

BOOK REVIEW BY HARFIYAH HALEEM

GREEN SPIRITUALITY: One answer to global environmental problems and world poverty by Chris Philpott, foreword by Vandana Shiva, Author House, Milton Keynes UK, 2011.

Chris Philpott is a seasoned environmental campaigner and climate camper, This book took him thirteen years to write and involved consultations with members of many different faiths. At the climate camp I attended as a Muslim, we had an interfaith discussion by candlelight, seated in a circle on bales of straw, also involving Christians, Hindus, Jews, Buddhists, Pagans, and others. This book reflects similar teachings on Nature and the importance of caring for the environment from a wide range of religious paths. The Islamic contribution is there amongst them, thanks to IFEES among others, but in places it seems a little weak compared with the very clear and concise guidance given in the Qur'an. Still, there is a way to improve on this, as Chris invites people, if they 'can illuminate further', to 'leave a comment on my website, www.greenspirituality.org .' The foreword concludes, 'Chris Philpott helps us to rediscover the ecological and spiritual sheet anchor that we so desperately need at this most difficult of times.'

The first twelve chapters summarise the basic facts about twelve different religions, including less-documented paths like Shamanism, Paganism, Spiritualism and Baha'i, ¹each with a section on its Green manifestations, and a list of helpful websites.

Part 2, in another seven chapters, looks closely at current misuses of water, food, air, climate, species extinction, waste and poverty, each contrasted with several warnings and exhortations quoted from various religious sources, sometimes even for sub-sections within chapters. Each of these chapters ends with a substantial list of suggestions for 'Personal actions' readers can take.

The evidence for religious teachings being green seems to be overwhelming and Chris has done a thorough job by including so many converging viewpoints to counteract the prevailing attitudes of our times, divorced as they are from our dependence on divine provision via the planet's now over-exploited resources. Finally Chapter 20, 'You are the Emergency Services,' calls on everyone to do their bit, saying, 'We have all slipped from these ideals, and understandably,' but that we can use the spiritual ideals contained in all these religious teachings 'to reinstate ... in each one of us a spirituality that is green.'

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¹ But not Zoroastrianism, Humanism or Atheism. See for example the *Shap Journal* on 'Religion and the Environment' http://www.shapworkingparty.org.uk/journals/index_0809.html