




The Integration of Spirituality and Ethics in the Construction of Tawhid-Based Ecotheology

Syawaluddin Hanafi^{1*}, Andi Yaqub², Rahmatun Nair¹, Abdul Muid Nawawi³, Arini Pratiwi², Muspita Sari¹

¹Institut Agama Islam Negeri Bone, Indonesia

²Institut Agama Islam Negeri Kendari, Indonesia

³Universitas Islam Negeri Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta, Indonesia

Corresponding Author  Syawaluddin.hanafi9@gmail.com ^{1*}

ABSTRACT

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This study aims to reconstruct the paradigm of ecotheology as a response to the global ecological crisis rooted in anthropocentrism and the secularization of the relationship between humans and nature. The research employs a qualitative method using a literature review approach and hermeneutical analysis of Islamic theological sources, particularly the concepts of cosmic *tawhid*, *khalifah* (stewardship), *mizān* (balance), the prohibition of *fasād* (corruption/destruction), and *ihsan* (moral excellence). The findings indicate that an ideal ecotheological paradigm should be developed through the integration of spiritual awareness, ecological ethics, and sustainable social praxis. Ecotheology functions not merely as an environmental ethic, but as an epistemological foundation and civilizational orientation that affirms the interconnectedness of humans, nature, and God. The resulting operational model of ecotheology positions spirituality as the basis of ecological consciousness, ethics as moral regulation, and ecological action as its concrete implementation in social life.

Keywords: Ecotheology, Cosmic *Tawhid*, *Khalifah*, *Mizān*, Ecological Ethics,

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INTRODUCTION

The global ecological crisis in the twenty-first century has become one of the most serious issues in modern human civilization. Phenomena such as climate change, biodiversity extinction, soil degradation, marine pollution, watershed destruction, ecological disasters, and the decline of clean air quality represent critical symptoms that threaten the sustainability of life on Earth. Scientific reports issued by various international institutions, including the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), indicate that environmental degradation has reached a level that endangers the continuity of ecosystems and human civilization. In many regions of the world, climate change has triggered extreme weather events, polar ice melting, rising sea levels, and the expansion of drought-prone areas. This situation not only causes material losses but also threatens global social, political, and moral stability.

At the same time, the development of modernity grounded in instrumental rationality and a capitalist economic system has fostered an exploitative paradigm in the human–nature relationship (White, 1967). Nature is regarded as a material object that can be extracted without limit in order to satisfy ambitions of economic productivity, industrial growth, and

global market expansion (Khoirul Umam, Ahmad Havid Jakiyudin, Muhammad Sovian Hidayat, 2024). This paradigm is strongly influenced by an anthropocentric worldview, which positions human beings as the center and ultimate purpose of the entire structure of existence. Consequently, all non-human beings and elements are treated merely as resources, rather than as entities possessing intrinsic value. In this context, various ecological crises become the logical consequences of a reduced epistemological, ethical, and spiritual outlook.

Environmental degradation is not merely the result of policy failure or technological limitations; more profoundly, it reflects a crisis of civilization and a crisis of values (Taufikin, 2025) a crisis of human spirituality in articulating its existence within the cosmos (Ahmad Sururi, Arqom Kuswanjono, 2020). Modern humanity, shaped by positivist and secular paradigms, tends to detach itself from a transcendental relationship with nature. Nature is no longer perceived as *āyāt* (signs of the existence and greatness of God), but rather as an economic commodity and an object of technological manipulation (Sanjotis, 2012). This condition has led to the loss of the dimension of sacredness within the structure of nature's existence. It is therefore understandable that "erroneous moral decisions" occur in the use of natural resources, since their moral and theological foundations have been severed (Gufon, 2016).

Within this framework, the study of ecotheology becomes relevant as an alternative paradigm. Ecotheology seeks to restore the relationship between humans, nature, and God as an interdependent unity within a single system of existence (Yakub et al., 2023). It does not merely address the obligation to protect the environment, but also explores the spiritual, metaphysical, moral, and theological foundations underlying human ecological action (Rizk, 2014). However, existing ecotheological approaches still present fundamental limitations. Many formulations remain confined to normative or moral discourse, without reaching the deeper epistemological dimension necessary to transform humanity's worldview toward nature.

Ecological Crisis as an Epistemological and Spiritual Crisis

The ecological crisis occurring worldwide may be understood as an epistemological crisis, as humanity has lost a holistic cosmic worldview (Ahmad Sururi, Arqom Kuswanjono, 2020). Modernity teaches that knowledge must be measurable, experimental, and value-free. Within this framework, nature is no longer understood as a living entity imbued with meaning, but merely as a collection of material elements governed by mechanistic laws. Such a perspective removes meaning, value, and spiritual awareness from the perception of natural reality. As a result, human beings are no longer able to experience an existential interconnectedness with the environment.

On the other hand, the ecological crisis is also a spiritual crisis (Yudha Nugraha Manguju, 2022). When metaphysical and theological views of nature as God's creation fade, moral awareness to protect and honor it also diminishes. In many religious traditions, including Islam, nature is understood as part of a cosmic system with a purposeful creation. Nature is regarded as *āyāt* (signs) that point to the existence, power, and wisdom of God. Therefore, damaging nature is equivalent to disrupting the divine order (Zuhdi, 2015). However, when these spiritual values lose their practical function in modern life, the human-nature relationship becomes dominative. Hence, reconstructing the paradigm of ecotheology is necessary not merely as environmental discourse, but as a civilizational renewal project that addresses the root of humanity's relationship with God, nature, and itself.

Anthropocentrism as the Root of the Environmental Crisis

Anthropocentrism is a worldview that places human beings at the center of all reality (Sarah & Hambali, 2023). Within this framework, nature is understood primarily as a means to fulfill human needs. The value of forests, oceans, land, water, and other living beings is measured according to their usefulness for human interests. Such a perspective creates an imbalanced relationship between humans and nature, in which humans are positioned as subjects entitled to regulate, control, and even exploit nature without feeling a moral obligation to preserve its sustainability. When nature is viewed merely as an economic object or resource, environmental destruction such as deforestation, pollution, and overexploitation

is often regarded as normal, legitimate, and even necessary for human progress.

This anthropocentric paradigm is rooted not only in modern economic logic but is also reinforced by technocratic modes of thinking that separate humans from their ecosystems (Mudin et al., 2025). Humans are perceived as if they stand outside of and above nature, rather than as part of it. Consequently, ethical considerations and moral limitations in dealing with the environment become weakened. Nature is no longer seen as an entity with intrinsic value, but merely as an instrument that may be used and depleted as long as it benefits humanity.

Ecotheology emerges as a critical effort to deconstruct this worldview. It proposes a cosmocentric paradigm one that views all beings, including humans, animals, plants, and natural elements, as part of an interconnected and interdependent cosmic unity. In this paradigm, humans are no longer the sole center, but rather members of an “ecological family” who bear ethical responsibility for the sustainability of life as a whole. The human–nature relationship is understood as reciprocal rather than as one of unilateral domination (Prakosa, 2025).

In the Islamic context, this idea aligns with the concept of *khalifah* (stewardship). Although humans are granted a distinguished position, this status does not constitute a mandate for absolute domination over nature. Rather, *khalifah* is more appropriately understood as an *amanah* (trust) a moral and spiritual responsibility to maintain balance, care for creation, and ensure sustainability for future generations (Noviani, 2024). From this perspective, nature does not belong to humans; it is a divine trust that must be preserved with prudence and justice.

In practice, however, the concept of *khalifah* has often been narrowed in meaning. It is frequently interpreted in technocratic and anthropocentric terms, as though it provides theological legitimacy for human domination over nature. Such interpretations give rise to what may be termed religious anthropocentrism—the use of religious language and symbols to justify environmental exploitation. When *khalifah* is understood as a right to control rather than a duty to care, Islamic ethical values such as balance (*mizān*), the prohibition of corruption or destruction (*fasād*), and intergenerational responsibility are marginalized.

Therefore, a reconstructive reinterpretation of the concept of *khalifah* is essential. This reinterpretation must shift the focus from power to responsibility, from domination to care, and from exploitation to sustainability. In doing so, the concept of *khalifah* can function as an ethical foundation for building a more just and harmonious relationship between humans and nature, while preventing religious understanding from falling into the trap of anthropocentrism that contradicts the ecological spirit of Islam itself.

The Capitalist Economic Paradigm and the Global Ecological Crisis

The global economic system based on capitalism has become one of the primary drivers of environmental exploitation (Faza & Mufid, 2025). Capitalism operates on the principle of infinite growth, whereas the Earth’s ecosystems possess limited carrying capacity. The global competition for resource extraction, large-scale development, excessive urbanization, and unsustainable consumption are material consequences of this paradigm. Ecotheology, therefore, cannot be limited to promoting moral awareness alone; it must also possess the courage to critically examine economic structures that undermine ecological sustainability (Mudin et al., 2025).

The Need for the Reconstruction of Ecotheology

The reconstruction of the ecotheological paradigm must encompass:

Aspek	Kebutuhan Rekonstruksi
Ontological	Restructuring the understanding of the relationship between humans and nature as a cosmic unity
Epistemological	Returning ma'rifah kauniyyah (wisdom in reading natural verses)
Etic	Building an ecological ethics system based on ihsan and the interconnectedness of creatures

Aspek	Kebutuhan Rekonstruksi
Spiritual	Reviving transcendental consciousness in relation to nature
Social Practice	Produce models of sustainable ecological action in society

In other words, an ecotheological perspective is insufficient if it remains confined to the normative level limited to religious discourse that articulates ideal teachings about humanity's obligation to protect nature, prohibitions against environmental destruction, and moral exhortations to live in harmony with God's creation. Normative ecotheology often appears in the form of concepts, doctrines, sermons, or religious texts that are rich in ethical values, yet do not necessarily produce tangible impacts on behavior or policy. At this stage, ecotheology functions merely as an abstract ethical guideline that has not fully engaged with the social, economic, and political realities that generate environmental crises.

Therefore, the ecotheological paradigm must shift toward an operational and transformative ecotheology (Mudin et al., 2025). This means that theological values concerning the environment must be translated into concrete actions, practical policies, and structural changes that shape how humans interact with nature. Ecotheology should no longer speak solely about "what ought to be" according to religious teachings, but also about "how" these values can be realized in everyday life—ranging from consumption patterns and natural resource management to spatial planning and development policies.

Transformative operational ecotheology requires the active involvement of religious institutions, educators, policymakers, and the broader community in transforming religious values into forces for change (Ramadhan & Anwar, 2025). For example, teachings about *amanah* (trust) and responsibility toward nature should not only be delivered in sermons, but also integrated into educational curricula, community empowerment programs, environmental regulations, and community-based social movements. Through this approach, religion does not merely serve as a source of moral legitimacy, but becomes a driving force for ecological transformation.

The transformation envisioned is not limited to individual change, but extends to collective and systemic shifts in mindset. Operational ecotheology encourages a transition from exploitative development models toward just and sustainable development (Daroini et al., n.d.). It challenges economic structures and public policies that damage the environment by offering alternatives rooted in spiritual values and religious ethics. Thus, the shift from normative ecotheology to transformative operational ecotheology constitutes a crucial step to ensure that environmental theology does not remain an ideal discourse, but instead plays a real and sustainable role in addressing the ecological crisis.

Ecotheology as a Basis for the Reorientation of Civilization

Reconstructing the ecotheological paradigm is not merely a theological endeavor, but an effort to redesign the direction of civilization itself (Surahman, 2021). A civilization built upon exploitation will ultimately culminate in ecological and social destruction. Conversely, a civilization grounded in interconnectedness, balance, and respect for all creation will generate a harmonious and sustainable order. In Islam, principles such as *mīzān* (balance), *amanah* (trust), *ihsan* (moral excellence), and the prohibition of *fasād* (corruption or destruction) provide both philosophical and practical foundations for an ecological civilization (Haris et al., 2025).

Therefore, an operational paradigm of Islamic ecotheology is required one capable of being translated into:

- Environmental regulations
- Spiritual-ecological education
- Green economic policies
- Sustainable spatial and habitat management
- Faith-based environmental social movements

Based on the background outlined above demonstrating that the global ecological crisis is not merely environmental degradation but, more profoundly, a crisis of values, spirituality, and human worldview, this research seeks to comprehensively reformulate the paradigm of ecotheology. The fundamental issue is that many theological approaches to

environmental concerns remain normative and moralistic, and have not fully transformed the way humans perceive and treat nature. Existing forms of ecotheology tend to be confined to declarative ethical discourse, while ecological destruction continues through economic, social, and cultural systems that are environmentally unsustainable.

This situation raises a critical question: why has ecotheology, which inherently contains spiritual awareness of the relationship between humans, nature, and God, not succeeded in significantly transforming ecological behavior? This question points to the need to reassess the epistemological, ethical, and spiritual structures of ecotheology itself. Accordingly, the research problem does not only concern how ecotheology is understood conceptually, but also how it can be reconstructed into an operational paradigm capable of guiding humanity toward a sustainable and dignified ecological relationship.

In line with these concerns, this study aims to formulate a model of ecotheology that is not only conceptual but also applicable. The objective is not merely to understand the theological relationship between humans, nature, and God, but to reorganize humanity's practical orientation in living an ecological life on Earth. Thus, the research has a dual purpose: theoretical and practical.

Theoretically, this study aims to:

- Identify and analyze the epistemological, theological, and spiritual roots underlying the global ecological crisis.
- Critically examine existing constructions of ecotheology both within Islamic thought and global discourse in order to uncover their paradigmatic weaknesses.
- Formulate a new ecotheological paradigm emphasizing cosmic interconnectedness, ecological balance, *amanah* as *khalifah* (stewardship), and the ethics of ecological *ihsan*.

Practically, this study aims to:

- Develop an operational model of ecotheology that can be implemented in policy-making, education, environmental culture, and social movements.
- Construct a spirituality-based ecological action framework capable of transforming how humans perceive, experience, and manage their living environment.

Ecotheology: Theoretical Study

1. Conceptualization of Ecotheology

Etymologically, the term *ecotheology* derives from two root words: *eco* (from the Greek *oikos*, meaning “home,” “habitat,” or “order of life”) and *theologia* (the study of God) (Zulfikar & Azkiya, 2023). Thus, ecotheology can be understood as a branch of theology that examines the relationship between God, humanity, and nature within a unified existential system. Ecotheology does not merely address the moral obligation to protect the environment; rather, it seeks to reconstruct the spiritual and metaphysical foundations underlying the human relationship with the ecological world.

Ecotheology emerges as a critique of modern modes of thought that separate God from nature and humanity from the cosmos. Modern thinking tends to regard nature as a material entity that can be treated functionally for human interests. This perspective produces patterns of exploitation that systematically lead to ecological destruction (Wasil & Muizudin, 2023). Therefore, ecotheology endeavors to construct an alternative worldview—one that restores the awareness that humans are integral parts of a sacred and interconnected cosmic order.

Conceptually, ecotheology comprises three primary dimensions:

1. **Theological Dimension** – Reinterpreting doctrines about God, creation, and humanity in ways that emphasize divine sovereignty over nature and humanity's responsibility as part of creation, not as its absolute ruler.
2. **Ethical Dimension** – Formulating ecological ethics rooted in spiritual accountability, justice, balance, and compassion toward all beings.
3. **Practical (Praxis) Dimension** – Translating theological and ethical insights into concrete actions, policies, and lifestyles that promote environmental sustainability and social justice.

Through these three dimensions, ecotheology functions not only as a theoretical framework but also as a transformative paradigm capable of reshaping humanity's relationship with the natural world.

Conceptually, ecotheology encompasses three principal dimensions:

Dimensi	Penjelasan	Implikasi
Ontological	Nature is seen as God's creation which has intrinsic value.	Nature must be respected, not exploited
Epistemological	Humans know God through kauniyyah verses	Contemplation of nature is a spiritual path
Ethical	The relationship between humans and nature is subject to moral law.	Ecological behavior becomes worship

As previously explained, ecotheology maintains that the relationship between humans and nature is determined not only by technological capacity or economic considerations, but also by the depth of spirituality and moral responsibility possessed by human beings as conscious creatures. Therefore, ecotheology seeks to integrate three essential dimensions: spirituality, namely the awareness of God's presence and sovereignty in every element of nature; morality, namely the ethical values and principles that regulate how humans ought to relate to the environment; and ecological praxis, namely concrete actions to care for, preserve, and maintain the balance of ecosystems.

These three dimensions are not understood as separate components, but as an interconnected and mutually reinforcing unity that shapes a holistic and sustainable relationship between humans, nature, and God. Through this integration, ecotheology offers not only a conceptual framework, but also a clear direction for behavior and practical action in safeguarding the sustainability of life.

2. History and Development of Ecotheological Thought

Ecological awareness within religious traditions is not a new phenomenon. In many early religious traditions, nature was regarded as part of a sacred reality. However, in modern civilization particularly after the Industrial Revolution the advancement of science and technology gave rise to a mechanistic paradigm that viewed nature as a machine governed solely by the laws of physics (Sihombing, 2019).

The ecotheological movement began to gain prominence in the twentieth century (Suteja, 2009), especially following the publication of Lynn White Jr.'s 1967 article, *The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis*. In this work, White argued that the ecological crisis was partly rooted in religious interpretations that positioned humans as absolute rulers over nature (Suteja, 2009). This critique stimulated the emergence of theological currents emphasizing the need to reorient environmental spirituality and reinterpret religious teachings in ways that promote ecological responsibility rather than domination.

In the context of global studies, several variants of ecotheology are known:

Tradisi	Karakteristik Ekoteologi	Tokoh Kunci
Christian	Emphasis on creation and stewardship of the earth	Paul Santmire, Leonardo Boff
Jewish	"Humans as guardians of the Garden of Eden"	David Seidenberg

Tradisi	Karakteristik Ekoteologi	Tokoh Kunci
Hinduism and Buddhism	Nature as part of cosmic consciousness	Vandana Shiva
Islam	Cosmology of monotheism and human trust as caliph	Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Fazlun Khalid

Islamic ecotheology began to show significant development in the 1990s, coinciding with the growing awareness among Muslim communities of the ecological impacts caused by processes of modernization and industrialization. During this period, the Muslim world increasingly recognized that accelerated economic and technological development not only generated material progress, but also resulted in environmental degradation, natural resource exploitation, and the erosion of ethical values in humanity's treatment of nature.

This awareness encouraged Muslim scholars, theologians, and intellectuals to reexamine Islamic teachings related to creation, humanity's *amanah* (trust) as *khalifah* (steward), as well as the principles of balance and the prohibition of corruption or destruction (*fasād*). From this point onward, Islamic ecotheology developed as an effort to reformulate the relationship between humans, nature, and God within a theological framework that is responsive to contemporary ecological challenges.

3. The Global Ecological Crisis: Reality and Root Causes

The global ecological crisis is not merely a technical problem, but a crisis of civilization. Phenomena such as:

- Global warming and climate change
- Massive deforestation
- Water, air, and soil pollution
- Loss of biodiversity
- Food and clean water crises
- Recurrent ecological disasters (floods, droughts, forest fires) demonstrate that the relationship between humans and nature has been fundamentally damaged. These conditions indicate not only environmental mismanagement, but also a deeper disruption in humanity's worldview, value system, and spiritual orientation toward the natural world.

The root of the problem can be summarized in three forms of paradigm errors:

Akar Krisis	Penjelasan
Anthropocentrism	Humans are seen as the center and goal of the cosmos
Materialisme & Sekularisme	Nature is separated from the sacred dimension
Extractive Capitalism	Economic growth is an absolute goal

Efforts to resolve the ecological crisis cannot be limited to technical measures such as waste management, the use of environmentally friendly technologies, or emission reduction policies (Wasil & Muizudin, 2023). Technical approaches are important, but they only address superficial symptoms. Ecological problems are fundamentally rooted deeper, namely in how humans view nature, understand their place in the ecosystem, and interpret life's values. Therefore, ecological solutions must address more fundamental dimensions, namely the paradigms of knowledge and spirituality that shape human thought and lifestyle. Without renewal in these two areas, humans will continue to view nature as an object of exploitation, rather than as a living space

that must be respected and protected. Thus, true ecological transformation can only be achieved if changes in technological patterns are accompanied by changes in human awareness, values, and spiritual orientation toward their environment.

4. The Paradigm of Modernity and Anthropocentrism

Modernity constructs human beings as sovereign subjects, while positioning nature as an object. This paradigm is rooted in three major strands of Western philosophical heritage:

1. **Cartesian Rationalism** – “I think, therefore I dominate.”
2. **Newtonian Mechanism** – Nature is a machine governed by mechanical laws.
3. **Adam Smith’s Capitalism** – Natural resources are economic commodities.

Over the past centuries, humanity’s perception of nature has shifted from viewing it as sacred to regarding it merely as a material object. Nature has increasingly been understood as a resource to be exploited in order to fulfill human needs and interests (Sarah & Hambali, 2023). When this worldview became institutionalized within economic systems, industrial structures, and consumer culture, the human–nature relationship transformed into one that is utilitarian and exploitative. Nature is no longer appreciated as a shared living space, but reduced to a commodity to be extracted, processed, consumed, and ultimately depleted.

This process generates patterns of consumption that expand without limit and exceed nature’s capacity for regeneration. The logical consequences of this cycle are escalating ecological damages, including deforestation, biodiversity loss, climate change, and environmental degradation.

Within this context, ecotheology emerges as a philosophical critique and an epistemological challenge to such modes of thinking (Haris et al., 2025). Ecotheology rejects the view that separates humans from nature and reaffirms that both exist within an interdependent cosmic system. By restoring the spiritual and ethical dimensions of the human–nature relationship, ecotheology seeks to correct the mechanistic, materialistic, and anthropocentric paradigms underlying modern models of development and civilization. Through this approach, ecotheology offers not only theological understanding, but also a moral and practical foundation for building a more sustainable, harmonious, and dignified relationship between humanity and the environment.

5. Ecotheology in the Islamic Perspective

Islam possesses a profoundly articulated ecological cosmology. The Qur’an presents nature as a “second book” after revelation namely, the *āyāt kauniyyah* (cosmic signs), which reflect divine wisdom and power within creation.

a. Cosmic *Tawhid*

In Islamic tradition, *tawhid* (the oneness of God) is not understood merely as a theological affirmation of divine unity, but as a foundational principle that structures and governs the entirety of reality (Mannan, 2018). *Tawhid* affirms that God, nature, and humanity do not exist as separate and independent entities, but are interconnected within a coherent web of meaning. God is the source of all existence; nature manifests His signs (*āyāt*); and humans bear responsibility as guardians entrusted with its preservation. Thus, *tawhid* is not only the foundation of faith, but also a cosmological principle that defines how humans ought to understand their existence within the universe.

Within this framework, nature is not perceived as inert matter or a mere material object to be used arbitrarily. Rather, it is regarded as a living entity that conveys divine messages and participates in a cosmic spiritual dynamic. The Qur’an affirms that all creation glorifies God, even if humans are unable to comprehend the manner of this glorification. This perspective implies that every element of nature possesses value, dignity, and a divinely ordained purpose. Therefore, treating nature with respect is not only an ecological obligation, but also an expression of faith and *tawhid*-consciousness.

Through this understanding, the human–nature relationship becomes participatory and responsible rather than dominative. Humans do not stand above nature, but alongside it within a divinely established system of life. Preserving environmental sustainability, therefore, constitutes an integral part of worship and an acknowledgment of divine order in creation.

b. Humanity as *Khalifah* (Steward)

Khalifah signifies a trustee rather than an absolute ruler. Humans are entrusted with responsibility (*amanah*) to maintain and protect the Earth, not to exploit or destroy it.

c. The Principle of *Mizān* (Balance)

Nature is created in balance. Disrupting this balance constitutes a deviation from the divine order embedded within creation.

d. The Prohibition of *Fasād* (Corruption/Destruction)

Fasād refers to moral and ecological corruption. The Qur’an strongly condemns any form of destruction upon the Earth, emphasizing accountability for environmental harm.

e. Ecological *Ihsan*

Ihsan means acting with excellence, compassion, and moral awareness. Ecological *ihsan* entails treating all creatures with care, respect, and ethical responsibility.

Through these interconnected principles, Islamic ecotheology provides a comprehensive spiritual, ethical, and cosmological foundation for cultivating a sustainable and dignified relationship between humanity and the environment.

6. Operational Ecotheology: Integration of Spirituality, Ethics, and Social Practice

To be operational, ecotheology must be realized in:

Dimensions	Practice
Spirituality	Nature contemplation, ecological dhikr
Ethics	Sustainable resource management
Social	Environmental policy, green economy
Education	Ecotheology curriculum and green Islamic boarding schools

Operational ecotheology is not merely understood as a conceptual framework or a collection of theoretical ideas concerning the relationship between humans, nature, and God. More than that, operational ecotheology represents a civilizational movement aimed at restoring divine values as the foundation for building sustainable ecological relationships. In other words, ecotheology does not remain confined to intellectual discourse, academic debate, or religious study; rather, it becomes a life orientation that encourages transformation in how humans behave, produce, manage resources, and interact with their environment.

As a civilizational movement, operational ecotheology requires the internalization of spiritual values such as *tawhid*-consciousness (awareness of divine unity), *amanah* (trust), balance (*mizān*), and *ihsan* (moral excellence) across all dimensions of social, economic, and cultural life (Muizzuddin, 2023). These values are not positioned as static moral teachings, but as guiding principles that shape development, public policy, education, lifestyle, and religious practice in alignment with ecological sustainability. In this way, operational ecotheology becomes a foundation for transforming anthropocentric and materialistic mindsets into a cosmocentric outlook

rooted in responsibility and stewardship.

Thus, operational ecotheology may be understood as a project of civilizational reorientation an effort to build a world that is not only technologically advanced, but also ethically mature in its treatment of life. It restores the awareness that the Earth is not merely a human dwelling place, but a shared space of existence that must be preserved with moral responsibility and transcendental consciousness

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research design based on library research, grounded in normative-theological and philosophical inquiry. The research aims to construct a conceptual framework of Tawhid-Based Ecotheology by integrating spirituality and ethics within the Islamic worldview. The theological-normative approach is used to examine foundational Islamic sources, particularly the Qur'an and Hadith, focusing on key concepts such as *tawhid* (divine unity), *khalifah* (vicegerency), *amanah* (trusteeship), and *'adl* (justice). In addition, a philosophical approach is applied to explore the ontological and ethical implications of *tawhid*, particularly its relevance to environmental responsibility and the sacredness of nature. The study also engages contemporary environmental ethics discourse, including Deep Ecology as developed by Arne Naess, in order to establish a constructive dialogue between Islamic theology and modern ecological thought.

The primary sources of this research consist of the Qur'an and classical as well as contemporary tafsir (exegesis), along with relevant hadith concerning environmental responsibility. The study also draws on the works of prominent Muslim scholars who have contributed to discussions on spirituality and ecology, including Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Fazlur Rahman, and Mawil Izzi Dien. Secondary sources include academic books, peer-reviewed journal articles, dissertations, and scholarly publications related to ecotheology, environmental ethics, Islamic theology, and sustainability studies.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Ideal Construction of the Ecotheological Paradigm

The global ecological crisis confronting the contemporary world has brought humanity to a historical juncture that demands a fundamental transformation in its worldview toward nature and cosmic reality. Environmental degradation can no longer be regarded as a local or sectoral issue; rather, it has become a structural problem of civilization that transcends ideological, national, religious, and cultural boundaries. The planet is no longer in the ecological balance necessary to sustain the continuity of life. Extreme climate change, the increasing frequency of natural disasters, melting polar ice caps, rising sea levels, biodiversity loss, and uncontrolled pollution all indicate that environmental destruction has reached a critical point. At this stage, it has become increasingly evident that the roots of the ecological crisis lie not merely in technological or policy failures, but in epistemological and spiritual paradigms that position humanity as superior and hegemonic over nature.

Ecology cannot be understood solely within the framework of physical interactions between organisms and their environment; rather, it reflects a profound existential network connecting all beings to the source of their existence. In this regard, the anthropocentric paradigm dominating modernity has shaped structures of knowledge and culture that separate humans from this cosmic network (Sihombing, 2019). Nature has been reduced to a material object that can be controlled and manipulated without limit. It has lost its sacred dimension and has been transformed into an economic commodity. This relational distortion constitutes the root of ecological destruction, as humans no longer perceive themselves as part of a living ecosystem, but as rulers free to exploit resources for individual or collective interests. Therefore, a new paradigmatic construction is required, one that reintegrates sacred values, existential awareness, and ethical responsibility into the human-nature relationship.

The ecotheological paradigm provides a foundation for restoring the fundamental

interconnectedness between humanity, nature, and God (Suteja, 2009). Ecotheology is not merely a branch of religious thought advocating environmental care; it is a metaphysical worldview that situates nature as an integral component of theological reality. Nature is not an object, but an entity possessing ontological and moral value because it manifests divine attributes. From this perspective, environmental destruction is not only an ecological moral error, but also a spiritual deviation from the cosmic order established by God. Ecotheology affirms that existence is not centered upon humanity, but upon a principle of interconnectedness rooted in divine reality. Consequently, humans cannot position themselves as the center of the cosmos, since all beings share an existential standing within the same structure of existence derived from God.

The ideal construction of an ecotheological paradigm must begin with a reconstruction of the metaphysics of *tawhid* (Zulfikar & Azkiya, 2023). *Tawhid* signifies not only recognition of divine unity, but acknowledgment that the entire universe constitutes a network of beings in mutual relationship with God as the source of existence. Embedded within *tawhid* are dimensions of interconnectedness, interdependence, and cosmic unity that shape reality itself. Through a holistic understanding of *tawhid*, humans recognize that they are not external to nature, but part of a living web imbued with spiritual purpose. Nature is not merely a resource, but a theophanic space, where divine signs are manifested. Thus, environmental preservation becomes an act of spiritual devotion and moral commitment inseparable from religious life (Saumantri & Ismail, 2025).

However, awareness of *tawhid* alone is insufficient to transform ecological behavior without a concrete ethical structure. In Islamic tradition, the human role as *khalifah* a trustee entrusted with the continuity of the Earth, constitutes the ethical foundation of ecotheology. The concept of *khalifah* is often misunderstood as legitimizing human domination over nature. Within the ideal ecotheological paradigm, however, *khalifah* is understood as an agent responsible for safeguarding cosmic balance. Humans are endowed with intellectual and spiritual capacities to comprehend natural laws and to preserve that order responsibly. Thus, humanity is not a sovereign exploiter, but a guardian of harmony obligated to nurture, maintain, and sustain creation.

Supporting this framework, the principle of *mīzān* (balance) serves as a central pillar of ecotheology. *Mīzān* is not merely an ecological regulation, but a metaphysical principle governing harmony among all elements of creation. Life remains stable because all components exist in balanced proportion. Ecological destruction occurs when human consumption and production exceed limits, pushing nature out of equilibrium. Therefore, *mīzān* possesses not only scientific significance, but also theological meaning, reflecting cosmic order. Violating this balance disrupts not only environmental systems, but the divine order sustaining life.

Furthermore, the prohibition of *fasād* (corruption or destruction) reinforces the ecological position within Islamic teaching (Willya et al., 2023). Theologically, *fasād* encompasses not only physical damage, but also moral, social, and spiritual corruption. In ecological terms, it represents all forms of environmental destruction resulting from human greed. The prohibition of *fasād* thus functions as a transcendent ecological norm. Nature must be preserved not merely because humans depend upon ecological stability, but because safeguarding it constitutes a moral obligation tied to humanity's accountable position within the cosmic order.

To ensure practical realization of these principles, the ideal ecotheological paradigm must integrate the concept of *ihsan* into ecological relations. *Ihsan*, acting with excellence and awareness of God's constant presence transforms the human-nature relationship from a purely functional interaction into an ethical relationship grounded in reverence. Through ecological *ihsan*, humans treat all beings with compassion, prioritize ecological well-being, and recognize the existential rights of every creature. This orientation cultivates what may be termed cosmic empathy the awareness of experiencing nature's suffering as inseparable from human suffering. At this point, ecological consciousness transcends cognition and becomes emotional and spiritual awareness.

The construction of an ideal ecotheological paradigm must not remain at the conceptual level, but must be realized through transformational action. This requires a

practical structure that integrates education, public policy, economics, and culture within an ecological orientation. Ecotheological education should cultivate spiritual awareness from an early age through reflection on nature (*tafakkur*), engagement with *āyāt kauniyyah* (cosmic signs), and experiential ecological learning. In public policy, the ecotheological paradigm should encourage environmental regulations grounded in sustainability and ecological justice. In the economic sphere, it should shape systems of production and consumption that do not undermine the Earth's carrying capacity. Culturally, ecotheology must foster a collective identity that perceives nature as an integral part of human existence.

Thus, the ideal ecotheological paradigm positions spirituality as the foundation of ecological consciousness, ethics as the framework of moral guidance, and social action as its concrete implementation. These three elements must be integrated into a mutually reinforcing system. Spiritual awareness without ethics loses direction; ethics without praxis loses transformative power; and action without spiritual grounding loses meaning and moral resilience.

An ideal ecotheological paradigm calls humanity back to God-consciousness through nature. Nature is not merely a living space, but a "second book" that guides humans toward knowledge of the Divine. Within this relationship, humans rediscover their true identity in interconnectedness with all creation. From this awareness emerge balance, peace, and sustainable life. Such a paradigm does not only safeguard the environment, but also heals the human spirituality that has been alienated by modernity.

CONCLUSION

The global ecological crisis in the contemporary era is not merely a technical problem or a failure in resource management, but a manifestation of epistemological, spiritual, and civilizational crises. Environmental destruction marked by global warming, pollution, biodiversity loss, soil degradation, and ecosystem imbalance stems from a modern worldview that places humanity at the center and as the ruler of nature (anthropocentrism), while reducing nature to an object of economic exploitation within an extractive capitalist framework. This paradigm severs humanity's connection to the sacredness of nature and removes the spiritual dimension from cosmic existence.

In this context, reconstructing the ecotheological paradigm becomes a fundamental necessity to rebuild the human-nature-God relationship within a more holistic ontological and ethical framework. Ecotheology is not merely a moral appeal to protect the environment, but a mode of thought that views nature as *āyāt kauniyyah*, manifestations of God's existence and greatness. In Islamic theology, cosmic *tawhid* forms the basis of ecological consciousness: all creation is interconnected within a unity of being, and thus humans possess no moral legitimacy to exploit nature without limit. The concept of *khalifah* is understood not as dominative authority, but as a divine trust (*amanah*) to nurture and sustain life. The principle of *mizān* affirms that nature operates within a system of balance that must be preserved, while the prohibition of *fasād* underscores that environmental destruction constitutes a spiritual and moral violation. These principles culminate in ecological *ihsan* the disposition of treating all beings with respect, compassion, and awareness of God's presence.

The ideal ecotheological paradigm developed in this study demonstrates that spirituality, ethics, and ecological action must be integrated into a coherent system of praxis. Spiritual awareness without ethical structure becomes abstraction without change, while ethics without spiritual grounding loses normative force. Likewise, ecological action unsupported by moral-spiritual consciousness risks becoming pragmatic and unsustainable. Therefore, reconstructing the ecotheological paradigm demands the integration of *tawhid*-consciousness, ecological ethics, and social praxis in order to cultivate a sustainable ecological way of life.

Ultimately, this study concludes that an operational ecotheology must establish three principal dimensions:

1. Ecological spiritual consciousness, the capacity to perceive nature as a theophanic space.

2. Ecological ethics, the affirmation of moral principles governing human relationships with all beings.
3. Sustainable ecological action, the implementation of spiritual and ethical values in environmental management, education, culture, economics, and public policy.

Through this integrative paradigm, ecotheology not only contributes to environmental preservation, but also restores humanity's identity as a conscious being living within a web of cosmic interconnectedness.

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