

## Faith-Based Environmental Initiatives on Combating Green Financial Crime: The Sacredness and The Stewardship's Concept

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### Abstract

Green financial crime seriously threatens the sustainability of the environment and the integrity of the global economy. This study aims to investigate the function of environmental efforts with a religious foundation in countering green financial crime by reviewing relevant literature, examining religious teachings on environmental stewardship, and evaluating the influence of religious advocacy on public policy and community behavior. In the practical sense in the Indonesian context, Muhammadiyah's humanitarian arm has been involved in disaster relief, focusing on environmental sustainability in recovery efforts. This includes advocating for better waste management and building resilient, eco-friendly infrastructure in disaster-prone areas. These initiatives highlight how organizations use their religious influence, aligning faith-based teachings with practical efforts. Thematic analysis is used in this study to find and examine themes and patterns in the data gathered. The results of this study show that, through its faith-based activities, it plays a significant role in the local and global fight against green financial crime. It is essential for religious organizations to prioritize environmental awareness because of the pressing nature of environmental crises and the significant moral, ethical, and practical effect that religion has. The integration of religious ideas and the utilization of religion-based organizations' strengths can significantly augment efforts aimed at combating green financial crime, thereby resulting in more equitable and sustainable outcomes for both society and the environment.

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### Introduction

Green financial crime as an environment financial crime which includes illegal logging, wildlife trafficking, and garbage trafficking, is a serious threat to both the sustainability of the

environment and the integrity of the global economy.<sup>1</sup> In addition to harming ecosystems, these illegal operations jeopardize attempts to stop climate change and save species. Green financial crime must be addressed with multidimensional approaches that consider the legal, economic, and social facets.<sup>2</sup> With its significant impact on moral conduct and social norms, religion is a potentially effective but little-used partner in the battle against environmental crimes.<sup>3</sup>

Faith-based organizations and religious institutions are uniquely positioned to mobilize people, support sustainable practices based on moral precepts, and advocate for ethical stewardship.<sup>4</sup> The significance of religion in preventing green financial crime has not received enough attention in scholarly literature despite its obvious potential. Comprehensive initiatives to reduce green financial crime have a promising route at the junction of religion and environmental conservation.<sup>5</sup> Doing this promotes a more all-encompassing strategy for preventing environmental crimes, acknowledging the significance of moral and spiritual aspects in ensuring justice and sustainability over the long run.

By analyzing the significance and potential of religious influence in preventing green financial crime, this research study seeks to close this gap. This research attempts to bridge this gap and highlight the critical role that religion can play in fostering a sustainable future by examining the potential and necessity of religious influence in preventing green financial crime. This study aims to investigate the function of environmental efforts with a religious foundation in countering green financial crime by reviewing relevant literature, examining religious teachings on environmental stewardship, and evaluating the influence of religious advocacy on public policy and community behavior. The main research questions posed by this study are: How do faith-based groups affect the mitigation and prevention of green financial crime, and How can religious beliefs and teachings influence people's attitudes and actions in protecting the environment and combating green financial crime on an individual and community level?

The present study utilizes qualitative research methodologies, specifically focusing on library research, to investigate the function of environmental efforts with a religious foundation in countering green financial crime. This study benefits greatly from the qualitative approach since it thoroughly explains the intricate and subtle ways that religious groups and teachings impact environmental practices and regulations. The study uses both exploratory and

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<sup>1</sup> Pamela Ann Davies, "Green Crime and Victimization: Tensions between Social and Environmental Justice," *Theoretical Criminology* 18, no. 3 (August 2014): 300–316, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362480614522286>.

<sup>2</sup> Muchamad Satria Endriana, Ana Silviana, and Zico Junius Fernando, "Green Financial Crime: Expose About Financial Crime In The Environment And Renewable Energy World," in *IOP Conference Series: Earth and Environmental Science*, vol. 1270 (IOP Publishing, 2023), 012012, <https://iopscience.iop.org/article/10.1088/1755-1315/1270/1/012012/meta>; Diane Heckenberg and Rob White, "Innovative Approaches to Researching Environmental Crime," in *Routledge International Handbook of Green Criminology* (Routledge, 2020), 110–31, <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781315207094-6/innovative-approaches-researching-environmental-crime-diane-heckenberg-rob-white>.

<sup>3</sup> Katharina Glaab and Doris Fuchs, "Green Faith? The Role of Faith-Based Actors in Global Sustainable Development Discourse," *Environmental Values* 27, no. 3 (2018): 289–312; Nadia B. Ahmad, "Faith-Based Approaches to Ecological Harmony and Environmental Protection," *Rutgers Race & L. Rev.* 21 (2020): 1.

<sup>4</sup> Ulil Amri, "Islamic Faith Based Organizations and Eco-Spiritual Governmentality in Indonesia," *Southeast Asia and Environmental Sustainability in Context*, 2019, 103; Kimberly R. Jacob Arriola et al., "Promoting Policy and Environmental Change in Faith-Based Organizations: Description and Findings From a Mini-Grants Program," *American Journal of Health Promotion* 31, no. 3 (May 2017): 192–99, <https://doi.org/10.4278/ajhp.150212-QUAN-724>; Wolfgang Bielefeld and William Suhs Cleveland, "Defining Faith-Based Organizations and Understanding Them Through Research," *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly* 42, no. 3 (June 2013): 442–67, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0899764013484090>.

<sup>5</sup> Laura L. Cochrane, "Land Degradation, Faith-Based Organizations, and Sustainability in S Enegal," *Culture, Agriculture, Food and Environment* 35, no. 2 (December 2013): 112–24, <https://doi.org/10.1111/cuag.12015>.

descriptive research designs to understand the various aspects of faith-based environmental initiatives. The methods of data collection used in this study are literature review and document analysis. They are completing a detailed examination of the corpus of research on faith-based environmental initiatives, green financial crime, and the concept of stewardship in various religions. This category will include books, academic journals, conference proceedings, reports from religious organizations, and relevant policy documents. In contrast, document analysis examines religious texts, doctrinal statements, and official publications from faith-based organizations to understand their perspectives on environmental stewardship and green financial crimes.

Furthermore, this study employs thematic analysis to identify and investigate themes and patterns in the collected data. This entails classifying the data, identifying the main themes, and interpreting the findings concerning the research questions. To broaden the elaboration, a content analysis of religious texts and publications from organizations will be conducted to measure and categorize statements about green financial crime and environmental stewardship in an organized manner. Next, the strategies and results of several faith-based programs will be compared between various religious traditions and geographical areas. This method adds significant insights to the field of environmental governance by enabling a thorough and nuanced analysis of the interactions between organizational procedures, religious teachings, and environmental policies.

### **Faith-Based Organizations and Green Financial Crime: The Mitigation Effort**

Green financial crime refers to illegal financial activities that harm the environment or involve the exploitation of natural resources.<sup>6</sup> These crimes are often carried out by corporations, organized crime networks, or corrupt government officials and can involve actions that degrade ecosystems, harm biodiversity, or contribute to climate change. Green financial crimes are distinct because they combine both environmental and financial illegalities. The primary motivation behind green financial crime is to generate unlawful financial profit by exploiting natural resources, violating environmental laws, or corrupting financial and governance systems.<sup>7</sup> These crimes directly contribute to environmental degradation, including deforestation, pollution, overfishing, illegal mining, and illegal wildlife trade.

Green financial crime is a transnational issue, often involving the illegal movement of goods and money across borders, with global ramifications for biodiversity, climate change, and economic inequality.<sup>8</sup> In the practical sense, green financial crime has various examples, such as wildlife trafficking and illegal logging and timber trade. The illegal trade of endangered species, including elephants (for ivory) and rhinoceroses (for their horns), is a major form of green financial crime.<sup>9</sup> Illegal logging also displaces indigenous communities and causes long-

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<sup>6</sup> Endriana, Silviana, and Fernando, "Green Financial Crime"; Heckenberg and White, "Innovative Approaches to Researching Environmental Crime."

<sup>7</sup> Rahmi Sutanti, Pujiyono Pujiyono, and Nur Rochaeti, "The Urgency of Implementing Non-Conviction-Based Asset Forfeiture in Combating Green Financial Crimes in Indonesia," in *Proceedings of the 1st International Workshop on Law, Economics and Governance, IWLEG 2022, 27 July 2022, Semarang, Indonesia*, 2023, <https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=kEatEAAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA324&dq=constitutional+law+and+green+financial+crime+in+indonesia&ots=k88QnKUNX1&sig=kqXW2Z2DME0JyRvqCYiogqD4Us8>.

<sup>8</sup> Reece Walters, "Eco-Crime and Green Activism," in *Forging a Socio-Legal Approach to Environmental Harms* (Routledge, 2017), 220–36, <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781315676715-11/eco-crime-green-activism-reece-walters>.

<sup>9</sup> Petter Gottschalk, "Reducing Financial Crime Convenience for Sustainable Finance. A Case Study of Danske Bank in Estonia," in *Sustainable Finance and Financial Crime*, ed. Michel Dion, Sustainable

term ecological damage—destruction of critical ecosystems, loss of biodiversity, and increased carbon emissions due to deforestation.

These examples show that green financial crime is a multifaceted problem, affecting both natural ecosystems and human societies, with significant implications for global environmental governance and socio-economic justice. Combating these crimes requires international cooperation, strict regulatory enforcement, and the engagement of both governmental and non-governmental organizations, including faith-based initiatives.

As elaborated above, the problem of green financial crime can be prevented by the involvement of religion. The moral and ethical framework that religions give impacts the actions and choices of its adherents. Principles like respect for all living things, stewardship of the earth, and the need to preserve natural resources are taught in many religions.<sup>10</sup> Religious leaders can encourage people to reject environmentally harmful behaviors and embrace moral behavior by citing these teachings. This moral instruction can play a critical role in bringing attention to the negative effects of green financial crimes and inspiring action to combat them.<sup>11</sup>

In the worldwide context, faith-based organizations have launched several programs to support environmental sustainability and fight green financial crime. The Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC), EcoSikh, Green Ramadan, and Interfaith Power & Light (IPL) are a few noteworthy instances.<sup>12</sup> The American Conservation Corps (ARC) is working on several projects, including sustainable farming methods, holy natural areas, and moral investments that shield the environment. By encouraging millions of adherents of different religions to take up environmental conservation through its programs, ARC has established a global network of religious organizations that share this concern. Conversely, EcoSikh is an environmental initiative of the Sikh community that was initiated in collaboration with the United Nations (UN). The organization's primary objectives are to promote sustainable lifestyles, encourage tree planting, and increase Sikh community awareness of environmental issues. EcoSikh has planted millions of trees throughout the world and inspired many Sikh organizations to adopt eco-friendly practices, which has substantially contributed to the preservation of biodiversity.

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Finance (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2023), 307–28, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-28752-7\\_16](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-28752-7_16); Michael Levi, “Green with Envy: Environmental Crimes and Black Money,” in *Green Crimes and Dirty Money* (Routledge, 2018), 179–93, <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/chapters/edit/10.4324/9781351245746-10/green-envy-michael-levi>.

<sup>10</sup> Lyndsay Hughes Dawson, “Stewards of the Mountains: A Case Study of the Lindquist Environmental Appalachian Fellowship, a Faith-Based Environmental Organization,” 2009, [https://trace.tennessee.edu/utk\\_gradthes/5755/](https://trace.tennessee.edu/utk_gradthes/5755/); Glaab and Fuchs, “Green Faith?”; Jean Chrysostome K. Kiyala, “Faith-Based Organisations and Environmental Peace: Impact of Laudato Si’ and Its Relevance in the Anthropocene,” in *Civil Society and Peacebuilding in Sub-Saharan Africa in the Anthropocene*, ed. Jean Chrysostome K. Kiyala and Geoff Thomas Harris, vol. 34, *The Anthropocene: Politik—Economics—Society—Science* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2022), 95–125, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-95179-5\\_4](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-95179-5_4).

<sup>11</sup> Lyndsay Moseley and David Lewis Feldman, “Faith-Based Environmental Initiatives in Appalachia: Connecting Faith, Environmental Concern and Reform,” *Worldviews: Global Religions, Culture, and Ecology* 7, no. 3 (2003): 227–52; Joanne M. Moyer and Claire Brandenburg, “The Landscape of Faith-Based Environmental Engagement in Canada,” *Local Environment* 26, no. 10 (October 3, 2021): 1267–83, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13549839.2021.1973395>.

<sup>12</sup> Christopher Key Chapple and Mary Evelyn Tucker, “Hinduism and Ecology,” *Harvard Center for the Study of World Religions, Harvard University Press*, 2000; Joanne M. Moyer and Stephen Bede Scharper, “The Fabric of Faith-Based Environmentalism in Canada: Exploring the Strands of Ecological Worldviews,” *Worldviews: Global Religions, Culture, and Ecology* 23, no. 1 (2019): 33–58; Joanne M. Moyer, A. John Sinclair, and Harry Spaling, “Working for God and Sustainability: The Activities of Faith-Based Organizations in Kenya,” *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 23, no. 4 (December 2012): 959–92, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11266-011-9245-x>; Joanne M. Moyer and A. John Sinclair, “Faith-Based Environmental Engagement in Canada: An Environmental Governance Perspective,” *Society & Natural Resources* 35, no. 8 (August 3, 2022): 836–55, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08941920.2022.2079786>.

Additionally, a campaign called Green Ramadan aims to encourage eco-friendly behaviors throughout the fasting month of Ramadan.<sup>13</sup> They provide services that include cutting down on food waste, utilizing environmentally friendly items, and bringing environmental issues to the public's attention through talks and neighborhood gatherings. Many Muslim groups have adopted sustainable habits due to Green Ramadan, lessening their environmental impact and supporting conservation efforts at a major religious time.

The Laudato Si' Movement, a Catholic movement that advocates for ecological justice and fights environmental degradation and climate change, is one example of a faith-based initiative related to combating green financial crime.<sup>14</sup> Other initiatives include "Interfaith Power and Light," a coalition of religious groups in the United States that mobilizes faith communities to advocate for climate protection and sustainable practices, "Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences (IFEES)," an organization that uses Islamic teachings to promote environmental conservation and combat environmental crimes in countries with a majority of Muslims, and "Buddhist Environmental Network," which engages Buddhist communities. To summarize, the faith-based initiative's case studies are implemented in Table 1.

**Table 1. The Case Studies from Faith-Based Initiatives**

No	Faith-Based Initiative	Case Studies
1.	Islamic Initiatives	Green Hajj, Initiatives to make the pilgrimage to Mecca more environmentally friendly, including waste reduction and sustainable practices, highlight the role of stewardship in Islam <sup>15</sup> .
2.	Christian Initiatives	Faith-Based Environmental Networks: Organizations like the Evangelical Environmental Network promote environmental stewardship and advocate against green financial crimes <sup>16</sup> .
3.	Catholic Initiatives	Pope Francis's encyclical calls for global action on climate change and environmental protection highlight the moral imperative for Catholics to care for the Earth <sup>17</sup> .
4.	Hindu Initiatives	Ganga Action Parivar, A coalition of Hindu leaders and organizations working to clean and protect the Ganges River, integrating spiritual practices with environmental activism. <sup>18</sup>
5.	Buddhist Initiatives	a) Eco-temples: Many Buddhist temples incorporate sustainable practices, such as solar energy and organic

<sup>13</sup> Paoula Sehanie, "Faith Based Environmental Stewardship: Practices and Attitudes of Christian Churches on Virginia's Northern Neck and Eastern Shore," 2010, <https://scholarscompass.vcu.edu/etd/2325/>; Laura C. Thaut, "The Role of Faith in Christian Faith-Based Humanitarian Agencies: Constructing the Taxonomy," *VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations* 20, no. 4 (December 2009): 319–50, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11266-009-9098-8>.

<sup>14</sup> Kiyala, "Faith-Based Organisations and Environmental Peace."

<sup>15</sup> Kristen Lyons, Peter Walters, and Erin Riddell, "The Role of Faith-Based Organizations in Environmental Governance: The Case of Forestry in Solomon Islands," *Journal of Environmental Policy & Planning* 18, no. 3 (May 26, 2016): 342–60, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1523908X.2015.1098524>.

<sup>16</sup> Marie-Therese Mäder, "Book Review. Elisha McIntyre, Religious Humor in Evangelical Christian and Mormon Culture," *Journal for Religion, Film and Media (JRFM)* 6, no. 1 (2020): 159–62.

<sup>17</sup> Emma Tomalin, "Thinking about Faith-Based Organisations in Development: Where Have We Got to and What Next?," in *Religion, Religious Organisations and Development* (Routledge, 2016), 69–83, <https://api.taylorfrancis.com/content/chapters/edit/download?identifierName=doi&identifierValue=10.4324/9781315540825-7&type=chapterpdf>.

<sup>18</sup> Chapple and Tucker, "Hinduism and Ecology."

No	Faith-Based Initiative	Case Studies
		farming, setting an example of environmental stewardship.
		b) Wildlife Protection: Buddhist monks in Southeast Asia have been involved in efforts to protect endangered species and combat wildlife trafficking.

Based on the preceding table, religion provides a valuable framework for dealing with green financial crime. It is feasible to encourage environmentally conscious behaviors, stop unlawful activity, and promote sustainable practices by utilizing religious traditions' moral authority, social networks, and moral teachings. Enhancing efforts to combat green financial crimes and safeguard the environment for future generations can be achieved through incorporating religious stewardship into environmental governance. Applying this moral paradigm to green finance crime—illegal actions that cause environmental harm—can be a successful strategy. Comprehending the relationship between religious stewardship and the fight against green financial crime can offer moral guidance and useful tactics for more efficient environmental preservation.

Faith-based initiative movements such as Muhammadiyah and Nahdlatul Ulama (NU) have several excellent practices within the Indonesian setting. With millions of Muslims under their sway, NU and Muhammadiyah are two of Indonesia's biggest Islamic groups. Both groups run environmental initiatives to encourage environmentally friendly behaviors and oppose unlawful actions that damage the environment. The largest Islamic organization in Indonesia, Nahdlatul Ulama (NU), is notable for its broad reach and dedication to environmental and social causes. NU has over 90 million members and is a strong force for promoting morality and environmentally friendly behavior because of its broad grassroots influence and moral authority.<sup>19</sup>

The Islamic teachings that strongly emphasize protecting all of creation and taking care of the Earth are the foundation of NU's involvement in environmental efforts. Using its community and religious networks, NU has started several initiatives to fight green financial crime, encourage sustainable behaviors, and raise public awareness of environmental issues. These programs comply with religious precepts and meet Indonesia's urgent needs for environmental preservation. By applying Islamic principles, Nahdlatul Ulama has successfully promoted moral behavior and environmental conservation. Through sermons, religious events, and educational programs, the organization has disseminated messages emphasizing the Islamic precepts of stewardship (*khalifah*) and the obligation to protect the Earth (*amana*). The significance of preventing green financial crime has become more apparent to millions of Indonesian Muslims as a result of this moral and ethical advocacy.

Through these programs, community members have gained the knowledge and skills needed to adopt sustainable lifestyles, and religious leaders have gained the authority to discuss environmental issues in their sermons. Despite its successes, NU still faces many challenges in its battle against green financial crime. These challenges include a lack of funding, resistance from influential parties that gain financially from illegal activity, and the need for more advanced technical skills in certain fields. Furthermore, maintaining a balance between the demands of the modern environment and customary religious practices requires ongoing compromise and adaptation.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Maizer Said Nahdi and Aziz Ghufroon, "Etika Lingkungan Dalam Perspektif Yusuf Al-Qaradawy," *Al-Jami'ah: Journal of Islamic Studies* 44, no. 1 (2006): 195–221.

<sup>20</sup> Laurie A. Occhipinti, "Faith-Based Organizations and Development," in *The Routledge Handbook of Religions and Global Development* (Routledge, 2015), 331–45.

The study's findings demonstrate that NU contributes significantly to Indonesia's efforts to combat green financial crime through faith-based initiatives. NU has made significant strides toward encouraging environmental stewardship by utilizing Islamic teachings, community mobilization, partnership formation, and advocacy for policy changes. However, in order to maintain and grow these initiatives, persistent issues need to be resolved. Including religious viewpoints in more comprehensive frameworks for environmental governance is a potent way to achieve justice and sustainability in the long run.

Similarly, Muhammadiyah is likewise very concerned about green financial crime. Muhammadiyah has successfully promoted ethical behavior and environmental care by drawing on Islamic teachings. Muhammadiyah stresses the conservation of the environment and Islamic guardianship (*khalifah*) through sermons, religious events, and educational initiatives.<sup>21</sup> Organizing community organizations and local branches of Muhammadiyah has been crucial in coordinating grassroots actions against environmental crimes. These include waste management plans, animal protection campaigns, and community-based monitoring of illegal logging operations. Muhammadiyah has promoted a sense of ownership and responsibility for environmental protection by interacting with the local community.

Muhammadiyah has formed strategic partnerships with governmental organizations, non-governmental organizations, and international organizations to bolster its environmental initiatives. Thanks to these partnerships, Muhammadiyah has been able to get the resources, expertise, and support needed to carry out successful projects. Muhammadiyah, for example, has worked with environmental NGOs to train the community in sustainable farming practices and forest management. Programs that support environmentally friendly farming practices are one way that Muhammadiyah is fighting green financial crime. Muhammadiyah has assisted rural communities in avoiding land degradation and reducing their reliance on harmful agricultural practices by promoting sustainable farming practices. Muhammadiyah has led community monitoring programs and revitalization efforts to preserve forests in areas at risk of illegal logging.<sup>22</sup>

### Shaping the Advocacy Toward Green Financial Crime

Green financial crime is often the result of the interaction of economic, cultural, and social factors. Religious organizations are uniquely positioned to address some of these fundamental issues by advancing social justice, eradicating poverty, and promoting moral business practices. By addressing problems like corruption in the granting of licenses and permits for resource extraction (e.g., forestry, mining) leads to environmentally harmful such as overexploitation or land grabs and money laundering through environmental crimes, faith-based initiatives are able to help create environmental regulations that reduce the incentives for committing environmental crimes. The most effective local and international faith-based projects show how important religion can be in preventing green financial crime and advancing environmental sustainability. These programs use the vast networks of religious organizations and their moral authority to rally communities, shape public policy, and carry out practical conservation measures. There is great promise to strengthen international efforts to safeguard the

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<https://api.taylorfrancis.com/content/chapters/edit/download?identifierName=doi&identifierValue=10.4324/9780203694442-29&type=chapterpdf>.

<sup>21</sup> Antonino Puglisi and Johan Buitendag, "A Faith-Based Environmental Approach for People and the Planet: Some Inter-Religious Perspectives on Our Earth-Embeddedness," *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies* 78, no. 2 (2022), <https://www.ajol.info/index.php/hts/article/view/248241>; Kiyala, "Faith-Based Organisations and Environmental Peace."

<sup>22</sup> Isa Anshori and Arfan Mu'ammam Muhammad, "Muhammadiyah Cosmopolitan From TeoAnthropocentris Toward World Citizenship," *Journal of Critical Reviews* 7, no. 5 (2020): 1523–28.

environment and stop green finance crime by incorporating religious viewpoints into larger environmental governance frameworks. This method not only supports a holistic approach that considers both the spiritual and material aspects of environmental stewardship, but it also conforms to the ethical precepts of major religions.

With its significant impact on moral conduct and social norms, religion presents itself as a potentially effective but little-used partner in the battle against environmental crimes. Faith-based organizations and religious institutions are uniquely positioned to mobilize people, support sustainable practices based on moral precepts, and advocate for ethical stewardship.<sup>23</sup> The significance of religion in preventing green financial crime has not received enough attention in scholarly literature despite its obvious potential. Religious beliefs, values, and moral and ethical responsibilities play a crucial part in the fight against green financial crime. From a religious standpoint, the weak and impoverished are frequently disproportionately affected by environmental deterioration. Religious teachings emphasize the moral need to maintain the Earth, which provides a solid moral basis for environmental protection. This moral instruction can be a very effective tool for educating people about green financial crimes and inspiring communities to act.<sup>24</sup>

Stressing environmental issues supports preserving all creation and is consistent with Christian demands for justice and compassion. Many religious traditions strongly emphasize the responsibility that humans must take care of creation as stewards of the Earth. Stewardship entails a moral obligation to safeguard the ecosystem and maintain its health for the next generations. Furthermore, a great deal of religions consider nature to be sacred or a representation of the divine.<sup>25</sup> Honoring and respecting the divine presence in the natural world is consistent with prioritizing environmental preservation. Numerous religious doctrines emphasize how all life is interrelated. Since environmental problems upset the harmony and balance many religions attempt to uphold, they are a direct concern.

The movement's strategic advantage is in inspiring sizable crowds of people to take action collectively. A strong grassroots movement for environmental protection might result from highlighting environmental issues. Presuming this capability, community mobilization driven by religious concepts or beliefs can quicken society's awareness of the need to combat green financial crime. Furthermore, religious organizations significantly impact government and policy, which relates to their advocacy opportunities. They can promote stricter environmental laws and policies at the municipal, state, and federal levels by prioritizing environmental issues. However, faith-based initiatives have a special mode of operation: local initiatives. Numerous religious groups have strong ties to their own locales. Numerous religious groups have strong ties to their own locales. Focusing on environmental issues might result in regionally tailored programs that address particular environmental problems in various areas.

Green financial crime and faith-based environmental projects interact in several important ways. Through advocacy, education, and direct action, religious organizations and faith-based projects generally play key roles in the fight against environmental crimes. By speaking out against environmental crimes, religious leaders and faith-based groups can raise awareness among their followers and the general public by using their moral authority. They also engage in community-based activities. In actuality, faith-based organizations frequently operate at the local level, enlisting the help of nearby communities in conservation initiatives that serve as a deterrent to unlawful activity.

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<sup>23</sup> Occhipinti, "Faith-Based Organizations and Development."

<sup>24</sup> Moseley and Feldman, "Faith-Based Environmental Initiatives in Appalachia."

<sup>25</sup> Dawson, "Stewards of the Mountains"; Sehannie, "Faith Based Environmental Stewardship."

## The Sacredness – Stewardship (*khalifah*) and Green Financial Crime

A theoretical framework known as "sacredness of nature" is based on the idea that the natural world has inherent value and spiritual significance. This idea is widely held in many theological traditions, which hold that nature is a manifestation of the divine that should be revered, respected, and cared for rather than just a resource for human use. At the very least, there are three ideas—the intrinsic value of nature, interconnectedness, and divine manifestation—based on earlier studies on the subject. The concept of the sacredness of nature emphasizes the idea that every component of the natural world has intrinsic worth and merits moral concern. On the other hand, the notion of interconnectedness holds that all life forms are interdependent and interconnected.<sup>26</sup> This philosophy emphasizes that any damage to the natural environment eventually affects the entire thing, including people. Natural elements are frequently revered and regarded as sacred, with the belief that they reflect or manifest the divine. Taking care of nature is a kind of devotion since it is believed by many religious traditions that the divine is manifest in the natural world.

Regardless of faith, certain commonalities exist between the notions of indigenous spiritualities and the sacredness of nature in different religions within the context of indigenous spiritualities.<sup>27</sup> Religions conserve and cherish specific environments, such as rivers, forests, and mountains, because they are considered sacred. Sacred sites are believed in Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism. Hinduism holds nature in high regard and regards it as sacred. The conviction that everything in the natural world is infused with divine presence. The Ganges River and Mount Kailash are two examples of holy natural elements revered as heavenly manifestations. Even certain Hindus are concerned about the sacred of plants and animals, like the Tulsi plant and cows, which are revered and protected due to their sacred status.

Christian doctrine frequently emphasizes how sacred creation is and how we must take care of it. They believe the natural world is sacred because it is a creation of God. Christian doctrine holds that we are responsible for the care of creation—not to exploit it, but to preserve and defend it. Nevertheless, other Christian traditions, such as Eastern Orthodoxy, see the natural world as a way to encounter God's grace and presence. This idea is known as the Sacramentality of Nature in Christian teachings.<sup>28</sup> Thomas Berry, a Christian theologian, highlighted the need for a new ecological spirituality as well as the holiness of the Earth.<sup>29</sup> Moreover, indigenous spiritualities frequently hold a sacred view of nature and have strong spiritual attachments to the land. According to animism, everything in nature, including plants, animals, and landscapes, has a spiritual component. Rituals and ceremonies that honor and strive for harmony with the natural environment are common in spiritual traditions. Indigenous beliefs encourage sustainable and considerate resource use by emphasizing reciprocal interactions with nature.<sup>30</sup>

A common understanding of the inherent worth and spiritual significance of the natural world is highlighted by the theoretical framework of the holiness of nature as taught by many religions. Religions provide strong ethical advice for sustainability and environmental stewardship because of their emphasis on reverence, respect, and responsibility. By incorporating these viewpoints, efforts to address ecological issues can be strengthened, and a more peaceful and considerate coexistence between humans and the environment can be

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<sup>26</sup> Moseley and Feldman, "Faith-Based Environmental Initiatives in Appalachia."

<sup>27</sup> Dawson, "Stewards of the Mountains."

<sup>28</sup> Thaut, "The Role of Faith in Christian Faith-Based Humanitarian Agencies."

<sup>29</sup> Thaut.

<sup>30</sup> Elizabeth Bomberg and Alice Hague, "Faith-Based Climate Action in Christian Congregations: Mobilisation and Spiritual Resources," *Local Environment* 23, no. 5 (May 4, 2018): 582–96, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13549839.2018.1449822>.

fostered. Related to sacredness, the religions have diverse stewardship perspectives (*khalifah*). Stewardship is a common theme across many religious traditions, emphasizing the responsibility of humans to care for the Earth and all its inhabitants. In Islam, the concept of stewardship is deeply rooted in the Qur'an and Hadith. Humans are considered stewards or guardians of the Earth, entrusted by Allah to manage its resources responsibly. Theoretically, Qur'an 2:30: "*Behold, your Lord said to the angels: 'I will create a vicegerent on earth. Qur'an 6:141: 'It is He who produces gardens trellised and un trellised, and dates, and tilth with produce of all kinds, and olives, and pomegranates, similar (in kind) and different (in variety): eat of their fruit in their season but render the dues that are proper on the day that the harvest is gathered. But waste not by excess: for Allah loves not the wasters.'*" The concept of Stewardship in Islam is related also *Amana* (Trust). The natural world is a trust from Allah, and humans must protect it. Qur'an 33:72: "*We did indeed offer the Trust to the Heavens and the Earth and the Mountains; but they refused to undertake it, being afraid thereof; but man undertook it; he was indeed unjust and foolish.*" Islamic teachings advocate for a balanced and sustainable approach to the environment, prohibiting wastefulness and encouraging the conservation of resources. Meanwhile, Seyyed Hossein Nasr, a prominent Islamic scholar, advocates for a spiritual and ethical approach to environmental issues, drawing on Islamic teachings.<sup>31</sup>

In Christianity, stewardship is a central theme, with the Bible providing extensive guidance on humanity's role as caretakers of God's creation. Implicitly, it is written in Genesis 1:26-28, "*God grants humans dominion over the Earth, but this dominion is understood as responsible stewardship, not exploitation*". Also, "*Then God said, 'Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.'*" On another hand, it is written Genesis 2:15: "*The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.*" This verse emphasizes the role of humans as caretakers. Christian stewardship involves caring for creation, promoting sustainability, and ensuring that resources are used wisely and equitably.

Furthermore, Hinduism teaches a deep reverence for nature, viewing it as a manifestation of the divine. It is manifested by the concept of *Dharma*. In Hinduism, *Dharma* encompasses duty and righteousness, including duties towards nature. Implicitly, it is written in Bhagavad Gita 3:10-12: "*Emphasizes the reciprocal relationship between humans and nature, urging humans to perform their duties to maintain the balance of the cosmos*". Meanwhile, the spirit of *Ahimsa* (non-violence) emphasizes on extends to all living beings, promoting compassion and protection of the environment. In Hinduism, there is the concept of worship of nature, which means many Hindu rituals and festivals celebrate elements of nature, such as rivers, mountains, and plants, recognizing their divine essence. Consequently, Hindu stewardship involves a holistic approach, integrating spiritual practice with environmental care and sustainability.

On the other hand, Buddhism strongly emphasizes the interconnection of all life and encourages a kind and thoughtful attitude toward the environment.<sup>32</sup> The idea of interdependence and connectivity highlights the core idea of Buddhist teachings: damaging the environment eventually impacts all living things. This is comparable in that it promotes moral behavior, including ethically caring for the environment. Buddhism also promotes a kind-hearted attitude toward the environment through the Principle of *Ahimsa* (Non-Harming), which is applicable to all living things.<sup>33</sup> These concepts also included simplicity and

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<sup>31</sup> Fikri Mahzumi, "Renungan Ekoteologis KH. KPP. Noer Nasroh Hadiningrat Di Pesantren Walisongo Tuban," *ISLAMICA: Jurnal Studi Keislaman* 12, no. 2 (2018): 333–57.

<sup>32</sup> Marco Orrù and Amy Wang, "Durkheim, Religion, and Buddhism," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 1992, 47–61.

<sup>33</sup> Davies, "Green Crime and Victimization."

mindfulness, the latter of which lowers environmental impact by encouraging a simple, sustainable lifestyle through the use of mindfulness in day-to-day activities. Living in peace with the natural world, cultivating compassion, and understanding the interdependence of all things are all part of Buddhist stewardship.

On the other side, lawmakers or decision-makers can incentivize companies to embrace sustainable and moral business practices consistent with religious beliefs. This can be accomplished by creating policies and certifications that honor companies that uphold strict environmental stewardship requirements.<sup>34</sup> When creating environmental regulations, governmental agencies should consider faith-based organizations' perspectives and principles. Policies that are more successful and sensitive to cultural differences can be created by including religious viewpoints on stewardship. Governments and faith-based organizations can collaborate to create and carry out educational initiatives highlighting environmental conservation's moral and spiritual aspects.<sup>35</sup> These initiatives can highlight the moral imperatives of stopping green financial crime and promoting civic virtue. Stronger environmental laws and policies can have the support of religious organizations.

Governments ought to interact with these groups to secure backing for legislative measures intended to counteract financial crimes related to the green economy. This support might be essential to overcoming societal and political resistance to environmental improvements. Religious institutions and NGOs that address environmental issues can benefit from forming alliances. In order to more effectively combat green financial crimes, these partnerships have the potential to increase lobbying efforts, broaden outreach, and gather resources.<sup>36</sup> Finally, religiously motivated environmental initiatives are a valuable and often overlooked weapon in the fight against green finance crime. Policies, governments, and other groups can create more effective and culturally sensitive environmental protection policies by recognizing and utilizing the influence of Christian stewardship principles. By encouraging collaboration, moral behavior, and community involvement, these programs can significantly enhance efforts to address environmental crimes and advance sustainable development.

In conclusion, stewardship is a concept found in many religions that highlights our moral obligation to care for the planet. Whether it be through Islamic *khalifah*, Christian teachings on *dominion and care*, Buddhist "mindfulness", Hindu "love of nature", or Indigenous spiritual traditions, every tradition offers valuable insights and moral guidance for long-term environmental stewardship. Including these religious perspectives can support efforts to address environmental problems and create a more just and sustainable world community. People can be greatly inspired to practice environmental conservation by the spiritual aspects of religion. This spiritual drive can help to sustain a steadfast commitment to environmental stewardship and fight green financial crime.

While variations exist in the approaches taken by green financial crime programs, the significance and immediacy of the findings underscore the imperative need for a synchronized and meticulously planned endeavor encompassing all tactics. The range of implementation strategies reflects how complex and multifaceted the battle against green financial crimes is. Religious organizations can create programs that integrate stewardship teachings with hands-on environmental projects. These initiatives could involve advocacy campaigns, community

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<sup>34</sup> Glaab and Fuchs, "Green Faith?"

<sup>35</sup> Heckenberg and White, "Innovative Approaches to Researching Environmental Crime."

<sup>36</sup> Christopher William Hrynkow, "Greening God? Christian Ecotheology, Environmental Justice, and Socio-Ecological Flourishing," *Environmental Justice* 10, no. 3 (2017): 81–87; Michael J. Lynch et al., "Measuring the Ecological Impact of the Wealthy: Excessive Consumption, Ecological Disorganization, Green Crime, and Justice," *Social Currents* 6, no. 4 (August 2019): 377–95, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2329496519847491>; Mary Alice Young and Deborah Adkins, "The Ascent of Green Crime: Exploring the Nexus between the Net Zero Transition and Organized Crime," *Journal of Financial Crime* 29, no. 3 (2022): 789–91.

service projects, and educational campaigns to encourage moral and sustainable behavior. The findings uphold our moral and ethical duty to protect the environment. The indispensability of protecting the environment and the stewardship lessons found in religion and ethics provide compelling evidence for prompt action against green financial crimes.

Even though there are differences in the approaches taken to implement green financial crime initiatives. Various technological, regulatory, faith-based, and community-based measures are integrated into a comprehensive strategy to tackle environmental crimes. Policy makers, governmental entities, and other organizations must acknowledge the vital requirement of harmonizing these approaches and prioritizing green financial crimes. By taking this action, they can guarantee a more robust and sustainable future for the earth and its people.

## **Conclusion**

Green financial crime, encompassing activities like illegal logging, wildlife trafficking, and garbage trafficking, poses a severe threat to both environmental sustainability and the global economy. These unlawful activities harm ecosystems and undermine efforts to combat climate change and conserve biodiversity. Addressing green financial crime demands a multifaceted approach that considers legal, economic, and social dimensions. Religion's influence on moral behavior and societal norms offers an underutilized yet powerful ally in the fight against environmental crimes. Faith-based organizations and religious institutions are uniquely positioned to mobilize communities, advocate for sustainable practices rooted in ethical stewardship, and influence policy through their moral teachings. Despite this potential, the role of religion in preventing green financial crime has been largely overlooked in academic discourse. This research proposes to bridge that gap by exploring the significance and potential of religious influence in combating green financial crime. The findings of this study suggest that faith-based groups can play a pivotal role in mitigating and preventing green financial crime. Through their stewardship and moral responsibility teachings, religious organizations can shape people's attitudes and behaviors toward the environment on both individual and community levels. By integrating environmental stewardship into their doctrines and practices, religious groups enhance sustainability efforts and contribute to a more equitable and just future. Furthermore, a comparative analysis of faith-based programs across different regions and religious traditions highlighted diverse strategies employed to address environmental issues, emphasizing the relevance of religious teachings in influencing environmental policies and practices. In conclusion, religious organizations have the potential to make significant contributions to global sustainability initiatives. By prioritizing environmental stewardship within their teachings, faith-based organizations can mobilize communities, influence policy, and lead moral and ethical advocacy against green financial crime. While this research underscores the promise of religious involvement in environmental governance, it also recognizes limitations, such as the complexity of measuring religious influence on policy outcomes. Nonetheless, the findings affirm that religion, through its educational impact and community mobilization, can be a critical force in addressing green financial crime and fostering a more sustainable and just world.

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