

Human Responsibility as *Khalīfah*: An Environmental-Ethical Reading of QS. Al-Baqarah [2]:30 in *Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān*

Fathul Falaah Al Akbar^{1*}, Iqbal Ramadhon², M Toyib³, Masruchin⁴

^{1,2,3,4} Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Intan Lampung, Indonesia

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*Corresponding Author:

Name: Fathul Falaah Al Akbar

Email: ajofalaah864@gmail.com

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Abstract

The accelerating environmental crisis, marked by ecosystem degradation, pollution, and unsustainable resource exploitation, calls for ethical frameworks that reconsider the human-nature relationship beyond purely instrumental approaches. This study examines Sayyid Qutb's interpretation of QS. Al-Baqarah [2]:30 in *Tafsīr Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān* to investigate how the Qur'anic concept of *khalīfah* can be understood as a framework for environmental responsibility. Employing qualitative library research and Abdul Mustaqim's character study approach, the study analyzes Qutb's exegetical interpretation as the primary source and relevant scholarly literature as secondary sources. Data were collected through systematic documentation and analyzed using descriptive-analytical content analysis, focusing on the theological, ethical, and ecological implications of Qutb's conception of human stewardship. The findings identify six interrelated dimensions of *khalīfah*: responsible management of the earth, prudent use of natural resources, maintenance of ecological balance, prevention of environmental destruction, support for sustainable development, and fulfillment of moral and religious obligations. The study argues that Qutb's interpretation frames human authority over the earth as a trust accompanied by accountability rather than unrestricted dominion. This reading contributes to contemporary Qur'anic environmental ethics by connecting *khalīfah* with ecological responsibility and offering a theological basis for more sustainable human-nature relations.

Environmental Ethics; Environmental Preservation; *Khalīfah*; Sayyid Qutb.

Abstrak

Krisis lingkungan yang semakin intensif, ditandai oleh degradasi ekosistem, pencemaran, dan eksploitasi sumber daya alam yang tidak berkelanjutan, mendorong perlunya kerangka etis yang menempatkan kembali relasi manusia dan alam di luar pendekatan yang semata-mata instrumental. Penelitian ini mengkaji penafsiran Sayyid Qutb terhadap QS. Al-Baqarah [2]:30 dalam *Tafsīr Fī Zilāl al-Qur'ān* untuk menganalisis bagaimana konsep *khalīfah* dalam Al-Qur'an dapat dipahami sebagai kerangka tanggung jawab manusia terhadap lingkungan. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif dengan jenis penelitian kepustakaan dan pendekatan studi tokoh Abdul Mustaqim. Penafsiran Qutb menjadi sumber primer, sedangkan literatur ilmiah yang relevan digunakan sebagai sumber sekunder. Data dikumpulkan melalui dokumentasi sistematis dan dianalisis menggunakan analisis isi dengan pendekatan deskriptif-analitis yang berfokus pada implikasi teologis, etis, dan ekologis dari konsepsi Qutb tentang kepemimpinan manusia atas bumi. Hasil penelitian mengidentifikasi enam dimensi yang saling berkaitan dalam konsep *khalīfah*: pengelolaan bumi secara bertanggung jawab, pemanfaatan sumber daya alam secara bijaksana, pemeliharaan keseimbangan ekologis, pencegahan kerusakan lingkungan, pengembangan keberlanjutan, serta pemenuhan tanggung jawab moral dan keagamaan. Penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa Qutb memandang otoritas manusia atas bumi sebagai amanah yang disertai pertanggungjawaban, bukan sebagai hak untuk menguasai alam secara tanpa batas. Temuan ini memperkaya diskursus etika lingkungan berbasis Al-Qur'an dengan menghubungkan konsep *khalīfah* dan tanggung jawab ekologis sebagai landasan teologis bagi relasi manusia dan alam yang berkelanjutan.

Kata Kunci: Etika Lingkungan; *Khalīfah*; Pelestarian Lingkungan; Sayyid Qutb.

INTRODUCTION

The increasingly serious environmental crisis is evident in the rapid degradation of ecosystems, rising levels of pollution, and the uncontrolled exploitation of natural resources. This situation underscores the importance of a strong ethical and theological foundation as a framework for understanding and reshaping the relationship between human beings and nature in a more responsible manner (Habibi & Nabilah, 2024). In Islam, human beings are regarded as *Khalifah* (stewards) on Earth and are entrusted with the responsibility to manage, preserve, and protect the environment appropriately, justly, and sustainably, in accordance with the will of Allah. Islam, as a religion of *Rahmatan lil 'Alamin* (Massofia & Rahmawati, 2023). Has the Qur'an, which not only articulates cosmological principles concerning the creation and order of the natural world but also emphasizes the ethical and spiritual dimensions inherent in every human action toward the environment. Such actions will ultimately be subject to accountability as part of the trust and responsibility entrusted to humanity as *Khalifah* (Rasyid et al., 2025).

The excessive exploitation of natural resources by human beings clearly demonstrates their inability to fulfill their role as *Khalifah* on Earth (Husna & Sarjan, 2024). A disregard for ecological balance, as evidenced by deforestation, pollution, and poorly regulated land conversion, clearly reflects the dominance of economic interests. As the religion predominantly practiced by the majority of the Indonesian population, Islam regards human beings as trustees who are entrusted with the responsibility to protect, care for, and preserve nature based on the principles of justice and balance (Amalya et al., 2025). This issue is particularly relevant to an examination of Sayyid Qutb's thought in *Tafsir Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*, especially his interpretation of Q.S. al-Baqarah (2): 30, which emphasizes the status of human beings as *Khalifah* and their responsibility to manage life on Earth. Such an examination can reveal how human beings are expected to fulfill their role as *Khalifah* on Earth.

The issue of how human beings should treat the environment is not a new one (Rachman et al., 2024). From the outset, the Qur'an has emphasized that human actions that neglect their responsibilities have the potential to cause corruption on land and at sea, while also calling upon humanity to uphold the values of Allah in managing and cultivating the Earth (Rohma & Putri, 2024). Through *Tafsir Fi Zilal Al-Qur'an*, Sayyid Qutb views the position of human beings as *Khalifah* not merely as a status, but as a trust and responsibility to manage and develop life on Earth in accordance with the will of Allah. This understanding demonstrates that the relationship between human beings and nature cannot be separated from moral and spiritual responsibility. Therefore, the utilization of natural resources must remain within the framework of Allah's guidance and must not lead to actions that disrupt the balance of life.

The relevance of the concept of *Khalifah* as a foundation for environmental ethics needs to be examined critically and contextually in light of the ecological crisis facing modern society (Arsyad & Hasanah, 2025). This concept is not merely symbolic; rather, it demands moral awareness and a sense of human responsibility in managing life on Earth (Amelia et al., 2025). Sayyid Qutb's *Tafsir Fi Zilal Al-Qur'an* is chosen because it emphasizes the spiritual, moral, and social dimensions of the Qur'an and their relevance to human realities. Qutb views human beings as *Khalifah* who are entrusted with the mandate to develop and cultivate the Earth in accordance with Allah's guidance, rather than as a justification for absolute dominion over nature. The

principles of balance (*tawāzun*) and trust (*amānah*) therefore serve as the foundation for environmental management (Nor & Dahliana, 2025). Therefore, the concept of *Khalīfah* needs to be understood comprehensively by taking into account the ecological challenges arising from globalization, industrialization, resource exploitation, and materialism.

Several previous studies have examined human responsibility as *Khalīfah* in efforts to preserve the environment through a variety of approaches. One such study is that of Zahra et al. (2026) which explores the concept of the responsibility of *Khalīfah* within the framework of Islamic ecotheology and its relevance to the global climate crisis through a literature review of Qur'anic exegesis, ecotheological thought, and contemporary environmental studies. Another study, such as that conducted by Syauqi et al. (2025), highlights the roles of human beings as *Khalīfah* on Earth through an examination of the hadiths of the Prophet Muhammad. Meanwhile, Muaidi's (2024) study demonstrates that the function of human beings as servants of Allah in caring for the universe entails important responsibilities for preserving and managing the sustainability of environmental ecosystems, including sustainable practices in agriculture, fisheries, forestry, and other industries.

Taken together, these three studies demonstrate that environmental preservation from an Islamic perspective is not merely concerned with technical aspects, but is also rooted in theological awareness, ethical considerations, and human responsibility as *Khalīfah* for preserving the environment on Earth. However, these studies have not specifically examined how the concept of *Khalīfah* is interpreted by Sayyid Qutb in *Tafsīr Fī Zīlāl Al-Qur'an*, particularly in his interpretation of Q.S. al-Baqarah (2): 30, and how this interpretation relates specifically to human responsibility for environmental preservation. This gap constitutes the novelty of the present study, which analyzes Sayyid Qutb's interpretation of the concept of *Khalīfah* in order to uncover its spiritual, moral, and ecological dimensions. Through this critical analysis, the study seeks to identify and establish its scholarly novelty in understanding the relationship between the concept of *Khalīfah* and environmental preservation.

Thus, the understanding of the concept of *Khalīfah* is largely determined by how human beings perceive the trust and responsibility entrusted to them by Allah in managing the Earth. This concept positions human beings not only as creatures endowed with a noble status, but also as bearers of the responsibility to preserve the sustainability of nature justly, without being influenced by group interests, generational differences, or profit-oriented motives alone (Fadhli & Fithriyah, 2021). This study aims to analyze Sayyid Qutb's interpretation in *Tafsīr Fī Zīlāl Al-Qur'an* of Q.S. al-Baqarah (2): 30 concerning the concept of human beings as *Khalīfah* and its implications for environmental preservation. This study reveals that the concept of *Khalīfah* can be understood as a trust from Allah that requires the Earth to be managed according to the values of *Tawḥīd*, responsibility, justice, and balance.

METHOD

This study employs a qualitative research approach based on library research. Library research was employed because all research data were obtained from various written sources related to Sayyid Qutb's thought on the status of human beings as *Khalīfah* and their responsibility toward the environment (Zed, 2025). This study also employs the intellectual figure study approach

as developed by Abdul Mustaqim. This approach is used to examine a scholar's thought in depth by considering their intellectual background, intellectual context, works, and ideas relevant to the research topic (Mustaqim, 2024). In this study, Sayyid Qutb is positioned as the central figure, while his exegetical work, *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*, serves as the primary source for examining the construction of his thought concerning human beings as *Khalifah* and their relationship with the environment.

The focus of this study is directed toward Sayyid Qutb's interpretation of Q.S. al-Baqarah (2): 30 as the fundamental basis for understanding the position of human beings on Earth. The data used in this study consist of primary and secondary sources. The primary data are derived from Sayyid Qutb's interpretation in *Tafsir Fi Zilal Al-Qur'an*, particularly his interpretation of Q.S. al-Baqarah (2): 30. The secondary data consist of various relevant sources discussing Sayyid Qutb's thought, the concept of human beings as *Khalifah*, Islamic environmental ethics, and environmental preservation. In collecting the data, this study employs a documentation technique by tracing and compiling various relevant library sources and subsequently identifying passages related to the focus of the study (Ardiansyah et al., 2023).

In analyzing the data, this study employs content analysis using a descriptive-analytical approach. The analysis is conducted through several stages: data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. At the data reduction stage, the researcher selects data from both primary and secondary sources that are directly relevant to the focus of the study. The selected data are then presented descriptively to illustrate Sayyid Qutb's thought concerning human beings as *Khalifah* and their responsibility toward the environment. Subsequently, the data are critically analyzed by relating Sayyid Qutb's interpretation to contemporary environmental issues. The final stage involves drawing conclusions regarding the construction of Sayyid Qutb's thought on human beings as *Khalifah* and its relevance to environmental preservation efforts (Pratama et al., 2021).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Biography of Sayyid Quthb

Sayyid Qutb Ibrahim Husayn was born in October 1906 in Musha, Asyut, Egypt. He was the third of five siblings (Kurniadi et al., 2025). Qutb grew up with a deep love for the Qur'an. His mother was Sayyidah Nafash Qutb, while his father was Al-Haj Qutb ibn Ibrahim. His sixth-generation ancestor was Al-Faqir Abdullah, a prominent figure of Indian origin. In 1929, Sayyid Qutb continued his education at Tajhiziyyah Dar al-'Ulum, one of Cairo's leading institutions, which was renowned for its studies of Islamic sciences and literature. He graduated with a degree in literature and a diploma in education (*tarbiyah*) in 1933 (Al-Khalidiy, 2016).

Along with several prominent figures of the Muslim Brotherhood, Sayyid Qutb was arrested in November 1954 following his growing disillusionment with the Nasser regime, which rejected his ideas regarding the establishment of an Islamic state. He was charged with subversion, anti-government propaganda, and involvement in a plot to assassinate the president. Subsequently, he was sentenced to fifteen years in prison and endured severe psychological and physical hardship during his imprisonment (Hadi et al., 2021).

Tafsir Fī Zilāl al-Qurʾān is do not merely explain the meanings of Qurʾanic verses but also reflects Qutb's beliefs and views concerning the Qurʾān as a guide for human life. He emphasized that living according to Qurʾanic values brings peace, happiness, and spiritual strength. Qutb examined the verses systematically and comprehensively by considering their meanings, contexts, relationships with other verses, and the historical circumstances surrounding the revelation in order to gain a holistic understanding of the Qurʾān's message. Therefore, this work is considered particularly suitable for examining human responsibility as *Khalifah* (Nor & Dahliana, 2025).

Method And Style of Tafsir Fī Zilāl Al-Qurʾān

Tafsir Fī Zilāl Al-Qurʾān is an exegetical work that presents the Qurʾān as a guide for human life through a reflective and literary approach. This tafsir employs the *Tablīlī* method by examining the verses and chapters sequentially, from Surah Al-Fāṭiḥah to Surah An-Nās (Hafizzullah & Ismail, 2024). In the process of interpretation, Qutb's first step was to read a surah as a whole and repeatedly, then reflect on its content and central theme until he attained a proper and comprehensive understanding. This approach meant that his interpretation was not limited to textual meaning but also incorporated spiritual, aesthetic, and emotional dimensions. His imaginative, powerful, and evocative language brought the message of the Qurʾān closer to the readers' lives, enabling it to awaken their consciousness, strengthen their faith, and encourage them to internalize the Qurʾanic guidance more deeply in their daily lives (Halimah, 2023).

Next is the stage of refinement and scholarly substantiation. At this stage, Qutb returned to classical works of Qurʾanic exegesis, hadith collections, reports from the Companions and the Ṭābiʿūn, as well as the opinions of Muslim scholars, drawing from both *tafsir bi al-maʿthūr* and *tafsir bi al-raʾy*. These references were used to supplement, correct, and strengthen the reflections developed in the first stage, particularly with regard to the *asbāb al-nuzūl* (occasions of revelation), issues of Islamic jurisprudence (*fiqh*), and the clarification of authentic transmitted reports. In this way, Qutb's method does not reduce Qurʾanic interpretation to a merely literary or sentimental approach, but remains grounded in scholarly rigor and a systematic methodology (Nasrun & Alwizar, 2025). He also employed a *Muqāran* (comparative) approach by citing the views of scholars whose perspectives were consistent with his line of thought. Consequently, *Fī Zilāl al-Qurʾān* emerges as an exegetical work that harmoniously integrates spiritual depth, literary sensitivity, and scholarly rigor (Darul, 2025).

Table 1. Method and Exegetical Style of *Tafsir Fī Zilāl Al-Qurʾān*

Aspect	Element	Relevance to the Research Topic
Exegesis Method	<i>Tablīlī</i>	Enables an in-depth examination of verses concerning human beings as <i>Khalifah</i> and environmental preservation.
Stage 1	Direct Engagement with the Qurʾān	Identifying the Qurʾān's central message
Stage 2	Scholarly Substantiation	Strengthening the understanding of human responsibility toward the environment through relevant hadiths, transmitted reports, and works of Qurʾanic exegesis.

<i>Muqāran</i> Aspect	Comparison of Scholarly Opinions	To examine Sayyid Qutb's intellectual position in interpreting the verse.
<i>Adabī</i> Style	Literary	Memudahkan pengungkapan pesan Al-Qur'an tentang hubungan manusia dengan alam
<i>Ijtima'ī</i> Style	Socio-Social	Relating environmental degradation to human behavior.

Based on the Table 1 above, Sayyid Qutb's *Tafsir Fi Zilal al-Qur'an* employs the *tahliḥī* method, which interprets the Qur'an according to the sequence of verses and surahs while examining their meanings, messages, and purposes. This method is relevant to understanding human responsibility as Khalifah in environmental preservation. Qutb begins by reading the surah comprehensively and engaging in *tadabbur* to identify its central themes, followed by strengthening his interpretation through hadiths, reports from the Companions and Tābi'ūn, classical tafsir works, and scholarly opinions. The *Muqāran* aspect appears through his consideration of various scholarly views, although it is not a dominant feature (Mastur & Adiguna, 2024). Meanwhile, the *Adabī* and *Ijtima'ī* styles connect Qur'anic meanings with literary beauty and social realities. These approaches reinforce the understanding of humans as *Khalifah* responsible for managing the Earth, preventing environmental degradation, maintaining ecological balance, and preserving nature sustainably according to Qur'anic values (Rohman et al., 2025).

Sayyid Qutb's Interpretation and Analysis of Q.S. al-Baqarah (2): 30

According to Sayyid Qutb's interpretation of Q.S. Al-Baqarah (2): 30 in *Fi Zilal al-Qur'an*, the concept of *Khalifah* highlights and addresses the human role in environmental preservation:

وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً قَالُوا أَتَجْعَلُ فِيهَا مَنْ يُفْسِدُ فِيهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَاءَ وَنَحْنُ نُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِكَ وَنُقَدِّسُ لَكَ قَالَ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ ﴿٣٠﴾

"And (remember) when your Lord said to the angels, "Indeed, I am going to place a Khalifah on Earth." They said, "Will You place therein one who will cause corruption and shed blood, while we glorify You with praise and declare Your holiness?" He said, "Indeed, I know that which you do not know."

In his interpretation of Q.S. al-Baqarah (2): 30, Sayyid Qutb explains the verse as follows:

٣٠- هَا نَحْنُ أَوْلَاءُ بَعَيْنِ الْبَصِيرَةِ فِي مُنْتَحَنَاتِ الْإِسْتِشْرَافِ فِي سَاحَةِ الْمَلَأِ الْأَعْلَى وَهَا نَحْنُ أَوْلَاءُ نَسْمَعُ وَنَرَى قِصَّةَ الْبَشَرِيَّةِ الْأُولَى ﴿وَإِذْ قَالَ رَبُّكَ لِلْمَلَائِكَةِ إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً﴾

وَإِذْنُ فَهِيَ الْمَشِيئَةُ الْعُلْيَا تُرِيدُ أَنْ تُسَلِّمَ هَذَا الْكَائِنَ الْجَدِيدَ فِي الْوُجُودِ زِمَامَ هَذِهِ الْأَرْضِ وَتُطْلِقَ فِيهَا يَدَهُ وَتَكِلَ إِلَيْهِ إِبْرَازَ مَشِيئَةِ الْخَلْقِ فِي الْإِبْدَاعِ وَالتَّكْوِينِ وَالتَّحْلِيلِ وَالتَّرَكِيبِ وَالتَّحْوِيرِ وَالتَّبْدِيلِ وَكَشَفَ مَا فِي هَذِهِ الْأَرْضِ مِنْ قُوَى وَطَاقَاتٍ وَكُنُوزٍ وَخَامَاتٍ وَتَسْخِيرَ هَذَا كُلِّهِ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ - فِي الْمَهْمَةِ الضَّخْمَةِ الَّتِي كُلَّهَا اللَّهُ إِلَيْهِ.

وَإِذْنُ فَقَدْ وَهَبَ هَذَا الْكَائِنَ الْجَدِيدَ مِنَ الطَّاقَاتِ الْكَامِنَةِ وَالْإِسْتِعْدَادَاتِ الْمَذْخُورَةِ كَفَاءً مَا فِي هَذِهِ الْأَرْضِ مِنْ قُوَى وَطَاقَاتٍ وَكُنُوزٍ وَخَامَاتٍ وَوَهَبَ مِنَ الْقُوَى الْخَفِيَّةِ مَا يُحَقِّقُ الْمَشِيئَةَ الْإِلَهِيَّةَ

وَإِذْ فَهِنَالِكَ وَحْدَهُ أَوْ تَنَاسَّقُ بَيْنَ النَّوَامِيسِ الَّتِي تَحْكُمُ الْأَرْضَ - وَتَحْكُمُ الْكَوْنَ كُلَّهُ - وَالنَّوَامِيسِ الَّتِي تَحْكُمُ هَذَا الْمَخْلُوقَ وَقُوَاهُ وَطَوَاقَاتِهِ لِكَيْ لَا يَقَعَ التَّصَادُمُ بَيْنَ هَذِهِ وَتِلْكَ النَّوَامِيسِ وَلِكَيْ لَا تَتَحَطَّمُ طَاقَةُ الْإِنْسَانِ عَلَى صَخْرَةِ الْكَوْنَ الضَّخْمَةِ! وَإِذْ فَهُوَ مَنْزِلَةٌ عَظِيمَةٌ مَنْزِلَةُ هَذَا الْإِنْسَانِ فِي نِظَامِ الْوُجُودِ عَلَى هَذِهِ الْأَرْضِ الْمُسِيحَةِ وَهُوَ التَّكْرِيمُ الَّذِي شَاءَ لَهُ خَالِقُهُ الْكَرِيمُ.

هَذَا كُلُّهُ بَعْضُ إِجَاءِ التَّعْيِيرِ الْعُلَوِيِّ الْجَلِيلِ: ﴿إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً﴾.. حِينَ تَتَلَّاهُ الْيَوْمَ بِالْحَسَنِ الْبَاقِظِ وَالْبَصِيرَةِ الْمُنْفُوحَةِ وَرُؤْيَا مَا تَمَّ فِي الْأَرْضِ عَلَى يَدِ هَذَا الْكَائِنِ الْمُسْتَخْلَفِ فِي هَذَا الْمُلْكِ الْعَرِيشِ ﴿قَالُوا أَتَجْعَلُ فِيهَا مَنْ يُفْسِدُ فِيهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَاءَ وَنَحْنُ نُسَبِّحُ بِحَمْدِكَ وَنُقَدِّسُ لَكَ﴾

وَيُوحِي قَوْلُ الْمَلَائِكَةِ هَذَا بِأَنَّهُ كَانَ لَدَيْهِمْ مَا شَاهَدُوهُ الْحَالُ أَوْ مِنْ تَجَارِبِ سَابِقَةٍ فِي الْأَرْضِ أَوْ مِنْ الْهَامِ الْبَصِيرَةِ مَا يَكْشِفُ لَهُمْ عَنْ شَيْءٍ مِنْ فِطْرَةِ هَذَا الْمَخْلُوقِ أَوْ مِنْ مُفْتَضِّلَاتِ حَيَاتِهِ عَلَى الْأَرْضِ وَمَا يَجْعَلُهُمْ يَعْرِفُونَ أَوْ يُوقِنُونَ أَنَّهُ سَيُفْسِدُ فِي الْأَرْضِ وَأَنَّهُ سَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَاءَ.. ثُمَّ هُمْ - بِفِطْرَةِ الْمَلَائِكَةِ الْبَرِيَّةِ الَّتِي لَا تَتَصَوَّرُ إِلَّا الْخَيْرَ الْمُطْلَقَ وَالْأَمَامَ الشَّامِلَ - يَرَوْنَ التَّسْبِيحَ بِحَمْدِ اللَّهِ وَالتَّقْدِيسَ لَهُ هُوَ الْعَايَةُ الْمُطْلَقَةُ لِلْوُجُودِ وَهُوَ وَحْدَهُ الْعِلَّةُ الْأُولَى لِلْخَلْقِ.. وَهُوَ مُحَقِّقُ بُجُودِهِمْ هُمْ يَسْتَبْجُونَ بِحَمْدِهِ وَيُقَدِّسُونَ لَهُ وَيَعْبُدُونَهُ وَلَا يَفْتَرُونَ عَنْ عِبَادَتِهِ! لَقَدْ خَفِيتْ عَلَيْهِمْ حِكْمَةُ الْمَشِيئَةِ الْعُلْيَا فِي بِنَاءِ هَذِهِ الْأَرْضِ وَعِمَارَتِهَا وَفِي تَمْدِيدِ الْحَيَاةِ وَتَنْمِيطِهَا وَفِي تَحْقِيقِ إِرَادَةِ الْخَلْقِ وَنَوَامِيسِ الْوُجُودِ فِي تَطْوِيرِهَا وَتَرْفِيقِهَا وَتَعْدِيلِهَا عَلَى يَدِ خَلِيفَةِ اللَّهِ فِي أَرْضِهِ هَذَا الَّذِي قَدْ يُفْسِدُ أَحْيَانًا وَقَدْ يَسْفِكُ الدِّمَاءَ أَحْيَانًا لِيَتَمَّ مِنْ وَرَاءِ هَذَا الشَّرِّ الْجُزْئِيِّ الظَّاهِرِ خَيْرٌ أَكْبَرُ وَأَشْمَلُ خَيْرُ النَّمُوِّ الدَّائِمِ وَالرُّقْيِ الدَّائِمِ خَيْرُ الْحَرَكَةِ الْهَادِفَةِ الْبَانِيَةِ خَيْرُ الطَّوَلَةِ الَّتِي لَا تَكْفُفُ وَالتَّطَلُّعِ الَّذِي لَا يَقِفُ وَالتَّغْيِيرِ وَالتَّطْوِيرِ فِي هَذَا الْمُلْكِ الْكَبِيرِ

عِنْدَئِذٍ جَاءَهُمُ الْقَرَارُ مِنَ الْعَلِيمِ بِكُلِّ شَيْءٍ وَالْمُنِيرِ بِمَصَائِرِ الْأُمُورِ. ﴿قَالَ إِنِّي أَغْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ﴾

Sayyid Qutb interprets the word of Allah as ﴿إِنِّي جَاعِلٌ فِي الْأَرْضِ خَلِيفَةً﴾ an affirmation of Allah's will to place human beings as creatures who hold a special position on Earth. Qutb explains that فِي هَذِهِ الْمَشِيئَةِ الْعُلْيَا تَرِيدُ أَنْ تُسَلِّمَ هَذَا الْكَائِنَ الْجَدِيدَ فِي الْوُجُودِ زِمَامَ هَذِهِ الْأَرْضِ, namely, Allah entrusts human beings with stewardship over the Earth and assigns them the responsibility to fulfill His will in life. This responsibility is manifested through human beings' ability to التَّحْوِيلِ وَالتَّكْوِينِ وَالتَّحْلِيلِ وَالتَّرَكِيبِ وَالتَّحْوِيرِ, and التَّجْدِيلِ, that is, as *Khalifah*, human beings are entrusted with the mandate to manage, cultivate, develop, and utilize the various resources of the Earth. However, all such activities must remain within the framework of Allah's permission and will.

To fulfill this trust, according to Qutb, human beings have been endowed with abilities appropriate to their role as *Khalifah*. He states that Allah وَهَبَ هَذَا الْكَائِنَ الْجَدِيدَ مِنَ الطَّاقَاتِ الْكَامِنَةِ وَالْإِسْتِعْدَادَاتِ الْمَذْخُورَةِ, namely, has endowed human beings with various potentials and innate capacities that are embedded within them. Qutb also explains the existence of وَحْدَهُ أَوْ تَنَاسَّقُ بَيْنَ النَّوَامِيسِ الَّتِي تَحْكُمُ الْأَرْضَ ... وَالنَّوَامِيسِ الَّتِي تَحْكُمُ هَذَا الْمَخْلُوقَ وَقُوَاهُ وَطَوَاقَاتِهِ, which demonstrates a harmony between human beings and the system governing the natural world. Therefore, human beings possess the ability to interact with nature and develop life without disrupting the balance established by Allah. Qutb refers to this position as التَّكْرِيمُ الَّذِي شَاءَ لَهُ خَالِقُهُ الْكَرِيمُ and مَنْزِلَةٌ عَظِيمَةٌ

the role of *Khalifah* represents both the dignity of human beings and a trust that entails responsibility for managing the Earth.

However, Qutb also acknowledges the negative potential inherent in human beings, as reflected in the angels' question: *أَتَجْعَلُ فِيهَا مَنْ يُفْسِدُ فِيهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَاءَ* According to Qutb, human beings are indeed capable of causing corruption, but this does not constitute the entirety of their created nature. The angels had not yet understood the broader wisdom behind Allah's will, as Qutb explains: *لَقَدْ خَفِيتَ عَلَيْهِمْ حِكْمَةَ الْمَشِيئَةِ الْعُلْيَا فِي بِنَاءِ هَذِهِ الْأَرْضِ وَعِمَارَتِهَا وَفِي تَنْمِيَةِ الْحَيَاةِ* Namely, human beings possess the potential to build, develop, and improve the quality of life, which Qutb refers to as *خَيْرُ النَّمُوِّ الدَّائِمِ وَالرَّقْيِ الدَّائِمِ خَيْرُ الْحَرَكَةِ الْهَادِفَةِ الْبَائِيَةِ*. Therefore, this interpretation demonstrates that the role of *Khalifah* is an honorable position accompanied by the trust and responsibility to manage and cultivate the Earth. All human potential must be directed toward development and the promotion of the common good, rather than toward causing corruption and destruction, as affirmed by Allah: *قَالَ إِنِّي أَعْلَمُ مَا لَا تَعْلَمُونَ* (Quthb, 1991).

Table 2. Key Points of Sayyid Qutb's Interpretation of Q.S. al-Baqarah (2): 30

Elements of Interpretation	Interpretive Meaning
Human Beings as <i>Khalifah</i>	Trust and Responsibility
Cultivation and Prosperity of the Earth	Cultivation and Utilization of Nature
Human Potential for Destruction	Regulation of Human Behavior
The Wisdom of the <i>Khalifah</i>	The Development of Life and Civilization
The Relationship Between Human Beings and Nature	Balance and Harmony
Allah's Will	Adherence to Allah's Guidance

Based on Table 2 above, Sayyid Qutb's interpretation of Q.S. Al-Baqarah (2): 30 positions human beings as *Khalifah*, entrusted with the responsibility to manage and cultivate the Earth in accordance with Allah's will. The concept of *Khalifah* therefore entails not only a special status but also a moral obligation to utilize natural resources wisely and responsibly. Human beings are endowed with various abilities and potentials to develop life and civilization; however, these capacities must be directed toward constructive purposes and the common good rather than environmental destruction. Qutb also acknowledges the human potential to cause corruption and shed blood, as reflected in the angels' question, emphasizing the need for moral discipline and responsible conduct. Furthermore, human interaction with nature must maintain harmony with the *sunnatullah* and remain within the framework of Allah's guidance. Thus, the concept of *Khalifah* encompasses responsibility for managing the Earth, preventing environmental degradation, maintaining ecological balance, and promoting sustainable life in accordance with Qur'anic values.

Khalifah and Human Responsibility for Environmental Preservation

Based on the presentation and analysis of Sayyid Qutb's interpretation discussed in the preceding section, it can be understood that the concept of *Khalifah* is closely related to human responsibility for protecting and preserving the environment. Human beings are positioned not merely as inhabitants of the Earth, but also as those entrusted with the responsibility to manage

life in accordance with Allah's guidance. Following an in-depth analysis of Sayyid Qutb's interpretation of Q.S. al-Baqarah (2): 30, several relevant aspects of the concept of *Khalifah* in relation to human responsibility for protecting the natural environment can be identified as follows:

1. Human Beings as Trustees in Managing the Earth

Sayyid Qutb explains that human beings are entrusted with the mandate to manage the Earth, as reflected in his statement *أَنْ تُسَلِّمَ هَذَا الْكَائِنَ الْجَدِيدَ فِي الْوُجُودِ زِمَامَ هَذِهِ الْأَرْضِ*, namely, human beings are granted authority over the Earth. This position demonstrates that human beings play an important role in determining the continuity of life on Earth. However, such authority does not mean that human beings are the absolute owners of nature, as Qutb emphasizes that the utilization of the Earth's various resources must be carried out *بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ* in accordance with Allah's guidance. Thus, as *Khalifah*, human beings occupy the position of trustees who are responsible for managing the Earth in accordance with Allah's commands. In the context of environmental preservation, this trust requires human beings to use natural resources wisely and responsibly, avoid excessive exploitation, and take into consideration the sustainability of life.

2. Responsible Use of Natural Resources

Furthermore, Qutb also interprets the concept of *Khalifah* in relation to human beings' ability to discover and utilize the potential of nature. He states: *كَشَفَ مَا فِي هَذِهِ الْأَرْضِ مِنْ قُوَى وَطَاقَاتٍ وَكُنُوزٍ وَخَامَاتٍ، وَتَسْخِيرَ هَذَا كُلِّهِ بِإِذْنِ اللَّهِ*. Namely, human beings are endowed with the ability to explore the various forces, energies, resources, and materials found on Earth. Such utilization is essentially permissible because it constitutes part of the human responsibility as *Khalifah*. However, the use of natural resources must remain within the bounds of responsibility. When exploration turns into excessive exploitation and results in environmental degradation, such actions contradict the purpose of the *Khalifah* role. Therefore, the utilization of nature must be directed toward the common good and the sustainability of life.

3. Maintaining Balance Between Human Beings and Nature

Sayyid Qutb emphasizes the existence of *وَحْدَةً أَوْ تَنَاسُقًا بَيْنَ النَّوَامِيْسِ الَّتِي تَحْكُمُ الْأَرْضَ ... وَالنَّوَامِيْسِ الَّتِي تَحْكُمُ هَذَا الْمَخْلُوقَ وَقُوَاهُ وَطَاقَاتِهِ*, namely, the unity and harmony between the laws governing the Earth and human beings, together with their abilities and potential. This perspective indicates that human beings do not exist outside nature but are part of an interconnected system of life. Therefore, human actions must take ecological balance into consideration. Deforestation, water pollution, air pollution, and excessive exploitation of natural resources are forms of human activity that can disrupt this balance. Understanding the role of *Khalifah* as a responsibility to maintain the balance of nature is therefore part of the human duty to ensure that the Earth remains capable of sustaining life.

4. Preventing Environmental Destruction as an Expression of the *Khalifah* Role

The potential of human beings to cause destruction is depicted in the angels' question, *أَتَجْعَلُ فِيهَا مَنْ يُفْسِدُ فِيهَا وَيَسْفِكُ الدِّمَاءَ*. Sayyid Qutb acknowledges that human beings have the potential to cause destruction, but this potential does not constitute the entirety of human nature. Human

beings are also endowed with the ability to build and develop life. Therefore, the role of *Khalifah* requires human beings to restrain their destructive potential and direct it toward the common good. In the context of the environment, this principle means that human beings must prevent actions that cause environmental destruction. This prohibition can be related to the word of Allah in QS. Al-A'raf (7): 56, وَلَا تُفْسِدُوا فِي الْأَرْضِ بَعْدَ إِصْلَاحِهَا, which emphasizes the prohibition against causing corruption on Earth after Allah has set it right.

5. Sustainable Development

In his interpretation, Qutb explains that the presence of human beings on Earth has the purpose of developing and advancing life. He describes this as *خَيْرُ النَّمُو الدَّائِمِ وَالرَّقِي الدَّائِمِ خَيْرُ الْحَرَكَةِ* *الْمُتَوَدِّعَةِ الْبَاقِيَةِ*, namely, continuous growth, ongoing progress, and purposeful constructive activity. This concept is relevant to the principle of sustainable development, which entails development that not only meets the needs of the present but also takes into account the availability and sustainability of resources for future generations. Thus, human beings as *Khalifah* are not merely entitled to utilize nature for economic and social interests but are also responsible for maintaining ecological balance, preventing excessive exploitation, and ensuring that development proceeds without undermining the capacity of nature to sustain human life and other living beings.

6. The Caliphate as a Moral and Religious Responsibility

Finally, in Sayyid Qutb's interpretation, the concept of *Khalifah* cannot be separated from human beings' moral responsibility before Allah. Qutb describes the position of human beings as *الشَّكْرِيْمُ الَّذِي شَاءَ لَهُ خَالِفُهُ الْكَرِيْمُ* *مَنْزِلَةً عَظِيْمَةً* namely, a noble position and a form of honor bestowed by the Creator. This dignity, however, also entails responsibility. Human beings must be accountable for how they use the abilities, resources, and authority granted to them by Allah. Therefore, protecting the environment can be regarded as part of fulfilling the trust inherent in the *Khalifah* role. Human beings who preserve the natural environment are fulfilling their role as *Khalifah* in a constructive manner, whereas actions that cause environmental destruction represent a deviation from the purpose of the *Khalifah* role, as understood from Sayyid Qutb's interpretation (Quthb, 1991).

Thus, Sayyid Qutb's interpretation of Q.S. al-Baqarah (2): 30 demonstrates that the concept of *Khalifah* encompasses six interconnected dimensions. First, human beings are trustees entrusted with managing the Earth. Second, they bear responsibility for the utilization of natural resources. Third, they are responsible for maintaining balance between human beings and nature. Fourth, they are required to prevent environmental destruction. Fifth, they are responsible for promoting sustainable development. Sixth, they bear moral and religious responsibility. This framework positions human beings not as absolute rulers over nature, but as beings endowed with both the capacity and the responsibility to ensure that the utilization of the Earth continues to support the sustainability of life.

CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, Sayyid Qutb's interpretation of Q.S. al-Baqarah (2): 30 in *Tafsir Fi Zilal Al-Qur'an* demonstrates that human responsibility as *Khalifah* constitutes a trust

from Allah, positioning human beings as those endowed with the ability to manage, develop, and cultivate the Earth. The findings identify six dimensions of the relevance of the concept of *Khalifah* to the responsibility of protecting nature: human beings as trustees entrusted with managing the Earth; responsible utilization of natural resources; maintaining balance between human beings and nature; preventing environmental destruction; promoting sustainable development; and fulfilling moral and religious responsibility. Thus, human responsibility as *Khalifah* in environmental preservation encompasses spiritual, moral, and ecological dimensions that guide human beings to utilize nature wisely, justly, and sustainably in accordance with Allah's guidance.

This study has certain limitations, as it focuses solely on one verse, namely Q.S. al-Baqarah (2): 30, and uses *Tafsir Fi Zilal Al-Qur'an* as its primary source through library research. Therefore, the findings do not fully represent Sayyid Qutb's overall thought on environmental issues, which can also be explored through other Qur'anic verses. The study also does not directly examine the application of the concept of *Khalifah* in environmental management practices within society. Future research is therefore encouraged to broaden the scope of inquiry by analyzing other ecological verses from Sayyid Qutb's perspective, comparing his interpretation with those of other exegetes, or conducting field research to examine the implementation of *Khalifah* values in environmental preservation behaviors and policies. Such studies could further enrich the understanding of the contribution of Qur'anic exegesis to contemporary ecological issue

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DECLARATION OF USING AI

The authors used ChatGPT solely to enhance the language, clarity, and readability of the manuscript. All generated content was carefully reviewed and edited by the authors, who retain full responsibility for the accuracy and integrity of the final content.

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