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Ecological Tendencies in Shaykh Nawawi al-Bantani's *Tafsir Marāḥ Labīd*: A Study of Environment-Related Qur'anic Verses

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Abstract

Ecological crisis has been a pressing issue since the 19th century. Various responses have emerged from different groups and classes. A response from Muslims is undoubtedly expected so that Islam can truly be a relevant religion, anytime, anywhere. The timelessness and universality of Islam should be fundamentally manifested in the interpretation of Qur'anic verses. *Marah Labid*, a tafsir work by Shaykh Nawawi al-Bantani, which emerged in the 19th century, when the industrial revolution was still in full swing and causing many environmental problems, should have contributed to addressing these ecological issues. Within the scope of *hifz al-bī'ah* (conservation of environment) in *Maqashid al-Syariah*, the researcher tried to examine Shaykh Nawawi's interpretation of Qur'anic verses related to environmental sustainability. Using a descriptive analysis, this library-based research employed Shaykh Nawawi's *Tafsir Marah Labid* as the primary secondary source, supplemented by various other sources. The results show that Shaykh Nawawi, in his *Tafsir Marah Labid*, does not explicitly demonstrate a practical or theoretical inclination toward environmental sustainability, an issue that was already problematic during Shaykh Nawawi's time. The term *fasad* on earth is consistently attributed to Allah's punishment for human sins and disobedience, rather than to human-induced environmental degradation. This research is expected to broaden academic knowledge regarding the responses of Quranic interpreter to contemporary issues.

Keywords: Nawawi Al-Bantani; *Marah Labid*; Ecological, Environment.

Abstrak

Krisis ekologis merupakan problem yang telah muncul sejak abad ke 19. Berbagai respon muncul dari berbagai kalangan dan golongan. Respon dari umat Islam tentunya juga mutlak diharapkan agar Islam benar-benar menjadi agama yang relevan, kapanpun, di manapun. Relevansi Islam yang tak lekang oleh tempat dan waktu ini harusnya terejewantahkan secara prinsipil pada penafsiran ayat-ayat Al-Quran. Marah Labid karya Syaikh Nawawi al-Bantani, sebagai karya tafsir yang muncul di abad 19-an Masehi, ketika revolusi industri masih hangat dan memunculkan banyak problem lingkungan, seyogyanya turut andil merespon masalah ekologis tersebut. Menggunakan teori *hifz al-bi'ah* (menjaga lingkungan) dalam Maqashid al-Syariah, peneliti berusaha menelisik penafsiran Syaikh Nawawi terhadap ayat-ayat Al-Quran yang berkaitan dengan kelestarian lingkungan. Dengan analisis deskriptif, penelitian pustaka ini menggunakan Tafsir Marah Labid karya Syaikh Nawawi sebagai sumber sekunder utama ditambah berbagai sumber-sumber tambahan lain. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Syaikh Nawawi, dalam tafsirnya Marah Labid, secara spesifik belum menunjukkan kecenderungan praktis maupun teoretis terhadap kelestarian lingkungan yang sebenarnya sudah bermasalah sejak di masa Syaikh Nawawi sendiri. Terma *fasad* (kerusakan) di muka bumi selalu disebut sebagai azab Allah akibat dosa dan maksiat manusia, bukan pada aktivitas perusakan lingkungan yang sering dilakukan manusia. Penelitian ini diharapkan dapat memperluas pengetahuan akademisi terkait respon ulama tafsir terhadap isu-isu kontemporer.

Kata kunci: Nawawi Al-Bantani; Marah Labid; Ekologis, Lingkungan.

Introduction

Environmental problems are problems that have actually existed since the existence of the environment itself. One of the oldest documented environmental crises was the soil salinization experienced by the Sumerians in Mesopotamia around 2000 years BC. Instead of getting good irrigation, *overirrigation* occurs and instead gradually backfires because it results in plants and soil being damaged by sedimentation salts that become crusty and harden. (Adamo & Al-Ansari, 2020) The more modern human life is, the more environmental problems must be faced. In the 18th-19th centuries, the industrial revolution that occurred in England was the beginning of a change in man's relationship with nature. (Steinberg, 1986) Some experts even consider this industrial revolution to be the culprit of the beginning of the destruction of the environment ("What was the Industrial Revolution's Environmental Impact?," t.t.)

Facing the increasingly widespread environmental issues, Islamic scholars also took part in responding. However, from the author's research, scholars' works that

specifically focus on environmental problems were only discovered in the 2000s. It could be that Yusuf Qardhawi was the one who inspired other scholars through his work *Ri'ayah al-Bi'ah fi Syari'ah al-Islam* which he wrote in 2000 and was published by Dar al-Syuruq Cairo a year later. Following this trend, it seems that Ali Yafie is the pioneer of environmental discourse in the framework of religion in Indonesia. He pioneered the use of the term Environmental Fiqh through his book entitled *Pioneering Environmental Fiqh*.

It can be argued that substantial scholarly engagement with environmental issues among both international and national Muslim scholars has emerged only in the twenty-first century, despite the fact that environmental degradation has been a growing concern since the Industrial Revolution. Therefore, scholars should continuously revisit and reinterpret the foundational sources of Islamic teachings to ensure their relevance to contemporary social and environmental realities. The author became interested in the figure of a prominent nineteenth-century scholar from Banten, namely Shaykh Nawawi al-Bantani. During his lifetime, he was renowned not only throughout the Indonesian archipelago but also in the wider international Islamic world. He was highly respected for his scholarly contributions and was entrusted to serve as an imam at the Grand Mosque in Mecca. In addition, he dedicated himself to teaching various Islamic sciences in the holy city, attracting students from different parts of the Muslim world. Among Shaykh Nawawi al-Bantani's scholarly contributions is his monumental Qur'anic commentary, *Marāḥ Labīd li Kashf Ma'nā al-Qur'ān al-Majīd*, which provides a complete interpretation of the Qur'an. This work occupies a prominent position in the history of Qur'anic exegesis in the Indonesian archipelago and is widely recognized as the first comprehensive Arabic-language tafsir authored by a Southeast Asian scholar. Through this commentary, Shaykh Nawawi offers a systematic exposition of all Qur'anic verses, reflecting both his mastery of the classical exegetical tradition and his intellectual engagement with the religious scholarship of his time. ("Tafsir Marāḥ Labīd, Tafsir Al-Quran by Sheikh Nawawi Al-Bantany," t.t.)

Tafsir Marāḥ Labīd was completed in 1305 AH (1887 CE), during a period marked by the far-reaching impacts of the Industrial Revolution. As a scholar situated within this historical milieu, Shaykh Nawawi al-Bantani would have been exposed, directly or indirectly, to the social transformations and environmental consequences

generated by industrialization. The increasing exploitation of natural resources and the growing tendency to prioritize economic interests over environmental preservation had begun to raise concerns on a global scale. Therefore, environmental degradation represented one of the pressing issues of the era that called for intellectual and religious responses, including those grounded in Islamic teachings and Qur'anic interpretation. ("Marahul Labid: Kitab Tafsir Al-Qur'an Cita Rasa Nusantara," t.t.)

These considerations have prompted the present study to investigate the ecological dimensions of Shaykh Nawawi al-Bantani's Tafsir Marāḥ Labīd. The study aims to assess whether his interpretation of environmentally related Qur'anic verses reflects an awareness of ecological concerns and offers a substantive response to the environmental challenges of his era, or whether it remains largely rooted in the conventional exegetical paradigms of classical Islamic scholarship. To address this question, the present research is entitled "Ecological Tendencies in Shaykh Nawawi al-Bantani's Tafsir Marāḥ Labīd : A Study of Environment-Related Qur'anic Verses"

This study focuses on analyzing Shaykh Nawawi al-Bantani's interpretation of ecological verses in the context of environmental changes that emerged following the Industrial Revolution. While significant scholarly engagement with environmental issues has largely developed in the twenty-first century, this research offers a distinctive contribution by examining ecological tendencies in a nineteenth-century Qur'anic commentary, long before environmental concerns became a central topic of global discourse.

By investigating whether Shaykh Nawawi, as a scholar of his era, responded to environmental challenges arising from the social and economic transformations of the Industrial Revolution, this study provides a fresh perspective on the relationship between classical Qur'anic exegesis and contemporary environmental issues. Furthermore, it contributes to the advancement of Islamic scholarship, particularly in the field of Qur'anic studies and tafsir.

This research is also expected to enhance scholarly appreciation of the exegetical works of Indonesian Muslim scholars, especially *Tafsir Marāḥ Labīd* authored by Shaykh Nawawi al-Bantani. In addition, the study of ecological verses in *Marāḥ Labīd* may help promote greater environmental awareness and encourage contemporary Qur'anic

interpreters to develop more context-sensitive interpretations that respond effectively to the challenges and developments of the modern world..

Theoretical Studies

Environmental Conservation (Ḥifẓ al-Bī'ah) as an Objective of Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah

Within the framework of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*, the primary objectives of Islamic law are traditionally understood as the preservation of five essential elements: religion (*ḥifẓ al-dīn*), life (*ḥifẓ al-nafs*), intellect (*ḥifẓ al-'aql*), lineage (*ḥifẓ al-nasl*), and property (*ḥifẓ al-māl*). However, with the development of contemporary Islamic thought, some scholars have expanded this framework by including additional dimensions that also require protection, one of which is the environment (*ḥifẓ al-bī'ah*).

A healthy and sustainable environment constitutes a fundamental prerequisite for the survival and well-being of human beings and other living creatures. Therefore, its preservation and protection can be regarded as an integral part of the objectives of Islamic law. The environment referred to in this context encompasses the natural world surrounding human beings, including land, water, air, animals, and plants. As God's vicegerents (*khulafā'*) on earth, humans bear the responsibility of safeguarding and managing these natural resources in a manner that ensures ecological balance and sustainability for present and future generations.

In his work, Abdul Majid al-Najjar argues that since the natural environment has been entrusted to humanity for its benefit and stewardship, the exploitation of natural resources—whether undertaken individually or collectively—must be managed responsibly to avoid disrupting ecological balance. Uncontrolled environmental degradation can damage ecosystems and ultimately threaten the well-being and prosperity of future generations. Therefore, the protection of the environment (*ḥifẓ al-bī'ah*) should be recognized and upheld as an essential objective of *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*.

This perspective is supported by the Qur'an, which explicitly prohibits acts of corruption and destruction on earth. Allah states in Surah al-A'raf (7:56): (Abdul Majid al-Najar, t.t.)

Meaning: "Do not do any harm to the earth..." ("Tafsir Kemenag," t.t.)

Yusuf al-Qaradawi likewise affirms the principle that the natural environment exists for the benefit of humanity and therefore must be safeguarded to ensure the well-being of future generations. He further emphasizes that environmental conservation is not an alien concept introduced into Islam from external intellectual traditions. Rather, its foundations are embedded within the classical Islamic heritage and can be identified across various disciplines of Islamic scholarship, including tafsir, *fiqh*, and *uṣūl al-fiqh*. Consequently, ecological stewardship should be regarded as an inherent aspect of the Islamic worldview and a practical manifestation of the objectives of the *Sharī'ah*. (Yusuf Qardhawi, 2001)

Based on the views of the two scholars mentioned above, as well as those of other contemporary Muslim thinkers, it can be concluded that environmental protection occupies an increasingly important position within the discourse of *uṣūl al-fiqh* and *Maqāṣid al-Sharī'ah*. The growing recognition of ecological concerns has led scholars to emphasize the urgency of preserving the environment as a fundamental component of Islamic legal and ethical thought.

Some contemporary scholars have even proposed a more expansive interpretation of the classical framework of *al-darūriyyāt al-khams* (the five essential objectives of the *Sharī'ah*). They argue that *ḥifẓ al-bī'ah* (environmental preservation) should be incorporated alongside the traditionally recognized objectives: the preservation of religion (*ḥifẓ al-dīn*), life (*ḥifẓ al-nafs*), intellect (*ḥifẓ al-'aql*), lineage (*ḥifẓ al-nasl*), and property (*ḥifẓ al-māl*). This perspective reflects an awareness that environmental sustainability is indispensable for the realization and protection of all other essential objectives of the *Sharī'ah*.

The conceptualization of *al-bī'ah* (the environment) within the framework of *uṣūl al-fiqh* can be elaborated further by referring to the model proposed by Nuruddin Ali Jum'ah in his work *Al-Bī'ah wa al-Ḥifāẓ 'Alayhā min Manzūr Islāmī*. In this work, he explains the foundations of environmental ethics and law in Islam through what he terms

al-Taṣawwurāt al-Fiqhiyyah (jurisprudential perceptions), which he places as the second foundational dimension after *al-Taṣawwurāt al-‘Aqā’idiyyah* (theological perceptions). These two dimensions serve as the normative basis that obliges and motivates Muslims to engage in environmental preservation (*al-muḥāfaẓah*), participation (*al-mushārahah*), and cooperation (*al-ta‘āwun*).

Furthermore, Nuruddin Ali Jum‘ah argues that the foundation of Islamic ecological law extends beyond mere environmental conservation. It also encompasses the development, regulation, and evaluation of all forms of interaction between human beings and their natural environment. According to him, the Qur’an encourages not only environmental stewardship but also observation, reflection, and critical analysis of the natural world as signs of God's creative power. Such engagement with nature ultimately fosters a deeper awareness of the Creator and cultivates attitudes of reverence, gratitude, and devotion toward Him. (Nuruddin Ali Jum'ah, 2009)

The conceptualization of *al-bī‘ah* (the environment) in Islamic thought can be traced historically through the contributions of numerous Muslim scholars. Through his dialogical approach, Ahmad al-Raysuni successfully demonstrates the relevance of classical Islamic scholarship to contemporary environmental ethics by connecting the works of earlier scholars with modern ecological concerns.

His exploration begins with the writings of Ibn ‘Abd Rabbih, particularly *al-Jumānah*, which discusses the relationship between human character, climate, and geographical environment. It is followed by the work of Ibn Khaldun in *al-Muqaddimah*, which is widely regarded as a pioneering study of the interaction between human societies and their environments, especially in relation to the formation and characteristics of different human communities. Al-Raysuni also highlights Ibn Ṭufayl’s philosophical narrative *Ḥayy ibn Yaqẓān*, in which human beings are portrayed as noble creatures whose developmental process parallels that of plants, progressing through stages of growth until reaching maturity and fruition.

Within al-Raysuni’s framework, the contribution of *uṣūl al-fiqh* to environmental thought is situated within the broader epistemology of Islamic ecology. He classifies environmental approaches into two principal methodologies. The first is *al-Manhaj al-‘Ilājī* (the therapeutic approach), which emphasizes reconstructive, restorative, and

regenerative efforts aimed at repairing environmental damage. The second is *al-Manhaj al-Wiqā'ī* (the preventive approach), which seeks to anticipate and prevent ecological degradation by identifying and addressing potential causes of environmental harm before they occur. Together, these approaches provide a comprehensive framework for understanding environmental stewardship within the tradition of Islamic legal theory.. (Qutb al-Raisuni, 2008)

Beyond the framework of *ḥifẓ al-bī'ah*, Islamic ecological thought can also be examined through the methodological approach developed by Fazlun M. Khalid in formulating Islamic environmental ethics and policy. His approach is grounded in principles derived from the Qur'an, which he presents as the foundation of an environmentally conscious and sustainable worldview.

According to Khalid, this worldview rests upon several key principles. The first is *tawḥīd* (the principle of unity), which emphasizes the interconnectedness of all creation. The second is *fiṭrah* (the principle of creation), which recognizes the intrinsic order of nature and the consequences of violating natural laws. The third is *mīzān* (the principle of balance), which affirms that natural systems function according to divinely established laws that maintain harmony and equilibrium. The fourth is *khilāfah* (the principle of stewardship), which assigns human beings the responsibility of preserving and maintaining the balance of the natural world.

In *Signs on the Earth*, Khalid further develops these theoretical foundations by exploring *istidlāl* as a practical method for applying Qur'anic principles to contemporary environmental challenges. For example, he argues that the concept of *ḥisbah*, as practiced during the time of the Prophet Muhammad, can serve as a model for environmental monitoring and regulation based on local customs, community participation, and ethical responsibility. Through this approach, Islamic environmental ethics are transformed from normative principles into practical mechanisms for environmental governance and sustainability. (Fazlun M Khalid, 2019)

Research Methods

This study employs a qualitative research design based on library research. Qualitative research seeks to understand and interpret phenomena through an in-depth

examination of relevant texts, ideas, and perspectives. In this study, the researcher investigates Shaykh Nawawi al-Bantani's views as presented in *Tafsir Marāḥ Labīd*, with particular attention to his interpretation of Qur'anic verses related to environmental and ecological issues.

The study adopts a descriptive-analytical approach. Through the collection, examination, and interpretation of textual data, it aims to describe and analyze Shaykh Nawawi al-Bantani's understanding of ecological verses and to identify the underlying patterns, tendencies, and perspectives reflected in his exegetical discourse.. (Erickson P, 2018)

Data for this study were collected through literature review and the supporting data were obtained through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and interviews with experts in Qur'anic studies and Islamic environmental thought. The primary source of data is *Tafsir Marāḥ Labīd* authored by Shaykh Nawawi al-Bantani. To maintain analytical focus, the study is limited to the interpretation of selected ecological verses, namely QS. al-Rūm (30): 41, QS. al-Baqarah (2): 11 and 30, and QS. al-A'raf (7): 56. Additional data were obtained from previous studies, scholarly publications, and relevant documents discussing Shaykh Nawawi al-Bantani's views as presented in *Tafsir Marāḥ Labīd*, as well as broader studies on environmental issues in Islam.

This study employs content analysis as its primary analytical method. Content analysis focuses on identifying and interpreting both explicit and implicit meanings contained within a text. In this context, *Tafsir Marāḥ Labīd* is analyzed through the classification, organization, and evaluation of key concepts, themes, and symbols related to environmental issues in order to uncover the meanings and implications embedded within the text.

The analytical process involves a close reading of the selected passages, the identification of interpretive patterns, and the reconstruction of meanings relevant to contemporary ecological discourse. In addition, the study adopts a hermeneutical approach by considering the historical, social, and cultural contexts surrounding both the exegete and the text. Through this approach, the research seeks to provide a deeper understanding of Shaykh Nawawi al-Bantani's ecological perspectives and their relevance to current environmental concerns.

Results

Method of Interpretation of Tafsir Marah Labid

Tafsir Marāḥ Labīd li Kashf Ma'nā al-Qur'ān al-Majīd is a Qur'anic commentary authored by Shaykh Nawawi al-Bantani. The work is also widely known by its alternative title, *al-Tafsīr al-Munīr li Ma'ālim al-Tanzīl*. Shaykh Nawawi began composing this commentary in the nineteenth century and completed it in 1305 AH (1887 CE), and it has since become one of the most significant contributions to the development of Qur'anic exegesis in the Indonesian world. (Niswatul Malihah & Tapa'ul Habdin, 2023)

In *Tafsir Marāḥ Labīd*, Shaykh Nawawi presents his interpretations in a concise yet comprehensive manner, making the text accessible and relatively easy to understand. The structure of the commentary follows the arrangement of the Qur'anic verses in the muṣḥaf, reflecting the conventional order of the Qur'an.

In his exegetical approach, Shaykh Nawawi demonstrates careful attention to linguistic and textual details while maintaining brevity in his explanations. Methodologically, the commentary employs the *taḥlīlī* (analytical) method, in which verses are interpreted sequentially and supported by detailed explanations of key vocabulary and expressions. In addition to linguistic analysis, Shaykh Nawawi frequently incorporates prophetic traditions (*ḥadīth*), historical narratives, and reports from the Companions (*ṣaḥābah*) and Successors (*tābi'ūn*) as authoritative sources for understanding the meanings of Qur'anic verses. These features highlight his reliance on the classical tradition of Qur'anic exegesis while ensuring clarity and coherence in his interpretations. (Niswatul Malihah & Tapa'ul Habdin, 2023)

The interpretive approach employed in *Tafsir Marāḥ Labīd* can be classified as a combination of *tafsīr bi al-ma'thūr* (transmitted exegesis) and *tafsīr bi al-ra'y al-maḥmūd* (reasoned exegesis based on sound judgment). The former refers to the interpretation of Qur'anic verses through other Qur'anic verses, Prophetic traditions (*ḥadīth*), and reports transmitted from the Companions (*ṣaḥābah*) and the Successors (*tābi'ūn*). The latter involves the use of scholarly reasoning, independent judgment (*ijtihād*), and analytical reflection in order to derive and explain the meanings of the Qur'anic text.

This combination demonstrates Shaykh Nawawi al-Bantani's effort to balance adherence to the classical exegetical tradition with the application of intellectual analysis. As a result, *Tafsir Marāḥ Labīd* reflects both the authority of transmitted sources and the exegete's interpretive engagement with the text.

The *tafsīr bi al-ra'y* employed by Shaykh Nawawi is grounded in both scholarly (*'ilmiyyah*) and *Sharī'ah*-based (*shar'iyyah*) principles. This is evident in his frequent reliance on the opinions of recognized authorities in various fields of Islamic scholarship when interpreting Qur'anic verses. References such as "Ahl al-Ma'ānī stated..." or "al-Zajjāj stated..." demonstrate that Shaykh Nawawi's use of reasoned interpretation was not based on personal opinion alone, but rather on established scholarly traditions and authoritative sources.

These references indicate that his employment of *tafsīr bi al-ra'y* was conducted within a rigorous intellectual framework, combining analytical reasoning with the insights of earlier scholars. Consequently, his interpretive method reflects a form of reasoned exegesis that remains firmly rooted in the principles and disciplines of classical Islamic scholarship. (Mufidah & Hasyim, 2021)

The sufistic nuances are quite felt in the interpretation of *Marāḥ Labīd*. It is likely that this nuance was influenced by the figure of Shaykh Nawawi who was a Sufi and the leader of a large order in the archipelago. Meanwhile, the tendency of the *tafsir* of *riwayah/ma'tsur* is caused because Shaykh Nawawi was worried about falling into a mistake when using his pure thinking (*bi al-Ra'yi*). (Niswatul Malihah & Tapa'ul Habdin, 2023)

Interpretation of Ecological Verses

As stated in the methodology section, this study examines Shaykh Nawawi al-Bantani's interpretation of selected Qur'anic verses associated with environmental preservation. Based on a review of the relevant Qur'anic passages, a number of verses were identified as having significant ecological implications, particularly with regard to the relationship between humans and the natural environment. These verses constitute the primary focus of the present analysis:

QS Al-Rum verse 41

"Corruption and disorder have become manifest on land and at sea because of what human beings have done, so that Allah may cause them to experience some of the consequences of their actions, in order that they may return to the right path." (Qur'an 30:41)

QS Al-Baqarah verse 11 :

"When they are told, 'Do not spread corruption and disorder on the earth,' they say, 'We are merely reformers.'" (Qur'an 2:11)

QS Al-Baqarah verse 30 :

"And [remember] when your Lord said to the angels, 'Indeed, I am going to place a vicegerent (khalifah) on the earth.' They said, 'Will You place therein one who will cause corruption and shed blood, while we glorify You with praise and sanctify You?' He said, 'Indeed, I know that which you do not know.'" (Qur'an 2:30)

QS Al-A'raf verse 56 :

"Do not spread corruption and destruction on the earth after it has been put in a state of order and balance. Call upon Him with fear and hope. Surely, the mercy of Allah is close to those who act righteously." (Qur'an 7:56)

Discussion

Shaykh Nawawi's Interpretation of QS Al-Rum verse 41

QS. Al-Rum verse 41 is a very popular verse related to the theme of environmental sustainability. Here is what Allah says in the verse:

"There has been damage on land and at sea caused by human hands. (Through that) Allah made them feel some of the (consequences) of their deeds so that they would return (to the right path)." ("Qur'an Ministry of Religion," t.t.)

This verse highlights the close relationship between the corruption that appears on land and sea and human actions. According to Shaykh Nawawi al-Bantani, various forms of destruction, such as droughts, forest fires, floods, and the decline of animal populations, are consequences of human disobedience to God. However, the disobedience referred to in this verse is not understood as the direct physical destruction

of the environment through actions such as indiscriminate logging, pollution, or irresponsible waste disposal.

Rather, Shaykh Nawawi interprets this disobedience as acts of shirk (associating partners with God), sinful behavior, and violations of divine commands and Islamic teachings. In his view, environmental degradation occurs as a manifestation of God's punishment for human sins and moral transgressions. The damage inflicted upon the natural world thus serves as an initial warning and a sign of divine retribution. Furthermore, at the end of his commentary on the verse, Shaykh Nawawi explains that the worldly consequences of human disobedience will ultimately be followed by a more severe punishment in the Hereafter. (al-Bantani, 2021)

Furthermore, Shaykh Nawawi reinforces his interpretation by citing the opinion of al-Ḍaḥḥāk. According to this narration, the earth was originally a lush and fertile place where trees grew abundantly, fruits were plentiful, animals lived peacefully without hostility toward one another, and even the seawater was fresh. This harmonious condition, however, changed after the incident in which Qābīl (Cain) killed Hābīl (Abel). According to al-Ḍaḥḥāk's account, this event marked the first act of disobedience committed by the descendants of Adam, initiating a process through which order and harmony on earth began to deteriorate.

By incorporating this narration, Shaykh Nawawi emphasizes the moral and spiritual dimensions of environmental degradation. In his view, the spread of human sin and disobedience leads to the withdrawal of divine blessings and the emergence of various forms of corruption and disorder in the world. Thus, the greater the extent of human violations of God's commands, the more severe the worldly consequences that may arise as manifestations of divine punishment.

The understanding of Al-Rum verse 41 which states that the destruction of the world/nature occurs as Allah's punishment for human sins, especially shirk, is also conveyed by other interpreters such as Kyai Bisri Mustofa (1960) in *Tafsir Al-Ibriz* who explains that the destruction of nature is part of the punishment given by Allah due to human sins before the entire torment in the hereafter so that people think and are willing to repent. Wahbah Zuhaili in *Tafsir al-Munir* also emphasizes that all damage to nature including crop failure, drought and so on is a punishment of Allah due to human

disobedience such as disbelief, tyranny, violating religious commands and prohibitions, and refusing to worship Allah. (az-Zuhaili, 2005)

Quraish Shihab relates the meaning of this verse to the preceding passage, which describes the attitude of the polytheists who associated partners with Allah and disregarded divine guidance. According to his interpretation, the verse explains the harmful consequences of human disobedience and sinful actions. As a result, various forms of corruption and disorder become manifest on land and at sea, including drought, famine, insecurity, drowning, and the decline of marine and river resources.

Still in the *tafsir of al-Misbah*, the word *al-fasad* according to al-Ashfahani means the exit of something from balance, referring to various aspects, both physical, soul, and other things. Although there are other opinions that limit their meaning to sinful acts such as polytheism, this view has no solid basis. In contrast, some contemporary scholars are more likely to understand this verse as a gesture against environmental degradation, given that the word *al-fasad* is associated with the words *al-barr* (land) and *al-bahr* (sea).

This verse mentions land and sea as places where *al-fasad* occurs, such as bloodshed and robbery, or as areas that directly suffer physical damage. The physical impact that arises is ocean pollution that causes fish deaths and a decrease in marine products, an increase in temperature on land that triggers a long drought. As a result, the balance of the environment becomes chaotic. This is what led some contemporary scholars to understand this verse as an indication of environmental damage. So based on this description, Quraish Shihab tends to show the direct involvement of human actions in the damage that occurs on the earth, caused by the act of *façade* which ultimately results in damage on land and sea. (Shihab, 2012)

Furthermore, Imam Maraghi also gave an interpretation of this verse in his book *Tafsir al-Maraghi*. He explained about the damage that occurred on earth as a result of unjust human deeds. These damages are such as natural disasters, wars, and social tensions caused by human actions that are unjust, greedy, and far from religious values. So it means that humans are portrayed as parties who are more concerned with worldly interests without considering the consequences of their actions towards fellow creatures and the surrounding nature.

According to Maraghi, Allah SWT. In this verse, it is emphasized that the damage that occurs is a retribution for the wrongful deeds they committed. The purpose of the descent of the punishment or adzab is to warn people so that they realize their mistakes and return to the right path. Although the editorial does not explain that the destruction on the earth is caused directly by human hands, this verse in Maraghi's view contains the message that man's negligence in carrying out religious teachings and their greed that results in war is the cause of the destruction of this earth. (Aḥmad Muṣṭafā Al-Marāgī, 1946)

A review of more contemporary Qur'anic interpretations reveals a stronger and more explicit connection between Qur'an 30:41 and human-induced environmental degradation. In addition to al-Maraghi and Quraish Shihab, Zaghlul Al-Najjar, in his work *Tafsīr al-Āyāt al-Kawniyyah fī al-Qur'ān al-Karīm*, argues that the human actions referred to in the verse encompass direct forms of environmental destruction rather than merely moral transgressions or acts of disobedience. According to his interpretation, environmental degradation results from human activities that directly disrupt and damage natural ecosystems.

Furthermore, Al-Najjar adopts a broader understanding of the terms "land" and "sea" mentioned in the verse. He extends their meaning to include other components of the natural environment, such as the atmosphere, rivers, and various ecological systems. On this basis, he discusses a range of contemporary environmental problems, including pollution, environmental contamination, and the harmful consequences of human exploitation of natural resources. His interpretation thus reflects a more ecological reading of the verse, emphasizing humanity's responsibility for preserving environmental balance and preventing ecological degradation. (al-Najjar, 2007)

Shaykh Nawawi's Interpretation of QS Al-Baqarah verse 11

Furthermore, expressly in QS. al-Baqarah verse 11, Allah SWT. has forbidden mankind to do damage on earth.

"And when it is said to them, 'Do not do any damage to the earth!', they answer, 'We are the ones who make repairs.'" ("Qur'an Ministry of Religion," t.t.)

The verse contains a prohibition for humans to do damage on earth. al-Nawawi in interpreting this verse makes the hypocrites the object referred to in the prohibition. According to al-Nawawi, the destruction of the earth in question is the activity of preventing humans from the religion of Islam (*Ta'wīq al-Nas 'an Diin Muhammad Saw.*). The context of this verse is intended for the *Munafiq* who always keep people away from the religion of Muhammad, but they instead consider them as people who make improvements. This is due to their hearts being filled with liver diseases. (al-Bantani, 2021) In line with al-Nawawi's interpretation, in this verse Hamka recounts the activities of the hypocrites who tried to hinder the improvement, spiritual and physical development that the Prophet was doing to his believers. It is reiterated in the next verse that Allah, according to Hamka, uses the word *Ala!* Find out! Indeed, they are destroyers of all, but they are not aware. So it is clear that the context of the prohibition of doing harm according to their interpretation is aimed at the hypocrites. The definition that Hamka thinks is relevant to hypocrites is those whose mouths confess to believe, but their hearts do not, and in their deeds it is even more evident that their oral confessions are not in accordance with what is stored in the heart. (Amrullah, t.t.)

A similar interpretation can be found in *Tafsīr al-Munīr* authored by Shaykh Wahbah al-Zuhaylī. In his commentary on the phrase *lā tufsidū* (“do not cause corruption”), he primarily associates it with the behavior of the hypocrites (*munāfiqūn*), who inflict harm upon society by spreading slander, disclosing the secrets of the Muslim community to its enemies, and discouraging believers from following the guidance of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him). According to al-Zuhailī, such actions constitute forms of corruption because they undermine social cohesion and weaken the moral foundations of the community. (az-Zuhaili, 2005)

In contrast, Quraish Shihab offers a broader interpretation in his *Tafsīr al-Miṣbāḥ*. He understands the phrase *lā tufsidū fī al-arḍ* (“do not cause corruption on the earth”) as referring to any action that diminishes the value, function, or benefit of a system, thereby altering its original state and impairing its ability to perform its intended role. In this sense, corruption (*fasād*) signifies the disruption of an order or balance that has previously been established and maintained.

From this perspective, the concept of *fasād* extends beyond moral and social misconduct to encompass any activity that undermines the proper functioning of a system. The author argues that Quraish Shihab's general formulation can be applied more specifically to environmental issues. For example, the indiscriminate disposal of waste may disrupt the availability of clean water and damage aquatic habitats, while excessive exploitation of forests can lead to the degradation of forest ecosystems and the loss of ecological balance. Such actions represent concrete manifestations of environmental corruption, as they reduce the capacity of natural systems to sustain life and fulfill their ecological functions. (Shihab, 2012)

Further, this verse specifically refers to the actions of the hypocrites who, when rebuked, "Do not do any harm on the earth," they replied, "Verily, we are the *righteous*." A *Mushlih*, according to Quraish Shihab, is one who always tries to improve something that has diminished in value so as to restore the condition to its best function. Better than that, *mushlih* are those who are able to provide added value from the good order, so that the quality is higher than before. As for the hypocrites, they consider themselves to be at this level, even though they are said to be in the category of destroyers.

Furthermore, the prohibition on them not to do damage on earth is not limited to the prohibition to do damage. The word earth in the verse serves to reflect how wide the impact of evil is, so that if left unchecked, it can spread throughout the earth. Not only humans, but also all living environments.

Shaykh Nawawi's Interpretation of QS Al-Baqarah verse 30

Another verse that is often associated with environmental sustainability problems is Surah Al-Baqarah verse 30. Some believe that the responsibility of humans as caliphs contained in the verse must be manifested in the management of nature properly, not *recklessly* to the point of threatening the preservation of nature and the environment. (Garwan, 2019) Some even relate this verse to environmental conservation as a reminder of a moderate attitude. (Fardiansyah & Admizal, 2023) In full, Allah says in the verse:

"(Remember) when your Lord said to the angels, 'I am going to make a caliph on earth,' they said, 'Do you want to make a man who destroys and sheds blood

there, while we praise You and sanctify Your name?" He said, "Surely I know what you do not know." ("Qur'an Kemenag," t.t.)

Humans before being sent down to earth have been chosen by Allah SWT to regulate all activities on earth. QS. al-Baqarah verse 30 tells the story of the appointment of man as *caliph fi al-Ardh* which received special attention from the angels. al-Nawawi when interpreting this verse said that the angels questioned the purpose of Allah appointing man as *caliph*. The purpose of the angel's question is not to oppose God's decree but to reveal the wisdom behind the appointment. Humans in this verse are associated with the activity of destroying the earth (*yufsidu fiha*) and like to shed blood (*yasfiku al-Dima*). According to al-Nawawi, these two things will happen when humans are trapped in disobedience and tyranny so as to weaken the logic of their sanity. (al-Bantani, 2021)

As in his interpretation of other related verses, Shaykh Nawawi understands the corruption (*fasād*) mentioned in this verse as human disobedience and injustice rather than environmental destruction. He does not explicitly discuss the ecological responsibilities of humanity as *khalīfah* on earth. This tendency is also evident in classical commentaries. Al-Ṭabarī interprets *khalīfah* primarily as a successor or one who inhabits and develops the earth, without linking the concept to environmental stewardship. Similarly, al-Qurṭubī explains *khalīfah* as one who succeeds previous inhabitants or is succeeded by later generations, emphasizing the responsibility to uphold God's commands and prohibitions rather than ecological obligations. Thus, ecological interpretations of the concept of *khalīfah* are largely absent from these classical commentaries. (al-Qurthubi, 2006)

In *Tafsir al-Miṣbāḥ*, Quraish Shihab explains that the angels assumed that human beings would have the potential to cause corruption and shed blood on earth. This assumption may have arisen from their knowledge of previous creatures that inhabited the earth and engaged in such behavior. Another possibility is that, unlike angels who constantly glorify God, humans possess free will and are therefore more prone to conflict and wrongdoing. Unlike Shaykh Nawawi, who interprets the angels' question as an expression of divine wisdom, Quraish Shihab views it as a reflection of the potential consequences of human vicegerency. According to him, the term *khalīfah* implies

succession, which in turn suggests the possibility of disputes and even bloodshed among human beings. (2012)

Shaykh Nawawi's Interpretation of QS al-A'raf verse 56

Another verse related to the destruction of nature is QS. al-A'raf verse 56:

"Do not do any damage to the earth after it is well regulated. Pray to Him with fear and hope. Indeed, Allah's mercy is very near to those who do good." ("Qur'an Kemenag," t.t.)

According to Shaykh Nawawi, the prohibition against causing corruption on earth encompasses acts such as murder, theft, disbelief (*kufr*), religious innovation (*bid'ah*), adultery, and the consumption of intoxicants. According to his interpretation, these actions lead to corruption and disorder that disrupt human life and social harmony. Thus, this verse emphasizes the prohibition of all forms of transgression that exceed the limits established by God and result in widespread harm. (al-Bantani, 2021)

In the *tafsir al-Misbah*, Quraish Shihab views destruction as a form of exceeding boundaries that is contrary to the purpose of the creation of the universe, which was essentially created by Allah in a harmonious, balanced, and able state to meet the needs of living beings. One form of improvement made by Allah is to send prophets to straighten out and correct the chaos among mankind. Thus, anyone who rejects the mission of the prophets can be considered as a person who does damage on the earth. (Shihab, 2012)

As for the interpretation of Wahbah az-Zuhaili in his book, *al-Munir*. He explained that this verse contains the prohibition of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) on all damages, both small and large after repairs have been made. It is taken from the words of Allah SWT. *walaa tufsiddu fii al-ardh ba'da ishlaahihaa*, which shows the absolute prohibition for humans to do dangerous things. Because the law of origin of dangerous things is haram. This interpretation is still within the same scope of discussion as the previous verse, QS. al-A'raf verse 55 which is substantially explained that the law of origin of benefits, good goods is permissible and halal. (az-Zuhaili, 2005)

Based on the interpretation of the verses with the theme of damage that the author has described above, there are no verses that al-Nawawi specifically interprets in an

ecological framework. Al-Nawawi tends to interpret these verses in a more global sense, namely as acts of damage in the context of violations of the Shari'a. The prohibition of doing damage to the earth as in QS. al-A'raf verse 56, for example, al-Nawawi interprets it as a prohibition on killing, stealing, committing kufr and bid'ah, adultery, and drinking liquor. This approach illustrates al-Nawawi's concern that highlights the issue of *worship rather* than correlating worldly issues such as environmental sustainability with human welfare as the main goal of Islamic law. Nawawi al-Bantani tends to adopt conventional methods of interpreting the verses themed on damage and denying environmental conservation (*hifz al-bi'ah*) as a preventive measure against the more common damage, environmental damage. This shows that it seems that Nawawi al-Bantani has not given a radical response to the environmental issues that began to arise in his time.

Conclusion

The preservation of the environment in the Qur'an is a very important issue. The Quran has explained that the most important urgency of preserving the environment is to maintain the survival of all creatures. The phenomenon of natural destruction that is increasingly spreading such as global warming, air pollution, forest fires, etc., should be able to make humanity more sensitive to its environment. Islam must be able to provide guidance regarding the ideal relationship between humans and the surrounding environment (*habl ma'a al-biah*). The slogan that is often taught is only limited to the relationship between man and Allah (*habl min Allah*) and man's relationship with his fellow man (*habl min al-Nas*). Despite the urgency of the ecological problem, some interpretations, including Marah Labid by Shaykh Nawawi al-Bantani, have not touched much on these environmental issues. The corruption of man on earth is always attributed to vices, sins, shirk, disbelief, and disobedience in general.

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