

# Beyond Anthropocentrism: A Comparative Ecotheological Framework of Khalifah fil-Ard and Imago Dei toward Theo-Ecocentrism

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## Article History:

Received: January 12, 2026

Revised: June 9, 2026

Accepted: June 20, 2026

Published: June 30, 2026

## Citation:

Stefanus, T. A., & Ming, D. (2026). Beyond Anthropocentrism: A Comparative Ecotheological Framework of Khalifah fil-Ard and Imago Dei toward Theo-Ecocentrism. *Jurnal Theologia*, 37(1), 13–26.  
<https://doi.org/10.21580/teo.2026.37.1.30832>

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**Abstract:** The modern ecological crisis is fundamentally driven by anthropocentric paradigms that exploit the biosphere. Addressing this challenge, this study utilizes the theological frameworks of *Khalifah fil-Ard* in Islam and *Imago Dei* in Christianity as its central units of analysis to construct an applicable interfaith environmental ethics model. Employing a qualitative, comparative theological-philosophical approach through library research, this study systematically analyzes classical and contemporary Qur'anic exegeses, biblical texts, and official church documents. The analysis reveals a vital conceptual intersection: both Abrahamic traditions strictly deconstruct despotic anthropocentrism by redefining human authority not as absolute ownership, but as derivative, accountable stewardship (*amanah*). The core novelty of this research lies in its transition from passive, compartmentalized dogmatic comparisons to an integrated "theo-ecocentric" paradigm that binds ecological preservation with absolute spiritual devotion. Ultimately, this study contributes a robust moral foundation and pragmatic, cross-religious action plans—such as eco-places of worship and interfaith environmental alliances—bridging the gap between sacred texts and practical biosphere restoration.

**Keywords:** *Khalifah fil-Ard*, *Imago Dei*, Ecotheology, Theo-ecocentrism, Interfaith Ecological Ethics, Environmental Stewardship, Anthropocentrism Deconstruction

## 1. Introduction

The global ecological crisis affecting the biosphere today is no longer just a technical anomaly or a secular economic pathology, but a real manifestation of humanity's moral crisis and acute spiritual drought (Huda et al., 2023). The hegemony of the modern anthropocentric paradigm has reduced the universe to mechanical entities and passive material commodities, accommodating the desires of limitless consumerism (Sutton, 2024). As a result, the earth is experiencing destructive escalation in the form of extreme climate change, massive deforestation, and the destruction of biodiversity that threatens the existence of all living things (IPCC, 2023). A recent report from the *Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change* (IPCC) (2023) confirms that human exploitative activities are a major driver of global warming, exacerbated by the failure of green political regulation in stemming structural damage (Sutton, 2024). This phenomenon of physical ecosystem damage is essentially an external reflection of the severed ontological-spiritual link between humans, nature, and the Creator (Mufid et al., 2023). When humans position themselves as absolute rulers, interaction with the environment



shifts from compassionate maintenance principles to exploitative tyrannical relations (Saputra & Maharani, 2024). Therefore, solving the environmental crisis can no longer rely solely on a technocentric approach, but rather requires a radical transformation of consciousness or "*ecological repentance*" across faith based on prophetic spirituality (Kirin et al., 2026).

Although the urgency of theological revitalization has been voiced, contemporary ecotheological discourse is still trapped in compartmentalized academic polarization and doctrinal studies (Bowode, 2025). A number of western scholars have historically accused Semitic religion of being the epistemological root of *dominion theology* that legitimizes the tyrannical conquest of the biosphere (White, 1967). In response to this criticism, pluralistic Islamic ecotheological literature is dominated by the articulation of *offiqh al-bi'ah* which examines the capacity of human beings as the obligatory of the earth exclusively and isolatedly (Munawaroh & Syaikhon, 2024). At the intersecting poles, the dialectic of Christian theology focuses on the reconstruction of biblical anthropology in order to transform the bias of conquest (*radah*) into a pillar of *stewardship* (Lala, 2025; Silitonga & Belo, 2025). Various interfaith research has sought to track the equivalence of this sacred teaching (Bowode, 2025; Mufid et al., 2023). However, the majority of previous studies have stagnated at the level of theoretical-dogmatic comparison without touching the area of global praxis (Bowode, 2025).

The current crucial *research gap* is the absence of a conclusive formulation on how the intersection of human theological authority can be drawn into an applicable and universal framework of environmental ethics (Mufid et al., 2023). As a result, the potential of the two largest Abrahamic theological reservoirs has not been able to transform orthodoxy into real ecological orthopraxis at the structural level (Kirin et al., 2026). To fill this research gap, this article aims to conduct an in-depth comparative investigation of the *Khalifah fil-Ard* paradigm in Islam and the *Imago Dei* discourse on Christian theology in order to formulate a pragmatic *framework for interfaith ecological ethics* (Bowode, 2025). Through this theological-philosophical reading, the dogmatic demarcation of the two religions is not at all obscured, but rather explored to extract universal moral values that can be articulated as a common resolution to the crisis of the biosphere (Huda et al., 2023). This literature study methodologically dissects the holy text of the Qur'an (QS. Al-Baqarah: 30) and its tafsir book, juxtaposed with biblical narratives (Genesis 1:26-28) and church magisterium documents such as the encyclical *Laudato Si'* (Arianto & Aluwesia, 2022). Similar studies in Southeast Asia show that local theological synergy is highly effective in reforming applied environmental governance (Kirin et al., 2026). Thus, it is urgent to fill this academic gap in order to convert static dogma into an inclusive ecosystem governance policy instrument for pluralistic societies (Kirin et al., 2026). Through the formulation of a *unified framework*, this research not only contributes to the development of theoretical ecotheology, but also presents concrete ethical resolutions that are able to mitigate the rate of degradation of global ecosystems in a sustainable manner (Mufid et al., 2023).

The central argument defended in this article is that Islamic orthodoxy and Christianity inherently construct a paradigm of "theo-ecocentrism" that radically limits human autonomy through theological accountability to the preservation of creation (Huda et al., 2023). When reinterpreted through the lens of contemporary ecotheology, the caliphate's mandate and representation of the *Imago Dei* actually reduce the hierarchical position of human beings from despotic rulers to cosmic stewards (stewards) (Lala, 2025). Humans are not the absolute owners of the biosphere, but rather mandatarists whose authority is derivative and delegative, where any destruction of nature (*fāsād*) is seen as a form of spiritual betrayal (Saputra & Maharani, 2024).

Empirical evidence suggests that the integration of this spiritual consciousness is able to increase community participation in real ecological restoration actions (Maula et al., 2026). The synthesis of these two fundamental doctrines gives birth to a solid ethical imperative to reject all forms of exploitation of nature based on capitalistic economic greed (Mufid et al., 2023). In conclusion, the hypothesis of this study confirms that Islamic-Christian interfaith theological collaboration is able to provide a strong moral foundation and trigger a radical paradigm shift towards cross-generational ecosystem sustainability (Kirin et al., 2026).

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Deconstructing Anthropocentrism in Modern Ecological Crisis**

The epistemological roots of the contemporary ecosystem crisis stem from the hegemony of the secular anthropocentric paradigm that positions humans as the center of the cosmic value system that has the right to exploit nature for short-term economic benefits (Sutton, 2024). In the mechanistic modern worldview, the universe is reduced to mere passive objects and material commodities that are separate from the dimension of sacredness or moral responsibility of humanity (Sutton, 2024). This utilitarian mindset gives birth to a systemic justification for the accumulation of unlimited capital through the practices of massive deforestation, industrial pollution, and habitat destruction that trigger the extinction of biodiversity globally (IPCC, 2023). Empirical evidence in the field suggests that the failure of secular regulatory instruments and technocentric solutions stems from the inability of such instruments to touch the philosophical roots of human greed as justified by modern philosophy (Huda et al., 2023; Saputra & Maharani, 2024). Consequently, the failure of the current biosphere governance demands a radical deconstruction of this radical anthropocentrism in order to shift towards an alternative perspective that recognizes the organic interdependence between creators, humans, and the environment (Huda et al., 2023). In conclusion, criticism of anthropocentrism is the main entrance to a new environmental ethical reconstruction that re-occupies the moral limits of human activities on earth (Saputra & Maharani, 2024).

This effort at cultural deconstruction is becoming increasingly urgent given the historical accusation that it erroneously places Abrahamic theology as the theological legitimacy for environmental destruction through the concept of domination (Bowode, 2025). Ever since Lynn White Jr.'s provocative thesis emerged, the global academic narrative has often claimed that the Semitic doctrine of creation inherently separates man from nature and grants an absolute right to conquer the biosphere for the fulfillment of anthropological needs (Bowode, 2025). This narrative is reinforced by a literal-partial reading of classical texts that ignores the dimensions of ethical boundaries and human spiritual accountability before the Creator (Mufid et al., 2023). However, contemporary research rejects this simplification by proving that the fundamental error lies not in its theological doctrine, but in the distortion of capitalistic-biased hermeneutic interpretations and ignores the original theo-centrism spirit of sacred texts (Aritonang et al., 2023; Huda et al., 2023). Therefore, the main task of contemporary ecotheology is to straighten out this hermeneutical misconception by re-exploring the essence of the divine mandate that is actually oriented towards preservation (Bowode, 2025). It can be concluded that the deconstruction of modern anthropocentrism entrusts a theological reconstruction capable of transforming the exploitative disposition of human beings into ethical cosmic protectors (Mufid et al., 2023).

## 2.2 The Theological Mandate of Khalifah fil-Ard in Islamic Ecotheology

In the Islamic theological tradition (*Kalam*), the anthropological-ecological conception of man is rooted in the fundamental mandate of the *Khalifah fil-Ard*, which defines man not as the absolute owner of the universe, but as the representative, guardian, and mandatory of God on earth (Saputra & Maharani, 2024). This position of the caliph ontologically binds humans in a primordial covenant (*amanah*) that demands the harmonious maintenance of the biosphere in accordance with divine laws (*Sharia*) (Atikawati et al., 2019; Fatkhullah & Mahmud, 2024). Human authority is derivative and delegative, which means that any exploitative act that causes ecosystem damage (*fasād*) is seen as a gross theological defiance of the absolute sovereignty of the Creator (Kholil, 2024; Saputra & Maharani, 2024). A hermeneutic study of QS. Al-Baqarah verse 30 shows that the function of the caliphate was revealed precisely to prosper the earth (*imarat al-ard*) through ecological justice, not to satisfy the hassat of materialistic greed (Habib & Saeed, 2025; Munawaroh & Syaikhon, 2024). Through this affirmation of cosmological boundaries, Islamic ecotheology strictly integrates the awareness of personal spirituality with collective ecological compliance (Fatkhullah & Mahmud, 2024). In conclusion, the idea of *khalifah* positions environmental protection as a form of direct worship that refuses to place anthropological comfort above the preservation of the natural creation of Allah (Kholil, 2024).

The dimension of originality of this caliphate framework is even more solid when articulated into applied environmental governance laws that go beyond abstract morality (Munawaroh & Syaikhon, 2024). The construction of *fiqh al-bī'ah* (environmental jurisprudence) translates the principles of caliphate into practical regulations that include the protection of nature conservation areas (*hima*), wildlife sanctuaries (*haram*), and the equitable management of water resources for all living things (Maula et al., 2026; Mufid et al., 2023). The integration of prophetic spirituality awareness and empirical conservation action has been shown to be effective in mitigating the rate of environmental degradation on a local community basis through faith-based movements (Kirin et al., 2026; Hidayati & Kurniawan, 2022). However, the great potential of this ecological jurisprudence often encounters structural obstacles due to weak synergy with secular public policy systems in Muslim-majority countries (Munawaroh & Syaikhon, 2024). Therefore, a reconceptualization is needed that bridges this normative theological doctrine so that it is transformed into an inclusive strategic policy in the global public space (Fatkhullah & Mahmud, 2024). In summary, it can be concluded that *Khalifah fil-Ard* presents a rich, comprehensive, and operational foundation of environmental ethics to oversee the sustainability of the biosphere across generations (Kholil, 2024).

## 2.3 Reconceptualizing Imago Dei and Stewardship in Christian Ecotheology

In the structure of Christian theology, man's moral position before the universe is determined through the doctrine of *Imago Dei* (Image of God) which requires man to reflect the character of divine love, care, and justice for all creatures (Lala, 2025). As the image and likeness of God, humans are not given the absolute right to carry out tyrannical conquest (*dominion*), but are called to carry out a responsible *stewardship* function (Lala, 2025; Manongga, 2025). Ecological hermeneutics to the text of Genesis 1:26-28 dismantles ancient misconceptions by asserting that the terms *radah* (to rule) and *kavash* (to conquer) should be read in the corridor of shepherd leadership that protects, cares, and maintains the *integrity of creation* (Karlau, 2022; Me et al., 2025). This violation of the maintenance mandate is seen as an ecological sin that undermines the cosmic covenant relationship

between the Creator, humans, and all other creations (Hutagalung et al., 2025; Simatupang, 2025). Human authority has also been radically redefined as a service responsibility that demands ethical sacrifices for the preservation of the earth, not the satisfaction of tyrannical consumerism (Lala, 2025). In conclusion, the concept of *Imago Dei* places the preservation of nature as a direct reflection of the depth of faith and moral obedience of the church in the midst of a global biosphere crisis (Silitonga & Belo, 2025).

This paradigmatic transformation finds its momentum through the articulation of contemporary magisterium theology that calls for radical ecological repentance as an inclusive form of accountability for the Christian faith (Simatupang, 2025). Through the historical encyclical document *Laudato Si'*, the Catholic Church unequivocally condemns the exploitation of the universe and calls for action to restore the earth as our "common home" through an integral ecological approach (Arianto & Aluwesia, 2022; Silitonga & Belo, 2025). The application of this stewardship theology in the local context has been proven to be able to encourage the birth of green communities, the preservation of customary forests, and the adaptation of environmentally friendly church policies (Pasaribu et al., 2022; Silitonga & Belo, 2025). However, the effectiveness of this doctrine is often weakened due to internal fragmentation in church theology that still separates eschatological-anthropocentric salvation from cosmic salvation (Manongga, 2025). Therefore, interfaith theological synergy is an absolute necessity to strengthen the resonance of this stewardship ethics on a broader public scale (Lala, 2025). Overall, it is concluded that *Imago Dei* provides a solid moral imperative for the Christian community to be actively involved in the global environmental restoration movement for the salvation of the earth (Silitonga & Belo, 2025).

### 3. Methods

The material object of this research is focused on a comparative analysis of the fundamental theological texts that shape environmental ethics in Islam and Christianity, namely the concepts of *Khalifah fil-Arḍ* and *Imago Dei* (Bowode, 2025). These two theological concepts are explored in depth in order to unravel the epistemological foundations of humans in responding to the contemporary global biosphere crisis (Sutton, 2024). Through this focus, sacred texts are no longer seen as static dogmas, but rather as dynamic ethical-moral reservoirs (Bowode, 2025). Therefore, these material objects serve as the main anchor for mapping human ecological responsibility from the perspective of theocentrism (Saputra & Maharani, 2024). In conclusion, the determination of material objects is crucial to ensure the depth of investigation into the pillars of interfaith environmental spirituality (Bowode, 2025).

The design of this study implements a qualitative-comparative approach based on library research oriented to philosophical ecological hermeneutics (Adlini et al., 2022). This design was chosen for its effectiveness in comparing two great thought traditions without reducing the unique theological characteristics of each religion (Adlini et al., 2022). Through a rigid comparative structure, conceptual linkages and philosophical demarcations between doctrines can be identified objectively and systematically (Huda et al., 2023). This textual hermeneutic approach is very relevant to transform dogmatic narratives into practical ethical principles (Saefullah, 2024). Thus, this research design provides a robust methodological blueprint for producing an ethical synthesis of biosphere governance (Huda et al., 2023).

The data sources in this study are strictly classified into primary and secondary sources to maintain academic validity (Saefullah, 2024). The primary data source relies directly on the authoritative text of the Qur'an (QS. Al-Baqarah: 30) and biblical narratives (Genesis 1:26-28), as well as church magisterium documents, including the encyclical *Laudato Si'* (Arianto & Aluwesia, 2022). Meanwhile, secondary data sources include articles from reputable international journals, ecotheology textbooks, and global environmental reports (Kirin et al., 2026). Diversification of these data sources is important to avoid the subjectivity of the researcher's interpretation (Mufid et al., 2023). It can be concluded that the validity of this research is supported by the integration of sacred textual sources and cutting-edge contemporary ecotheological literature (Saefullah, 2024).

The data collection technique is carried out through a systematic documentation method aimed at tracking ecological literature based on specific keywords (Saefullah, 2024). This process involves the extraction of textual units from leading books of commentary, biblical theology, and scientific articles on the theme of *interfaith ecotheology* (Bowode, 2025). All textual data collected are then categorized thematically based on anthropological dimensions, human authority, and nature conservation mandates (Lala, 2025). This strict documentation step minimizes the risk of losing relevant contextual data (Saefullah, 2024). In summary, this data collection technique guarantees that the entire theological corpus analyzed has a high degree of reliability and scientific validity (Saefullah, 2024).

The data analysis technique relies on the *content analysis* method combined with *constant comparative analysis* techniques (Saefullah, 2024). The analysis step begins with data reduction, followed by thematic coding of theological terms such as *radah* and *amanah* (Manongga, 2025). Furthermore, theological synthesis was drawn to construct a new paradigm called "teo-ecocentrism" as a resolution to the biosphere crisis (Aritonang et al., 2023). This hermeneutic step is crucial to ensure that research conclusions are not stuck in a purely abstract comparative plane (Silitonga & Belo, 2025). In conclusion, this data analysis technique succeeded in converting normative sacred texts into a draft of ecosystem restoration ethics that is inclusive in the public (Silitonga & Belo, 2025).

## 4. Result

### 4.1 Deconstructing the Anthropocentric Conception and the Ecotheological Emergence

Textual hermeneutic data show that the roots of environmental degradation go upstream to modern anthropocentric absolutism that erroneously exploits the biosphere order for capitalistic interests (Huda et al., 2023). The Semitic theological tradition is often accused of asymmetrically legitimizing tyrannical domination over non-human entities through the simplification of the interpretation of ancient texts (Bowode, 2025). Based on content analysis data on the corpus of contemporary ecotheology, these historical accusations collapse when confronted with theocentric orthodoxy of sacred texts (Mufid et al., 2023). Literature findings confirm that the global ecosystem crisis manifested in extreme climate fluctuations and massive deforestation is triggered by the separation of the spiritual relationship between humans, nature, and the Creator (Huda et al., 2023). Empirical reports from various international databases confirm that secular technocentric approaches have proven to be fragile without a transformation of transcendental morality (Sutton, 2024). Therefore, research data show that there is an urgent need for "ecological conversion" that revitalizes the role of religious institutions across traditions (Kirin et al., 2026). In conclusion,

preliminary data indicate that the deconstruction of modern anthropocentrism is an absolute prerequisite for stemming the rate of destruction of the earth through the activation of environmental spirituality (Huda et al., 2023).

Textual findings further reveal that the theological reservoir of Islamic and Christian traditions provides a very comprehensive instrument of criticism of the exploitation of nature (Bowode, 2025). Based on the tracking of religious documents, true faith orthopraxis rejects the reduction of the universe to mere passive material commodities that are legitimate to be drained (Mufid et al., 2023). Data show that failure to carry out the divine mandate on earth is directly correlated with the escalation of pollution and massive loss of biodiversity (Huda et al., 2023). Through reconceptualization with the lens of contemporary ecotheology, documentation data proves that the hierarchical superiority of humans in deconstruction becomes a compassionate stewardship responsibility (Lala, 2025). This cross-faith theological synergy offers a philosophical meeting point in which the autonomy of human freedom is strictly limited by transcendental accountability (Kirin et al., 2026). These findings reinforce evidence that theology does not legitimize the tyrannical subjugation of nature but rather underscores ecological interdependence (Mufid et al., 2023). In conclusion, the textual data proves that the Semitic religions have a solid ethical basis for correcting the vanity of the species and restoring the sacredness of the cosmic order (Bowode, 2025).

Comparative literature data also record a substantial gap in previous research that tends to examine ecological doctrines partially and compartmentally (Bowode, 2025). The majority of Islamic ecotheological studies have so far focused exclusively on the articulation of *fiqh al-bī'ah*, while Christian theology has stagnated on the anthropological reconstruction of internal stewardship (Munawaroh & Shaikhon, 2024; Silitonga & Belo, 2025). Data extracted from scientific articles in the last decade confirm the absence of a conclusive formulation capable of uniting these two theological authorities into an integrated, applicable framework (Mufid et al., 2023). This research fills the blank space by presenting conceptual equivalence data between the two fundamental theological pillars as a resolution of the ecosystem crisis (Kirin et al., 2026). Through the objective juxtaposition of hermeneutical data, this study succeeded in tracking the value of equivalence across faiths without syncretizing the static dogmatic-dogmatic realm (Bowode, 2025). It can be concluded that the findings of this research data are consistently directed at transforming theoretical theology into pragmatic moral imperatives in the universal public space (Huda et al., 2023).

#### **4.2 The Islamic Data: Hermeneutika dan Mandat Etis Khalīfah fil-Arḍ**

Hermeneutical data on the Arabic linguistic structure in Islamic theology reveal that the terminology of the caliph comes from the root word *khalafa* which functionally indicates representation or guardianship (Saputra & Maharani, 2024). Based on the data of exegesis analysis of Surah Al-Baqarah verse 30, human beings as *khalīfah fil-arḍ* place them as representatives of Allah in terrestrial space, not as absolute rulers (Kholil, 2024). Textual evidence notes an ancient dialectic that affirms that human existence was cosmically designed to maintain the balance of ecosystems (*islāh*) and is absolutely forbidden to produce massive ecological destruction (*fasād fil-arḍ*) (Fatkhullah & Mahmud, 2024). Contemporary interpretive documentation data confirm that the management of the biosphere by humans is strictly limited by the doctrine of monotheism which views nature as divine theophany (Saputra & Maharani, 2024). Consequently, any tyrannical exploitation of nature is positioned as a direct violation of the absolute sovereignty of the Creator

(Kholil, 2024). In conclusion, Islamic ecotheological data radically reject despotic anthropocentrism by positioning humans as conservation agents who are fully responsible for the preservation of ecosystems (Fatkhullah & Mahmud, 2024).

Empirical data on the realization of the concept of caliphate is normatively manifested through the doctrine of *trust* or spiritual mandate that binds human ecological morality (Atikawati et al., 2019). The findings of textual data show that the relationship between humans and the environment has been completely restructured from a relationship of control to a model of sustainable stewardship (Fatkhullah & Mahmud, 2024). The earth's biosphere is an entity delegated by Allah to humans with sharia obligations to be cared for and prospered (Munawaroh & Syaikhon, 2024). Contemporary research data prove that human failure to maintain this ecological mandate is the main cause of the current global climate crisis (Atikawati et al., 2019). Therefore, Islamic jurisprudence data confirms that the essential task of humanity is to ensure ecosystem stability so that the carrying capacity of life remains balanced for all species across generations (Saputra & Maharani, 2024). In summary, it can be concluded that Islamic normative data requires wise biosphere governance as the highest form of manifestation of worship and theological submission (Kholil, 2024).

The content analysis of the practical application of the concept of caliphate is also supported by highly operational environmental jurisprudence literature (*fiqh al-bi'ah*) (Munawaroh & Syaikhon, 2024). The data notes that the Islamic framework of environmental ethics translates the macro principles of the caliphate into micro-regulations such as the protection of nature reserve areas (*himā*) and the conservation of water resources (Mufid et al., 2023). Evidence from recent research shows that the activation of ecological spirituality based on sacred texts is effective in increasing the participation of local communities in environmental restoration actions (Maula et al., 2026). The synergy between the doctrine of the caliphate and *sustainable management* is able to provide concrete solutions in mitigating terrestrial damage (Fatkhullah & Mahmud, 2024). However, the data also show that the potential of this theological reservoir is often hampered by the dominance of secular capitalistic economic systems that ignore the intrinsic value of the universe (Saputra & Maharani, 2024). In conclusion, Islamic textual data presents a strong moral foundation to reduce human autonomy and enforce ecological justice persistently (Kholil, 2024).

#### **4.3 The Christian Data: The Conception of the Imago Dei and the Cosmic Stewardship**

Christian theological anthropological data show that human moral existence before the universe is centered on the dogma of human creation as *Imago Dei* (the image and likeness of God) (Lala, 2025). Based on exegesis data on the narrative of Genesis 1:26-28, the bestowal of this status does not project human beings as biological entities of despotic rulers, but as divine mandates (Karlau, 2022). Textual evidence reveals that the term "image and likeness" does not refer to physical resemblance at all, but rather a relational and functional attribution that is attached to the character of God (Silitonga & Belo, 2025). Humans are designed as terrestrial representatives to manage the earth, where the autonomy is obliged to be subject to the absolute authority of God as the sole Owner of the universe (Manongga, 2025). Religious document data confirms that the attachment of *Imago Dei* status has logical consequences in the form of a "*cultural mandate*" that is oriented towards the preservation of creations (Karlau, 2022). In conclusion, biblical data expressly deconstructs the claim



of absolute human ownership of the biosphere and reduces it to a derivative authority (Simatupang, 2025).

The findings of contemporary hermeneutic data have succeeded in dismantling the simplification of past interpretations of the Hebrew terminology *radah* (to master) and *kavash* (to conquer) (Me et al., 2025). Documentation data shows that such linguistic misconceptions have been abused for centuries to legitimize the tyranny and exploitation of nature that has led to a global ecological crisis (Hutagalung et al., 2025). Contemporary Christian ecotheology radically deconstructs this erroneous view by asserting that the right to "rule" must be reflected in the just, loving, and nurturing character of God's government (Lala, 2025). Therefore, theological data confirm the paradigm shift from the concept of tyrannical domination to the principle of stewardship (Silitonga & Belo, 2025). Humans are called to act as protectors who maintain the integrity of *creation* for the glory of the Creator (Karlau, 2022). It can be concluded that *stewardship theology data* restores the awareness that environmental preservation is an integral part of the work of cosmic salvation and essential worship of the church (Simatupang, 2025).

Empirical data on this paradigm transformation is strengthened by official magisterium documents, in particular through content analysis of the encyclical *Laudato Si'* (Arianto & Aluwesia, 2022). The data notes that church institutions globally call for the importance of "ecological repentance" in order to restore the destruction of the earth as a common home for all beings (Pope Francis, 2015). Research findings in various local Christian communities show that the implementation of this stewardship theology is able to encourage forest ecosystem restoration and applied water management (Pasaribu et al., 2022; Silitonga & Belo, 2025). Human relational authority as *Imago Dei* emanates intrinsically when humans reflect God's love through the protection of biodiversity across generations (Manongga, 2025). However, the data also indicate that there are obstacles in the form of internal theological fragmentation that still separates spiritual salvation from ecological justice (Hutagalung et al., 2025). In conclusion, textual data and official Christian teachings present a solid ethical imperative to reject destructive anthropocentric orders and enforce sustainable biosphere governance (Silitonga & Belo, 2025).

## 5. Discussion

The synthesis of data findings consistently shows that the ecotheological discourse between Islam and Christianity manifests a very strong functional equivalence regarding the ontological position of man as a divine mandatary who does not have absolute ownership rights over the biosphere (Bowode, 2025). Through the integration of content analysis, the draft data proves that the conception of *Khalifah fil-Ard* and *Imago Dei* radically reduces human autonomy from despotic rulers to cosmic stewards whose roles are strictly limited by transcendental accountability (Huda et al., 2023). The textual evidence of these two Abrahamic traditions confirms the convergence on the paradigm of theocentrism-ethics, in which the hierarchical position of human beings is converted into a just interdependent relationship for the preservation of the universe (Mufid et al., 2023). This empirical data framework directly answers the research problem by asserting that human domination of nature is not a theological license for capitalistic exploitation, but rather a moral responsibility tied to the mandate of maintenance (Saputra & Maharani, 2024). In conclusion, this summary of findings confirms that both Islam and Christianity place environmental preservation as

the highest form of manifestation of worship and absolute submission to the Creator (Kirin et al., 2026).

An in-depth reflection on the research data reveals that the recovery of physical ecosystem damage requires a radical transformation of consciousness or "ecological repentance" from anthropocentrism to theo-ecocentrism (Mufid et al., 2023). The author reflects that when humans are uprooted from their spiritual roots, interaction with the terrestrial environment will turn into tyrannical and destructive power relations (Huda et al., 2023). Based on contemporary ecotheological reconceptualization, the discovery of this conceptual meeting point gives birth to an inclusive ecological morality, in which God becomes the central fulcrum of all cosmic realities that manifest in the form of biosphere balance (Bowode, 2025). Evidence from recent research confirms that the failure of the secular approach stems from its inability to touch the aspects of modern human spiritual drought that legitimize the infinite exploitation of nature (Sutton, 2024). Therefore, the reflection on these findings proves that strengthening the transcendental dimension is crucial to correct *speciesism* and restore the ontological status of nature as a sacred entity before God (Kirin et al., 2026). In conclusion, the paradigm shift towards theo-ecocentrism has become a new spiritual energy that is able to reduce the persistent rate of global environmental decadence (Mufid et al., 2023).

A philosophical interpretation of the data findings reveals an asymmetrical nuance on the ontological basis and ethical approach of the two doctrines, although both are sharply intertwined at the level of ecological praxis (Bowode, 2025). In Islamic theology, the interpretation of the caliph's mandate is closely related to the juridical-moral dimension and constitutional compliance with the cosmic law of Allah through the fulfillment of the primordial covenant (*amanah*) (Saputra & Maharani, 2024). In contrast, Christian theology interprets *Imago Dei* from the conception of relational participation and a direct reflection of God's character of love and care for the integrity of His creation (Lala, 2025). Contemporary exegesis data support this interpretation by showing that if the Islamic approach emphasizes the constitutional submission of sharia law, then Christianity emphasizes the representation of divine love (Mufid et al., 2023). These different conceptual nuances should not be viewed as dogmatic separatists, but rather as complementary treasures in enriching the formulation of practical environmental ethics (Kirin et al., 2026). It can be concluded that the interpretation of the results of this research strengthens the theoretical construction that the difference in ontological basis actually strengthens the building of cross-faith ethical imperatives in overcoming the global ecological crisis (Huda et al., 2023).

A comparison with previous literature shows that this article has succeeded in bridging the polarization of the focus of studies that has so far separated the dialectic of Islamic and Christian ecotheology into a compartmental wall of theological tradition (Bowode, 2025). Previous research has generally examined the capacity of human beings as the mandatory rulers of the earth in isolation from the concept *offiqh al-bī'ah* or limited to the deconstruction of the internal *dominion* bias of the church (Munawaroh & Syaikhon, 2024; Silitonga & Belo, 2025). The findings of this study go beyond the comparative theoretical-dogmatic stagnation by presenting an applicative and universal applicable and universal framework for interfaith environmental ethics (Kirin et al., 2026). Evidence from a comparison of academic documents proves that this conceptual synthesis is able to transform passive theological discourse into collective ecological restoration actions that are responsive to the global climate crisis (Mufid et al., 2023). This shift from static comparative studies to pragmatic

ethical formulations is the main differentiator as well as the value *of the scientific novelty* of this article in the midst of contemporary ecotheological discourse (Huda et al., 2023). In conclusion, this comparison confirms the article's position as a joint resolution that facilitates the integration of a formidable interfaith moral front (Bowode, 2025).

This *follow-up* of this theological comparative synthesis demands an immediate conversion from the normative dogma level of sacred texts to the realm of implementation of applied environmental governance practices in pluralistic societies (Kirin et al., 2026). The framework for interfaith environmental ethics that has been formulated must be followed up through real strategic policies, such as the development of green *places of worship and the* alliance for biosphere restoration actions (Mufid et al., 2023). Empirical data show that this prophetic synergy is able to mobilize the moral consciousness of grassroots communities massively as a catalyst for the water and forest conservation movement (Maula et al., 2026). Therefore, public policy makers and religious leaders must work hand in hand to integrate this moral imperative of theo-ecocentrism into secular environmental law regulations in order to have structural strength (Munawaroh & Syaikhon, 2024). In conclusion, the follow-up to this research recommends the need for future empirical research to measure the effectiveness of internalizing the values *of Khalifah and Imago Dei* in reforming the ecological behavior of society in a sustainable manner (Huda et al., 2023).

## 6. Conclusion

This study succeeded in concluding an important finding regarding the existence of a very strong functional-ethical convergence between the doctrine *of Khalifah fil-Arḍ* in Islam and *the Imago Dei* in Christianity regarding the ontological position of humans in the universe. These two Abrahamic traditions radically reject the claim of despotic anthropocentrism that places man as an absolute ruler who is free to exploit the cosmic order for mere material gain. Through the reading of the ecotheological lens, textual documentation data confirm that human ecological authority is proportionally reduced to God's representative or *steward* who bears full moral responsibility (*trust*) to care for the balance of the biosphere. This derivative and delegative authority binds the autonomy of human freedom to strict theological accountability before the Creator (Saputra & Maharani, 2024). As a result, this crucial finding proves that environmental protection is lived by both religions not just as a social encouragement, but as the highest form of complete manifestation of faith, obedience, and worship.

Academically, this research makes a significant scientific contribution in bridging the polarization of the focus of interfaith theological studies which has tended to be studied compartmentally and isolatedly. The main contribution of this article lies in its success in transforming static theoretical-dogmatic dialogue into a universal and pragmatic unified framework for environmental ethics. This theological synthesis formulates a new paradigm called "theo-ecocentrism" that is able to correct species pride (*speciesism*) and restore the ontological status of the universe as a sacred entity of intrinsic value before God. This conceptual integration also breaks the one-sided historical accusation that Semitic religion is the epistemological root of the theology of tyrannical domination over non-human beings. By presenting a strong cross-faith moral foundation, this study enriches the treasures of public theology and provides concrete ethical resolutions that are responsive to the global ecological crisis.

Although it presents a solid synthesis, this literature research has limitations because the realm of analysis still relies on the normative conceptual reasoning of authoritative texts. These methodological limitations open up space for the formulation of urgent follow-up research suggestions to test the effectiveness of the implementation of this theo-ecocentrism paradigm at the empirical level of pluralistic societies. Future research is suggested to adopt a field qualitative approach or mixed case studies to measure the extent to which the internalization of caliphate values and stewardship is able to reform the ecological behavior of grassroots communities. The next research focus can be directed to evaluate the effectiveness of applied biosphere governance movements, such as *green places of worship* programs and international conservation alliances. Through this advanced research agenda, this theological comparison does not only stop as an abstract literature discourse, but transforms into an operational guide in formulating sustainable global environmental conservation policies.

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