the average annual rainfall (8200 mm³) is one of the most pressing concerns in the country especially with the rising population. Another major concern is water quality. In fact, in the absence of environmental resource management strategies, Lebanese water is constantly exposed to infiltration of pollutants from intensive agriculture, wastewater, septic tanks, industries, etc. Recent studies show that streams are enriched with inorganic pollutants such as Cd, Zn, Cr and Ni. These same waters are used for irrigation and for human consumption. The country is therefore facing a significant risk of toxicity.

Faith-based Organizations (FBOs) are a natural actor for the protection of the society against this risk. While working on the spiritual well-being of their members, FBOs worldwide are more and more concerned about the physical health of individuals as well. A clean environment is indispensable for the emotional, psychological and spiritual health of individuals.

Besides, FBOs have long fought against poverty and for the basic needs of human beings. They have always shed light on the moral, ethical and spiritual importance of human equity and rights to shelter, good quality water, food and air. Therefore, their role as the voice of the voiceless can be put in action very easily in Lebanon. It is worth stating here that people who suffer most

from polluted and scarce water are the poor. The fight for their rights is a basic role of FBOs.

Furthermore, it is in the scope of FBOs to be a voice of moral authority. They can easily create a link between people and the government just like any other NGO. But, because 80% of the world's population professes religious faith, FBOs can have more impact on society. Moreover, FBOs are often more efficient than governmental bodies due to their flexibility, creativity and long-term thinking. Thus, they would probably be able to muster more participation and a greater impact for global changes. This is particularly true in countries like Lebanon where religion plays a major role in the everyday life of citizens.

Accordingly, the role of FBOs can be summarized as follows:

- Spreading awareness about the situation of water pollution in Lebanon. This could be done through environmental education (training, capacity building among teachers, etc.) in schools and universities.

- Collecting information to assess environmental conditions and monitor the compliance with environmental agreements and laws.

- Implementing and helping to fund demonstration and pilot projects for depollution and continuous monitoring of water bodies.

- Promoting community and individual actions.

- Advocating justice and rights for water of good quality. This can help in pushing for changes in policy decisions when possible. To achieve this, FBOs should be more involved in international organizations and meetings. They must be included in national delegations, international conferences and in ongoing policy development with the governmental ministries involved.

More individuals strive for spiritual principles and in this scope, improving the conditions of the community and its integrity becomes a necessity. FBOs can be a powerful driving force actively mobilizing public opinion and support especially in countries like Lebanon impregnated by religious beliefs.

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Pressing issues and faith-based organizations

Nadim Farajalla

The water sector in Lebanon is under pressure from an increasing population coupled with an uncontrolled urban sprawl and a changing climate, which reduces the recharge of groundwater. The management of the sector which has been less than stellar has compounded these stressors into, at times, crises.

I believe that there are three basic tracks that should be followed, concurrently, to quickly address this growing problem in Lebanon. First, there is a need for **management of the demand for water through the reduction of water waste in both urban networks and in agriculture**. This could be done through urban networks. Examples of management water in urban networks are metering at the household level and at the source; reduction of (significantly) illegal tapping of networks; and upgrading and rehabilitating networks to reduce leaks. Examples of water management in agriculture are the use of more efficient irrigation networks; training of farmers to better manage their irrigation systems in terms of when to apply water and how much (irrigation management is completely lacking at the present); and promoting rain-fed agriculture.

For both areas above, one common control measure that is critical would be the application of a tariff for water use in a fair and equitable way, and one that protects the low income bracket of society, but at the same time ensures that costs sunk into the sector are recovered.

The second track that should be followed is **the improvement of water supply**. An integrated water storage plan should be developed at the regional and national levels through the construction of dams (small and large) and hill lakes to capture snowmelt and runoff. The key is for the plan be integrated, whereby large dams come in as a last choice after small structures and hill lakes in combination have been utilized.

Furthermore, the over-exploitation of groundwater should be countered and access to it be restricted. At the same time, alternative sources of freshwater should be developed, especially treated sewage effluent and rainwater and dew harvesting. Water supply will also significantly improve when pollution of sources, surface and subsurface, is reduced. This can be done through the construction of wastewater treatment facilities; better zoning so that industries can be grouped together to ensure treatment of their effluent before discharge; and the introduction and implementation of the “*polluter pays*” regulation by setting clear and “painful” penalties (financial and other) to reduce uncontrolled discharge into waterbodies. Finally, agricultural practices need to be improved by less reliance on synthetic agrochemicals, utilization of integrated pest management, etc.

The third track that should be followed is a **more effective and inclusive governance of the sector**. This includes a continuous revision and updating of the National Water Sector Strategy; the implementation of the Water Code; the revision and improvement of Law 221 to reintegrate municipalities in the management of the sector; a better cooperation between the Regional Water Establishments (RWEs) and the Ministry of Energy and Water (MEW); the employment of well trained staff for the RWEs and the MEW – especially training in the various aspects of water resources management, sector operation, etc.; and the development of business plans to aid in the operational and strategic guidance for the RWEs.

In all the above, a new thought process needs to be followed in that the water sector should be managed as part of national development so that water is integrated in the planning of the agriculture sector, the energy sector, tourism, infrastructure, etc. The best vehicle for this is the Water-Energy-Food Nexus approach.

The main role for NGOs should be in support of the above. The best niche for faith-based NGOs is sensitizing people to the fact that water is precious and must not be wasted – waste must

be viewed as a sin practically. The moral high ground that religion occupies would enable faith-based NGOs to succeed.

Guidance in technical training programs is the second aspect that comes to mind. Promoting and supporting integrity in operating the water sector and all projects within is a task/role that should be undertaken by such NGOs.

Saving water through religion

Björn Zimprich

Over the past few years, development organizations have increasingly cooperated with religious authorities, also in the areas of biodiversity and the protection of nature. Within German development organizations questions have been raised as to the added value of working with religious authorities. We have concluded that religious authorities are important multipliers. They have different target groups than NGOs. In many cases, religious organizations are less donor-driven, because they dispose of large funds themselves and have many active members.

In 2016, the German government adopted a new strategy in which religion is viewed as a partner in development cooperation. Religions are acknowledged as important, since more than 80 percent of the world's population is in some way affiliated with a religion. We also see religions as an important source of moral and spiritual values. These values should be incorporated into joint projects.

One of these projects started in 2015. It is called “saving water through religion”. The key partners in this project are religious authorities, who are viewed as multipliers. We are dealing with imams and female preachers as well as priests and nuns. In their Friday sermons Muslim religious authorities have a wide reach. In Jordan, approximately four million people listen to the weekly Friday sermon. So if you are able to convince imams to preach about the protection of natural resources and water, you will reach out to this large audience.

We are focusing on religious authorities as water ambassadors. We have developed a training guide in cooperation with the Jordanian Ministry of Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Water and Irrigation. We have already trained 2,000 female preachers and imams, which is one third of all religious

authorities in Jordan. They have received a two-day training in which they learned how water-scarce Jordan is and how one can practically save water in the mosque and at home. We try to help the participants realize that this is a very serious issue for the future of Jordanian communities and that action is urgently needed.

With more than 1,000 imams we have visited the Azraq Oasis. This is an oasis in the Eastern Arabian Desert. It used to be an important station for bird migration. It fell completely dry in the 1990s. The groundwater of the oasis was gradually pumped away to meet the water needs of the Jordanian capital Amman and was used for irrigation. Yearly over-pumping caused it to fall dry.

At the Azraq Oasis the water scarcity is evident. There used to be a big natural lake; now there is only a small, artificially maintained lake left. Many imams who visited the oasis commented that they used to visit the place in the past, swam in the lake, and enjoyed the waters of the oasis. They were saddened to see what was left of it. Water scarcity can also be demonstrated by visiting the Dead Sea. The yearly decline of 90 centimeters of the surface of the Dead Sea can be observed. By 2070 it may fall completely dry.

With the Ministry of Religious Affairs, we prepared four Friday sermons. In Jordan, imams are expected to preach on topics suggested by the Ministry. In 2018, four of the Friday sermons were devoted to the issue of water scarcity and protection of natural resources. Even specific issues such as rainwater harvesting were discussed in the sermons.

We do not only look at mosques as centers of awareness-raising, but also as places of water consumption. We have pilot projects in several mosques and shrines for rainwater harvesting, especially in arid areas. With mosques we are also piloting the use of “gray water,” the water used for ablution, after treatment, for irrigation of mosque gardens. This makes mosque gardens community friendly spaces where children can play.

A short impression of the discussion

Dr. Ekmekji introduced the panelists and started the discussion with a reference to two examples of water symbolism in the New Testament. The first one was that of Pontius Pilate washing his hands. The second one was the example of Jesus washing the feet of his disciples. In both cases water was used in a symbolic way. The former used water to symbolize disengagement. To the latter, water signified commitment, involvement, leadership, humility and love. Faith-based NGOs take their cue from the example of Jesus, Dr. Ekmekji explained.

Dr. El Azzi expressed that she was happy to hear the word “hope” used by people from other disciplines. Scientists are quite depressed when it comes to the situation of the environment, especially in Lebanon.

El Azzi looked back on the genesis of her book, *Ô Liban au fil de l'eau* (2017). Some years ago she began to notice that people were not receptive to the idea that the environment is in danger. The difficulty of depolluting the environment was not understood, she observed. Many people did not see the urgency and believed that things could be depolluted once we reached a point-of-no-return. This prompted El Azzi to engage with people on ecology not only along the lines science, but by looking at spiritual matters as well. The idea of her book was to touch people’s identities, especially the link of the Lebanese people with water throughout history.

In her book she described the Lebanese landscape, especially the presence of water, and the link between water and the population centers. El Azzi described what Lebanon’s waters used to be like and what they are today. She illustrated it with photographs; compiled proverbs; described religious rites and prayers, some of which exist in Christianity and Islam. She also looked at place names and names of rivers. She found that people were much more receptive to this than to purely scientific messages.

El Azzi underlined that faith-based organizations are important for environmental care because they bring hope. People need to hold on to hope, she argued, especially in Lebanon. Beyond the task of science, environmental awareness needs to be carried forward. For that reason, FBOs have an important role to play in motivating people to take action, El Azzi explained.

Dr. Farajalla agreed that the faith-based approach is especially relevant when it comes to changing mentalities. A change in behavior is needed, he argued, and this change will occur when water will be viewed as a precious resource that we cannot afford to waste. Unfortunately, Farajalla lamented, Lebanon is still wasting both fresh water and waste water.

Farajalla related how he often urges students to start by changing their own habits. People need to start saving water in their everyday routines of washing, bathing, brushing teeth. This change in behavior is closely related to our morality, Farajalla pointed out, especially the moral high ground of faith, if truly followed. Moral action is the heart of religion, he argued. In this respect religion is inclusive: all are called to moral actions, including care for water resources. As the Bible says, water is for everybody, humans and non-humans. We share the same resources.

Farajalla explained that he has been inspired by Lebanon's ancient traditions. In the Lebanese mountains people used to come together to divide the water and to share responsibility for cleaning the canals and the reservoirs. Their cattle had to share in the water as well. This is our native knowledge, Farajalla pointed out, which we should apply in urban contexts today.

Björn Zimprich added that people can be reached through spiritual meanings. He explained that the German development corporation GIZ sees a role for itself in bringing together the water sector and the religious authorities in Jordan. These two do not always communicate. Zimprich recounted how the Ministry of Religious Affairs told GIZ that imams tend to focus on purely

spiritual subjects and that there was a need for them to see other perspectives. On the other hand, Zimprich argued, engineers who focus on technical work with water tend to forget how important the spiritual aspect is. The intervention of a development organization can bring these two perspectives together.

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