



A COMPARISON OF STEWARDSHIP THEOLOGY IN LAUDATO SI' AND *AL-MĪZĀN*:
CREATION TEXTS IN CHRISTIAN AND MUSLIM SCRIPTURES

NAME: WASEEM RAZA

STUDENT NUMBER: 2141947

COURSE NAME: THESIS CHRISTIANITY AND SOCIETY

COURSE CODE: U40071-M-15

SUPERVISORS: PROF. DR. CAROLINE VANDER STICHELE, DR. ÖMER GÜRLESIN

ASSESSOR: DR. JAN VAN WIELE

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DEDICATION

Very humbly dedicated to
Pope Francis, a man who lived what he preached!

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	5
BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE STUDY.....	5
RESEARCH PROBLEM AND SIGNIFICANCE.....	6
RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIVES.....	6
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK:.....	7
METHODOLOGY AND SCOPE.....	8
STRUCTURE OF THESIS.....	8
CHAPTER 1	
AN OVERVIEW OF THEOLOGICAL AND ETHICAL FOUNDATIONS FROM THE BIBLE AND THE QURAN USED IN <i>LAUDATO SI'</i> AND <i>AL-MĪZĀN</i>	9
1.1. <i>LAUDATO SI'</i>	9
1.2 <i>AL-MĪZĀN</i>	10
1.3 SCRIPTURAL SOURCES CITED IN EACH DOCUMENT.....	11
1.3.1 SCRIPTURAL SOURCES IN <i>LAUDATO SI'</i>	12
1.3.2 SCRIPTURAL SOURCES CITED IN <i>AL-MĪZĀN</i>	14
1.4 CONCLUSION.....	15
CHAPTER 2	
COMPARISON OF THE NOTION OF STEWARDSHIP IN <i>LAUDATO SI'</i> AND <i>AL-MĪZĀN</i>	
2.1 CONTEXT	17
2.2 STEWARDSHIP / VICEREGENCY IN BOTH DOCUMENTS.....	18
2.2.1 STEWARDSHIP IN <i>LAUDATO SI'</i>	19
2.2.2 STEWARDSHIP IN <i>AL-MĪZĀN</i>	21
2.3 THEOLOGY OF CREATION OF GENESIS AND THE QUR'ĀN IN BOTH DOCUMENTS.....	25
2.3.1 CREATION THEOLOGY IN <i>LAUDATO SI'</i>	25
2.3.2 CREATION THEOLOGY OF <i>AL-MĪZĀN</i>	26
2.3.3 COMMON THEOLOGY OF CREATION.....	27
2.4 CONCLUSION.....	27

CHAPTER 3

SHARED CONCERNS ROOTED IN THE THEOLOGY OF STEWARDSHIP.....	28
3.1- SHARED CONCERNS.....	28
3.1.1- CLIMATE CRISIS AND PRESERVATION OF BALANCE	28
3.1.2-ACCOUNTABILITY TO THE CREATOR.....	29
3.1.3- JUSTICE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE POOR.....	29
3.1.4- SPIRITUAL AND ETHICAL TRANSFORMATION.....	31
3.2. DIFFERENCES IN EMPHASIS: ANTHROPOCENTRIC VIEW, SPIRITUAL WORLDVIEWS.....	32
3.2.1 ANTHROPOCENTRIC VS THEOCENTRIC VIEWS.....	32
3.2.2- SPIRITUAL WORLD VIEWS.....	33
3.3 ECOLOGICAL MODERATION IN <i>LAUDATO SI'</i> AND BALANCE JUSTICE IN <i>AL-MĪZĀN</i>	33
3.4CONCLUSION.....	34
CONCLUSION AND WAY FORWARD.....	36
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	41

INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

The environmental crisis of the past two decades has presented humanity with exceptional challenges, affecting ecosystems, biodiversity, and human communities alike. Underdeveloped countries like Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, and the African continent are suffering disproportionately from this crisis. From increasing temperatures, melting glaciers, shifts in harvesting and cultivation, to widespread pollution, these issues have caught the attention of international policymakers, who argue for urgent action from all sectors of society.¹ Religious traditions, with their rich ethical teachings and moral frameworks, are crucial in this context, offering theological guidance on human responsibility toward the environment. Eco-theology, at the intersection of religious teachings and environmental ethics, has emerged as a critical area of study for understanding how faith communities can contribute to environmental protection and sustainability.

Within the Christian tradition, Pope Francis's encyclical *Laudato Si': On Care for Our Common Home*², has become a foundational document for Christian environmental ethics. It is deeply rooted in Biblical teachings and based on catholic social teaching. It calls for an integrated approach to ecology in which the environment, society, and economy are interconnected. The document emphasizes the importance of recognizing the sanctity of creation and the need for all individuals and communities to care for the Earth. Similarly, in the Islamic tradition, *Al-Mīzān: An Islamic Covenant for the Earth*³ provides a theological and ethical framework for addressing the environmental crisis, emphasizing humanity's role as stewards (*ḥalīfa*) of the Earth, as dictated by Islamic teachings. The document was created by Islamic scholars, activists, and environmentalists who aimed to address the growing need for faith-based ecological action in response to global environmental challenges.

Sharing a similar theological and spiritual focus, both *Laudato Si'* and *Al-Mīzān* advocate for a moral response to environmental degradation. However, they emerge from different theological and religious contexts: Christianity and Islam. Understanding the common ground and differences among these two influential documents could foster interfaith environmental advocacy and collaborative action on global environmental issues in an increasingly interconnected world. In light of the global engagement of religious communities in environmental activism, this thesis examines these documents to determine what theological and ethical support they can offer. What

¹ Earth Negotiations Bulletin, *Summary of the 2024 Baku Climate Change Conference: 11–22 November 2024*, vol. 12, no. 865 (November 26, 2024): 1–16, https://enb.iisd.org/sites/default/files/2024-11/enb12865e_0.pdf.

² Pope Francis, *Laudato Si: On Care for Our Common Home* (Vatican City: Vatican Press, 2015).

³ Othman Abd-ar-Rahman Llewellyn, Fazlun Khalid, and others, *Al-Mīzān: A Covenant for the Earth* (Birmingham, UK: Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences, 2024), https://www.almizan.earth/files/ugd/57dc1c_45a7b6bebdbd46598965240443d5b28d.pdf.

are their shared concerns? It also examines the potential for religious collaboration in addressing the ecological crisis.

Building on this foundation, the present study undertakes a comparative exploration of the theological and ethical frameworks around which *Laudato Si'* and *Al-Mīzān* revolve. This study highlights how each document, rooted in its respective sacred texts and traditions, addresses contemporary ecological challenges and articulates visions of human responsibility toward the Earth.

RESEARCH PROBLEM AND SIGNIFICANCE

While Christianity and Islam offer robust theological responses to environmental degradation, the current literature lacks a detailed comparative analysis of *Laudato Si'* and *Al-Mīzān*, which are two influential documents in the field. This gap is particularly significant in the light of the global nature of the environmental crisis, which requires unified responses that transcend cultural and religious boundaries. As climate change, habitat destruction, biodiversity loss, and resource depletion continue to affect societies worldwide, faith communities are uniquely positioned to contribute a moral and ethical dimension to environmental discourse.

This study is significant for two main reasons. First, it aims to deepen our understanding of how two of the world's largest religious traditions, Christianity and Islam, articulate environmental responsibility and ethical stewardship through specific texts: *Laudato Si'* and *Al-Mīzān*. These documents not only address their respective religious followers but also aim to engage the broader world in a moral conversation about ecological justice. Second, the study explores the potential for interfaith cooperation based on shared ethical concerns. By drawing attention to both commonalities and differences, this comparative approach may encourage eco-theology, dialogue, and joint action in the environmental arena.

The growing number of religious environmental movements further supports the relevance of this study. Initiatives such as the *Laudato Si'* Movement and Muslim-led environmental campaigns demonstrate that religious communities are already undertaking ecological action. However, collaboration between these communities remains limited. A scholarly comparison of foundational theological texts may pave the way for more meaningful cooperation, enabling faith-based organizations to work together in responding to the urgent demands of the environmental crisis.

Through this lens, the study positions itself not just as a contribution to academic theology but also as a resource for fostering religious engagement in ecological advocacy.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIVES

The following research questions drive this thesis:

- What are the theological and ethical foundations of environmental stewardship articulated in *Laudato Si'* and *Al-Mīzān*?

- How do *Laudato Si'* and *Al-Mīzān* frame human responsibility as the notion of stewardship toward the Earth in their respective Scriptures?

The primary objectives of this thesis are:

- To examine the theological foundations of the environmental ethics in *Laudato Si'* and *Al-Mīzān*.
- To identify shared themes and key differences in how both documents approach environmental responsibility and care for the Earth.
- To explore the implications of these documents for interfaith environmental advocacy and collective action.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study explores the connections between *Laudato Si'* and *Al-Mīzān*. It analyses how these two documents engage with their respective sacred scriptures, the Bible and the Quran, and how they interpret environmental ethics through their religious traditions. It examines how religious texts shape the ethical guidelines proposed in each document, particularly about care for creation and human stewardship. The study seeks to uncover similarities and differences between Christianity and Islam regarding the environment and humanity's role, in order to uncover intertextual connections between the two faiths.

In addition, the framework of religious environmental ethics is central to this study. Religious environmental ethics assumes that spiritual traditions carry inherent moral imperatives regarding the care of the natural world. The study draws on scholars such as Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Vincent Jude Miller, Dermot A. Lane, Sean MacDonagh, and Celia Deane-Drummond, who have made significant contributions to our understanding of eco-theology. Their work highlights the significance of sacred texts in shaping the religious imagination and moral consciousness of believers regarding the Earth.

METHODOLOGY AND SCOPE

This research uses a qualitative, comparative methodology. The analysis focuses on a textual examination of both *Laudato Si'* and *Al-Mīzān*, analyzing the theological, ethical, and environmental themes that arise from each document. Secondary sources, including scholarly commentaries, theological writings, and environmental texts such as those by Lynn White, Alister McGrath, and Sean MacDonagh, will be used to provide additional insights into the religious and ecological principles embedded in both documents. Unfortunately, there is not enough secondary literature available for *Al-Mīzān* because it is a very recent document.

The scope of this thesis is intentionally kept limited to the theological and ethical content of the two documents. While environmental issues also have political, economic, and scientific dimensions, this study centres on the religious responses to the crisis. The aim is to uncover the theological reflections and ethical imperatives offered by both Christianity and Islam without delving into the institutional or policy-level implications. These broader areas can be explored in future research.

STRUCTURE OF THESIS

The thesis is organized into the following chapters:

CHAPTER ONE first explores the context and content of *Laudato Si'* and *Al-Mīzān*, as well as the scriptural foundations from the Bible and the Quran that inform both documents. Then it focuses on the scripturally grounded theological and ethical foundations of each document and how they use creation texts to support their notion of stewardship.

CHAPTER TWO conducts a comparative study of the notion of stewardship found in both documents. Through this comparative lens, the chapter aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of how a vision of stewardship emerges from their scriptures and how they develop their theology of creation.

CHAPTER THREE demonstrates how, based on their concepts of stewardship and theology of creation, what concerns both documents is an integral ecology.

The conclusion section takes a brief survey of the findings and offers some suggestions in the "A Way Forward" section for the future.

Through this comparative examination of *Laudato Si'* and *Al-Mīzān*, this thesis aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of how two of the world's major religious traditions approach the critical issue of environmental stewardship and promote interfaith collaboration in addressing the global environmental crisis.

CHAPTER 1

AN OVERVIEW OF THEOLOGICAL AND ETHICAL FOUNDATIONS FROM THE BIBLE AND THE QURAN USED IN *LAUDATO SI'* AND *AL-MĪZĀN*

The intersection of religion and environment received special academic interest when Lynn White published his influential article in 1967, in which he criticized the cosmological view of Latin Christianity as a contributing factor to the degradation of ecological resources. He particularly challenged the anthropocentric interpretation of Genesis as held by Western Christians.⁴ Although White was not the first to mention the connection between religion and the environment, his view worked as a catalyst. As described in the introduction, the urgent worsening global environmental crisis has motivated ecclesial leadership of world religions to reassert the importance of ecological responsibility and stewardship, as revealed in their scriptures.⁵ The Yale Forum of Religion and Ecology and World Environment Day of 2019 by the UN Environment Program⁶ exemplify the acknowledgement of how religious leadership is being engaged in this discourse. Among these religious traditions, two have issued documents that address the ecological crisis. These are *Laudato Si'* and *Al-Mīzān* issued by Christianity, more specifically the Catholic Church, and Islam respectively. Both documents present faith-based responses to environmental degradation through their respective theological teachings and ethical actions, informed by their respective Scriptures, the Bible and the Quran. This chapter provides an overview of how both documents utilize their core scriptures to support their arguments and express their theological and ethical concerns regarding the environment. This chapter demonstrates how both documents are deeply rooted in their scriptural foundations and highlights in conclusion the shared concerns and thematic parallels found within them. Before doing so, I will first introduce both documents.

1.1. *LAUDATO SI'*

Laudato Si' is authored by Pope Francis. It was published by the Vatican in 2015 as Encyclical letter *Laudato Si'* of the Holy Father Francis on Care of Our Common Home.

Context: *Laudato Si'* is a landmark document among catholic responses to environmental justice in the 21st century. It emerged in June 2015, just before the COP21 summit on the environment in Paris, which culminated in the Paris Agreement.⁷ The Pope never mentioned this summit neither did he give any hints in *Laudato Si'* about this summit but still some critics saw the issuance of

⁴ Lynn White, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis," *Science* 155, no. 3767 (March 10, 1967): 1205, <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.155.3767.1203>.

⁵ Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology, "Ecojustice Resources," *World Religions* section, Yale Forum on Religion and Ecology, accessed June 13, 2025, <https://fore.yale.edu/World-Religions/Interreligious/Ecojustice-Resources>.

⁶ United Nations Environment Programme, "How All Religious Faiths Advocate for Environmental Protection," *UN Environment*, June 7, 2019, <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/how-all-religious-faiths-advocate-environmental-protection>.

⁷ An international treaty signed by 198 parties to reduce temperature to 2 degrees. For details, see <https://unfccc.int/process-and-meetings/the-paris-agreement>.

Laudato Si' as the church's unnecessary intervention in a political debate.⁸ Although *Laudato Si'* was generally praised, it has also generated criticism. In the USA for instance, several politicians, especially Republicans, the heads of the fossil fuel industry, and some senators interpreted it as a misadventure of the church on the road of science.⁹

Content: *Laudato Si'* offers a profound theological and moral reflection on the environmental crisis, particularly regarding climate change, pollution, biodiversity loss, and global inequality between the rich and the poor. It was written by Pope Francis, who took his papal name after Francis of Assisi, the patron saint of nature in Catholic social thought.¹⁰ Even the very name of the document, *Laudato Si'* is derived from the 'Canticle of the Sun', a prayer/hymn/chant written by Francis of Assisi.¹¹ This canticle uses *Laudato Si' mi signore* as a refrain line that means "praise be to you, my Lord."¹² Therefore, the title *Laudato Si'* resonates with a thankful devotion towards nature inspired by the writing of Francis of Assisi, as Schweiker also notes¹³. This encyclical is rooted in scripture and Catholic tradition but also based on scientific insights; Pope Francis advocates for an inner ecological conversion, articulated through a tone of humility and spiritual devotion¹⁴ expressed in a devotional, humble and compassionate tone. To bring justice, he calls for structural change, ecological education, and global solidarity. Central to the letter is the concept of integral ecology,¹⁵ stressing the importance of connecting life's environmental, economic, social, and spiritual dimensions. For Kureethadam the concept of integral ecology by Pope Francis and his stress on a changed lifestyle is one of the ten green commandments given by Francis¹⁶.

1.2 *AL-MĪZĀN*

It was authored by Othman Llewellyn, Fazlun Khalid and a team. Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences (IFEES) published it in 2024 from Birmingham, the United Kingdom. Its full name is Al-Mizan; A Covenant for The Earth.

⁸ Pope Francis. *On Care for Our Common Home, Laudato Si': The Encyclical of Pope Francis on the Environment with Commentary by Sean McDonagh*. (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2016) Xii-xix.

⁹ Pope Francis, *Laudato Si' with commentary*, 2016, xviii-xiv.

¹⁰ Michael Meléndez, "St. Francis of Assisi: A Reverence for Nature," *St. Francis College*, October 12, 2024, <https://www.sfc.edu/blog/st-francis-of-assisi-a-reverence-for-nature>.

¹¹ Antonino Puglisi and Johan Buitendag, "The Religious Vision of Nature in the Light of *Laudato Si'*: An Interreligious Reading between Islam and Christianity," *HTS Teologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 76, no. 1 (September 15, 2020): 2, <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v76i1.6063>. also see.

¹² Francis of Assisi, *The Canticle of the Sun*, Franciscan Ministries and Missions, accessed May 13, 2025, <https://franciscanfriarscresson.org/the-canticle-of-the-sun/>.

¹³ William Schweiker, "The Destiny of Creation: Theological Ethical Reflections on *Laudato Si'*," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 46, no. 3 (September 2018): 480, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jore.12228>.

¹⁴ *Laudato Si'*, § 216-221.

¹⁵ § 137-155.

¹⁶ Joshtrom Isaac Kureethadam, *The Ten Green Commandments of Laudato Si'* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2019), 105–7.

Context: *Al-Mīzān* was neither written to respond to *Laudato Si'* nor was it issued from any ecclesiastical hierarchy like the Pope¹⁷. However, its preface informs us that it was a follow-up to the 8th Islamic Conference of Environment Ministers of member countries of the Islamic Cooperation, convened in Rabat, Morocco, in 2019. The aim of this follow up was to recognize and address Islam's religious duty towards environmental challenges to the creation of God. And leading Islamic institutions and scholars, coordinated by UNEP's Faith for Earth Coalition, collaborated with organizations such as IFEES, ICESCO, and academic centres to develop *Al-Mīzān* as a global Islamic framework for environmental sustainability. This vast and influential engagement confers a similar kind of authority, although it does not stem from a parallel ecclesiastical hierarchy. UN's environment program has acknowledged this powerful voice from Islamic circles by dedicating a page to *Mīzān* on its website.¹⁸

Content: *Al-Mīzān* draws its name from *Sūra Ar Raḥmān* 55:1-9 which teaches that God has created the world with a cosmic balance in it¹⁹. The idea of balance, along with the Arabic definite article *al*, connects with the Justice towards the "cosmic equilibrium", a balance and harmony, interconnectedness God placed when he created the world²⁰. Also, the word "covenant" significant in *Mīzān's* title, resonates with Judeo-Christian theology. However, this is coincidental. The reason is that the Arabic word translated as 'covenant' in this document is '*ahd*', which occurs 46 times in the Quran, referring to an agreement between two parties.²¹ The document reflects that humans are given this planet as custodians and, therefore, are in a covenant with God. Moreover, the balance God created must be retained under this covenant²². In that case, it suggests a binding ethical and moral obligation on the part of humans, which is visible from the Quranic verse on its title page; "...He (God) set up the balance (*al-mīzān*) so that you may not exceed the balance. Weigh with Justice and do not fall short in the balance. Furthermore, the Earth he has spread out for all living creatures (Qur'an 55:7-10)". *Al-Mīzān* aims to express an Islamic ethical framework for environmental stewardship according to its compilers, addressing contemporary ecological challenges through Islamic teachings.²³ Therefore, *Al-Mīzān* is a comprehensive Islamic response to the environmental crisis, grounded in Qur'anic teachings and Islamic traditions, such as hadith

¹⁷ In the glossary, on entry, covenant, compilers acknowledge the fact that they have no ecclesiastical authority over their community, which is why they used the word '*ahd*', not *mīthāq*. *Mīthāq* is a more formal tone, similar to making a notary paper. However, this study takes it as their humble confession; in fact, their influence is significant.

¹⁸ [Al-Mizan: A Covenant for the Earth | UNEP - UN Environment Programme](#)

¹⁹ *Mīzān* is a key term in Quranic studies, derived from the Arabic root وزن (*wzn*), which is used 23 times in the Quran. It means to measure or weigh to create a balance.

²⁰ ²⁰ §2.10, 2.11, 2.19, 4.22.

²¹ *Al-Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī, Mufradāt al-Qur'ān*, vol. 2, s.v. "‘Ahd (عهد)," trans. Maulana Muhammad Abadah Ferozpurī (Lahore: Sheikh Shamas ul Haque, June 1987). The estimate of occurrence is based on a search of Dr. Kais Dukes' project, available at <https://corpus.quran.com>. Its usage in the title of the document might echo the primordial covenant between God and humanity in (Q7:172), though never cited in the document

²² "Uncovering the Structure and Message of Al-Mizan: Covenant for the Earth," panel discussion, Clark University and Üsküdar University, May 6, 2024, online event, <https://uskudar.edu.tr/en/icerik/45143/al-mizan-covenant-for-the-earth-panel-was-held-with-the-participation-of-experts-in-the-field>.

²³ Ibrahim Özdemir, "Embracing Al-Mizan: An Islamic Call to Environmental Stewardship," Maqasid Institute, August 24, 2024, <https://maqasid.org/blog/embracing-al-mizan-an-islamic-call-to-environmental-stewardship/>.

and Sufi teachings. However, this study focuses solely on the usage of the Quran in *Al-Mīzān*. It utilizes Quranic key terms as its core ethical concepts, especially, but not limited to, Stewardship (*ḥilāfa*), Balance (*al-mīzān*), Compassion (*rahma*), and Justice (*ʿadl*), with a focus on measured (*qadar*) emphasis on the moral responsibility of caring for the Earth and people experiencing poverty.

After having introduced both documents, we will now examine how these two documents are rooted in their relevant scriptures, the Bible and the Quran.

1.3 SCRIPTURAL SOURCES CITED IN EACH DOCUMENT

Since the primary scriptures, the Bible and the Quran, are fundamental sources of guidance for Christianity and Islam, both use their scriptures as the basis for their arguments. However, they also very heavily draw on their respective traditions (such as Catholic theologians, papal documents and hadith and Muslim thinkers) to explain how the ideas were received and interpreted throughout the history of interpretation. This thesis focuses on their scriptural foundations.

1.3.1 SCRIPTURAL SOURCES IN *LAUDATO SI'*

Laudato Si' is heavily documented with scriptural references.²⁴ *Laudato Si* uses 50 citations from the Old Testament and 21 from the New Testament. These citations come from the books of Genesis, Psalms, Leviticus, and prophetic writings, as well as include frequent references to the teachings and parables of Jesus in the Gospels and to the Pauline epistles. This results in a total of 70 citations within a 180-page document²⁵.

Laudato Si primarily engages with the Old Testament, with 50 citations used to emphasize themes of creation, human responsibility, divine ownership, ecological justice, and harmony between humanity and nature. The creation accounts are foundational and with 12 citations, Genesis is more cited than any other book: Genesis 1:26, 1:28, 1:31 (§65, §66, §67) and Genesis 2:7, 2:15, 2:2–3 (§2, §66, §67, §71, §124) are repeatedly cited to show both the goodness of creation and humanity's role to "till and keep" it not exploit it. Genesis 3:17–19 (§66) marks the disruption of harmony brought about by sin, while Genesis 4:9–11 (§70) portrays the moral implications of violence on the Earth. Genesis 6:5–6, 6:13 (§70–71) reference the flood narrative to illustrate how widespread human corruption defiles creation. Deuteronomy 10:14 and 22:4, 6 (§ § 67–68) and Exodus 23:12 (§§ 68, §237) are used to underscore Israel's laws that integrate care for animals and

²⁴ Rod Benson, "The Use of Scripture in *Laudato Si*," *iDigress* (blog), November 26, 2019, accessed June 11, 2025, <https://rodbenson.com/2019/11/26/the-use-of-scripture-in-laudato-si/>.

²⁵ The count of OT citations is based on the Catholic or Orthodox biblical canon, which includes the books of Wisdom and Sirach as part of the Old Testament. From a Protestant perspective, which does not consider Wisdom and Sirach as part of the canonical Old Testament, the count shifts slightly: 44 citations come from the Old Testament, 21 from the New Testament, and six are categorized as Apocryphal or Deuterocanonical. This distinction is not taken into account, as the Catholic Church issued *Laudato Si*.

land into a framework of social Justice. Leviticus 19:9–10, 25:1–4, 25:4–6, 25:10, and 25:23 (§71) illustrate the Jubilee and sabbatical laws, which promote rest for the land and equity for the poor, reinforcing the theme that creation is not to be owned absolutely. Additionally, the presence of Psalms is in harmony with the thankful devotional tone of the document. Psalms are cited 6 times the second most cited book: Ps 24:1 (§67), Ps 33:6 (§77), Ps 104:31 (§69), Ps 136:6 (§72), and Ps 148:3–6 (§68, §72–73) praise God as Creator and celebrate all creation as participating in worship. Proverbs 3:19 and 22:2 (§69, §94) affirm God's wisdom in founding the Earth and human equality in dignity. Among the major prophets, Jeremiah 1:5 and 32:17, 21 (§64, §73) support the idea of divine intentionality in both personal creation and historical deliverance. Isaiah 40:28–29 (§73) testifies to the sustaining power God holds as the creator. Additionally, Sirach 38:4, 38:34 (§124) highlights how labourers and medicines are part of God's providential care for the Earth. These references form a theological backbone for *Laudato Si'*, arguing that ecological conversion is not just a modern ethic but deeply rooted in the biblical witness that calls humanity to reverence, responsibility, and relationship with all of creation.

Among the 21 New Testament citations found in *Laudato Si'*, seven are drawn from the Pauline Epistles, specifically from Romans (Rom 1:20 in §12; Rom 8:22 in §2; Rom 12:1 in §220), 1 Corinthians (1 Cor 13:12 in §243; 1 Cor 15:28 in §100), and Colossians (Col 1:16 in §99; Col 1:19–20 in §100). These references emphasize themes of cosmic redemption, divine design, and human transformation. The document also cites one parable, the Parable of the Mustard Seed (Mt 13:31–32 in §97), to illustrate how small beginnings in God's kingdom can grow into something vast and life-giving. Other Gospel citations feature sayings and actions of Jesus that underscore God's care for creation and humanity: for example, Mt 5:45 (§94), Mt 6:26 (§96), Mt 8:27 (§98), Mt 11:19 (§98), Mt 11:25 (§96), Mt 20:25–26 (§82), and Mk 6:3 (§98). The Gospel of Luke is cited with similar ecological and theological emphasis, including Luke 12:6 (§96, §221), Luke 2:19 and 2:51 (§241), and the compassionate gaze of Jesus in Mark 10:21 (§226). The Gospel of John provides two Christological references: John 1:14 (§99), which emphasizes the Incarnation, and John 4:35 (§97), a call to perceive spiritual meaning in the natural world. Finally, the Book of Revelation is cited multiple times: Rev 15:3 (§74), Rev 12:1 (§241), and Rev 21:5 (§243), reflecting the eschatological vision of renewal and divine Justice.

The use of both Testaments highlights three elements: (a) theological continuity between creation in the OT, (b) redemption in the NT, and c) human responsibility toward the environment. The analysis of *Laudato Si'* reveals a clear and theologically rich conclusion: Pope Francis grounds his ecological vision firmly in the biblical tradition, drawing more extensively from the Old Testament (50 citations) than the New Testament (21 citations) within the 180-page encyclical. This heavy reliance on the Old Testament, especially Genesis, Psalms, Leviticus, and the prophetic books, emphasizes that creation care is not solely a contemporary concern but a longstanding biblical mandate found throughout the Bible. The biblical texts used by *Laudato Si'* highlight themes such as the goodness of creation, divine ownership, the moral consequences of environmental harm, and the social Justice embedded in Israelite law.

On the other hand, the New Testament references, particularly from the gospels and epistles reinforce these themes through the teachings of Jesus, Paul's theology, and eschatological hope. The inclusion of parables (e.g., the Mustard Seed § 97) and sayings of Jesus highlights the ecological wisdom embedded in the Gospel message. At the same time, the Epistles offer a cosmic and redemptive framework for the destiny of creation. Together, the balanced use of Scripture in *Laudato Si'* supports a profound conclusion: integral ecology is not an optional or peripheral theme but a central, biblically grounded dimension of Christian discipleship, calling believers to both spiritual and environmental conversion rooted in the full sweep of salvation history.

1.3.2 SCRIPTURAL SOURCES CITED IN AL-MĪZĀN

Like *Laudato Si' Al-Mīzān*, it is also heavily populated by references from the Quran. It is divided into five chapters, a concluding section marked as "a way forward" and then a prayer.

Like *Laudato Si'*, *Al-Mīzān* relies upon its source text, the Quran. It is cited 87 times in a 47-page document as a source text for the argument of the holiness of creation, its balance, and human responsibility towards it. Cited 10 times, Sura Baqra is the most cited sura. Sūrat al-An'ām (6) remains the second most frequently cited text, 8 times, due to its rich ecological and theological themes.

Sura Baqra is prominently used in the argument to advocate for practical guidance on living a righteous life (2:177), establishing Justice (2:282), and understanding divine law (2:256), which are essential to building an ethical, balanced, and sustainable society. Surah Al-An'ām, the second most cited chapter, focuses on *Tawhid* (the Oneness of God) through the natural world (6:99), emphasizing divine signs in creation (6:38), the sustainable use of resources (6:141) and rejection of superstition (6:101). These two Surahs dominate because they bridge metaphysical teachings with ethics and combine spiritual, economic, and ecological teachings to emphasize Justice, balance, and responsibility, which are the core values. They provide basic groundwork for why humanity is supposed to be a good steward. The concept of stewardship is established in the following way.

Creation is consistently framed as measured, purposeful, and meaningful: 25:2 and 54:49 (§§4.1, 4.4) proclaim that "He created all things and ordained them in due measure," while 44:38–39 (§§2.5, 5.8) declares that the heavens and Earth were made "not in jest, but in truth." This measured creation reflects divine wisdom (59:24, §2.3) and mercy (6:12 and 7:156, §2.6) and is sustained by a God who sprouts seeds and gives form (6:95, §2.4).

The notion of cosmic balance is emphasized in verses like 55:7–10 (title page, §§2.5, 2.12) and 57:25 (§2.12), where the term *mīzān* (balance/justice) becomes a theological anchor: the universe is calibrated in equilibrium, urging humans toward moral Justice and environmental restraint.

A Qur'anic ethic of universal kinship is advanced through verses such as 6:38 (§§2.13, 4.20), “there is no animal... but is a community like you,” and 17:44, 24:41, and 22:18 (§§2.7, 3.19), which describe all of creation as glorifying God. These verses elevate ecological responsibility into a spiritual bond of shared worship and status.

Human beings are portrayed as entrusted stewards. Verses such as 6:165 (§2.19), 33:72 (§2.23), and 38:26 (§2.20) define humans as *khalīfah* (vicegerents) tasked with administering Justice on Earth. Verse 67:2 (§§1.20, 2.21, 3.3) frames life as a test: those who act righteously fulfil the trust.

Environmental harm is linked to moral failure. 30:41 (§2.1) laments that “corruption has appeared... by what the hands of humankind have wrought,” while 7:56 (§2.17) and 6:141 (§§4.4, 4.23) condemn excess and wastage. Verses like 2:276 and 30:39 (§4.21) critique economic exploitation, advocating for charity and social balance.

Qur'anic verses also invite emotional and intellectual engagement with nature. Verses such as 35:27–28 (§3.13), 36:33–35 (§3.5), and 32:7, 27:88 (§§2.6, 3.8) display nature's diversity as signs (*āyāt*) meant to stir gratitude, reflection, and reverence.

Finally, *Al-Mizān* locates environmental ethics within communal and liturgical life. Verses such as 6:162 (§5.30) and 22:41, 3:104, and 3:110 (§5.35) emphasize that prayer, sacrifice, and social Justice are interwoven, calling the community (*ummah*) to act as a collective moral agent. Ecology is thus framed as both a spiritual discipline and a social obligation.

1.4 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, both documents offer theological teachings on environmental stewardship deeply rooted in their respective scriptures. Both were written and issued in two distinct religious and cultural environments; both documents draw upon their respective scriptures but adopt a shared, holistic approach to ecological issues that integrates not only spiritual and moral considerations but also practical ones.

While *Laudato Si'* emphasizes the interconnectedness of all life through a Catholic lens with a focus on integral ecology, *Al-Mizān* frames ecological balance as a divine trust rooted in the Islamic concept of vicegerency (*khilāfa*). *Laudato Si'* relies heavily on Old Testament creation texts and the New Testament's message of redemptive hope, while *Al-Mizān* centres on Qur'anic cosmology, divine mercy, and Stewardship. In both cases, scriptural references elevate environmental concern from being just a policy matter to a spiritual calling.

These documents demonstrate that creation care is not a modern idea but a return to ancient truths: the world is God's gift, humans are accountable, and spiritual maturity entails reverence for the Earth. Their scriptural use emphasizes that integral ecology is not optional but relatively central to religious faith and practice.

Through the idea of stewardship, they both affirm humanity's role as caretakers of creation, with a moral obligation to preserve its balance for future generations. This forms a solid foundation for

the next chapter, which will present a comparative analysis of the concept of stewardship in both documents. After understanding the scriptural sources of each, we now examine how both texts address stewardship as a core ethical theme.

CHAPTER 2

COMPARISON OF THE NOTION OF STEWARDSHIP IN *LAUDATO SI'* AND *AL-MĪZĀN*

In the previous chapter, we explored the theological and ethical foundations of *both Laudato Si'* and *Al-Mīzān* in their relevant scriptures. This chapter conducts a comparative study of the notion of stewardship in both documents. We explore how their theology of creation evolved, and what the ethical implications of their creation theology are. As a result, this chapter will highlight the shared but distinctive emphases on stewardship in their approaches to ecological responsibility. This analysis will help to gain a deeper understanding of how Catholic and Islamic viewpoints address the environmental crisis within their traditions and how it can be viewed as a collective effort to respond to the environmental crisis. Before we turn to a comparison of this notion, it is good to specify the context.

2.1 CONTEXT

The Bible and the Qur'ān are two primary scriptures within the Abrahamic tradition. Qur'ān was revealed in Mecca, where Muslims were living with Jews and Christians. The Qur'ān recognizes Jews and Christians as *'Ahl al-Kitāb*, the people of the Book (2:62, 2:105, 3:64, 5:5, and 5:68). The Qur'ān accepts their scriptures as revealed (3:3), guidance, and light (5:44, 46; 91). The similarity between the Qur'ān and the previous Abrahamic scriptures is not hidden. It is a well-known topic in comparative studies.²⁶ Gabriel Said estimates that a significant portion (for some 70%) of the Qur'ān reflects the Bible.²⁷ Heinrich Speyer, a German orientalist, has identified around 141 instances where Qur'ānic verses reflect Psalms²⁸. Additionally, Faruq Sherif has identified that nearly one-fourth (1,453 verses) of the Qur'ān is about important figures from the Bible.²⁹ Similarly, the Qur'ān also has nearly 50-70 instances where it echoes the Torah of Moses, including its moral and theological motifs, persons and figures, and laws. Significant parts of this similarity relate to the creation texts of both books. We have outlined them already in Chapter 1, but the following table provides a concise visual overview.

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²⁶ John C. Reeves, ed., *Bible and Qur'ān: Essays in Scriptural Intertextuality*, SBL Symposium Series 24 (Atlanta, Ga: Society of Biblical Literature, 2003): i-iv.

²⁷ Gabriel Said Reynolds and 'Alī Qūlī Qarā'ī, *The Qur'an and the Bible: Text and Commentary* (New Haven (Conn.): Yale University Press, 2018).

²⁸ Angelika Neuwirth, "Qur'ānic Readings of the Psalms" In Angelika Neuwirth, Nicolai Sinai, and Michael Marx, eds., *The Qur'ān in Context: Historical and Literary Investigations into the Qur'ānic Milieu*, Texts and Studies on the Qur'ān, v. 6 (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2010), 733-734.

²⁹ Faruq Sherif, *A Guide to the Contents of the Qur'ān* (Reading, U.K: Garnet Pub, 1995), 69.

Bible (Genesis) – <i>Laudato Si'</i> §	Qur'an – <i>Al-Mīzān</i> §	Theme
Genesis 1:26 (§65)	Qur'an 25:2 (§4.1)	God created all things; the human role in creation
Genesis 1:28 (§66)	Qur'an 54:49 (§4.4)	Creation in due measure; human stewardship
Genesis 1:31 (§67)	Qur'an 44:38–39 (§2.5, §5.8)	Creation is good; made in truth, not in jest
Genesis 2:7 (§2, §66)	Qur'an 59:24 (§2.3)	God gives life and form, divine wisdom
Genesis 2:15 (§67, §71)	Qur'an 6:12, 7:156 (§2.6)	Humanity to "till and keep" divine mercy
Genesis 2:2–3 (§124)	Qur'an 6:95 (§2.4)	Rhythm in creation; God as sustainer

This overview shows how *Laudato Si'* and *Al-Mīzān* draw from these primary scriptures, what similarity lies in these scriptures, and the role they play in the discussion of both documents.

2.2 STEWARDSHIP / VICEREGENCY IN BOTH DOCUMENTS

The mandate of stewardship given by God is developed in both documents using their relevant scriptures. This table documents how extensively scriptures are used to develop the notion of stewardship.

	Mandate of Stewardship in <i>Laudato Si'</i>	Man's Mandate as Khalīfah (Vicegerent) in <i>Al-Mīzān</i>
	Genesis 1:28: " <i>Have dominion over the earth</i> ". (§§ 66, 67) Genesis: 1:31 <i>God saw everything that he had made, and behold it was very good</i> " (§§ 65)	Surah Šād (38:26) " <i>We have made you a khalīfah on the Earth: so judge between people in truth...</i> " (§2.20)
	Genesis 2:15: " <i>Till it and keep it</i> ". (§§ 66, 67, 124)	Surah Al-An'ām (6:165) " <i>God has made you successors (khalīfah) on the Earth...</i> " (§2.18)
	Sirach 38:34 " <i>Labourers and craftsmen thus 'maintain the fabric of the world'</i> ",	Surah Al-Aḥzāb (33:72) — " <i>We offered the trust to the heavens, the Earth, and the mountains, but they refused to bear it. Yet humans bore it. They have indeed proven unjust and ignorant</i> ". (§2.21)

	<p>Genesis 4:9–11 (§70) -moral implications of violence on the Earth.</p> <p>Genesis 6:5–6, 6:13 (§70–71) flood narrative illustrates how widespread human corruption defiles creation.</p> <p>Sirach 38:4: "<i>The Lord created medicines out of the earth, and a sensible man will not despise them.</i>"</p>	<p>Surah Al-Baqarah (2:30)³⁰</p> <p>Allah said, "<i>Behold, I am placing a khalīfah on the Earth,</i>" They said: "<i>Will you place on it one who will wreak corruption therein and shed blood?</i>"</p>
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2.2.1 STEWARDSHIP IN *LAUDATO SI'*

In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis develops the notion of stewardship by drawing on biblical teachings that emphasize humanity's responsibility to care for creation as God's appointed guardians. Since the Old Testament of the Bible is rooted in an agrarian culture³¹, it provides a fertile ground for *Laudato Si'* to incorporate Biblical texts to communicate ecological concerns. Pope Francis starts chapter 2 with the title "Gospel of Creation." (§62-63) The Gospel of creation is a unique idea which does not only fit well into the thanksgiving pastoral tone of *Laudato Si'* and its vision for the redemption of the planet but it also defends the inclusion of a religious view point in the ongoing ecological debate because the Pope thinks that moral and spiritual wisdom offered by religion can deepen the understanding human and environment by complementing scientific knowledge.

The Pope starts to argue for the case of stewardship, with the idea of human interconnectedness with the creation in §66 and §67 and then repeats it in §215. He cites Genesis 2:15, where God commands humans to till the ground and keep it. This verse has a connection with Genesis 1:27-28, to the extent that later (2:15) shapes the biblical vision of human vocation based on 1:27. Both texts 2:15 and 1:27-28 are traditionally read from an anthropocentric perspective,³² but Pope Francis prefers an ecocentric reading. In his commentary on *Laudato Si'*, McDonagh notes that Pope Francis thus creates his own theology of creation.³³ The approach Pope Francis has taken is also supported by modern scholarship. Contrary to traditional anthropocentric interpretations, modern scholars suggest that verse 27 of Genesis 1 introduces the idea that humans hold a unique

³⁰ The foundational verse is used in Al-Mīzān's main argument for the idea of viceregency only in the glossary of terms.

³¹ Ellen F. Davis, *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture: An Agrarian Reading of the Bible*, 1st ed. (Cambridge University Press, 2008), <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511815041>.

³² Ole Jensen, "Reading Genesis 1.28 with a Plea for Planetary Responsibility," in *Market, Ethics and Religion*, ed. Niels Kærgård, vol. 62, Ethical Economy (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2023), 159–61, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-08462-1_11.

³³ Catholic Church and Sean McDonagh, eds., *On Care for Our Common Home: The Encyclical of Pope Francis on the Environment, Laudato Si'*, Ecology and Justice (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2016), 10.

role as stewards of the Earth, not dominion holders, which is how 2:15 is often interpreted. In other words, being made in God's image in 1: 27 does not suggest humans have a divine DNA but rather a sacred appointment. In this verse, God entrusts humanity with the care of creation, expecting them to exercise authority with the same love and responsibility that God shows towards His Creation.

Theodore Hiebert, a modern commentator and expert on Genesis, supports the modern stewardship perspective over the traditional anthropocentric view, noting that the Hebrew phrase *na'āśeh* (“let us make”) followed by *wē-yirdû* (they will rule) indicates a purpose in the future.³⁴ This means humanity was intended to serve as God's stewards on Earth, reflecting His care for creation. Thus, “dominion” is better understood not as unrestricted power but as a responsibility to care for Creation as God's appointed and holy stewards. This theological reading of Genesis 1 is further supported by a literary pattern found in Genesis 1. Genesis 1 presents the theme of stewardship through divine blessings: First, in 1:22, God blesses the sea creatures and birds with fertility; second, in 1:28, God blesses humanity with a mandate to be stewards. Third, although distinct in the subject, the blessing of the seventh day in Genesis 2:3 reinforces the pattern of divine intentionality in the creation. God's sanctification of the seventh day introduces the concept of limits, balance, and sacred time, which are essential principles of ecological stewardship. According to Umberto Cassuto, the repetition in these three texts, 1:22, 1:28 and 2:3, , especially in triplets, is a literary device in the Hebrew Scriptures used to emphasize order, completion, and divine sovereignty.³⁵ Thus, these three blessings collectively underscore God's design for a well-ordered world in which humans are called to steward creation responsibly within the rhythms God has instituted. Therefore, Pope Francis's rejection of an anthropocentric reading of Genesis does have scholarly support, as McDonagh, an expert on *Laudato Si*, has also concluded in his commentary on *Laudato Si*.³⁶

After establishing the notion of stewardship, Pope Francis, rejecting the anthropocentric reading, presents his integral ecology. He argues that the mandate of stewardship is given to human beings; “*This responsibility for God's earth means that human beings, endowed with intelligence*” (§ 68). The phrase ‘God's earth’ is relevant here. For *Laudato Si*, humanity is only the custodian, not the owner of the Earth. *Laudato Si* thus stresses that humans (as the more intelligent creation) are responsible for exercising stewardship by understanding the laws of nature and equilibrium in creation and should not overrule these laws. By building on this integral ecology, he urges a spirit of solidarity with other creations (not limited to humans) and responsibility, which is placed on the shoulders of humans as second in command to God, to nurture and safeguard the natural world.

³⁴ Theodore Hiebert, “Retranslating Genesis 1–2: Reconnecting Biblical Thought and Contemporary Experience,” *The Bible Translator* 70, no. 3 (December 2019): 261–63, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2051677019877229>.

³⁵ Umberto Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis* (Slokie, ILL: Varda Books, 2012), 12–16.

³⁶ Catholic Church and Sean McDonagh, eds., *On Care for Our Common Home: The Encyclical of Pope Francis on the Environment, Laudato Si*, Ecology and Justice (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2016), 12–14.

“We need to live in “harmony with ourselves, with others, with nature and other living creatures, and with God.” He calls for intergenerational solidarity (§159) and intragenerational (§162) universal (§14,152) solidarity “which flows from the mystery of trinity” (§240). Solidarity for him is not optional but required because “solidarity which is at the same time aware that we live in a common home which God has entrusted to us” (§232). He agrees with Pope Benedict XVI that, “its(solidarity) violation harms the environment” and requests/appeals for this type of solidarity with the whole creation of God. In *Laudato Si’* the word ‘solidarity’ appears 14 times and ‘care’ 43 times, while the word ‘steward’ appears once and ‘stewardship’ also once. This in McDonagh’s view, shows that the virtue of solidarity and care is actually stewardship for Pope Francis.³⁷

2.2.2 STEWARDSHIP IN *AL-MĪZĀN*

Our basic assumption and point of departure in this study is the use of scriptures in environmental documents *Laudato Si’* and *Al-Mīzān*. In the previous section we have seen how *Laudato Si’* developed the idea of stewardship and now we turn to *Al-Mīzān* - *Al-Mīzān* uses the term for stewardship (*ḥalīfa*) 37 times in the document starting from § 1.2.

Al-Mīzān has a thanksgiving tone similar to an *imām* speaking from his pulpit and argues for compassion for the creation of God. In fact, it does use the idea of compassion for the creation several times (§1.1, 2.6, 2.8, 2.12, 2.16, 2.23, 3.5, 3.14, 3.15, 3.17, 3.19, 3.20, 3.24, 4.11, 5.2;). *Al-Mīzān* also uses legal terms (*sharī’a*) from the Quran such as *Isrāf* (waste) (§4.22 §5.10, §5.11;), *Haram* (§ 3.18, § 5.13, §5.14, §5.17;), *Fasād fi ’l-ard / Ifsād fi ’l-ard* (corruption on the Earth) (§1.20, §2.16, §2.17, §2.19, §5.9, §5.10, §5.11) and several more because for *Al-Mīzān* violation of stewardship is also a matter of Islamic jurisprudence and punishable in the sight of God. The language and tone of both documents would be an interesting topic but requires a separate study, and is beyond the scope of this study. This analysis, therefore, focuses on how the idea of stewardship is developed in *Al-Mīzān*.

Interestingly, *Al-Mīzān* carries a similar and shared ethical duty of stewardship, drawing on the Arabic key term of *ḥalīfa*, which the Quran first time uses in 2:30, “Behold, I am placing a *khalīfah* on the Earth,” They said: “Will you place on it one who will wreak corruption therein and shed blood.”³⁸ *Al-Mīzān* starts its discussion with a creation account of the universe to establish the idea of the interconnectedness of creation, as *Laudato Si’* does. It lays a foundation by citing verse 2:30 on the title page to remind the audience of an ontological truth that God created this world in balance. Then, it proceeds in chapter 1 with 67:2, which states that God creates life and death to test humans who perform the best deeds, thereby highlighting human responsibility. It issues a

³⁷The stress he puts on the virtue of ontological solidarity has been observed by McDonagh and Lane. Dermot A. Lane and Sean McDonagh, *Theology and Ecology in Dialogue: The Wisdom Do Laudato Si’* (Dublin: Messenger Publications, 2020), 8–9, 12 and 98–99.

³⁸ This verse is never cited in the main body, only once in the end notes.

warning against altering nature, citing 4:119, and appeals to its audience to return to nature by quoting 30:41. Overall, it lays a foundation by stressing the spiritual accountability of humanity.

When *Al-Mizān* proceeds to the notion of stewardship, and defines *ḥalīfa*, *Al-Mizān* places a methodological limitation that since there is a diverse range of interpretations of *ḥalīfa*, *Al-Mizān* will, therefore, keep itself limited to how the word is used in the Qur'ān and hadith only.³⁹ It gives a definition of this word in glossary

"The word khalīfah is derived from the root kh-l-f, which signifies to come after, follow, succeed, remain after, or replace another one who has perished or passed away or is not present; it can also mean to act on behalf of another; as in the prayer of the prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace and the blessing of God, "O God, You are the khalīfah over my family".

A secondary meaning of this root is to cultivate, to husband, to thrive, and cause to thrive; yet another meaning is to be at variance with, offend against, violate or break a rule, command or promise – a significant connotation in the light of the angels' premonition. Khilāfah is an ethical mandate assigned to human beings individually and to humankind collectively by the All-Merciful, All-Compassionate Lord and Sustainer of the worlds.⁴⁰

Finally, it concludes that stewardship is “an ethical mandate” given to humanity by God.

Since *Al-Mizān* draws from the Qur'ān for its teachings, it would be valuable to gain insight from the Qur'ān on how this idea is used and interpreted. Parallel to the biblical concept of human stewardship, the Qur'ān presents a similar idea, often translated as viceregent or custodians. Chapter 2 of the Qur'ān states, “And [mention, O Muhammad], when your Lord said to the angels, “Indeed, I will make upon the earth a successive authority”⁴¹ (Al-Qur'ān 2:30a). This verse refers to the creation event when God created man, and there has been a universal consensus among all Qur'ānic commentators that man is the viceregent or second in command (*ḥalīfa*) after God; however, there is a wide range of possible views on the purpose of this viceregency. Almost all of them are mentioned above in the quotation from *Al-Mizān*. Another limited interpretation of *ḥalīfa* is associated with the political concept of the *imāma* (ruler/rulership) of an Islamic state. This is a minority view to understand this root. Nur Hadi Ihsan, in a recent study, has rejected this interpretation in the following words, “This interpretation is based on several hadis⁴² about 'Khalifah' and 'imamah,' where the meanings of these two terms are not distinguished.⁴³”. Traditionally, the title *ḥalīfa* was seen to refer to Adam only. *Faḥr al-Dīn al-Rāzī* was probably the

³⁹ "Uncovering the Structure and Message of Al-Mizān: Covenant for the Earth," panel discussion, Clark University and Üsküdar University, May 6, 2024, online event, <https://uskudar.edu.tr/en/icerik/45143/al-mizan-covenant-for-the-earth-panel-was-held-with-the-participation-of-experts-in-the-field>.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 63.

⁴¹ Talal Itani, *Quran in English: Clear and Easy to Understand. Modern English Translation*; 2014.

⁴² (the collection of sayings of prophet of Islam)

⁴³ Nur Hadi Ihsan, Syahrinal, and Henri Shalahudin, “Environmental Ethics in the Quran: A Study of Semantic Analysis and Interpretation of the Term ‘Khalifah,’” *Proceedings of International Conference on Muslim Society and Thought* 4 (July 8, 2024): 2, <https://doi.org/10.15642/ICMUST.4.2024.1779>.

first to extend the application of *ḥalīfa* from Adam to the entire human race. Ömer F. Gürlesin is correct in his observation of the diverse interpretations of the history of Quranic texts⁴⁴. *ḥalīfa* texts are part of that.

The Arabic word translated as ‘*successive authority*’ in verse 2:30 above in translation of *Ṭalāl Itānī* is an anthropocentric reading of this verse which can promote dominion or hierarchical control over the creation. The Arabic behind ‘*successive authority*’ is a single word (*ḥalīfa*) from the root (*ḥ-l-f*). This root and its derivatives are used 127 times in the Qur’ān. *Rāḡib al-Isfahānī*⁴⁵ defines the literal meaning of this root as ‘someone left behind by someone’ or ‘heir/successor’. For this succession or inheritance, the death of the predecessor is unnecessary. This succession is possible 1. in the partial/temporary absence of the predecessor and 2. even in his entire presence, in order to pay regard to or to glorify his successor.⁴⁶ Every time this root is used as a noun in the Qur’ān, it refers to someone who acts in place of someone senior, such as Aaron on behalf of Moses (7:142) or one who receives something as an inheritance (7:169). Several translators have taken a different route, such as “viceregent” and “deputy”, as seen in Pickthall, *Yūsuf ‘Alī* and several others. Therefore, when the Quran uses the term *ḥalīfa*, it is similar to the *imago dei* in the Book of Genesis. The difference is that Islamic theology does not have the idea of anthropological (human like) God, therefore it also cannot depict or assume an image of God. However, from the previous discussion on Genesis one can see that the function of *imago dei* and *ḥalīfa* is similar. It does recall the shared roots of theological ideas in Abrahamic religions. This similar theological stance is reflected in *Al-Mīzān*, which is similar to *Laudato Si’*.

If we read 2:30 with 6:165, another interesting occurrence of the root (*ḥ-l-f*) strengthens our argument: “*And it is He who has made you successors upon the Earth and has raised some of you above others in degrees [of rank] that He may try you through what He has given you.*”⁴⁷ The latter half of this verse indicates that dominion is granted with a sense of responsibility towards the Earth, not to exploit it excessively. That is why the additional noun ‘authority’ in some translations of 2:30 reproduces an anthropocentric reading which conflicts with the context of human ordination as stewards of the Earth. Scholars like *Ibn Ḡarīr al-Ṭabarī*⁴⁸ are pioneers behind this anthropocentric (but majority) reading of this root, which is not fully aligned with the overall discourse in the Qur’ān. In Qur’ānic discourse, God and nature are closely intertwined, and both are considered sacred. For example, Sura 24:41 states,

⁴⁴ Ömer Gürlesin, “Al-Mizan: An Islamic Covenant for the Earth,” *Ömer Gürlesin Blog*, accessed June 30, 2025, <https://www.omergurlesin.nl/blog/environment-3/al-mizan-an-islamic-covenant-for-the-earth-6>.

⁴⁵ *Rāḡib* is famous for his focus on linguistic, historical, and theological analysis of terms and is comparable to BDB or TWOT in the Christian tradition.

⁴⁶ Al-Raghib al-Isfahani, *Mufradat al-Quran*, vol 1. trans. Maulana Muhammad Abadah Ferozपुरi Lahore: Sheikh Shamas ul Haque, June 1987), 312-315.

⁴⁷ Talal Itani, *Quran in English: Clear and Easy to Understand. Modern English Translation*; 2014.

⁴⁸ Al-Tabari Ibn Jarir, *Tafsir al-Tabari*, accessed January 17, 2025, <https://www.altafsir.com>.

“Do you not see that Allah is glorified by all those in the heavens and the Earth, even the birds as they soar? Each ‘instinctively’ knows their manner of prayer and glorification. Moreover, Allah has perfect knowledge of all they do.”⁴⁹.

Moreover, contrary to the anthropocentric view of *Ibn Ġarīr al-Ṭabarī*, two leading commentators of the Qur’ān *Qurtubī* and *Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī* have seen *ḥalīfa* as a human privilege, granting the supreme being a responsibility towards nature. *Qurtubī* has an interesting point to add. He believes that when the Arabic adverb of time (*‘id*) at the beginning of 2:30 is used with the past tense; its intended meaning is not past anymore. Instead, it refers to humans' future responsibility and purpose as God's second in command on the Earth. This is also how Hiebert comments on the grammar of Genesis 1:27, as we noted in the previous section. In addition, according to *Qurtubī*, the purpose of this ordination is correction/rectification.⁵⁰ *Imām Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī*, in his *Tafsīr al-Kabīr*, suggests that “*ḥalīfa*” means a successor..... and God made man as his successor because, after God, man is responsible for his (God's) creation.”⁵¹.

Another central key term closely associated with stewardship in *Al-Mīzān* is trust (*Al-Amānah*) (§2.16, §2.20, §2.21; endnote 67). By applying this term to the discussion, *Al-Mīzān* argues that God has placed trust in humans and that humans will be good custodians of what God gave and will not break his trust. This is in line with modern scholarship; for example, Ziauddin Sardar interprets *Khalifah* not as viceregent but as trustee “because God has placed his trust on humanity”... by placing them on the Earth to take good care of it.”⁵² Moreover, since Allah is merciful to his creatures, humans, such as Allah's *ḥalīfa*, are also supposed to be merciful when it comes to caring for creation. Like *Laudato Si’* *Al-Mīzān* also puts a lot of stress on the idea of God being merciful. This word merciful occurs 32 times in *Al-Mīzān*, but trust as a theological key term is unique to *Al-Mīzān* and not found in *Laudato Si’*, although the idea is there (§5 §67).

In addition, as we saw in chapter 1, the name of this document is derived from a theological key term, *Al-Mīzān*. It is the primary concept, along with *ḥalīfa*, which Muslim communities have adopted in recent years to promote sustainable living through initiatives such as the Green Muslim Movement.⁵³ *Al-Mīzān* uses this key term as a building block for the notion of stewardship in §1.1, §1.2, §1.9, §1.21, §2.10, §2.11, §2.19, §4.22, which involves maintaining a balance in consumption of resources. Chapter 4 cites three verses to strengthen the argument.

“God has created all things and ordained them in precise measure” (25:2), “All things We have created in precise measure” (54:49), and in the warning, “...Eat and drink, and do not waste by

⁴⁹ Talal Itani, *Quran in English: Clear and Easy to Understand. Modern English Translation*; 2014.

⁵⁰ Abu 'Abdullah Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Qurtubi, *Al-Jami' li-Ahkam al-Qur'an*, accessed January 15, 2025, <https://altafsir.com>.

⁵¹ Razi, Fakhr al-Dīn. n.d. *Tafsir Mafateh al-Ghaib*. Accessed January 15, 2025. <https://www.altafsir.com/>.

⁵² Ziauddin Sardar, *Reading the Qur'an: The Contemporary Relevance of the Sacred Text of Islam* (Oxford; New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2011), 263.

⁵³ Ömer F. Gürlesin, “Al Mizan, an Islamic Covenant for the Earth,” March 25, 2024, <https://www.religionclimate.org/nl/blog/blogs-1/al-mizan-an-islamic-covenant-for-the-earth-23>.

excess: God does not love those who waste by excess". In *Laudato Si'*, we observed Pope Francis considered the excess usage a violation of solidarity, but for *Al-Mīzān*, this is a violation of the balance God established. *Al-Mīzān* never uses the word solidarity in the main text, but it talks about justice, a widespread idea in Muslim theology⁵⁴. To establish justice is considered social solidarity because Allah, according to the Qur'ān is just (*'adl*) and he orders to establish justice in Qur'ān 9:71 to bring equality and social solidarity with other human beings, so the idea of solidarity is present in *Al-Mīzān* although the word itself only appears in the glossary.

In addition to that, justice (*'adl*) is another significant term used by *Al-Mīzān* to further shape the idea of stewardship. *Al-Mīzān* uses it in a twofold meaning. Justice is not only required to maintain the balance of nature but also relates to fellow humans and non-human creation. This is also what Pope Francis said when he notes that, "*We need to live in "harmony with ourselves, with others, with nature and other living creatures, and with God"*" (§210).

The notion of stewardship appears to be a shared ethical motif of both documents.⁵⁵ *Laudato Si'* takes the position that humans are appointed as stewards over creation, tasked with similar love and care as God, rather than exploitation. Similarly, *Al-Mīzān* presents humanity as *ḥalīfa* (vicegerent or trustee) on Earth endowed with the responsibility to maintain justice and harmony. Both accept stewardship of man as a shared ethical obligation and a sacred duty assigned by their relevant scriptures.

2.3 THEOLOGY OF CREATION OF GENESIS AND THE QUR'ĀN IN BOTH DOCUMENTS

2.3.1 CREATION THEOLOGY IN *LAUDATO SI'*

In the previous section, we saw McDonagh's observation that Pope Francis created his own theology of creation. We will discuss this here in more detail. Pope Francis envisions the broader context of Genesis 1:1–2:3: "*Without repeating the entire theology of creation, we can ask what the great biblical narratives say about the relationship of human beings with the world*" (§65). He developed a theology inspired by Francis Assisi by emphasizing the notion of the 'gospel of creation' in §62–100, understanding creation as a sacramental sign of God through which God communicates divine love. He sees creation also as a gift from God. Creation in the theology of *Laudato Si'* is inherently good and participates in God's redemptive plan. This interpretation aligns with a sacramental worldview that elevates nature to a theological status rather than reducing it to its use.

In Pope Francis' creation theology, humanity is supreme, which might save him from being accused of pantheism. Every man and woman is created in the image of God (§65) not to subdue but to reflect divine love and responsibility. Genesis 1:27–28 and 2:15 are re-read with an

⁵⁴ Yasien Mohamed, "More Than Just Law: The Idea of Justice in the Qur'an," Yaqeen Institute, February 7, 2020, updated July 22, 2024, accessed June 30, 2025, <https://yaqeeninstitute.org/read/paper/the-idea-of-justice-in-the-quran>.

⁵⁵ According to Ömer Gürlesin, it is evidently a shared motif. Ibid.

ecocentric view. Rather than dominion, Pope Francis emphasizes responsible care and custodianship stewardship as vocation, not domination. Not to subdue the creation but to reflect divine love and responsibility, thus rooting human dignity and ecological responsibility in theological anthropology. This theology entails an ecological vision for Christian communities based on the word of God. The theological basis for this interpretation is consistent with the deeper structure and intent of the Genesis creation narrative. In Genesis, creation emerges from divine order⁵⁶. Moreover, it ends in Sabbath harmony, which means there is no more chaos, but cosmic order, and everything is at peace. This vision resonates with Pope Francis's ecological theology, which emphasizes that creation is sacred, ordered, and entrusted to humanity.

Finally, Pope Francis develops a theology of integral ecology, connecting human dignity, social justice, and environmental concern. Stewardship is a moral-spiritual obligation grounded in solidarity with all creation, including future generations (§159, §162, §240). Francis's ecological theology emphasizes interconnectedness and mutual dependence. Humans are partners of God in safeguarding creation by conceiving it as a gift and a responsibility given by their creator.

2.3.2 CREATION THEOLOGY OF *AL-MĪZĀN*

Al-Mīzān develops an ethical and jurisprudential theology based on the Qur'ānic concept of balance (*Al-Mīzān*) and justice (*ʿadl*) as the foundational principles of creation. God created the universe in measured balance (e.g., Q 25:2, Q 54:49), and violating this balance through overconsumption (*isrāf*) is not just unethical, but it is also a breach of divine law. Creation reflects the divine wisdom of its creator and order. Ecological care is, therefore, a form of worship and obedience to God's will.

Moreover, man is appointed as viceregent (*ḥalīfa*) of God. The theology of creation in *Al-Mīzān* is profoundly shaped by the Qur'anic term *ḥalīfa* (2:30), interpreted not as a dominion holder but a trustee of the trust God has placed upon them. It defines stewardship as an ethical mandate rooted in accountability before the creator of both nature and humanity. It emphasizes that trust (*amānah*) should not be breached.

In addition, the theology of *Al-Mīzān* integrates jurisprudential dimensions, utilizing terms such as law (*sharīʿa*), legally forbidden (*ḥarām*), and corruption (*fasād*) to locate ecological responsibility within Islamic law (*fiqh*). Violating environmental ethics is a spiritual and legal infraction. Though *solidarity* is not a key term, *Al-Mīzān* implies it in calling for justice, mercy, and communal responsibility.

The vision of *Al-Mīzān* is a theocentric ethical and legal view of creation where humans are beings (*ḥalīfa*) entrusted with a task to preserve divinely created balance and to act justly.

⁵⁶ The Hebrew verb, often translated as "God said," is a weak translation. It can be translated as 'ordered' because it is an imperative in the creation account. In Arabic, it is called امر (*ʿamr*), which originates from the Hebrew wayyōʿmer, as seen in Genesis 1.

2.3.3 COMMON THEOLOGY OF CREATION

Laudato Si and *Al-Mīzān* develop a shared theology of creation, built on:

- i) SACREDNESS OF NATURE: Both view the created world as sacred, not merely as resources for human use.
- ii) HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY: Stewardship is a divinely mandated vocation grounded in scriptural anthropology (*imago Dei* / *ḥalīfa*).
- iii) MORAL ACCOUNTABILITY: Humans are accountable to God for the ecological crisis.
- iv) ECOLOGICAL JUSTICE: Both call for justice, compassion, and care as key theological responses to environmental degradation.

2.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter has examined the similarity and thematic intersections between *Laudato Si* and *Al-Mīzān*, two faith-based texts that address ecological crises from Catholic and Islamic traditions, respectively. We examined the similarities that resonate between the two documents, as their source texts are based on Abrahamic scriptures, namely the Bible and the Quran. These two faith-based documents address ecological crises from the perspectives of their respective Catholic and Islamic theologies. They use their creation texts to develop the notion of stewardship. Since their theologies are drawn from their scriptures, this is also evident in their eco-theologies. Both documents share a common moral and spiritual vision that recognizes the urgent state of the environmental crisis and calls for a faith-driven response to its challenges.

The Qur'ān's creation narrative diverges from the Genesis account in form but not in spirit. It is scattered across multiple chapters (*sūrahs*) and presented in various rhetorical forms: narrative, polemic, and appeal. Regardless of form, its core themes are consistent, and *Al-Mīzān* incorporates them creatively so that creation is purposeful, harmonious, and an act of divine mercy (*rahma*). The universe is infused with signs (*āyāt*) that point to the creator, and humanity is invited to consider these signs with humility and reverence.

In this light, *Al-Mīzān*'s creation theology is supported by an ontological vision to make it clear that the universe is a revelation of God's names and attributes. Environmental degradation, therefore, is not merely a physical crisis but also a spiritual one and an offence to the divine order. Despite some differences in theological frameworks, the two texts share a similar pastoral tone and ethical concern for the environment. Both texts thus affirm that creation is sacred, as God created it, ordered it, and entrusted it to human beings for responsible care.

CHAPTER 3

SHARED CONCERNS ROOTED IN THE THEOLOGY OF STEWARDSHIP

In the previous chapter, we explored the theology of stewardship as presented in *Laudato Si'* and *al-Mīzān*, showing how both texts, though rooted in different scriptures, draw on a shared Abrahamic tradition. This chapter aims to explore the core concerns that these documents share in light of their theology of stewardship. While both documents articulate similar ethical and spiritual responses to the ecological crisis, this chapter also considers areas of divergence. By analyzing these concerns, we gain deeper insight into how each tradition frames the moral and practical implications of environmental responsibility.

3.1- SHARED CONCERNS

3.1.1- CLIMATE CRISIS AND PRESERVATION OF BALANCE

Both texts view climate change as a threat to the existence of the precious and sacred creation of God. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the climate crisis is an existential and ethical issue for both, and they both attempt to address it within their theology of stewardship. *Laudato Si'* describes climate change as “one of the principal challenges facing humanity.” (§25). Additionally, it criticizes the excessive use of fossil fuels and deforestation, emphasizing the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (§165, §167). Keeping the notion of stewardship in view, this is the responsibility of everyone: “The gravity of the ecological crisis demands that *we all* look to the common good” (§201). Lane, a commentator of *Laudato Si'* with the conflict of Church and science in view, appreciates *Laudato Si'*'s scientific backup and calls it a dialogue between science and theology⁵⁷.

Al-Mīzān, on the other hand, also warns humanity, without any discrimination based on religion, nationality, or ethnicity, and urges everyone to recognize that nature is out of balance, linking this imbalance to climate change (§1.3, §1.7, §1.8). Like *Laudato Si'* *Al-Mīzān* also backs up this spiritual plea with the scientific consensus on climate change and supports urgent efforts to mitigate effects of climate change by citing scientific reports like the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change and OECD Environmental Outlook to 2050⁵⁸. In *Al-Mīzān's* view, climate change is a violation of God's trust (*'Amānah*) in the stewardship of the Earth which is not only a spiritual but also legal violation of the covenant between God and humans. Despite all the mosque-science conflicts, environmental concerns are not new in modern Muslim scholarship. As a famous Muslim scholar, Hussain Nasr, said in an interview: "A crisis already implies that a normal state has been

⁵⁷ Dermot A. Lane and Sean MacDonagh, *Theology and Ecology in Dialogue: The Wisdom Do Laudato Si'* (Dublin: Messenger Publications, 2020), 25–30.

⁵⁸ See footnotes in section 1. Specially no 17

disrupted in a dangerous direction and manner and that we are aware of what has happened."⁵⁹. This study views *Al-Mīzān* as a fulfilment of the dream Hossein Nasr envisioned in his "*The Need For a Sacred Science*."⁶⁰.

In conclusion, the theology of stewardship of *Laudato Si'* and *Al-Mīzān*, which addresses their concern about the climate crisis, is grounded in both scientific and theological arguments.

3.1.2-ACCOUNTABILITY TO THE CREATOR

Based on their theological stance that humans, as custodians, are accountable to God for what God has given them, both documents condemn a lifestyle that is unsustainable and characterized by material excess. *Laudato Si'* condemns the waste of resources, calling it "throwaway culture" (§16, §22, §43) and a consumerist mentality by calling it a "whirlwind of needless buying" (§50, §184, §203) and pleads for a new sustainable lifestyle, not caught in a 'whirlwind' of buying unnecessary things only because the market promotes them. It highlights the disordered desire for profit and endless growth, as well as the support for "less is more" (§222) and the cultivation of sobriety and simplicity. (§223)

Al-Mīzān states that the trust (*amāna*) God showed in someone is an assumption of moral accountability; therefore, humanity is accountable to God under the trust God placed upon them when he appointed them as *ḥalīfa* (§2.21;) It observes that "our energy-hungry consumer civilization has been damaging the Earth's ecosystems" (§1.9) and it acknowledges that the trust is broken, and humanity falls short of its goals: "In tending the Earth, as a species, we have proven ourselves thoroughly unjust and ignorant" (§2.21). It also stresses the need to restore the balance (*mīzān*) in human consumption. It criticizes overconsumption by saying that overconsumption (*isrāf*) is corruption (*ifsād*). Like *Laudato Si'*, it also criticizes excessive and wasteful overconsumption (§4.7) that can lead to environmental degradation. Therefore, it encourages moderation (*wasāṭiyyah*) as a core Islamic principle for sustainability. (§4.22).

3.1.3- JUSTICE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE POOR

In *Laudato Si'* justice is one of the central themes within its theology of stewardship. As it states, "When all these relationships are neglected, when justice no longer dwells in the land, the Bible tells us that life itself is endangered" (§70). Pope Francis emphasizes that people experiencing poverty suffer disproportionately from pollution, water scarcity, and climate change. He writes, "This vision of 'might is right' has engendered immense inequality, injustice and acts of violence against the majority of humanity, since resources end up in the hands of the first comer or the most powerful: the winner takes all" (§82).

⁵⁹ Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Muzaffar Iqbal, *Islam, Science, Muslims, and Technology: Seyyed Hossein Nasr in Conversation with Muzaffar Iqbal* (Islamabad Dost Publications, 2009).

⁶⁰ Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Muzaffar Iqbal, *Islam, Science, Muslims, and Technology: Seyyed Hossein Nasr in Conversation with Muzaffar Iqbal* (Islamabad Dost Publications, 2009),123.

The call for justice in its theology of stewardship is grounded in the belief that humanity is made in the image of God. As His steward it is responsible for enacting justice in Creation, an idea some associate with the mission of Jesus (§). Therefore, it calls for a preferential option for people with low incomes in environmental policy. Ultimately, it advocates for distributive justice rooted in the idea of the "universal destination of goods," where resources are shared unequally (§ 92, § 157, § 160). Pope Francis, according to Finn, "expands the sense of justice to include the integrity, natural ends, and well-being of nonhuman creatures," reminding readers that everything is interconnected.⁶¹

Modern scholarship reflects this vision, when it critiques the tension between globalization and sustainability, aligning eco-justice with the Christian call to social justice and God's redemptive plan for all Creation.^{62 63} *Laudato Si'* is thus clearly aligned with such contemporary theological concerns for justice.

Al-Mīzān recognizes justice as a central element in the cosmology of the Quran. It frames environmental degradation as a violation of justice by employing a legal term from Muslim jurisprudence ('*adl*'). In the stewardship theology of *Al-Mīzān*, it is crucial to maintain two key principles: the cosmic balance God created in nature and the mandate He gave to humans as custodians. *Al-Mīzān* argues, "To practice *khilāfah* (viceregency) on the Earth by tending it, upholding right and justice; and spreading good and utility on Earth, as shown in God's command to the prophet David 'O David! We have made you a *khalīfah* on the Earth: judge, therefore, with justice between humankind, and do not follow passions that may divert you from the way of God...'”(§2.19)

Significantly, *Al-Mīzān* does not limit this justice to humans but encompasses "all beings" (§3.15), developing a case for social and ecological justice (§1.14) All beings includes non-human species because they risk being extinct forever. It refers back to five mass extinction already studied by paleontologists' (§1.4) and calls it "disrupt indigenous spiritual bonds with the natural world" (§1.5). This is an extension of justice by *Al -Mīzān* to non-human species. For *Al-Mīzān*, this is also a genocide, a crime against creation (§5.6) and wonders why no institution has taken it as a crime against nature.⁶⁴

Al-Mīzān argues that harming the Earth is inherently an injustice against the vulnerable, thus positioning environmental ethics within a broader framework of social justice and 'environmental jurisprudence' (§5.5). This aligns with classical Islamic legal principles, where actions are judged

⁶¹ Daniel K. Finn, *Rethinking Justice in Catholic Social Thought*, 1st ed, Moral Traditions Series (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2025), 228.

⁶² Blaine Smith and Daniel K. Brannan, "A Christian Basis for Environmentalism," *European Journal of Science and Theology* 9, no. 5 (October 2013): 167–177.

⁶³ Celia Deane-Drummond, "Economics and Environmental Justice" in *Eco-Theology*, Reprinted 2016 (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2016), 17-31.

⁶⁴ The heart of compiler can also be seen in footnote 257 when they explain why they think it should be taken as a crime.

based on their outcomes, benefits (*masālih*) and harms (*mafasid*) to promote the universal common good. According to Islamic jurisprudence, *Al-Mīzān* emphasises that the poor and marginalised suffer the most from environmental degradation. However, this ethical concern is not limited to human beings alone—it includes all of God's Creation.

Both documents thus emphasise that the group most affected by environmental degradation is the poor. Additionally, it is extended to all of God's creations and not limited to humans.

3.1.4- SPIRITUAL AND ETHICAL TRANSFORMATION

In the previous sections, we have seen how these two documents are the responses of the Church and the mosque to the realization that humanity has fallen short of its responsibility toward creation. We also saw that both have a reformatory tone aimed at correcting the shortcomings in the mandate of stewardship. Both documents stress the need for transformation.

Laudato Si' stresses that “everything is connected” (§70, §138, §240). Through its integral ecology that links human, social, and environmental well-being, *Laudato Si'* calls for a “transformation of heart and awareness.”⁶⁵ Some commentators of *Laudato Si'* emphasize that its vision of integral ecology requires a transdisciplinary approach because it goes beyond environmental science, incorporating ethics, economics, politics, culture, and spirituality. In this regard, when other disciplines engage with ecological concerns, theology, too, cannot remain silent. It must critically assess and, if necessary, revise its assumptions, methods, and teachings in light of today's ecological challenges.⁶⁶ To do this, Pope Francis develops his notion of integral theology based on three main relationships in which life is not just interconnected but ‘intertwined,’ as Miller puts it.⁶⁷ These three relationships are with God, with other humans, and with other creatures (§68). This vision is rooted in the theology of stewardship discussed in the previous chapter.

After that, the Pope pleads for “ecological citizenship” and spiritual conversion or a change of heart from the global Church, based on the theology of stewardship. He calls this an ecological conversion (§211, §217, §219) and continues, “I ask all Christians to recognize and to live fully this dimension of their conversion. May the power and the light of the grace we have received also be evident in our relationship to other creatures and the world”. (§221)

Al-Mīzān describes creation as a network or tapestry of balance where each being is skillfully interconnected or woven into the network and has a role and purpose. In §2.12, it extends the theology of *ummah* to plural *Umam* to argue that only Muslims are not a community but animals with whom we share this Earth. To strengthen this argument, it cites the Qur’ān's 6:38: “There is no animal that moves on the Earth nor any bird that wings its flight but is a community like yourselves”. Therefore, it calls for a transformation or behavioral change (§1.21). It suggests that

⁶⁵ Vincent Jude Miller, *The Theological and Ecological Vision of Laudato Si': Everything Is Connected* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2017), 5–6.

⁶⁶ Lane and MacDonagh, *Theology and Ecology in Dialogue*.

⁶⁷ Miller, *The Theological and Ecological Vision of Laudato Si'*, 11–13.

Islamic rituals can help to bring about this change (§3.13). In addition to that, it uses another legal term, "*Hisbah*, a distinctive aspect of Islamic teaching that all individuals are responsible for commanding the good and averting evil..." (§5.30). Based upon this legal obligation to do good and stop harm, it demands environmental activism: "Activism in defence of God's creation finds its ethical culmination in striving in the way of God, devoting one's own life in the cause of the Lord of all, as the prophet Muhammad, upon him be blessings and peace, was commanded: Say: 'Truly, my prayer and my sacrifice and my living and my dying are for God, the Lord of all beings'" (Qur'an 6:162). (§5.34-5.35). In addition to that there is a whole section dedicated as Way Forward to give suggestions for practical recommendations for environmental activism which starts with personal change and extends to communities.

In a nutshell, *Laudato Si* urges for ecological conversion: a profound inner change that leads to action and calls on individuals, nations, and institutions to change systems and habits. Similarly, *Al-Mīzān* seeks to inspire transformative change in behaviour, policy, and spiritual consciousness. However, despite their shared concerns, they do have some differences, which we consider in the next section.

3.2. DIFFERENCES IN EMPHASIS ON ANTHROPOCENTRIC AND SPIRITUAL WORLDVIEWS,

Both *Laudato Si* and *Al-Mīzān* articulate a profound concern for the environmental crisis. However, their emphases and tones diverge from each other, particularly in terms of their anthropocentric view, spiritual worldviews, juridical and pastoral tones.

3.2.1 ANTHROPOCENTRIC VS THEOCENTRIC VIEWS

Contrary to the dominion theology of for instance Wesley and Calvin⁶⁸, the theology of stewardship promoted by *Laudato Si* aligns closely with the eco-theological principles of St. Francis' *Canticle of the Creatures* and previous papal encyclicals, which advocate a responsible and sustainable relationship with the environment. Based on this foundation, we can say that *Laudato Si* does not promote an anthropocentric worldview, one that sees the human being as the supreme creation of God⁶⁹. Instead, *Laudato Si* emphasizes that all of God's creations are interconnected. By doing so, *Laudato Si* advocates an integral ecology, affirming that every living being has intrinsic value (§118).

⁶⁸ These two theologians sustained the idea that humans are placed as custodians of nature and to take advantage of it. For details, see John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, trans. Henry Beveridge, ed. Christian Classics Ethereal Library, accessed January 15, 2025, <https://www.monergism.com/thethreshold/sdg/calvin/Institutes%20-%20John%20Calvin.pdf>. Also, see John Calvin's *Commentary on Genesis*, s.v. "Genesis 1:26-28," accessed January 13, 2025, <https://biblehub.com/commentaries/calvin/genesis/1.htm>. Furthermore, Sandor Goodhart, "Opening Genesis 1," *Prose Studies* 34, no. 1 (April 2012): 5, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01440357.2012.686209>.

⁶⁹ Carmody T. S. Grey, "'The Only Creature God Willed For Its Own Sake': Anthropocentrism in *Laudato Si* and *Gaudium et Spes*," *Modern Theology* 36, no. 4 (October 2020): 877, <https://doi.org/10.1111/moth.12588>.

Al-Mīzān, on the other hand, also adopts a theocentric view of creation, emphasizing that humans are stewards placed by God on earth. They are accountable to God if they fail to maintain the balance (*mīzān*) that God has established in creation. However, the difference lies in tone and emphasis: *Al-Mīzān*'s language is rooted in law, as seen in previous sections, whereas *Laudato Si'* stresses humanity's moral responsibility.

In terms of style, *Laudato Si'* appeals to its audience in a very pastoral tone, the absence of word punishment in the document and incorporating Psalms, choosing a name which means praise be to God all shows a pastoral heart to ask individuals and Catholic communities to take this responsibility, whereas *Al-Mīzān* has a word play in its name. The term does not mean balance. It also carries to connotation of justice, reward, punishment etc. *Al-Mīzān* addresses its audience in a more juridical tone, grounded in Islamic jurisprudence, with ethical and moral duties outlined in the Qur'ān and hadith. It says, "The trust is understood as the assumption of moral accountability (*taklīf*) to God for one's beliefs, intentions, and actions and their repercussions – with the reward and punishment that this entails." (2.21) However, it is not a fatwa given by a mufti and does not have Islamic legal implications in the case of failure. The inclusion of this tone is only to show how serious the compilers take this issue but still vocabulary like punishment and rewards and crime gives it a juridical tone. It outlines specific duties and prohibitions concerning environmental conduct (§2.5-2.7).

3.2.2- SPIRITUAL WORLD VIEWS

The usage of spiritual reinforcements in both documents exhibits their religious traditions. *Laudato Si'* draws from Christian theology (particularly the Franciscan tradition), viewing nature as a manifestation of God's love and advocating for a sacramental view of the world (§11). On the other hand, *Al-Mīzān*, rooted in Islamic theology, emphasizes the concept of *tawhid* (divine unity), portraying the natural world as a reflection of God's attributes and a means to attain spiritual awareness⁷⁰.

3.3 ECOLOGICAL MODERATION IN *LAUDATO SI'* AND BALANCE JUSTICE IN *AL-MĪZĀN*

The Bible never literally used the words balance and perfection for creation. It simply says God saw it, and it was good, but *Laudato Si'* does interpret good with these two adjectives, balance and perfect (§69,86). In addition to that, *Laudato Si'* emphasises both ecological and moral moderation when it employs the phrase "care for our common home" in the title. It also reflects a deep concern for ecological integrity, using terms like "integral ecology" (§ 62, 124, 137, 156, 159, 225, 230) and opening a dedicated section (III) with the title "Ecological conversion". Another subsection (V) dedicated to 'justice between the generations' deals with leaving a healthy environment for

⁷⁰ *Al-Mīzān*, p. 14.

future generations.⁷¹ It views the creatures as being interdependent and, therefore, urges the audience to think in terms of "one world with a common plan" (§164). To stress this justice and culture of care, terms like "human ecology" are used (§148, §152, §155). Francis compares countries suffering from environmental crisis to hell and suggests that environmental justice can turn these places into places of dignity and life. In his view, this will be a matter of solidarity, a common good. This is the moral ecology that *Laudato Si'* urges.

As previously mentioned, the central concept in *al-Mīzān* is the Qur'ānic term *mīzān*, which refers to balance or measure and is foundational to Islamic cosmology and ethics. The Qur'ān repeatedly emphasizes that God "created the heavens and the earth in true proportion and measure" (Q. 54:49) and commands humanity not to "transgress the balance" (Q. 55:7–9).

Al-Mīzān projects this cosmological principle into a comprehensive ethical framework, asserting that human actions must respect the balance of the natural order. Excessive exploitation, waste, or pollution is seen as a form of *fasād* (corruption) that disturbs the divinely ordained harmony. Also, in the words of the authors, moderation involves using resources on our planet in an "equitable distribution and preservation of ecosystems" (§1.13, §5.10) "Moderation tends toward fairness (*qist*) and the balance (*mīzān*) associated with it, whereas immoderation (*isrāf*) feeds transgression and injustice and disturbs the balance that God has set in the Creation" (§4.2 §5.10). This concept aligns closely with the modern ecological principle of sustainability, where balance in natural systems is considered critical for continued life.

In conclusion, we see both documents warn against excess and call for justice in ecological terms, because human moral behaviour impacts natural harmony.

3.4 CONCLUSION

Both *Laudato Si'* and *al-Mīzān* frame the climate crisis not only as an environmental issue but as a deeply ethical and spiritual issue for believers. They highlight how overconsumption, environmental injustice, and the marginalization of people with lower incomes reflect a broader moral disorder in society. At their core, both texts call for a renewed sense of human responsibility, whether through the Islamic concept of *khilāfah* or the Christian idea of stewardship, as an appeal from God to care for Creation.

Despite differences in tone and method, *Laudato Si'* being pastoral and rooted in sacramental spirituality, *al-Mīzān* drawing on legal and ethical reasoning from the Islamic tradition, they converge on key themes. Both emphasize the interconnectedness of all life, presenting ecological balance not as a side concern but as central to human flourishing. *Laudato Si'* speaks of "integral ecology," while *al-Mīzān* calls for the restoration of *mīzān*, the balance set by God.

⁷¹ This resonates with a repetitive phrase in Genesis known as the '*toledoth* formula,' which shows the continuity of God's covenant with future generations. Victor P. Hamilton, *The New International Commentary on the Old Testament: Chapters 1-17* (Grand Rapids (Mich.): W. B. Eerdmans, 1990), 6–10.

Consumerism and excess are strongly criticized in both documents. Pope Francis warns against a “throwaway culture,” while *al-Mīzān* promotes *wasāṭiyyah*, or moderation, as a guiding principle. Each text also emphasises the urgency of environmental justice, particularly for communities most vulnerable to ecological harm. They view this not only as a policy matter but as a spiritual command rooted in compassion, equity, and accountability before God.

Together, they suggest that meaningful responses to the climate crisis must go beyond technical solutions. What is needed is a shift in worldview, including an ethical and spiritual reorientation. The shared moral ground of these two traditions thus offers fertile ground for cooperation.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION AND WAY FORWARD

This study originated in the context of the modern environmental debate sparked by Lynn White and the response from faith-based communities. The aim was to compare the theology of stewardship in *Laudato Si'* and *Al-Mīzān*, with the question of how these two influential documents from two major Abrahamic religions draw on their scriptures. Since their scriptures share similarities in the meaning, duties, and functions of stewardship, this similarity may also be reflected in these two documents. If so, what are the similarities in their creation theology, and what can be the importance of those similarities in faith-based advocacy for environmental crises?

In Chapter One, we examined the content of *Laudato Si'* and *Al-Mīzān*. *Laudato Si'* emphasises themes such as the goodness of creation, divine ownership, justice, and human responsibility, and offers a theological and moral reflection on the environmental crisis. This reflection, grounded in Scripture, Catholic tradition, and science, calls for an ecological conversion, a lifestyle change, and global solidarity. Inspired by Francis of Assisi, it promotes an integral ecology that unites environmental, social, economic, and spiritual concerns. *Al-Mīzān* frames ecological care as a covenant ('*ahd*'). It emphasises stewardship (*khilāfa*), justice ('*adl*'), compassion (*rahma*), and balance, as seen in Qur'an 55:1-10, which highlights cosmic balance (*al-mīzān*) and humanity's custodianship of the Earth under a covenant ('*ahd*') with God. It presents an Islamic ethical framework for environmental stewardship, grounded in the Qur'an, Ḥadīth, Sufi tradition, and Islamic jurisprudence, to argue for stewardship, balance, compassion, and justice in addressing ecological crises and moral responsibility toward the Earth and the less fortunate.

We identified scriptural sources in both documents and found that they incorporated their creation texts to support the notion of stewardship and used other teachings to argue for the function and responsibility of stewardship. The argument in both documents is based on the human mandate of stewardship given by God.

We concluded that scripture is central to environmental ethics in both documents. They have distinct but complementary theological frameworks. A devotional, humble tone is rooted in both scripture and Catholic tradition, with *Laudato Si'* heavily citing the Old Testament, particularly Genesis, Psalms, and Leviticus. *Al-Mīzān* in turn builds its theological framework rooted in concepts of cosmic order, measured creation, and human accountability to God.

The two documents also have shared ethical and spiritual themes, such as a sacred view of nature, custodianship of the Earth, and social justice, and view environmental degradation as a form of spiritual corruption. They share the conviction that religion can play a significant role in environmental advocacy.

After exploring the theological foundations in Chapter One, the second chapter compared similarities and thematic intersections between *Laudato Si'* and *Al-Mīzān*. The comparative analysis revealed a deep interconnection between the Qur'an and the Bible, particularly in themes

of creation, divine purpose, and human responsibility. Both scriptures affirm that the world is a deliberate, calculated creation of God, which is inherently good and given to humanity as its caretakers. This shared mandate from Abrahamic scriptures is present as the concept of stewardship in *Laudato Si'* and vicegerency (*khalīfah*) in *Al-Mīzān*.

The analysis of stewardship in *Laudato Si'* and *Al-Mīzān* revealed a profound theological intersection on humanity's moral responsibility toward the environment, rooted in their scriptures. *Laudato Si'* develops a theology of stewardship based on a reinterpretation of Genesis. This reinterpretation emphasizes an ecocentric view by rejecting the anthropocentric view. Pope Francis argues that being made in God's image is a sacred appointment to care for creation, not a license for domination. Additionally, he connects stewardship to virtues such as solidarity, responsibility, and care, and emphasizes intergenerational and universal ethical obligations. Similarly, *Al-Mīzān* develops the notion of stewardship based on the Qur'ānic key term *ḥalīfa*, and presents humans as vicegerents entrusted with the Earth by God. For *Al-Mīzān*, stewardship is an ethical mandate that links it with other Qur'ānic principles, such as trust (*amānah*), justice ('*adl*'), and balance (*mīzān*). The document employs strong legal and religious language, framing environmental responsibility within the context of Islamic jurisprudence and accountability. Despite differences in theological frameworks and terminology, both texts ultimately present stewardship as a divinely ordained moral duty that binds humanity to a sacred covenant with creation.

This chapter also reveals the deep theological engagement with the creation that both *Laudato Si'* and *Al-Mīzān* have. In *Laudato Si'*, Pope Francis presents a sacramental view of nature. In this sacramental view, creation is a divine gift that reflects God's love and is connected to God's redemptive plan. Drawing inspiration from Francis of Assisi, the Pope develops a theology in which humanity is called not to dominate but to care for creation responsibly. Human beings, made in the image of God, are seen as stewards. Their purpose as stewards is to reflect divine love for creation and maintain the harmony in creation that is intended in the Genesis account. This view fosters an integral ecology, connecting human dignity, social justice, and environmental concern, articulating ecological stewardship as a spiritual and moral obligation.

Similarly, *Al-Mīzān* emphasises the sacredness and divine balance of creation, rooted in Qur'anic concepts such as *al-mīzān* (balance) and '*adl*' (justice). Humanity is described not as rulers but as trustees (*ḥalīfa*) accountable to God for preserving ecological harmony. Environmental care in *Al-Mīzān* is deeply embedded in Islamic law (*sharī'a*), where overconsumption and waste of resources are considered legal and spiritual transgressions. Ecological responsibility is thus framed as obedience to God's will and an expression of worship.

Together, *Laudato Si'* and *Al-Mīzān* thus articulate a shared theology of creation that emphasises the sacredness of nature, the divine mandate of stewardship, moral accountability before God, and a call for ecological justice rooted in compassion and responsibility. Despite arising from different religious traditions, both texts affirm a theocentric vision that recognizes creation as a divine trust and humanity as its ethical guardian.

After studying theologies of stewardship formed by both documents, the third chapter identified some key shared concerns between *Laudato Si'* and *al-Mīzān* grounded in their theologies of stewardship. We observed that since their theology of stewardship is similar, their concerns also show resemblance. Both documents frame the climate crisis not only as an urgent environmental crisis but also as a spiritual and moral issue. Both argue that ecological degradation violates the sacred trust between humans and their Creator. Each document stresses the interconnectedness of all life and draws on both theological principles and scientific insights to call for action. On the one hand, *Laudato Si'* presents the Earth as "our common home" and advocates an "integral ecology" that connects environmental, social, and spiritual dimensions. *Al-Mīzān*, on the other hand, expresses its concern about the importance of maintaining the *mīzān* (balance), an order established by God, and frames environmental degradation as a disruption of this balance. Both remind their audience of the idea of human accountability to the Creator. *Laudato Si'* critiques consumerism and the "throwaway culture," urging a change in lifestyle towards simplicity and sustainability. *Al-Mīzān* criticizes *isrāf* (excessiveness) and *ifsād* (corruption), highlighting how overconsumption and ecological harm contradict Qur'anic values, and encourages moderation (*wasatiyyah*) as a religious imperative.

Another shared key concern in both documents is the pursuit of justice. Both stress that the poor and vulnerable suffer the most from environmental damage. This concern is especially pertinent for countries with fewer resources, such as Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, and the African continent, which are struggling with environmental issues. Some places are experiencing 50 °C this summer when these lines are being written. For *Laudato Si'*, care for the Earth is care for the marginalized, while *al-Mīzān* extends the concept of justice to all creation, including animals and future generations. Inclusion of non-human creation in the justice theme is less explicit in *Laudato Si'*, and more pronounced in *Al-Mīzān*. The probable reason is that Catholic social thought has, for decades, revolved around humans. At the same time, *Al-Mīzān* assigns comparatively greater ontological significance to justice for non-human creation. To practice this justice, both documents require the virtue of solidarity, which brings about transformation. In terms of transformation, both require profound moral and spiritual transformation. *Laudato Si'* calls for "ecological conversion," a shift in mindset and values rooted in Christian spirituality. *Al-Mīzān* encourages reform through Islamic ethics and legal frameworks, such as *ḥisbah* (moral accountability). Despite these similarities, there are differences in tone and emphasis. *Laudato Si'* takes a pastoral and sacramental approach, often using poetic and relational language, while *al-Mīzān* adopts a more juridical and theological tone, grounded in Qur'anic injunctions and legal reasoning. These differences reflect their different religious traditions but don't detract from their shared warning against the consequences of ecological excess, stressing the importance of justice and moral accountability, and calling for a renewed relationship between humans, nature, and the divine. Together, they offer a compelling interfaith framework for ethical and theological responses to the climate crisis.

WAYS FORWARD

Based on a comparison of stewardship theology in the Bible and the Quran, and its reflection in both documents, this thesis identifies some potential for moving forward.

First, the contrast in tone and theological emphasis between the two documents should be seen not as a division but as a complementarity. *Laudato Si'*'s pastoral tone and *Al-Mīzān*'s juridical clarity can still mutually enrich interreligious efforts by offering both a relational and legal framework for stewardship. The difference, especially in the tone, is rooted in contexts. If we are unaware of the context, it does not necessarily mean that the tone is harsh or extra soft. Together, they can provide a robust theological foundation for developing a global, faith-based response to climate change, one that respects tradition while addressing contemporary ecological realities.

Second, interfaith dialogue on environmental stewardship should be encouraged and deepened. Since *Laudato Si'* and *Al-Mīzān* both draw from their respective scriptures and traditions to articulate a vision of care for creation, this shared theological ground provides a powerful platform for cooperative advocacy. Ecclesial leadership of both religions can unite to issue joint statements, arrange informative events, and engage in ecological education to reflect their shared ethical commitments to justice, compassion, and responsibility.

Third, in my own context of Pakistan, which is facing some of the worst results of environmental changes, the Pakistan Ministry of Federal Education reports that we have an extensive network of 3500 madrasas (Muslim seminaries)⁷². At the same time, Caritas is also present in almost every parish of Pakistan. If this cooperation is established, civil society will welcome it, as we often see on Facebook, where society is concerned about increasing temperatures and a shift in the cultivation and harvesting times of crops. In addition to that, every public and private school in Pakistan is obliged to offer religious studies for Christians and Muslims as a compulsory subject. Scripture-based environmental education within both Christian and Muslim communities should be prioritized, as it is traditionally not part of the current syllabi. As both documents demonstrate, theological literacy about creation and stewardship can motivate grassroots action. Faith-based curricula and green sermons can incorporate the scriptural foundations of ecological ethics, such as *khilāfa*, *mīzān*, and *amānah* in Islam, and *integral ecology* and *creation as a gift* in Catholicism, to inspire moral and practical engagement with climate challenges.

Fourth, the spiritual perspective on ecological crises as moral and existential challenges should be introduced in public discourse. Both documents agree that the environmental crisis is not merely scientific or economic but a deeper ethical violation in humanity's relationship with the Creator and creation. It will enable religious communities to use their spiritual resources, rituals, prayers, and communal practices for ecological healing, thereby fostering a sense of sacred duty toward the

⁷² <https://tinyurl.com/2p9zj3a5>.

Earth. A few mosques are already using the water used in *wuḍū* (Muslim ceremonial washing before prayer) for their gardens. It should be encouraged, and people with resources can help mosques and churches to be more environmentally friendly. All the churches in the Pakistani city of Jaranwala are good examples after they shifted to solar energy. Additionally, Green Khutbas and Green Sunday services can be a good initiative to start with no cost.

Fourth, justice-centred action is essential, particularly for the most vulnerable. Both documents highlight that the impact of environmental degradation is not proportional to the differences between the poor and the wealthy. People experiencing poverty are suffering more. Faith-based organizations can help address this moral urgency by supporting climate justice initiatives, policy reforms, and humanitarian efforts, particularly in regions affected by extreme heat, floods, and displacement.

Additionally, in terms of philological concepts, this study has demonstrated similarity in the vocabulary used for stewardship. This is not limited. There is a vast similarity in Semitic lexical concepts, and there is considerable potential to study intertextual relations between the scriptures of both religions, having shared Abrahamic roots, thereby strengthening the hands of peacemakers in both faiths rather than promoting hatred. Ultimately, as we noted in the introduction, the Abrahamic religions comprise a significant portion of the planet's population. This study therefore strongly recommends a united response to the urgency of environmental degradation, as "our common home" is suffering from it.

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