UNIVERSITY OF GHANA
COLLEGE OF HUMANITIES

GEN 1:1—2:3 AND THE ENVIRONMENT:
AN EXEGETICAL AND THEOLOGICAL STUDY

BY

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DECLARATION

This is to certify that this thesis is the result of research undertaken by Otis Kissi Asiedu under the supervision of Dr. Nicoletta Gatti and Dr. Alexander Salakpi towards the award of M.Phil Degree in Study of Religions in the Department for the Study of Religions, University of Ghana (Legon).

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ABSTRACT

The increasingly diminishing rate of the world’s natural resources and the current ecological crisis facing the world has sparked a global debate about the causes of the menace. Since 1967, following Lynn White’s article “The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis,” the anthropocentric and dualistic reading of Genesis 1:1—2:3 perpetuated by Western Christianity has been indicated as the main cause. White’s assertion has initiated a scholarly debate about the possibility of an Ecological Hermeneutics. Against this background, the research analysed the relationship existing between the first creation account and the environment. It, furthermore, explored how Genesis 1:1—2:3 can be used to promote advocacy and environment care among youth groups of selected churches in Kwahu-Atibie.

The Communicative approach proposed by Ossom-Batsa was employed as a theoretical framework. The West African scholar proposes a three-step method: Exegesis of reality, Exegesis of the text and the Engagement between reality and the text. The exegesis of reality was performed using the Intercultural Hermeneutics proposed by Anum-Bortey and Quaye, in order to assess how three selected youth groups, read Genesis 1:1—2:3. The narrative criticism proposed by Powell was employed to reach an informed understanding of the text.

The engagement of the reality and the text reveals that although youth group members showed ecological sensitivity and a positive attitude concerning the care of the environment, their interpretation of the text was often literal, facilitated by the use of Ashanti Twi bible. As consequence, they did not see any relationship between their faith and active care and advocacy for the environment.
The narrative reading of Genesis 1:26-28 disclosed that the Priestly creation account invites readers to rediscover the community of creation. Human is created in relationship and for relationship: every form of exploitation, violence, reduction of the others (co-humans or nature) to an object is a betrayal of God’s plan. Therefore, the creation accounts invite us to rediscover our limit: we are not God, not even ‘little gods’; we are members of the creation community called to serve and care for all, humans and non-humans.

The study recommends further research on the concept of ‘stewardship’ and ‘citizenship,’ as used in ecological discussions. From the pastoral perspective, the research recommends that ecological care deliberations should form part of the core doctrines of the church, as a way to promote positive attitude towards the environment in the lives of the people. Lastly churches in Kwahu-Atibie should collaborate and organize regular environmental care and cleanliness programs to educate the populace.
DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my parents and siblings
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First and Foremost, I am thankful to God for making this dream a reality.

With a sincere and appreciative heart, I wish to express my profound gratitude to my supervisors Dr. Nicoletta Gatti and Dr. Alexander Salakpi as well as Dr. George Os- som-Batsa for their guidance and support needed for the completion of this work. I am grateful for the motherly and fatherly love you have shown me through hard times.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Declaration ........................................................................................................................................... ii

Abstract ................................................................................................................................................ iii

Dedication ............................................................................................................................................... v

Acknowledgement ............................................................................................................................... vi

Table of Contents ................................................................................................................................... vii

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTORY ISSUES ........................................................................................... 1

1.1 Background of the study .................................................................................................................. 1

1.2 Statement of the Problem ............................................................................................................... 7

1.3 Research questions ......................................................................................................................... 8

1.4 Literature Review ............................................................................................................................ 8

1.4.1 Gen. 1:1—2:3 in the Ecological Debate ....................................................................................... 8

1.4.2 Ecology and Fundamentalist Interpretation .............................................................................. 12

1.4.5 Conclusion ................................................................................................................................ 15

1.5 Theoretical Framework .................................................................................................................. 16

1.6 Methodology .................................................................................................................................. 16

CHAPTER TWO: EXEGESIS OF REALITY ......................................................................................... 21

2.1 Introduction .................................................................................................................................. 21

2.2 Overview of Kwahu Atibie .......................................................................................................... 22

2.3 The Environmental Concerns of the Town ................................................................................... 23

2.3.1 Waste Disposal ....................................................................................................................... 24
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.4.2 Identification</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.3 Retrieval</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.4 Doctrinal constructs</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.5 Recovery reading</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.6 Evaluation of the approaches</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.7 Conclusion</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER FOUR: READING GEN 1:1—2:3 WITH ECOLOGICAL LENS</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Introduction</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Delimitation of the first creation account</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.3 Structure of Genesis 1:1—2:3</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.4 The Narrative setting</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5 Textual Analysis</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5.1 The Dominion Mandate</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5.2 The Sabbath</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.5.3 The Stewardship Model</td>
<td>114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.6 Theological Reflections</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.7 Conclusion</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Introduction</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.2 Summary</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.3 Conclusion</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.4 Recommendations .................................................................................................................. 130

5.4.1 Academic .......................................................................................................................... 130

5.4.2 Pastoral ............................................................................................................................ 131

BIBLIOGRAPHY ......................................................................................................................... 133
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTORY ISSUES

1.1 Background of the study

In recent decades, there has been a global awareness of the ecological challenges facing
the earth. The earth’s “natural resources are diminishing; global warming is causing
species loss, increased flooding and hurricanes; energy sources are diminishing and
earth’s capacity for a sustainable future looks bleak.”

Indeed, while the discourse about the environment was at the marginal side of political
discussions some decades ago, it has now become a constant presence at political
debates since the 1980s, especially after the discovery of the depletion of the ozone
layer. For instance, discussions about industrial pollutions and waste disposals have
been some of the insistent deliberations globally.

According to Devadass, the quality of the air we breathe, the water we use, the climate
conditions, wildlife among others have changed drastically over the decades. He con-
curs that humans pursue of short-term gains have led to the manipulation and destruc-
tion of the eco system. This will have great consequences for the future generation
because natural resources such as forests, water bodies, among others are being ex-
ploited at an alarming rate.

2 Horrell concurs that much attention has been given to the rapidly most discussed subject global warm-
3 Ibid., 3-4.
4 Devadass, Towards Responsible Stewardship, 1.
The bone of contention to tackle the environmental problems have been a blame game over the years. Several groups have been imputed as the source of environmental disasters.

Scholars such as Zhang\(^5\), Shepherd\(^6\) and Awuah-Nyamekye\(^7\) hold the view that humans through their activities are the cause of ecological crisis.\(^8\) Zhang asserts that the disappearing rate of forest land is due to the greed and ignorance of people.\(^9\) The forest forms the main component of the telluric ecosystem consisting of all the plants, the animals and micro-organisms which play a decisive role “for maintaining the ecological balance of the land.”\(^10\) He further observes that the world’s forests are vanishing at a faster “annual rate of 16 million hectares.”\(^11\) Hence, the world will lose its amount of forest reserves every year if nothing is done to the increasingly waning rate of the world’s forest reserves. The consequence is the earth becoming ‘bald’ in the future.\(^12\)

Coming to Ghana, there is no doubt that environmental pollution is a major problem. Twumasi Amoah and Akwasi Kose coincide that solid and liquid waste management is one of the daunting problems in Ghana.\(^13\) Inappropriate dumping of refuse, open

\(^7\) Samuel Awuah-Nyamekye, *Managing the Environmental Crisis in Ghana: The Role of African Traditional Religion and Culture with Special Reference to the Berekum Traditional Area* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2014).
\(^8\) Church leaders recognized human’s responsibility. See, Pope Paul VI referred to the ecological crisis as ‘a tragic consequence’ of unrestrained human actions. Pope Paul VI further states that as a result of human’s exploitation of nature, “humanity runs the risk of destroying nature and becoming in turn a victim of this degradation”. He asserts that humans are more concern only about what creation offers immediately for consumption than to see other meaning in our natural environment. Pope Benedict XVI also coincides that various unchecked human actions have led to the exploitation of nature. Cf. Pope Francis, *Laudato Si’: Encyclical Letter on Care for our Common Home* (Rome:Vatican Press), 4.
\(^10\) Ibid., 70.
\(^11\) Ibid., 70-72.
\(^12\) Ibid., 70.
defecation, indiscriminate logging, annual bush fires, illegal surface mining, poor farming practices, dumping of human and industrial waste into water bodies, floods caused by choked gutters, woods for firewood among others are some of the unsmiling ecological disquietedness of the country.¹⁴

The sanitation situation of Ghana has, therefore, caused some prominent world organizations such as the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) to name Ghana as one of the ‘least sanitary’ countries of the world: “This means Ghana has a severe shortage of what the WHO defines as “improved sanitation, i.e. waste disposal systems that separate human excrement from human contact.”¹⁵

Nevertheless, there are other environmental problems facing the country. For example, in the last months media reports have centred on the fight against illegal mining activities, which is locally termed ‘galamsey’.¹⁶

The mining sector is considered as one of the economic backbones of the country. The state benefits greatly from the exportation of the minerals such as gold, diamond, bauxite among others which generates income and foreign exchange. Yet despite the economic benefits derived from the various minerals, they pose a threat to the environment in terms of land degradation and water pollution¹⁷. The fight against ‘galamsey’ has been intensified by the current government and stakeholders to safeguard the water bodies and the forest reserves of the country.

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¹⁴ Awuah-Nyamekye, *Managing the Environmental*, 1-16.
¹⁷ Amponsah-Tawiah and Darney-Baah, “The Mining Industry in Ghana,” 63-64.
Looking for the root-cause of the problem, many scholars point a finger at capitalism and the capitalistic mentality. Zhang proclaims that “before the birth of the capitalist mode of production, environmental problem was but a regional one, which, in most cases, had only a minor and partial negative impact on the human society.”

But in the past 100 years due to capitalism mode of production, environmental problems have been on the increase. Toffler argues that no civilization in human history has caused the greatest environmental problems than the capitalist civilization.

Zhang contends that since capitalism, the world has experience serious environmental problems such as deforestation, decrease in fresh water, the falling of the marine ecosystem, rain forest reduction leading to floods and climate change, emission of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere causing greenhouse effects, which poses a threat such as global warming to both planet earth and its inhabitants among others.

Horrell perceives that technological development, despite its positive benefits, has also a negative impact on planet earth. Thus, technological development powers industrialization and commercial activities which intends maximizes the consumption rate of the world’s population. Additionally, high demands on consumption and the consequence need to increase production placed massive pressure on the few available natural resources.

In the same fashion Bryant contends that industrialization or capitalism has contributed to the over exploitation of the earth’s resources. He posits that the use of fishing ships

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18 Zhang, “Capitalism,” 71.
19 Ibid., 69-73.
20 Ibid., 69-73.
22 Zhang, “Capitalism,” 70-72.
is causing over harvesting. Again, toxic chemicals such as mercury are dumped into the water bodies, and these activities over a period of time will have long term irreversible consequences for other species in the water. The top soils are also destroyed through mining activities.24

Some scholars, however, consider Christianity as greatly responsible for ecological crisis. Rogerson claims that modern debate on the relationship between Christian message and ecological crisis started from an article published in 1967 by Lynn White25. According to White, the anthropocentric and dualistic reading of the creation account (Genesis 1—2) had created the dominion-mentality that is affecting the environment26. Scholars such as Horrell and Habel proclaim that the controversy focuses on whether humans are ‘stewards of creation’ or ‘possessors’ able to exploit nature, because it is ‘freely given’ to them.27

Overall, the ecological crisis facing the world and the ecological blame on the Christian’s reading of the bible have led to a new branch of hermeneutics called Ecological Hermeneutics. The Ecological Hermeneutics aims at re-reading the bible, asking the following questions: “Does the biblical narrative offer an alternative account of how humanity should live in relation with the Earth? Or rather, is it the biblical narrative itself which is the cause of our current ecological predicament?”28

28 Shepherd, “Creation & Christology,” 2.
Among the different approaches proposed, the ‘recovery’ reading of the text aimed at rescuing the “biblical text from accusations that they promote an anthropocentricism which legitimize aggressive domination of the earth.” According to Horrell, ‘recovery’ strategy “seeks the recovery or the retrieval of the bible’s ecological wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and obscured by interpreters who failed to see or attend to such dimensions of the text.”

One of the widely debated text that has been subjected to a ‘recovery’ attempt by scholars is Genesis. 1:26-28 where humans are ostensibly given the dominion mandate (Ʌה יד) by God to subdue the earth (בָּשָׂם). However, Scholars such as Horrell and Bauckham have maintain that the text does not in any way gives an aggressive power to humans to exploit creation.

Rather the text offers to humans the responsibility of caring and serving God’s created world. In this context, the word ‘stewardship’ has been widely used by scholars to determine the kind of ‘dominion mandate’ God desires from humanity. Bauckham postulates that the notion of ‘stewardship’ is one way of reading the bible in the age of ecological disaster: “the stewardship model has had an enormous influence for good in giving Christians a framework within which to approach ecological issues with concern and responsibility.”

Certainly, it expresses the relationship between humans and the rest of creation; though the ‘stewardship’ model has been widely accepted, Bauckham disputes that there are limitations to the model. He maintains that it neglects God’s own continuing

29 Horrell, The Bible and the Environment, 12.
30 Ibid., 11.
32 Cf. Bauckham, Bible and Ecology, 1.
33 Bauckham, Bible and Ecology, 2.
involvement in creation. Also ‘stewardship’ lacks content in terms of what it actually entails: ‘stewardship’ is about preservation or it is about changing.

One notable text used to accentuate the ‘stewardship’ of humans has been a verse from the second creation account. Thus Genesis 2:15 states that ‘God created and placed man into the garden of Eden to till (גָּרוֹע) and keep it (חֲסֹרֶה)’.

While the ‘stewardship’ model serves as a defensive strategy employed to deal with the ‘dominion mandate,’ in reading the eschatological texts (cf 2 Pet. 3:10-13), the protective approach used, “has been to argue that these texts envisage not destruction but transformation of the earth.”

To sum up, ‘recovery’ readings attempt to prove that the text can and does offer the foundation for a positive thinking and stance regarding the environment or creation.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Environmental crisis poses a severe threat for both humans and non-humans, ranging from health risks to loss of diversity of species.

In the last two decades, therefore, a hot debate has arisen among Christian and non-Christian scholars about the interpretation of Genesis 1:26-28 and its relevance on environmental issues. According to Horrell the pronouncement of the text that humanity was made in the image of God and was given the dominion over creation has been a

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36 Ibid., 12.
38 Horrell, *The Bible and the Environment*. 
central focus in the construction of a doctrine that expresses the responsibility and accountability of humans in relation to the environment.

Against this background, the research aims to analyse the relationship between Genesis 1:26-28 and the environment through a narrative analysis of the first creation account in Genesis. 1:1—2:3.

1.3 Research questions
The main question that guides the research is:

To what extent is the Creation account relevant to the ecological crisis that the world at large, and Ghana in particular, is facing?

The sub-question is:

To what extent does the first Creation account offer hope in ecological crisis and can motivate a more active involvement of Ghanaian Christians in environment care and advocacy?

1.4 Literature Review
The literature related to this study is organized into two thematic sections: Gen. 1:1—2:3 in the ecological debate, and Ecology and Fundamentalist Interpretation.

1.4.1 Gen. 1:1—2:3 in the Ecological Debate
The role of the Bible in the ecological debate is an issue that emerged in 1967, with the publication of White’s article, *The Historical Root of our Ecological Crisis*. Horrell notes that the article is the most consulted document in ecological deliberations as it serves as a benchmark against which biblical scholars measure their position in any
debate, whether contrary or in agreement to White’s assessment. As pointed out by Rogerson, White’s article has blamed the Christian’s reading of Genesis 1, for the current ecological problems facing the world. According to White, Western Christians’ interpretation of the Priestly creation account has two element: dualism and anthropocentrism. While the dualistic reading emphasized ‘spiritual’ over ‘material’ and ‘soul’ over ‘body,’ the anthropocentric reading considers ‘humans’ as the climax and centre of creation. This hermeneutical approach has created a distinction between humans and non-human and a separation of humanity from the community of creation, with heavy consequences for the environment.

Stead highlighted White’s stance concerning the environmental woes in two modes:

1. *The bible privileges humans as solely created in the image of God.* The conviction generates a division between humans (spiritual) and non-humans (non-spiritual); furthermore, since the non-human creation does not have an ‘eternal soul,’ it can be exploited for the benefits of humanity.

2. *The bible grants human’s dominion over nature.* Western Christianity reading of Genesis 1:26-28 aliment the feeling of superiority of ‘humans’ over non-humans. This anthropocentric view influences humans’ attitude and behaviour in a negative manner.

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39 Horrell, “Introduction,” 1-2
41 White, “The Historical Roots,” 1203-1207.
43 White, “The Historical Roots.” According to Horrell, the statement that humanity was made in the image of God and was given ‘dominion’ over creation, has been a central focus in the construction of a doctrine that expresses the responsibility and accountability of humans in relation to the environment. Horrell, The Bible and the Environment, 11-26.
46 Ibid, 13-16.
As such Christianity “bears a huge burden of guilt, for contemporary ecological crisis.”

Concerning dualism, Hiebert blames biblical interpreters for spiritualizing faith to the extent that the natural world is regarded as a ‘foreign habitat’ by humans. He contends that at the centre of Christians’ faith much concentration has been given to the ‘spirit world’ than the ‘real world,’ which has been neglected. Consequently, the spiritual life of humans has become the primary concern of the church. Christianity considers the ‘material dimension’ of the world secondary and educates humans to focus on the spiritual needs. Evangelism is, therefore, more important than caring for the environment.

The second aspects, anthropocentrism, is based on the reading of Gen. 1:28 in which God gives humankind authority over creation. According to the ‘dominion reading,’ the text places humans at the centre of creation, giving them ruling power over creation.

Moreover, the anthropocentric interpretation of Gen. 1:27, “created in the image and the likeness of God,” places humanity as ‘governors’ of creations and non-humans as the subordinates in the created world.

McHarg states that the Bible in its “insistence upon dominion and subjugation of nature, encourages the most exploitative and destructive instincts in man.” The scholar’s

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47 White, “The Historical Roots,” 1206.
49 Ibid., 342-344.
51 Bishop, “Green Theology,” 3. The anthropocentric perspective makes the claim “mankind is the highest of all creation made by God and was given dominion over the earth and all the natural” resources. Therefore, humans have the absolute right to exploit creation in their interest. Adetoye O. Faniran and Oluwagbenga O.I. Orimoogunje, “Creation and Environmental Care for Global Security and Peace: The Theocentric Option,” American Journal of Academic Research 1, no. 1 (2016): 14.
52 Bishop, “Green Theology,” 10.
statement voices that the interpretation of Genesis 1, with its emphasis on dominion and subjugation of creation, motivates and justifies, human’s destructive instinct towards creation. The problem, according to Bishop, is the interpretation of two Hebrew roots, רדָּשׁ and חֶבֶס, which can be respectively interpreted as “rule, govern” and “subdue, rape, trample.” The forceful connotation of the syntagma in the context of Genesis 1:26-28, if not critically analysed, can have great consequences.

Addressing White’s concern, scholars have proposed different ecological reading of the text. For example, Horrell reasons that God’s declaration of the ‘goodness’ of all creation in Genesis 1:31 articulates that humans are not at the focal point of creation but rather God loves all his creatures. Bauckman concurs and posits that the readers of Genesis 1:1-27 do not perceive that the creation of ‘Adam’ is the climax of a sort of “evolutionary process that envisages a process of increasing complexity and increasing intelligence that culminates in human being”.

Scholars like Bishop, Faniran and Orimoogunje argue that God, and not humans, is the centre and the absolute owner of creation (Ps. 24:1), which implies that the world was created to give glory to God and not to man. This theocentric perspective affirms that human beings are rather ‘stewards’ who are required to care for the created world, on behalf of God, as God’s representatives on earth.

Other scholars, like Guillaume and Gatti think that the seven-day structure and the emphasis on time seems to indicate that the Sabbath, rather than humanity, is the crown of creation. The first, fourth and seventh days are devoted entirely to the creation of rhythms and the importance of the Sabbath is underlined by the exclusive attribution of sanctity.

54 Horrell, The Bible and the Environment, 25.
55 Bauckham, Bible and Ecology, 14.
Hartman observes that adoption of a Sabbath-centred theology creates an ‘Altered Theocentric’, with positive consequences for the environment:

This altered, theocentric perspective entails humility about human importance relative to the rest of creation and leads Sabbath-keepers to re-orient their lives according to what they see as God’s priorities – which often includes attention to and care for the non-human natural world.

Notwithstanding the differences, a common element of the above scholars’ opinion is the proposal to use the bible as a resource to mitigate the environmental problems. However, other Christians use the same bible to oppose the ecological agenda.

1.4.2 Ecology and Fundamentalist Interpretation

Some Christian groups have defined the concern for the environment as a ‘satanic agenda’, a way to encourage environmental worship.

For example, in his book ‘The hidden dangers of the rainbow,’ Cumbey states,

Christians are urged to support internationalism in the interests of stewardship. Of course, what they are not told is that the people heading up the internationalist efforts like Donald Keys, David Spangler, and the rest of the Planetary Citizens’ gang are open Luciferians. Once the structures are established, even if St. Francis of Assisi were running them — they are available for takeovers by those interests wishing to establish the one-world government of the antichrist as foretold in Revelation 13. The scriptures told us plainly to love not the world.

Moreover, Todd Strandberg, a Dispensationalist, states that the best thing for environmentalists to do is to devote their energy ‘to evangelize lost souls.’

Thus, he argues:

In 2 Peter, we are told that someday the earth will undergo a fiery renovation. All of nature and everything man has created will be completely destroyed … I know that environmentalists would bristle at the idea of a refurbished earth being the ultimate solution to all ecological problems. If the world is going to be “dissolved,” there is no need for us to become too attached to it.

Strandberg holds the perception that evangelization should be the primary concern for Christianity. Horrell coincides that for many Evangelicals the central focus of a believer should be ‘to save lost souls’ from the coming judgment on humanity, and not caring for the environment, because the earth’s destiny is destruction (2 Pet. 3:7).

On the “Rapture Ready” website, Todd Strandberg, writing on ‘Bible and Environmentalism,’ asserts that environmental activists are rather specialized in highlighting the problems whiles they offer no solutions:

If environmentalists were to take a stand on a thorny issue, they might have to commit themselves to a workable solution. Sometimes, the wisdom of Solomon is required to find a resolution to an environmental dilemma that weighs the needs of man vs. the protection of nature.

Calvin Beisner agrees that caring for creation is important, hence humans have a responsibility to preserve creation, but he does not share the view that there is an ecological crisis affecting the world. Beisner believes the environment is rather ‘improving’ and not ‘deteriorating’. He affirms that “humanity’s God-given task is to turn the earth from wilderness into garden, increasing its bounty and productivity.”

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67 Horrell, The Bible and the Environment, 13-17.
69 Horrell, The Bible and the Environment, 15.
Moreover, there are others who hold in high esteem the doctrines of the Premillennial Dispensationalists. They hold the belief that the eschatology will be characterized by the great tribunal, the Armageddon, that is, the battle between God and Satan and a millennial reign of Christ on earth. As a result, prior to the tribulation faithful Christians will be raptured from the earth.\(^\text{70}\)

Though these positions are not accepted in academic setting, they have a great impact on the environmental agenda. Thus, they perceive environmental disasters as signs of the end time which are to be embraced by Christians since this earth will be destroyed. Maier, for example, contends that ecological devastation fulfils the prophecy that God, through the use of natural causes, is destroying the destroyers of the earth (Rev.11:18) and a sign of the forthcoming return of Christ.\(^\text{71}\)

Furthermore, this perception encourages Christians to rather ‘rescue the lost souls’ than ‘rescuing the earth’ from decaying. Hence, the agenda to preserve creation is a work against God’s purpose, since the destruction of the earth must happen before the end:\(^\text{72}\)

Christians should not be carried away into frenzy that is being stirred up in popular culture. While it is true that we are all stewards of the earth and should thus take care of it, we should also be aware of the fact that the ‘heavens and earth’ are being prevented from being destroyed by the word of God (2 Peter 3:7). God will one day destroy the earth with the fire of judgement and this is the warning that Christians must take to those who are lost, in order that they might be saved through the obedience of the gospel.\(^\text{73}\)

Finally, some scholars believe environmental crisis such as climate change is a ‘hoarse.’ For instance, Kulikovsky claims Christians and environmental activists are propagating false claims about the climate.\(^\text{74}\) He is of the view that humans are at the pinnacle of

\(^\text{70}\) Horrell, *The Bible and the Environment*, 16-17.
\(^\text{72}\) Horrell, *The Bible and the Environment*, 16-17.
\(^\text{73}\) Todd Strandberg, “Bible Prophecy,” 17.
God’s creation and non-humans are the subordinates of creation. Considering humans as stewards of God’s creation, he argues, industries and agricultural productions should not come to a halt or strictly monitored.⁷⁵

Moreover, he asserts that there is no evidence to prove that carbon dioxide emission causes global warming because carbon dioxide in its self is not a pollutant, but a natural gas essential for the process of photosynthesis to enhance the growth of plants. As such, additional carbon dioxide will enhance plant growth and the warmer weather will increase the growing season of agricultural productions.⁷⁶

Again, he postulates that the earth in the past has proven to be remarkably resilient to catastrophes. That is the earth has experienced several catastrophic events such as ice age, the warming periods, the periods of meteorites strike, massive earthquakes and volcanoes, floods that even covered high mountains. Yet still humans, vegetation and animals are existing.⁷⁷

1.4.5 Conclusion

It can be inferred from the discussions that Genesis 1 is pivotal in environmental discourse. Lynn White’s criticism about Western Christianity reading of Genesis 1 has contributed to the various scrutiny concerning the first creation account and the environment. Whiles several scholars agree with White, others point to the fact that White’s assessment requires further studies.

⁷⁵ Kulikovsky, “Creation,” 86-93. Though environmental activists do not completely call for an end to capitalism, they believe there should be actions to tackle their production.
⁷⁶ Ibid., 86-93.
⁷⁷ Ibid.
Furthermore, it can be realized that there are various viewpoints concerning the reading and interpretation of Genesis 1 and the environment. The varied interpretations given reveal that there is a problem concerning the interpretation of the text.

These wide-ranging standpoints regarding the text prove that there is the need to critically examine the text, to discover how a group of ordinary readers interpret the text, why it is interpreted in different ways and what the text’s call to action concerning the environment is.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

The research employed the Communicative approach proposed by Ossom-Batsa as the theoretical framework of the research.

The approach proposes three steps: The first step is the exegesis of reality; the second is the exegesis of the text to discover its call to action, the perlocutory effect that the author intends to have on the readers. Finally, the third step is the engagement between reality and the text.

According to the scholar, the Communicative approach enables the reader to understand and appreciate the relevance of the informed understanding of the text not only to its original addressee’s but also to the contemporary readers.

1.6 Methodology

In adhering to the theoretical framework ‘communal reading’ of the text is employed for the exegesis of the reality and it is conducted among three selected youth groups in Kwahu Atibie. Among the different approaches to ‘popular reading,’ the researcher
adopted the Intercultural Hermeneutics proposed by Bortey Anum and Quaye\textsuperscript{78} for the following reasons:

1. The approach serves as a guide for the researcher in situating Genesis 1:26-28 in the context of the ordinary readers.

2. It allows the researcher to verify whether the socio-cultural context of the ordinary reader has an influence on their reading and interpretation of the text.

The authors suggest a three-phase strategy to contextualize the text in a dialogical manner with groups of ‘ordinary readers:

1. \textit{Forming group of ordinary readers:} “Ordinary bible reading groups of radically different situations, backgrounds and contexts communally read a biblical text in their separate groups.”\textsuperscript{79}

2. \textit{Reading the text:} “Using a selected biblical text as the central focus, each group enters into an interactive dialogue process with its respective member, assisted by a facilitator who is responsible for leading the group during the various reading sessions.”\textsuperscript{80}

3. \textit{Writing a report:} “Subsequently, a coordinator establishes a partner group from another community for each group. A separate coordinator for each group serves as a ‘collation officer.’\textsuperscript{81} Their main function is to serve as an ‘interface between the reading groups gathering his/her respective group’s findings into a concise and comprehensive written report.’\textsuperscript{82}

\textsuperscript{78} Eric Nii Bortey Anum and Ebenezer Quaye, \textit{Intercultural Reading of John 10:1-21}, ed. Hans de Wit and Mary Schetz (Elkhart: Foundation Don Hlnder Camara Chair, 2016), 1-10.
\textsuperscript{79} Bortey Anum and Quaye, \textit{Intercultural}, 3
\textsuperscript{80} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{81} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{82} Ibid.
To concretize the second step of the theoretical framework, the narrative criticism is employed in the exegesis of the text. The method was chosen because it suits the narrative nature of the text. According to Habel, in fact, Genesis 1:1—2:3 is a “story with a setting, a narrative progression and a closure.”

Narrative criticism seeks to explore the communication pattern from the author to the reader. Tolmie and Tate observe that it is an analysis of the typical features of a narrative text that takes into consideration the relationship between the author, text and the reader.

Powell concurs that Narrative criticism analyses the stories of the biblical literature to “determine the effects that the stories are expected to have on their audience.” According to Goldingay, it focuses on the structure and plot of the text, and asks critical questions such as “Who are its characters? From what points of view is the story told?”

Tate adds that Narrative criticism does not only focus on the character’s settings and plots in the narrative but also the role of the reader. Therefore, the reader plays an important role in Narrative criticism because the approach accepts that the meaning of a story does not only exist independently within the text but through the interaction between the text and the reader. Hence it takes into consideration the position of the reader in constructing expressions and interpretations concerning the text.

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83 Habel, “Geophany,” 34. He further posits that looking at the structural unit of the text or the characteristics of the text is a way of avoiding “the fundamentalist alternative of viewing the text as a literal account of how the world was actually created.”
85 Powell, *Narrative Criticism*, 239.
87 Tate, *Biblical Interpretation*, 335-338.
Tomlie and Powell pointed out that there are some underlying principles or concepts regarding the Narrative criticism which are the concept of the implied author and the concept of the implied reader.\textsuperscript{88} The ‘implied author’ is not the original author but a reflection of the original author.\textsuperscript{89} The entity of an ‘implied author’ allowed a reader to interpret stories on their own terms, without having to externally refer to the original text itself.\textsuperscript{90}

The implied reader is not the original addressee but rather an imaginary reader whom the text is addressed to. But his/her thoughts, behaviour or ideas may vary from the real reader.\textsuperscript{91} Vorster adds that the implied reader is created by the author of a text. However, the ‘image’ created by the author has to be re-constructed by the reader through the reading process, in order to attribute meaning to the text.\textsuperscript{92}

1.7 Organization of Chapters

The research is structured into five chapters. Chapter one dealt with the general introductory issues including the background of the study, statement of the problem, research questions, literature review and research methodology. Chapter two looked at the exegesis of the reality focusing on the environmental challenges of Kwahu-Atibie as well as the interactions with the three-selected church youth groups concerning the interpretation of Genesis 1:26-28. In Chapter three the study presented an overview of Ecological Hermeneutics and an evaluation of the different approaches. Chapter four

\textsuperscript{89} Tate, \textit{Biblical Interpretation}, 336-337.
\textsuperscript{90} Powell, \textit{Narrative Criticism}, 240-241.
\textsuperscript{91} Tolmie, \textit{Narratology and Biblical Narratives}, 6-9.
\textsuperscript{92} Ibid.
covered a narrative analysis and ecological reading in Genesis 1:1—2:3. Lastly, Chapter five discussed conclusion, summary and recommendation.
CHAPTER TWO
EXEGESIS OF REALITY

2.1 Introduction

The chapter deals with the first step of the theoretical framework: exegesis of reality. After an overview of the ecological challenges facing Kwahu Atibie (ER), the chapter focuses on how the community’s understanding of Genesis 1:26-28 influences the ecological awareness of three church youth groups in the locality.

The Inculturation Hermeneutical approach to the reading of the text elaborated by scholars such as, Justin Ukpong,93 Eric Anum,94 and Musimbi Kanyoro95 guided the interaction between the researcher and the chosen youth groups. One merit of the approach is that it enables the participants to freely express their opinions within their own experiences as members of a church and community.

In addition, situating the text in the context of the people is key in African Biblical Hermeneutics as it takes into consideration the wide captured diversity in its approach to communal reading of the bible.96

Several African Biblical Scholars such as Ukpong,97 Ossom-Batsa,98 Eric Anum99 among others have adopted the Inculturation Hermeneutical Method of reading and interpreting the text among Africans, as a way of assessing how the locals read and

94 Bortey Anum and Quaye, Intercultural Reading, 1-15.
96 Thus, African Biblical Hermeneutics seeks to make the text relevant in the lives of the people through a community reading of the text. Kanyoro, “Reading the Bible,” 17-22.
99 Bortey Anum and Quaye, Intercultural Reading, 1-15.
interpret the bible in their context. As a result, it is of no coincidence that Ossom-Batsa’s Communicative Approach to reading and interpreting the bible has ‘the reality of the people’ as one of the steps in its approach whereby the context of the people is assessed and analysed in relation to a text.\textsuperscript{100}

These scholars correspond by emphasizing on the fact that in African Biblical Hermeneutics the socio-cultural context of the people influences their understanding on how they live a text. Ukpong elaborates on the fact that a good Inculturation Hermeneutics must take into consideration the context of the ordinary people as a way of reflecting their opinion towards a biblical interpretation.\textsuperscript{101} Likewise, Kanyoro proclaims that the “context of a person affects the meaning attached to any communication event, verbal or otherwise.”\textsuperscript{102}

Therefore, in order to critically scrutinize the reality of the people, the text must be situated within the tradition of the people and in the concrete socio-economic environment in which a specific community resides.

2.2 Overview of Kwahu Atibie

Kwahu Atibie is a small town in the Eastern region of Ghana. The town is mostly known for the paragliding event during the Kwahu Easter festivities. Similarly, a prominent landmark edifice such as the Kwahu Government Hospital, which serves as the lone largest hospital in the Kwahu South District Assembly (KSDA), and the Atibie Nursing and Midwifery Training College enhances the image of the town. The town forms part of the Kwahu South District and shares a close proximity with its capital Mpraeso. Also,
the town is a member of the three settlements that make the Mpraeso, Atibie and Obomeng town council.\(^{103}\)

In terms of the district’s population, the composite budget report states that the locality has smaller communities within a population of about 2000 or less. Currently the projected population of KSDA is around 80,224 of which the urban population constitues 38.2% as against 61.8% rural population.\(^{104}\)

The economic activity is predominantly agrarian. The 2010 population census emphasizes that greater percentage of the population in the locality are involved in the practices of subsistence farming producing mainly crops such as yams, cocoyam’s, cassava among others. Basic farming implements such as the use of hoes, cutlasses and other manually operated tools are used in farming.\(^{105}\) The dominant animal rearing in the district is poultry. Another influential sector among the residents is primarily small-scale businesses. In fact, the community has the highest number of small-scale industries due to the leading pottery making among women and palm wine tapping activities in these areas. Finally, ‘petty trading’, that is, small scale buying and selling, is very common among the population.\(^{106}\)

2.3 The Environmental Concerns of the Town

It is important to notice that the National Environmental Sanitation Strategy and Action Plan Materials in Transition (NESSAP) stated that Ghana is facing major environmental


\(^{104}\) Kwahu South District Assembly, “The Composite Budget,” 7.


concerns which include land degradation, deforestation, and waste management.\textsuperscript{107} These environmental distresses are also a concern for the Kwahu South District.

\textbf{2.3.1 Waste Disposal}

Waste disposal is one of the major environmental challenges in the town. The 2010 population and housing census report asserts that public toilet is the most common toilet facility in the district, since most households in the area do not have toilet facilities in their houses.\textsuperscript{108} Aside the public toilets, pit latrines, locally called ‘Atonko,’ are highly patronized by the locals. The census report has 37.7\% for public toilet usage, pit latrines at 23.8\%, and 12.1 \% of the population has no toilet facility.\textsuperscript{109}

The census again revealed that the most widely method of solid waste disposal is by public dumping in the open. This practice scored a higher percentage of 47.5\%. Once more, indiscriminately dumping of refuse accounted for 13.0\% of the population, which is two in twenty households, whiles house to house waste collection amounted to only 2.2\%.\textsuperscript{110}

In the Eastern Region, solid waste disposal in public open space is a common practice. Modern Ghana Website states that “More than half (56.5\%) of households in the region dispose of solid waste in public dumps, while a quarter (25.2\%) dump their household waste anywhere. A tenth (10.1\%) of households bury their solid waste in and around their compounds.”\textsuperscript{111}

\textsuperscript{109} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{110} Ibid., xii.
From the statistics, it can be perceived that a considerable amount of people that is 13.0% and 56.5% of people in the region indiscreetly dispose of their solid waste anywhere such as in gutters or drainage systems, river banks, beside public toilets among others and this has a negative environmental sanitation impact in the locality.\textsuperscript{112}

Unrestraint dumping of refuse is done through various practices by the locals. One common method is dumping of waste into gutters, and since open gutters are very common in Ghana, it is easier for citizens to dump waste into them.\textsuperscript{113} This practice poses a critical environmental challenge to the country. The numerous gutters are exposed to heavy rainfalls that overflow in the gutters which are then choked by polythene bags, refuse among others, causing stagnant waters. Hence, they become breeding places for one of the deadly killer diseases in the country – malaria,\textsuperscript{114} causing health risks especially for children considered as the greatest victims of sanitation related diseases. As the United Nations Human Development Report states: “Sanitation related diseases such as diarrhoea kill more children worldwide than anything else.”\textsuperscript{115}

Furthermore, although public toilet is highly patronized in the community, the smelly and the poor maintenance of these public facilities leave the people at risk of contracting communicable diseases. Freeman asserts that fatal diarrhoea is common in areas where the individual does not have access to improved toilet. Also “When five or six families are sharing one toilet, the risk of infection from communicable diseases rises dramatically, putting young children who are especially susceptible at risk.”\textsuperscript{116} This in the long

\textsuperscript{112} Modern Ghana, “Ghana Eastern Region,”.
\textsuperscript{113} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{115} It is common to observe in the district that most food vendors sell along the gutters. However, these open gutters make it accessible for the people to dump human excretions into them which can cause smelly gutters that will pollute the environment especially when these gutters are choked. Freeman, “Ghana: The Waste Land,” 51.
\textsuperscript{116} Freeman, “Ghana: The Waste Land,” 51.
run will lead to many families finding their own way of excretion which can become a problem especially if the alternate method is not environmentally friendly. Therefore, as indicated by the 2010 Population and Housing Census pit latrine and the use of bucket/pan are some methods adopted by the inhabitants.117

2.3.2 Deforestation

These factors — utility, legal and illegal logging and bush burning — are considered the main causes of deforestation in the district.

A. Utility

The 2010 population and housing census states that wood is the source of fuel for cooking in 54.7% of households in Kwahu South District. While some depend on the wood, others burnt the wood in the form of charcoal, which is widely used by most families.118

The use of charcoal and fuelwood in the locality can be attributed to the economic activities of the people. In fact, sales of firewood and burning of woods for charcoal are a major enterprise in the district, because they are the basic source of fuel for daily activities.119 In addition, one of the dominant economic activities in the district, according to the 2010 population and activities census, is pottery, heavily dependent on wood due to the fact that it is economical.120 According to Quashie, these small-scale processing activities, such as fish smoking, pottery making, and oil extraction in Ghana are some of the factors leading to the loss of forest.121

118 Ibid., xi.
119 Ibid.
120 Ibid., 4.
Though the use of firewood and charcoal may not be the main cause of deforestation in the Kwahu Atibie, over reliance on these as a source of fuel and as an economic activity for a period of time, if not well managed and regulated by the district assembly, will lead to deforestation as consequent loss of jobs for people in the district.\textsuperscript{122}

Asamoah argues that in the Eastern Region, aside bush fires, cutting down of trees for firewood is one of the main contributors to deforestation causing the reduction in vegetation cover.\textsuperscript{123} The Modern Ghana Webpage also maintains that about 70.0 per cent (68.8\%) of households use wood and 22.0 per cent use charcoal as the main fuel for cooking. The District Assemblies have, as a matter of serious concern to consider introducing L.P. Gas cylinders of different sizes to encourage the use of L.P. Gas as the main source of cooking fuel in the region.\textsuperscript{124}

Such a high proportion of households (90.8\%) using wood as firewood and charcoal as their main source of fuel for cooking poses a serious environmental threat to the region.\textsuperscript{125} The local situation reflects a national problem. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations report states that “wood fuels account for 78 percent of all primary energy consumption in the country, being the predominant source of energy for households, and the commercial and small industries sector.”\textsuperscript{126}

According to ghanaweb.com, an IMANI survey has indicated that “more than 90\% of rural dwellers rely on either firewood or charcoal for their cooking needs. A situation that requires government to step up its Rural LPG Promotion Programme.”\textsuperscript{127} This

\textsuperscript{122}Modern Ghana, “Ghana Eastern Region.”
\textsuperscript{123}Moses Asamoah Kumi, “Religious Environmentalism : The Church’s Environmental Sustainability Paradigm (The Case of the Church of Pentecost in Ghana),” \textit{European Journal of Business and Social Sciences} 2, no. 8 (2013): 61. The use of wood as fuel in the district is an Eastern regional problem whereby District Assemblies are fighting to deal with the situation. Modern Ghana, “Ghana Eastern Region.”
\textsuperscript{124}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{125}Ibid.
implies that many Ghanaians, especially rural settlers, rely on firewood and charcoal for daily household and business activities.

Again, the Energy Commission’s Website asserts that wood fuels account for about “71% of the total primary energy supply and 60% of the final energy demand” in the country. 128 Similarly, a big concern for our natural forest was raised by the commission’s Website when they proclaim that 90% of the bulk of wood fuels are directly obtained from the country’s natural forest whiles the remaining 10% is derived from the wood wastes such as logging and sawmill residue and planted forest.129 Additionally, deforestation stands at 36% as a result of various human activities on the forests in the country.130

Overall, even though exploitations of wood resources for fuels are not the main cause of deforestation in Ghana, there are indications that the preferred wood fuels species are gradually vanishing at an alarming rate making the people in some of the main charcoal production areas in the country, such as Donkorkrom and Kintampo, turning their attention to the less preferred wood species such as Neem and Wawa.131 Furthermore, the Energy Commission indicates that as at 2000, 18 million tons of fuel wood was consumed and if this trend continues, it is likely that by 2020 Ghana would have consumed more than 25 million tons of fuel wood.132 This, the commission believes, will increase the rate of deforestation in the nation.

129 Ibid.
130 Ibid.
131 Ibid.
132 Ibid.
B. Legal and Illegal Logging

The 2010 population and housing census contends that the district lies within a semi-deciduous forest zone with dense vegetation comprising economic value trees such as wawa, saple, odum among others.\footnote{Ghana Statistical Service, “2010 Population and Housing Census,” 1-2.} This implies that woods for illegal and legal loggings are easily accessible by the people. Hence, the human activities, if not monitored, has the tendency to lead to critical environmental problems such as deforestation in the district.

Citi FM Webpage states that forestry experts have cautioned that Ghana’s natural forest runs the risk of being depleted in the next 10-20 years and fears that if measures were not taken to deal with the situation Ghana will resort to importation of timber.\footnote{Citi Fm, “Ghana’s Forests to Be Depleted in 10 Years If…,” 2017, http://citifmonline.com/2017/08/19/ghanas-forests-to-be-depleted-in-10-years-if/} The Deputy Minister of Lands and National Resources, Barbara Serwaa Asamoah, when addressing the 5th edition of National Forest Forum Ghana (NFF-G) in Dodowa disclosed that timber products on the market were not enough to meet demand, therefore the government was planning to commence with the importation of timber.\footnote{Citi Fm, “Ghana’s Forests.”}

Furthermore, Awuah-Nyamekye coincides that Ghana is critically facing indiscriminate excessive logging leading to land degradation in the country: “Current records estimate that over 90% of Ghana’s high forest has been logged since the late 1940s, and the rate of deforestation is 5% per annum outside of reserves.”\footnote{Samuel Awuah-Nyamekye, Managing the Environmental Crisis in Ghana: The Role of African Traditional Religion and Culture with Special Reference to the Berekum Traditional Area (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2014), 4.} Theghanaweb.com also reiterates that Ghana has the highest rate of deforestation in the African sub region as a result of illegal and legally felling down of trees, pasture for livestock, mining
activities etc. The 2010 census indicates illegal mining practices, excessive cutting down of timber for exportation and bush fires as some of the major causes. It is, in fact, estimated that more than half cubic meters of exportable timber have been lost to fire.

C. Bush Burning

Oppong Ansah gathered that bush burning can be attributed to the activities of hunters such as the use of fire in driving away reptiles, and fire as a burning tool to regenerate grazing land. Similarly, he further contends that the Fulani herdsmen, “burn the bush to facilitate the growing of new grasses which are used to feed their cattle.” Moreover, Spedding observed that subsistence farming practices have the tendency to cause bush fires. This is due to its mode of clearing and manuring the forest which is through the traditional known method of burning the vegetation.

Bush burning activities pose several environmental consequences ranging from the destruction of vegetation, wildlife, reduces the chemistry of the ‘soil and causes soil erosion’. It again destroys “the oxygen cycle and reduces food crops.” These are serious ecological problems that need attention to help protect the environment.

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137 Ghanaweb, “Charcoal, Firewood.”
138 Ghana Statistical Service, “2010 Population and Housing Census,” 1-14. Again, Awuah-Nyamekye, asserts that: “It has been assessed that about 30% of the forest areas are destroyed by fire each year and only about 20% of the forest zone is covered by forest that is not burn regularly”. Awuah-Nyamekye, Managing the Environmental, 5.
140 Ibid.
142 Albert Oppong Ansah, “Indiscriminate Bush Burning.”
2.3.3 Conclusion

The section explored the major environmental challenges facing Kwahu Atibie and its environs. Waste disposal, utility (in terms of the wide use of charcoal and wood fuel) as well as deforestation were highlighted as the major contributors to environmental crisis in the locality.

The discussion reveals that public toilet is the most used toilet facility by the people because most locals do not have toilet in their homes. The few available pose a serious environmental concern for the community because the public toilets are not well managed: they are not in acceptable hygienic condition and attractive to use and not adequate to meet the demands of the inhabitants of the town. Again, most people may not find it tolerable to queue for a public toilet, due to the smelly and poor maintenance state of some of the facilities.

Moreover, in the area of solid waste disposal, majority of the people used the open space dumping of refuse. Others also dispose their waste especially liquid waste into the open gutters in the community.

Furthermore, the discussion highlighted on the fact the that the high patronage of fuel wood and charcoal by the locals has the tendency of causing deforestation in the area. In addition, excessive logging and bush burning were other indicators causing deforestation in the district.

2.4 Kwahu Atibie’s Christian Youth Groups and the Environment

As stated in the literature review, since 1967 there has been an interdisciplinary debate about the role of Christianity in creating the ideological background of the environmental challenges the world is facing. Meanwhile, some churches are becoming more and
more aware of their responsibility to form a new ecological conscience in their members, using the bible as an educational tool.\textsuperscript{143}

Against this background, the research explored how selected Christian communities living in Kwahu Atibie educate their members, particularly the youth, to ecological sensitivity and how their reading of Gen. 1:26-28, a key text in the ecological debate, influences their attitude towards the environment.

The researcher aims to explore the following issues at the end of the interaction with the youth groups.

1. Whether the people perceive the text as an advocacy to care for creation or to exploit creation.

2. Whether the ecological sensitivity of the participants establish a relationship between the text and the environment.

To achieve the aim, the researcher employed the ‘popular reading’ of the Bible as proposed by the Intercultural Hermeneutical Method of Bortey Anum and Quaye.

\textbf{2.4.1 Intercultural Hermeneutical Method}

Robert Schreiter defines Intercultural communication as the ability to speak and to understand across cultural boundaries.\textsuperscript{144} Therefore, Intercultural Hermeneutics according to Bortey Anum and Quaye is an exegetical tool that builds on the communication, “by exploring the conditions that make communication possible across cultural boundaries in the interpretation process of a given text.”\textsuperscript{145}


\textsuperscript{144} Bortey Anum and Quaye, \textit{Intercultural}, 4.

\textsuperscript{145} Ibid., 4.
Ukpong proclaims that the context of the people is crucial in biblical interpretation because the author wrote the text in a context to an audience, as such the text must also be read in a local context to be able to make the text relevant to the ordinary reader.\footnote{146} Hence Bortey Anum and Quaye call for the making of the text relevant “to the ordinary reader who reads from within a terrain different from that of the text, not only from a different geographical place but also from a different historical time and context”.\footnote{147} They further assert that the cultural background of the ordinary reader, the social, economic, political and religious contexts of the people,\footnote{148} is crucial in communal reading of the bible. Hence, Intercultural Hermeneutics is the “reading of biblical text by a small groups or individuals across cultures for the purpose of meeting, conversation/ interaction, compares, exchange and confrontations.”\footnote{149}

Ukpong highlighted on three elements that are basically a resource for reading and interpreting the text in the ‘socio cultural-historical’ context of the people.\footnote{150} They are as follows:

1. “The use of the people’s socio-cultural resources as hermeneutical tools for reading and interpretation.”\footnote{151} The African has a rich culture which is a resource for biblical interpretation, which includes the thought systems and practices of the people, their oral narrative, the people’s arts and symbols among others.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[147] Bortey Anum and Quaye, Intercultural, 4.
\item[149] Bortey and Quaye, Intercultural,5.
\item[150] Ukpong, “Inculturation Hermeneutics”, 19.
\item[151] Ibid., 19.
\end{footnotes}
2. The resources further provide the background whereby interpretation is done. This makes their interpretation reflective of their concerns, values and interpretive materials or world view which represents the socio-cultural context and worldview.\(^\text{152}\)

3. The third element “is the use of the people’s conceptual frame of reference in the reading.”\(^\text{153}\) The conceptual frame becomes the culture of the people as it is a reference to the people’s reading and interpretation of the text.

These elements presented by Ukpong expresses the fact that Intercultural Hermeneutics, through communal reading of the text, is not complete without factorizing in the cultural elements of the people as an influence and reference to their reading and interpretation of a text.

Situating the reading of Genesis 1:26-28 in a local context, three churches were selected for in a communal reading of the bible. As elaborated in the Methodology, the Intercultural Hermeneutical Method provides a three-phase strategy\(^\text{154}\):

1. Forming group of ordinary readers
2. Reading the text
3. Writing a report

Following the method, the researcher met the groups separately at different times to read and interpret the text (*phase one*). The reading sessions created an environment in which participants were free to express their thoughts without any negative confrontation. The researcher acted as a facilitator and guided the interactions. He, at the same


\(^{154}\) Bortey Anum and Quaye, *Intercultural Reading*, 2-4.
time took notes on the various opinions expressed from participants in the various groups.

**In the second phase,** the groups were introduced to the text for discussion. Members were free to choose from any biblical translation of their choice. The selected three groups opted to use the Ashanti Twi Bible. The procedure used was for one person to read aloud, and all members debated on it.

**The 3rd phase** of the model presented the conclusions and findings from the interaction with the youth groups.

One crucial merit of the Intercultural Hermeneutics Method highlighted by Bortey Anum and Quaye is that the approach takes into consideration the communication pattern between the ‘speaker and hearer’ instead of the ‘sender and receiver.’ This reflects the interactive and dialogical nature of the approach.

Moreover, ‘ordinary readers’ are invited to participate in the group discussion. This promotes team work, because participants regard themselves as “partners and are willing to utilize their combined efforts to produce new meanings or understandings of scripture.”

**2.4.1 The Selection of Church Youth Groups**

Three youth groups from three different churches in Kwahu Atibie were selected for the popular reading of the text. The youth groups selected were from the Apostolic Church Witness Movement, The Presbyterian Church Young People’s Guild (YPG) and the Methodist Youth Fellowship (MYF). The Pentecost Church in the town was

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155 Bortey Anum and Quaye, *Intercultural Reading*, 5.
156 Ibid.
consulted but the researcher did not receive the permission to interact with their youth group.

These groups were selected due to the following:

1. The young men and women are considered as the future leaders of their various churches. Therefore, their sensitivity to the text and the environmental problems in their surroundings are key in creating ecological care advocacy among believers.

2. The youth are involved in a number of outreach programmes such as evangelism, sporting events, musical performances, all-night services, biblical teachings among others. This to the researcher provides the right condition in terms of an inclusive participation for biblical readings and interpretations on a familiar biblical text, Genesis 1, and a well-known topic, environmental cleanliness.

The churches were selected due to their importance and visibility:

a) The Apostolic church has a head pastor presiding over other local churches under the central church in the town. This positions the church as one of the biggest in the community.

b) The Presbyterian Church was selected because it has a prayer camp which is well recognized in the community and its surroundings.

c) Lastly, The Methodist Church has a missionary school that has imparted the life of the people in the town. The school has, in fact, enhanced the social status of the church in the locality.
2.5 Discussion with Youth Groups

The first group the researcher met was with the Atibie Apostolic Church Witness Movement, whose members are predominantly students (nursing trainees) and teachers. Due to the difficulty of meeting members on their usual Thursday evening, the researcher was able to meet them on Sunday 24th September early morning with the first service, that majority of the youth attend. The discussion lasted for about 45 minutes.

Members participated actively in the discussion. Their reading and interpretation of the text was based on their experiences as Apostolic church members, their spiritual lives and the understanding of scriptures in their vernacular. In all 12 peoples participated in the discussion, 5 were nursing students, 1 was a tutor at the nursing school, 1 again was a retired nurse, another was headmaster, 2 were self-employed and 3 were teachers.

The second group was the Presbyterian Church Young People’s Guild (YPG). As mentioned earlier, associates in these groups were mostly nursing students, national service personnel as well as government trained teachers. The group was to meet on a Friday at 7:00 p.m. but due to a heavy rainstorm in the locality on that day the meeting was rescheduled, and the researcher was able to meet with them on Sunday 24th September 2017 at 3:30 p.m. 11 people were present made of 8 nursing trainees and 3 were teachers.

The last group was the Methodist Youth Fellowship (MYF). Majority of its members were also nursing trainees, service personnel and government trained teachers. The researcher met the group on Monday, 9th October 2017 during a usual meeting day, at 7:30 p.m. 12 members were involved in the discussion which lasted for 42 minutes. 4 of the members were nursing trainees, 4 teachers and the other three were SHS students and a national service person.
In terms of the gender demography, females formed the majority of the participants. Overall majority of adherents were between the ages of 16 and 35 years.\textsuperscript{157}

The table below represents the total participating members of the three groups:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHURCHES</th>
<th>FEMALES</th>
<th>MALES</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>APOSTOLIC</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRESBY</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>METHODIST</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>11</td>
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</table>

From the table, it can be concluded that in all 35 people participated in the exercise.

Below are the various themes drawn from the discussions with the various groups.

2.5.1 Ecological Sensitivity

The researcher was able to perceive their environmental sensitivity based on their general awareness of the environmental challenges their community is facing.

Generally, participants showed concern for the protection of the environment. They anticipate that humans must take care of the environment not only for today but for future use. As a result, participants highlighted the responsibility of human beings as caring for the cleanliness of the environment. Nevertheless, their ecological awareness was mostly focused on the various ecological challenges facing the country — ‘galamsey’, pollution of the river bodies as well as solid and liquid waste management — than the concrete problem facing their town.

Few participants from the Methodist Church shared the opinion that “we should not be too concerned about the environment, especially with regards the fight against ‘galamsey’

\textsuperscript{157} Only one of the groups, the Apostolic church Ghana, had 3 adults (members over 40 years).
and the use of chemicals in fishing.” They argued that humankind must survive and in order to live various means have to be employed to use the available resources in a country. They, however, agreed with the other members’ concerns towards waste management in the country.

2.5.2 Interpretation of Genesis 1:26-28

In spite of members indicating an encouraging sensitivity towards their surroundings, the problem lies in whether their sensitivity to the environment reflects in their reading and interpretation of Gen. 1:26-28. This is because the reading and interpretation of the text is key in promoting ecological advocacy in the churches, since the text presents the relationship between God, earth, and humans.

In the reading of the text a particular version of the bible represents the standpoint from which members are able to understand a text and interpret it from their own experiences. The version of the bible used by the three groups was the Ashanti Twi Bible, chosen because the three churches had it placed on their lecterns. The English versions were also used by some individuals and groups, such as the Apostolic Church Witness Movement. However, these few individuals interpreted the text by citing what has been written in the Ashanti Twi Bible.

From the sharing, some hendiadys emerged as hermeneutic keys: ‘image and likeness’, ‘dominion and subdue’ and ‘fill and multiply’

A. Image and Likeness

Participants shared their views on the ‘image and likeness of God’ under the following thematic premise:
i. The manifestation of the Trinity: partakers argue that God had a consultation with the Son (Jesus) and the Holy Spirit before creating man. Members based their argument on the beginning of verse 26a: “Let us make man in our image and likeness”. The verb ‘let’ followed by the pronoun ‘us,’ according to the three groups, represents the Trinity.

ii. Perception of the ‘spiritual’ nature of God. There was the general perception from members in the three groups that God is a spiritual being. A participant from the Apostolic church gave this observation: “in the book of John, Jesus said God is Spirit. Therefore, everything that God created was in the spiritual realm.”

Another contributor from the same church confirms the above, by distinguishing between the first creation and the second creation as a result of the spiritual nature of God.

He stated that

…the first creation is in order because God is a spirit since he created the universe in the spiritual realm whiles, the second creation is not in order because God did not create in the spiritual realm. That is God first created everything in his mind in the spiritual realm and afterward manifested it into the physical (second creation account). Therefore, the phrase ‘in his image and likeness’ means God is a spirit being who created in the spiritual realm and manifested that into the physical in the second creation. This is because our bodies can be manifested by different spirits. As a result, God in his own wisdom after creating man from the dust saw the need for man’s vessel to be operated by his spirit. So, God breathing into the man was God breathing his spirit into man. From that moment humans bear the image and likeness of God.

The participant’s opinion suggests that in the first creation account God’s statement, “let us make humans in our image and likeness,” signifies God creating man in the spiritual realm which represents the creation of the soul of humans. While in the second creation account (2:7), God creating humans from earth represents the formation of the physical body of humans.

Yet again, a member from the Presbyterian church corresponds that the “spirituality of God in creation expresses why in the first creation God created man and woman whiles in the second creation narrative God created man from the ground and woman from the
According to participants from the three groups, in the first creation account God created in the spiritual realm, which could be the reason why it was not specified on how human beings were created but in the second creation account, the process of creation was specified (Gen. 2:7).

Furthermore, the spiritual attribute given to God caused partakers to have a dualistic understanding of the creation of man and woman, in the first and the second creation accounts: spirituality is attached to the first creation and physicality to the second creation. The members from the three groups argued that it was only in the second creation narrative that God created man from the ground and woman from the rib of man. Therefore, in their interpretation, in the second narrative God created the ‘body’ of human beings, whereas the first creation expresses the creation of the ‘spirit’ of humanity.

This explicit opinion from all participants clearly expresses the dualistic understanding regarding their reading and interpretation of the two-creation narrative. It again signifies the dualistic understanding in relations to the being of humanity as composed of body and spirit.

A member from the Methodist Church agreed with the above suggestions in regard to spiritual nature of God but she had a slightly different opinion in regard to the phrase ‘created in the likeness and image of God.’ She asserts that “God creating us in His image means in His spirit, that is, Man was created in the spirit of God whiles the phrase ‘in His likeness means humankind also doing what God did.” Thus, humans become gods on earth, because they were given the power of God when He created humans in His image.

Furthermore, another member of the Presbyterian Church interpreted the ‘image of God’ as imitating the character of someone. He claims that “As the Apostles imitated
Christ so we also must imitate the image of God. Example, the spirit of God that was in Elijah is also in us signifying that we are created in the likeness of God. Therefore, our ways must conform to the rules and regulations of Christ.”

**B. Dominion and Subdue**

Majority of the participants agreed to the fact that man was to have dominion over creation. One person from the Apostolic Church stated that “God created the universe hence he has dominion over the heavens and earth. As a result, in his own wisdom, he saw the need to delegate some of his powers to man to also rule the earth as his subordinates.”

In contrast, a member from the Presbyterian Church claims that the dominion power given to man can also be attained by humans believing in the identity of Christ and being filled with the Holy Spirit. He states that “truly we have been given the earth to rule but we only take dominion if we know our identity in Christ. If you know Christ and his power in you through the Holy Spirit that is when you can exercise your dominion power. That is the Apostles had dominion when the Holy Spirit came on them.”

Overall participants from the three groups correspond that God did not just delegate his powers to man to rule creation but rather a responsibility for man to keep what he has created for the benefit of humanity.

**C. Be Fruitful and Multiply**

Majority of the participants from the three groups argue to the notion that the phrase ‘be fruitful and multiply’ is broad, but in the textual context it signifies the role of humanity to procreate (have offspring). Only one person from the Apostolic Church interpreted ‘fruitfulness’ in relation to our deeds as followers of Christ. The partaker made the claim that as believers “one way we can be fruitful in our lives is by living a worthy
life well emulating by other believers and this signifies that we have been fruitful in our deeds as believers.”

Another member from the Apostolic Church claims that the command to be fruitful and multiply is a spiritual statement emphasizing the spiritual nature of birth creation. He explained the phrase as following:

Sexual intercourse is a spiritual thing through which a man and a woman produce a baby which is spiritual (The birth-giving process indicates a spiritual activity). Thus, man and woman will come together to be fruitful (sexual intercourse) and produce a baby then God in his own wisdom will form a body for the baby so that it will grow. The baby will grow, marry and do same. Therefore, fruitfulness is man and woman coming together to produce something through which multiplying will occur.

The expression again represents the dualistic understanding members have concerning the two creation narratives. The spiritual attribute given to the creation of man and woman in the first creation narrative by participants in the three groups have a significant influence on members’ interpretation of the text. Hence it is of no coincidence that the process of childbearing was perceived as a spiritual activity through which humans are to fulfil and multiply the earth.

On the other hand, an associate from the Presbyterian Church attributes ‘be fruitfulness’ to mean “people’s benefitting from us. Thus, we are to be fruitful in our deeds for others to imitate us. Whereas multiply means we should give birth and take control of the earth.”

In summary, the following can be taken from the discussions in this section.

1. The first creation account has been interpreted as a spiritual creation narrative. This is because participants debated on the narrative by attributing it to a spiritual activity or command from God. For instance, the creation of humans in God’s image and likeness (1:26), according to the participants, implies that God created humans spiritually in the first narrative. This opinion from participants is due to the fact that in the second
creation narrative God created man and woman from the ground, which to the members implies that God created the physicality of humans. Also, in terms of “be fruitful and multiply” partakers again attributed spirituality to the command. They perceive the process of sexual intercourse leading to childbearing as a spiritual activity through which God commanded humans to do in fulfilling the mandate of multiplying the earth.

This sharing from the members implies a dualistic understanding of creation: ‘spiritual’ in the first narrative and ‘physical’ in the second.

2. The Ashanti Twi Bible had an influence on member’s interpretation, supporting their literal approach to scripture. For instance, Gen. 1:28 from the Ashanti Twi Bible states monwo na monye asasae so ma offering a different concept from the usual English translations. The statement in the vernacular is ‘obviously’ telling the ordinary reader to ‘give birth and fill the earth’. Again, the phrase in the Ashanti Twi translation, monya so tumi, is read by the ordinary reader, as an undeniable command of God to humans to have ‘power or authority’

2.6 Relationship Between Genesis 1:26-28 and Ecology

From the previous section, we studied that the environmental sensitivity of the people is crucial in motivating an active participation in caring for the environment. Thus, it was accessed that the participant’s sensitivity to their surroundings was positive because they were much sensitive to the ecological menace such as ‘galamsey’, the use of DDT in fishing, and the waste disposal problems facing the country. However, their reading and interpretation of the text manifested that their positive sensitivity towards the care for the environment did not reflect in their interpretation of Gen. 1:26-28. This suggests that members from the three groups do not see any connections between environmental care and bible.
Against this background, the researcher decided to further explore their vision of ‘stewardship’ and ‘exploitation of creation.’

2.6.1 Stewardship

Members maintain that God created human beings in His own image and likeness signifies an authority given to humans. A participant from the Apostolic church states “God never created anything bad therefore he gave the man the power to exercise control over all what he has created which is good. Hence man was to keep what God has created for it to reproduce more for the benefit of humans.”

Another member from the Presbyterian church asserts that “man was to take charge of God’s creation and see to it that the proclamation God made that all creation is good should come true.” Moreover, another member from the Apostolic church corresponds that “God gave the man the power to be responsible for creation as caretakers and to also benefit from creation.”

Overall, members from the three groups maintain that God in his own wisdom expects the man to be stewards of creation.

2.6.2 Exploitation of Creation

Participants from the three groups assert that the text commands human’s exploitation of creation. Thus, associates argue, “we cannot say humans should not exploit creation by the using the bible, because it is clearly stated in the text that we should have dominion over creation” (Gen 1:26-28). Participant’s stance on the notion that humans have the right to exploit creation was based on the following:

1. The text commands humans to exploit creation. They based their view on the order in Gen. 1:26-30, which states that humans are to have ‘dominion’ over the fish and all
over the earth. Humans are to multiply and replenish the earth is (v. 28); and in God’s statement that he has given to humanity every herb, the seeds of trees among others. (v. 29).

2. Genesis 1:26 states that humans were created in the image and likeness of God. This according to the three groups “makes human’s higher than all other created beings and that represents an authority to humans to rule over other creatures.”

In spite of members stance, they had a passionate position on how humans are to exploit creation. Thus, adherents argue that “we must use our wisdom in ruling over creation.”

A participant from the Presbyterian church agrees that “we are to exploit by applying our wisdom. That is though we are to use animals, God expects us to care for them by making them fruitful for our benefit.” Additionally, the same participant asserts that “God said we must take charge, therefore, we must exploit and care at the same time. Though we are exploiting we must care also for the future.”

On the other hand, a member of the Methodist church shared this insight as a way of how humans are to exploit creation:

We have been given the power to exploit creation, but we are required to do that in a gradual manner (and that is the good way) and not by exploiting the environment (in a bad manner). An example in the area of fishing, we are to use the net which is the required method and not the use of ‘DDT’ or chemicals in fishing. This is because the use of harmful chemicals will destroy aquatic life in the water which will again pose a threat to human survival. Besides Jesus commanded Peter to cast the net but not to use DDT in fishing.

Overall, participants agreed to the fact that humans are not only to exploit creation but also to care for creation. Adherents, however, did not critically state that as Christians we are called to protect the environment, because:
1. Participants argued that we have been given the authority and the command to exploit creation but in a gradual manner. ‘In a gradual manner’ indicates that humans definitely have the right to exploit the environment.

2. Their stance on humans as stewards of creation does not mean that human beings are to care for creation, but rather that caring for creation is a way of satisfying human’s needs.

2.7 Evaluation

Members showed a positive sensitivity towards the care of the environment, but there is a gap from their positive sensitivity to the environment to their reading and interpretation of the text. In fact, their positive sensitivity came into conflict with their interpretations of the dominion mandate, “be fruitful and multiply” and be created in the image and likeness of God.

Against from the above presentation, which are the cause of the gap between positive sensitivity to the environment and their interpretation of the text?

2.7.1 Ecological Sensitivity

From the discussion it emerged that their ecological sensitivity is influenced mainly by discussions on Mass Media. The mass media in the country, especially the radio and television stations, have participated actively in the fight against ‘galamsey’ which has had a positive influence in the thinking about the environment by most Ghanaians. The influence of the mass media was observed from the position in which partakers greatly debated on environmental destructions in the country especially in the area of ‘galamsey,’ in terms of how their activities are destroying the water bodies and the use of chemicals in fishing, which has been aired and discussed on the various mass houses in
the country. This implies that members referred to what they have seen or heard in the media in regard to the destruction of the environment in Ghana.

For example, a participant cites the following as some information she listened in the media: “The Birim River at its present state is destroyed as a result of the ‘galamsey’ activities in the area. Therefore, I do not believe that efforts from the chief and government can help restore the river back to its glorious days except maybe a miracle from above.” Another participant also highlighted on the dangers of the use of harmful chemicals such as ‘DDT’ in fishing “which she asserts that the use of the ‘DDT’ ends up polluting the river which will be unsafe for drinking and the killing of aquatic life in the water bodies”. She further states that “The use of the ‘DDT’ even contaminates the fishes caught which make them harmful for consumption.”

Sadly, no participants mentioned preaching or teaching of their respective pastors/churches as a source of knowledge about environmental issues.

2.7.2 Interpretation of Genesis 1:26-28

Their reading and interpretation of Gen. 1:26 is influenced by the translation of the Ashanti Twi Bible, which supports a literal reading of the text. The statements in the text are taken ‘literally’ because they are easy to understand in their mother tongue. Participants in reading the Twi Bible embrace the words of the text critically, because they are clearly expressed in their vernacular and it leaves them with no desire to further scrutinize the text. Examples of some phrases in the text are momma yenye onipa woyenne so, which was interpreted to be ‘a communication among the Trinity’ because of the word yenye indicating plurality. Again, participants interpreted phrases like nawɔnni to mean ‘having authority or power over’ and a statement such as monwona-monno as ‘having more children.’
Two viewpoints can be taken from their discussions on Gen. 1:26-28:

1. God has delegated His powers to humanity to rule creation: Participants made it clear that the architect of creation God, upon creating human beings, saw the need to delegate some of His powers to humankind to be his subordinates on earth. Thus, humans were given a rulership power from God to have dominion over creation.

Their argument manifests an anthropocentric view of creation, whereby humanity is placed at the centre of creation and ruling over creation for their purposes.

2. The dominion rulership over creation comes with a responsibility: participants, in fact, asserts that great power comes with great responsibility. They pointed out that their rulership over creation does not point on exploitation but on responsibility towards cultivating creation for their benefits. Although participants proclaim that creation has been given to them, they maintained that they have a responsibility as rulers of creation to protect the environment, to cultivate crops or rare animals for the survival of humanity. As a respondent from Apostolic Church states: “caring for animals is also to produce which in the long run will lead to a multiplication of these animals which will profit us.”

It can be deduced that ‘caring for creation’ does not manifests concern to the dangers humanity poses to the environmental destruction of the earth and its consequences for the future, but it is centred on humans’ benefits and survival.

3. Lastly, it can be observed that participants agree that the bible commands humans to exploit creation but in a gradual manner. Members anticipate that though we have been given creation, we are to exploit it gradually for the future. The statement does not speak well in regard to participant’s position that as rulers of creation we have been
tasked to care for earth. ‘Gradual exploitation’ of creation therefore, does not mean humans caring for creation. Rather the statement supports the Lynn White’s position that the Christian reading of Genesis 1 commands humanity to exploit the environment.

2.8 Conclusion

The various interpretations given by the groups present to us the following challenges:

1. To return to the text and critically access the scripture to reach an informed understanding of the text as against the readings of members especially in relation to their explanations from the Ashanti Twi bible.

It can be perceived from the discussion that members in reading and interpreting the text were influenced by the local bible (Ashanti Twi). Thus, participants adhere strongly to the Ashanti Twi Bible because members are able to understand the text clearly as it is written in their vernacular. This, therefore, does not make the text ‘challenge’ their pre-understanding, since for the three groups the Ashanti Twi version is authoritative.

From their interpretation, it can be realized that there are substantial differences between the Ashanti Twi translation and the Hebrew Bible. For example, the phrases monwonamonnɔ, do not correspond to צאしなו and זכרו. Whiles literally the former can be interpreted as ‘having more children’ the latter means ‘to bear fruit and to be many or numerous’. Although human procreation is expressed in the Twi version, the same cannot be associated with the Hebrew version. This suggests that action is needed to address the problem of interpretation of the text that has characterized Christian community for a longer period.

2. To access the relationship between the text and the environment (Ecological Hermeneutics) and to interpret the first creation narrative as an advocacy for the protection of our ecosystem.
The interpretation proposed by the ordinary readers poses a hermeneutical challenge: how can churches ‘use’ the first creation narrative as an educational and advocacy tool for the protection of our ecosystem? How to change the perception of the text as anthropocentric — given humans authority over non-humans? How to offer church-members an alternative and more inclusive concept of stewardship, not only as a way of enhancing the survival of humanity but also as responsibility to protect the environment from human activities that destroys the eco-system?

To address these and many similar questions, researchers have developed a new branch of biblical hermeneutics, called Ecological Hermeneutical. According to scholars, Ecological Hermeneutics arose as a result of the ecological problems facing the earth due to exploitation of the earth’s resources, and to respond to the criticisms laid against the Christian interpretation of the Bible.

Hence the researcher finds it essential to explore the various approaches employed by scholars to read the bible ‘ecologically,’ to understand how Ecological Hermeneutics can provide a stance for the liberation of God’s created world.
3.1 Introduction

The chapter focuses on ‘ecological hermeneutics’ to understand the relationship between biblical interpretation and contemporary ecological discourse. The chapter is thus organized into three sections: the first analyses ‘why’ to speak of ecological hermeneutics; the second elaborated on what constitutes an ‘ecological hermeneutics’; the final section presents and evaluates the different approaches proposed by scholars.

3.2 Why an Ecological Hermeneutics?

In fact, two perspectives can be looked at as the factors that gave rise to ecological hermeneutics. The first concerns the ecological crisis and the second is Lynn Whites’ article written in 1967. The current ecological crisis — with its dramatic evidences of global warming, rising sea level, natural disasters, desertification as consequence of humanity’s greed in exploiting nature to satisfy their needs — has a critical influence in the way we interpret the bible.158

A contributing factor is the ambiguity of some biblical texts, such as the first creation account, which has been exposed to multiple interpretations regarding the relationship humans-environment.159

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159 Horrell, The Bible and the Environment, 23-35.
Scholars such as John Rogerson, Ludlow, Stavrakopoulou, among others, correspond to the fact that Lynn White’s article opened a debate and created the awareness, in scholars and church leaders, to the need to response to the challenges and allegations concerning the influence of the ‘Christian reading of the text’ in the ecological crisis. This awareness led to the formation of what is contemporary known as ‘Ecological Hermeneutics.’ Thus, these factors acted as means by which the churches, as well as biblical scholars and theologians, participated in the debate on ecological problems of the world.

The point of departure is how to interpret the bible as a way of fostering a positive environmental care attitude in the life of the people. The focal point of Environmental Hermeneutics, as noted by Drenthen, is the notion that biblical text, especially the first creation narrative, has been misinterpreted transforming the text in a validation of the human right to destroy the environment. Therefore, the aim is to read the text with ecological eyes, as a way of coming up with a strategy to critically interpret and

161 Ludlow argues that “In current environmental debates, Christian biblical interpretation has often been held partly responsible for modern western attitude to the natural world”. The reading of the Genesis 1 account of creation has been the central point in these debates. Hence the involvement of the church and theologians or biblical scholars in responding to the issue gave rise to ecological hermeneutics. Morwenna Ludlow, “Power and Dominion: Patristic Interpretation,” in Ecological Hermeneutics, 140.
162 The dominion and the imago Dei reading of the Genesis 1 narrative, placing humanity at the apex of all creation, has been used as a stance authorizing human beings to disregard and to relegate the rest of creation as secondary matters in this world. Hence, it is of no coincidence that eco-critics have blamed the ecclesia as the sole source of the destruction of the earth. Francesca Stavrakopoulou, “Introduction,” in Ecological Hermeneutics: Biblical, Historical and Theological Perspectives, ed. David Horrell et al. (London: T&T Clark International, 2010), 15–20.
165 Ibid., 3-4.
167 Reading with an ecological lens is crucial in the development of an ecological hermeneutics. According to Horrell, an initial requirement is by articulating a particular ethical lens “that can enable a positive creative, yet also critical re-reading” of the biblical text. Ecology cannot be found in the bible but to make the bible speak about it, the text has to be read with a lens that is reading with the pre motive and understanding that there is ecological crisis that the text can be used to engage it by reflecting on the messages that speaks about the earth, creation among others. David G. Horrell, Cherryl Hunt, and Christopher Southgate, “Appeals to the Bible in Ecotheology and Environmental Ethics: A Typology of
comprehend the role of humanity in the created world, and the relationship between
God, humans and earth in creation.\textsuperscript{168}

Tate states that Hermeneutics consists of exegesis and interpretation. He explained ex-
egesis as the process of critically accessing the biblical text to devise the first readers
informed understanding of the text, and interpretation as entailing the implications
drawn out of the exegetical process and explaining its consequence on contemporary
readers and hearers\textsuperscript{169}. However, he made the assertion that hermeneutics and interpre-
tations are mostly used interchangeably representing the procedure through which the
meaning and purpose of a text is determined.

Among the different definition of Hermeneutics,\textsuperscript{170} Horrell proposes the following:

“Hermeneutics is best understood as a systematic and disciplined form of second-order
reflection on the praxis of interpretation.”\textsuperscript{171} Thus, it focuses on the various interpreta-
tions that characterizes a textual context.\textsuperscript{172} ‘Ecological Hermeneutics’ is, therefore, a

\textsuperscript{168} Tate, \textit{Biblical Interpretation}, 1-3.
\textsuperscript{169} Habel, \textit{The Birth, the Curse}, 17-18.
\textsuperscript{170} Conradi defines the hermeneutics as “a systematic and disciplined form of second-order reflection
on the praxis of interpretation” Ernest M Conradi, “What on Earth Is an Ecological Hermeneutics?,” in
\textit{Ecological Hermeneutics: Biblical, Historical and Theological Perspectives} (London: T&T Clark
International, 2010), 296. Again, Tate defines hermeneutics to mean “the study of the locus of meaning
and the principles of interpretation.” Moreover, Carl Braaten defines hermeneutics as “the science of
reflecting on how a word or an event in the past time and culture may be understood and become exist-
tentially meaningful in our present situation.” Furthermore, Duncan Ferguson defines the discipline
simply as “the task of hearing what an ancient text has to say. From the above definitions the central
meaning in these explanations resides on the task of understanding the literary meaning of the text. The
literary meaning of a text has been centered on these three present scholarship theories. That is author-
centered, text-centered and the reader-centered. Tate, \textit{Biblical Interpretation}, 1-3.

\textsuperscript{171} Horrell, “Ecological Hermeneutics”, 296.
\textsuperscript{172} Horrell, “Introduction,” 3-6.
new branch of hermeneutics with the task to interpret the bible with ‘ecological lenses,’ employing hermeneutical tools in its analysis.\textsuperscript{173}

According to Conradie, hermeneutical reflection arises when there is a distorted communication in an interpretation.\textsuperscript{174} That is, when the meaning of a text is unclear. An example of distortions in communication from the perspective of Lynn White’s criticism, is the anthropocentric and dualistic reading the first creation narrative.\textsuperscript{175}

Consequently, ecological hermeneutics has been defined as an attempt to retrieve the ecological wisdom embedded in the Christian tradition as a response to environmental threats and injustices so as to have a conceptual instrument to contrast the effect of the ecological crisis.\textsuperscript{176} Accordingly, the central task of the discipline is to redirect the process of interpretation of a text as a way of using the scripture to create an awareness of the destruction of God’s created world.\textsuperscript{177}

The approach has posed serious problems for biblical scholars because “the biblical texts themselves are by no means free from such anthropocentrism.”\textsuperscript{178} This can be attributed to the fact that the biblical texts were written by human beings and as such the messages reflect their various human contextual interests. Furthermore, contemporary context of interpretation comes into conflict with the ancient texts’ cultural setting.\textsuperscript{179} However, over the last decade a considerable effort has been made towards an attempt to demonstrate that the bible is not anthropocentric, as White claims, and to assert that ecological care values can be rightly accessed from the biblical text.\textsuperscript{180}

\textsuperscript{173} Drenthen, “Environmental Hermeneutics,” 1.
\textsuperscript{174} Conradie, “What on Earth,” 297.
\textsuperscript{175} Ibid., 296-298.
\textsuperscript{176} Ibid., 296-301.
\textsuperscript{177} Horrell, “Ecological Hermeneutics, ” 6-9.
\textsuperscript{178} Conradie, “What on Earth,” 297.
\textsuperscript{179} Conradie, “What on Earth,” 297-298.
\textsuperscript{180} Horrell, “Introduction,” 1-3.
3.3 What constitutes Ecological Hermeneutics?

One ground-breaking project in Ecological Hermeneutics is the Earth Bible Project by Norman Habel and his team.\(^{181}\) According to Horrell the project provides a variety of ecologically oriented texts that indicate a ‘green message’ in the bible. The approach by the Earth Bible Project requires a “critical and self-conscious hermeneutical strategy in analysing a text.”\(^{182}\)

The Earth Bible Team has developed six ecojustice principles of the earth which guide their interaction with the text.\(^{183}\) This set of proposed principles forms the position from which the biblical texts are read and measured against the six principles.\(^{184}\) Thus, the principles form a sort of ethical standards against which a biblical text is measured, to verify whether a text is in consistency or is in a conflict with whichever of the six proposed principles. Therefore, the conformity of the text to the six principles determines its relevance.\(^{185}\)

The principles proposed by the Earth Team are as follows:\(^{186}\)

**A. The principle of intrinsic worth:** The principle specifies that all entities created by God have intrinsic value that makes them worthy to be cared for. Similarly, their worth is not valued base on the fact that it is part of God’s creation or because of its utilitarian value for the survival of human beings. Rather it is worthy due to their purpose in God’s creation.\(^{187}\)

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\(^{181}\) Habel, *The Birth, the Curse*, 1-140.


\(^{183}\) Habel, *The Birth, the Curse*, 1-3.


\(^{185}\) Ibid., 13-15.

\(^{186}\) Habel, *The Birth, the Curse*, 1-3.

\(^{187}\) Habel, “Ecology and Bible.”
The earth is valued by God and it is valuable to all inhabitants on it. Humanity’s anthropocentric reading of the creation narrative has compelled humanity to perceive humans as closer to God, and the earth far from him. In reality, God has created all and he loves and values all his creatures, including the earth. Besides, humans are part of a whole creation which God declares as good.\(^{188}\)

This idea is represented by the following figures that compare and contrast the ‘anthropocentric’ and ‘theocentric’ reading of creation. The figure 3.1 presents the anthropocentric idea that the earth has ontological value but exists for the benefit of humanity. Therefore, humankind is more valuable to God than the earth.\(^{189}\)

Instead, figure 2, portrays the ‘theocentric view of creation.’ God perceives all creatures as equally good and valuable. Humanity’s and earth’s value come from God. Humanity is, therefore, part of a “greater whole.”

![Figure 3.1: Anthropocentric view of creation](image)


\(^{189}\) Ibid.

\(^{190}\) Fig 3.1. Humans have been perceived as the second commander’s aside God on earth. That’s in the worldview of creation, humans are special creatures created in the image of God and commanded to rule creation (Gen 1:26-28). The earth is therefore regarded as serving the interest of humanity. Willems, “Is the Earth”. 
Additionally, the dualistic understanding of creation, when employed in reading the text, has the propensity to influence our behaviour towards the earth. For example, the reading of the Hebrew expression שמים אים being translated as ‘heaven and earth’ has contributed to construct a dualistic view of the two entities, especially if it is understood on the backdrop of text as Isaiah 66:2 where heaven is termed the place of God’s throne, and the earth his footstool. The same perception is enforced by the reading of Hebrew 11,13-16 which stated that those who die in the faith consider the earth as a ‘foreign land’ whiles heaven is considered a ‘better country’ and a homeland prepared by God for those who die in the faith.

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191 Fig 3.2. The earth part of God’s creation also has an intrinsic worth. It was created to be a habitat to living organisms. God does not discriminate in His created world. He values all His creation equally. For example, in Gen. 1:31 -2:3 God declared His creation as good which implies every creation has a purpose on the earth. Willems, “Is the Earth”.

192 These interpretations propelled Habel to argue that the expression should be translated rather as ‘sky and land’ because it will leave little room for people to argue about. Habel, “Ecology and Bible.”
Thus, we have accepted a vision of ‘heaven’ as the eternal abode, spiritual and pure whereas the ‘earth’ has been viewed as transitory, material, inferior, corrupt etc. Hence, it is of no wonder that Todd Strandberg, a dispensationalist, proclaims that the basic function of a Christian is to ‘win lost souls’ and not caring for the materialistic world which we will leave behind because ‘heaven’ is our true home and not this corrupt earth.193

**B. The principle of interconnectedness:** The earth’s community comprising of living and non-living things are all interdependent on each other.194 Humanity, as members of the created world also depends on the other creatures for their survival:195 the trees, the fields, the water, the animals etc. Therefore, humankind forms part of the earth’s community.196

Furthermore, it is claimed that Biblical writers have influenced the interpretation of the text by making it exalts humans more than other creatures. An example is Psalm 8 which univocally makes the text anthropocentric in its poetry. The text highlights on the fact that humans are “a little lesser than gods” and have been given the authority to dominate the other creatures. The text, therefore, leaves a big gap in the inter relatedness between humans and the earth197 because the text portrays humans outside the community of creation.

**C. The principle of voice:** The earth as a subject and a character in the Genesis creation narrative has a voice to speak against human’s injustices towards it.198 Tucker postulates that the principle gives the impression that the team intends to personify the earth.

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193 Habel, “Ecology and Bible.”
194 Ibid.
195 Habel, *The Birth, the Curse*, 2.
196 Habel, “Ecology and Bible.”
197 Ibid.
198 Habel, *The Birth, the Curse*, 2.
However, that is not their motive. Their intention is to make humanity identify themselves with the earth.\textsuperscript{199} Thinking about the earth in this perspective raises our consciousness in treating the earth as a subject, rather than as an object.

Furthermore, there is a rising mindfulness among biologists, ecologists, feminists and theologians that the earth is a living entity which functions not as a man-made machine with rigid laws governing its operation. For example, Lovelock concurs that the earth is a self-regulating and sustaining entity that has the capability to operate on its own. Identifying the earth as a subject increases our desire to hear the voice of the earth which has been silent for decades due to our dualistic perception. In fact, we regarded humanity as the only being with feelings and with a voice that needs to be heard, while we considered the other creatures as ‘lower-class citizens’ of creation without voice and without rights.\textsuperscript{200} Then, it is about time we identified with the earth to listen to its voice and joins it in the struggle against injustices threatening the ecosystem.\textsuperscript{201}

\textbf{D. The principle of purpose:} “The universe earth and all its components are part of a dynamic cosmic design within which each piece has a place in the overall goal of the design.”\textsuperscript{202}

The design of the earth has been characterized by several arguments. There are those who share the view that a Living Spirit being, or a Creator made the world;\textsuperscript{203} others ascribe the design of the earth to evolutionary impulse.\textsuperscript{204} Upon all these arguments,

\textsuperscript{199} Anne Elvey, “Retrieving an Earth Voice: Ecological Hermeneutics, the Matter of the Text and Reading ‘as if it’s Holy,’” \textit{AEJT} 22, no. 2 (2015): 86.
\textsuperscript{200} Habel, “Ecology and Bible.”
\textsuperscript{201} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{202} Habel, \textit{The Birth, the Curse}, 2.
there is the general acceptance that the design of the earth, made of several inter related parts, serves the purpose of sustaining life.\textsuperscript{205}

Moreover, it can be argued that the purpose of the design of the earth has been neglected by the faith community, because of our dualistic reading of the eschatological biblical texts, especially 2 Peter 3:7, which emphasizes on the notion that the present earth will be destroyed. Hence, heaven has been perceived as the true home of the believer and earth as a transitory abode, which is destined for destruction. Therefore, the believer must ‘fight to go to heaven,’ rather than caring for the present world.\textsuperscript{206}

**E. The principle of mutual custodianship:** The earth is a balanced and miscellaneous domain, where responsible custodians can function as cohorts with each other, rather than acting as rulers over others.\textsuperscript{207}

This principle reflects on the stewardship role of humanity in creation. Contemporarily, the reading of humans having absolute dominion mandate over the earth has been undoubtedly rejected,\textsuperscript{208} based on the position that God, the creator and owner of the earth, expects humanity to care for His creation. We are to have the perception that we are not gods of the earth rather we are inter-dependent on non-human creatures on earth. Therefore, we are to live peacefully with the other creatures.\textsuperscript{209}

**F. The principle of resistance:** “Earth and its components not only suffer from human injustices but actively resist them in the struggle for justice.”\textsuperscript{210}

\textsuperscript{205} Habel, “Ecology and Bible.”
\textsuperscript{206} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{207} Habel, *The Birth, the Curse.*, 2.
\textsuperscript{209} Habel, “Ecology and Bible.”
\textsuperscript{210} Habel, *The Birth, the Curse.*, 2.
While people are able to identify the commands of God, to recognize sins committed against him as well as evil practices against other humans, it is difficult to recognize the injustices humanity is perpetrating against earth. This is because the earth has been perceived as an object created to be a dwelling place for the survival of human beings.

However, many biblical texts suggest the ideas of ‘injustice’ against the earth. In texts, such as Deuteronomy 28 and Amos 4:7-9, the earth suffers unjustly when humans sin against God, because God ‘uses’ the earth to punish humanity.

Likewise, there are suggestions expressing the idea that the earth is responsive to the injustices committed against it. Thus, in Jeremiah 12:4-11 the earth ‘mourns’ as a result of Israel’s sins, and it is left in a state of desolation:

How long will the land be in mourning, and the grass wither all over the countryside? The animals and birds are dying as a result of the wickedness of the inhabitants… They have made it a waste; wasted, it mourns before me. The whole country has been devastated and no one takes it to heart” (Jer. 12:4, 11).

Another example is Leviticus 18:25:

whereby the land is said ‘to vomit out’ anyone who defiles it: “The country has become unclean; hence I am about to punish it for its guilt, and the country itself will vomit out its inhabitants.

Moreover, biologists and ecologists have stated that the earth is not as fragile as we may perceive it: it is designed to sustain itself and it has been in existence before the first human on it. Therefore, in spite the exploitations of the land by human beings, the earth will still survive.

In sum, the principles offer a mirror, or an angle from which ecological hermeneutics should begin. It again expresses what constitutes ecological hermeneutics as it entails various perspectives which are central to reading the bible in the midst of ecological crisis. Therefore, the following points can be said to constitute ecological hermeneutics:
1. The principles express the opinion that the biblical text when read with ecological lens is not anthropocentric. Anthropocentric reading has contributed to the general perception that humans are higher than any other creatures and that ‘earth’ purposely serves the interest of humanity. However, the principles offer a diverse perspective. Humanity is presented as part of God’s interdependent creation.

2. The principles may present the concept of doctrinal construct as key in ecological care. The researcher agrees with Conradie on the position that doctrinal construct is important in ecological biblical hermeneutics and in ‘secular’ ecological debates.211

The first two principles can be said to be a doctrine of creation emphasizing on the earth’s community and the kinship relationship existing among all creatures. It again demands a mutual respect among all creatures and the desire to regard and care for each other since all creatures depend on one another for their existence.

Moreover, the principle on the voice emphasizes that not only humans’ voice can be heard. Rather the earth as well as the other living organisms have a voice that must be heard. They are capable of raising their voice to denounce any injustice committed against them. In terms of a doctrinal construct it can be termed as the doctrine on the earth’s cry for justice against humanity, and the need for humanity to listen to the voice of the earth in order to avoid any future injustice against not-human members of the creation community. The last three principles, in the researcher opinion, represents the doctrine of stewardship or a doctrine of a harmonious living with the environment.

211 One central feature that can be vividly realized from the principles is that, specific terms such as God, creator, creation etc. are not used in any of the principles of the earth team. This suggests that they can be used secularly to facilitate a dialogue communication among biologists, ecologists and by other faith traditions such as Buddhists, Hinduisms among others. Habel, The Birth, the Curse, 2-4.
Every creation has a purpose on earth, therefore one entity is required not to rule over others but must be in a mutual relationship with the other.

3. The laid down principles create the conception that several approaches are needed in dealing with ecological problems, depending on the ecological situation facing a particular context. In terms of the use of doctrinal constructs the researcher agrees with Conradie that there is no ‘one good’ construct hence there is the need to “search for relatively adequate constructs in order to do justice both to the rich plurality within the biblical texts and the contemporary demands of ecojustice and sustainability.”

Furthermore, the situation will determine the approach to be used. For example, the earth team takes the position of an earth-centred approach to the situation therefore, the hermeneutics of identification takes a focal point in their analysis of the situation.

4. Finally, the principles suggest the idea that employing ecological hermeneutics, the creation narratives can be studied from various angles such as earth-centred, theocentric, sabbath-centred, among others. It is from this assumption, that ecological hermeneutics is making significant progress in defending the Scriptures against various criticisms.

### 3.4 Approaches to Ecological Hermeneutics

Several approaches to ecological hermeneutics have been developed upon which the interpretation of the bible is transformed into an instrument to either promote environmental care or oppose an ethical agenda of the earth. It is important to note, that the hermeneutical approaches are not neutral, but each approach generates a different attitude toward ecology.

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The Earth Bible Commentary analysed three approaches to ecological hermeneutics: 214 suspicion and resistance; identification and retrieval.

3.4.1 Suspicion and Resistance

The suspicion reading of the text reveals the anthropocentrism present in the biblical text and considers the text responsible of encouraging the destruction of the environment. 215 According to its proponents, such as Habel, it also raises the awareness that the interests of other creatures are ignored or eluded from biblical interpretation. 216 The texts are, indeed, written by human beings and they reflect the interest of the humanity not that of the other creatures. 217

In fact, the text is generally approached with these intuitions:

1. We read the text with the hunch that it is anthropocentric in nature. 218

2. We read the text with the notion that traditionally the text has been interpreted from an anthropocentric perspective which we have accepted as the truth. 219

The anthropocentric bias to be discovered by the reader in the text has two assumptions:

The first assumption states that human beings have perceived their creation as superior to those of other living creatures.

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214 Habel, The Birth, the Curse, 3.
215 The *imago Dei* as expressed in the narrative gives the impression that the implied reader considers the creation of humanity as very special. The uniqueness of the creation of humanity as created in the image of God leads to the tendency of setting humanity far apart from other creation. At the same time, it makes human beings have a distinctive power to rule creation as superiors. The received and accepted interpretation of Genesis 1:26–28 has several implications in the life of humanity especially in the area of caring for creation. Norman Habel, “Introducing Ecological Hermeneutics,” in Exploring Ecological Hermeneutics, ed. N. Habel and P. Trudinger (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008), 1–9.
217 The biblical text, is suspicion of its narrative in the sense that, the texts are written by human beings as such there is the tendency of its narrative reflecting in the interest of humanity than that of the non-human creatures. Habel, “Ecology and Bible.”
219 Ibid., 4.
We have inherited the understanding that humans are higher than other creatures and that God created the universe for our survival. Likewise, humans have come to accept the notion to be ‘special’ in the created world.\textsuperscript{220} As stated by Habel, “in the hierarchy of things there is God, human beings, and the rest.”\textsuperscript{221} Therefore, humankind considered itself as the rulers of the earth. This traditional, almost ‘genetic’ conception, influences the reading of a text.\textsuperscript{222}

The second assumption concerns humanity’s dualistic understanding of creation. Nature has been perceived by humans as ‘objects’ and not ‘subjects’ over a long period of time. Humans have distanced and separated themselves from the rest of creation. Nature has been considered as an object that needs to be controlled and exploited. Therefore, ‘the rest’ of creation has become less valuable to humans.\textsuperscript{223}

These ‘objects’ are considered as grounds for scientific investigations to guarantee human survivor. The assumption not only re-enforced humanity’s superiority over creation but it widens the gap between human beings and nature.\textsuperscript{224}

In addition, the dualistic understanding of nature has contributed to the anthropocentric view of the world. Therefore, the implication is that ecological hermeneutics begins with the suspicion that the text and the interpreter reflect an anthropocentric bias.\textsuperscript{225}

For example, a suspicion reading of Gen. 1:26-28 denounces the anthropocentric bias which affirms that humanity was created distinctively from other living creatures,
because humans were created in the *imago Dei*, and they received the dominion mandate to subdue creation.  

The second approach is the *Resistance reading of the text*. Two kinds of resistance approach were analysed by Horrell, Hunt and Southgate.  

The first focuses on resisting the biblical texts in favour of the earth. Santmire termed the reading tendency as ‘Reconstructionist’ position which calls for a new way of reflection which seeks to engage the dogmatic traditions with ecological issues. The model is developed by the earth team and it is earth-centric. Its proponents believe that the earth can exist on its own, without any help from human beings. Therefore, they ‘resist’ an anthropocentric perception of the creation story which has been considered as promoting the destruction and the extinction of species.  

Their position on the notion is based on the fact that the first creation narrative makes the claim that the earth existed before humans were created, hence, it needs no human participation in solving its problems. However, humanity is required to listen to its voice:  

Our best procedure might be to consider that we need not a human answer to an earth problem, but an earth answer to an earth problem. The earth will solve its problems, and possibly our own, if we will let the earth function in its own ways. We need only listen to what the earth is telling us.

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226 Habel, “Ecology and Bible.”  
227 Horrell, Hunt, and Southgate, “Appeals to the Bible in Ecotheology,” 1.  
229 A parallel can be drawn with feminist writings which states that the biblical texts are patriarchal and sexist, “promoting values that are deeply damaging to women.” As Mary Daly and Daphne Hampson argues that the whole Christian tradition is patriarchal, therefore, it must be rejected, in the same way there are some ecological thinkers postulating that the doctrine of Christianity cannot in any way provide “the kind of valuing of the earth that our contemporary context demands and so again must be rejected”. Horrell, *The Bible and the Environment*, 13.  
231 As already stated the principles developed by the team forms an ethical standard upon which biblical texts were measured. The key task is to access whether a text is consistent or is in conflict with any of the six principles. See, Berry, *The Dream of the Earth*, 35.
The principles developed by the Earth Team were used as the bases upon which a resistance to a biblical text is theologized. As Horrell states, “where the texts cohere with the principles, they may be fruitfully and positively read, where they do not, suspicion and resistance may be more appropriate interpretive strategy.” 232

The second form of resistance approach moves in the opposite direction. It seeks to oppose the contemporary environmental care agenda based on the conviction that environmental issues are not in conformity to the teachings of the bible.233 Thus, it resists ecological focus in favour of biblical authority. The proponents view the biblical text as highly an authoritative non-negotiable book, in that, no contemporary reality should challenge its stance. Therefore, they perceive environmentalism as a secular initiative backed by satanic agenda. For example, Cumbey234 considers any concern about the environment as a satanic New Age plot, to make believers more conformed ‘to the things of the world’.

The anti-environmental readings of the text may not gain recognition in the academic world but they “warrant our attention because they are of considerable popular influence, especially, of course, in some evangelical and fundamentalist circles, notably in the USA.”235

There are several Christians who do not share in the view that we are to be concerned citizens of the created world. For example, Maier explains that in some instances American Evangelicals have used the bible to urge its members to abandon care of

235 Ibid., 11.
Again, some Christian communities are quick to interpret environmental problems as a result of God’s wrath on humanity, due to devastating sinful lifestyle, and a harbinger for the imminent Parousia of Christ.\textsuperscript{237}

Indeed, the proponents of resistance reading, think that the ‘ecological discourse’ has no biblical bases. God gives the earth to ‘use’, and in their opinion, Christians cannot focus on ecological issues but on preaching, because “the true ‘global warming’ is hell.”\textsuperscript{238} For example, Hal Lindsey declares that “the wages of sins are pollution and environmental death.”\textsuperscript{239}

Furthermore, the eschatology of the Dispensationalists and the Premillennialists believe that before the tribulation there will be a day of rapture, the great battle of Armageddon and the millennial reign of Christ pose a threat to the care of the earth. In fact, they believe that before the return of Christ, the earth will experience natural disasters and other earthly decays, which will serve as indicators of the imminent Parousia of Christ.\textsuperscript{240} This interpretation based on the cosmic destruction presents in the apocalyptic literature, confirms the opinion that the ecological crisis is a sign from God to intensify preaching of reaching out to lost souls.\textsuperscript{241}

\textbf{3.4.2 Identification}

We read a biblical text with the ability to identify with the various human characters in the text. When readers recognize themselves in the characters, they become in tune to

\textsuperscript{236} Maier, “Green Millennialism,” 249-262.
\textsuperscript{237} Ibid., 250-251.
\textsuperscript{238} Maier, “Green Millennialism,” 252.
\textsuperscript{239} Ibid. This is the position of Todd Strandberg, a renowned Dispensationalist. His opinion will suggest that there is no need for ecological hermeneutics, because the care for the environment is not the responsibility of Christians.
\textsuperscript{240} Ibid., 250-260. Unfortunately, while some evangelic churches preach to the congregation that God has given humanity the dominion mandate to exploit creation, they do not realize that their anthropocentric explanation of the text is contributing to the environmental crisis. White, “The Historical Roots.”
\textsuperscript{241} Strandberg, “Bible Prophecy and Environmentalism.”
the narrative which makes them appreciate the text. The recognition with the characters further allows readers to be aware of the narrative setting surrounding the characters.\(^{242}\) Unconsciously readers are again able to establish a relationship with biblical human characters who may not even be their cherished characters.\(^{243}\)

According to its proponents, such as the Earth Team, the approach can be used to listen to the voice of the earth especially with regards the various injustices human beings have committed against her. Thus, through our kinship relationship with the earth, we will come to regard it as a subject and not an object to be exploited by humans.\(^{244}\) Through the process, the gap between humanity and other creatures closes up, making humanity identify the earth as a precious jewel that needs to be protected. Readers realize that humanity forms part of the earth’s eco system, whereby each creature depends on the other for survival.\(^{245}\)

Before we seek to identify with the earth in the text, there is the need for human beings to face the realities of the current ecological crisis as citizens of planet earth and as members of the ecosystem that has emerged on earth.\(^{246}\) The experiences we encounter through our identification with the earth raises our consciousness towards the damage we are causing to the earth as “reflected in the text.”\(^{247}\)

The focus of identification in ecological hermeneutics, therefore, is humans reading the text in solidarity with the earth, through which we will consciously listen to the voice

\(^{242}\) Horrell, “Introduction,” 1-10.

\(^{243}\) Habel, *The Birth, the Curse*, 10-11.

\(^{244}\) It requires humanity to recognize their kinship relationship with the earth through which humanity will react empathetically and sympathetically in their relationship with the other creatures. According to Harrison it is a “necessary step between suspicion and retrieval”. Thus “one requiring of the interpreter an ecological conversion to the other, to Earth as other”. The approach requires humans to know themselves as part of the earth’s ecosystem and recognizing that humanity again is interdepend as well as other living creations. Elvey, “Retrieving an Earth Voice,” 85.

\(^{245}\) Habel, *The Birth, the Curse*, 10-11.

\(^{246}\) Ibid., 10-11.

\(^{247}\) Habel, *The Birth, the Curse*, 10.
of the earth. According to Habel, “Our task is to take up the cause of Earth and the non-human members of the Earth’s community, by sensing their presence in the text, whether their presence is suppressed, oppressed or celebrated.”

Overall, we move beyond identifying various themes in the text that highlight on ecology, to help the readers to identify with the earth in terms of its struggles, its cries for ecojustice: “Another dimension of this process is to locate ourselves in the habitat of all the participants in the narrative, and discerning any forces, whether positive or negative, interacting with the characters in the text and determining their identities.”

Therefore, if humanity is able to identify with their environment, they will come to realize that all living organisms are interrelated and their survival on this planet is largely influenced by the environment.

Quoting Elvey, “identification requires of readers an ability to draw connections, to exercise imagination, self-reflection, critique and, cautiously, a ‘self- transcendence’ where transcendence means going beyond ‘the narrowly defined individualized self.’” Thus, human beings need an ecological conversion as a way of dealing with the behaviour that is gradually destroying the earth. The ecological conversion in humans will make humanity respect, listen to the voice of the earth and response actively to the cries of the land.

### 3.4.3 Retrieval

The central focus of this approach is to retrieve the voice of the earth in the text. Again, it gives the impression that ecological message is present in the bible, once we

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248 Hence within the text we are to identify with the non-human beings in the narrative of the text focusing on “their roles, characters and treatment, and discerning their voices”. Habel, *The Birth, the Curse*, 11.

249 The interactions may help in revealing how the other creations are being isolated and depressed by human beings. Ibid., 11.

250 Elvey, “Retrieving an Earth Voice”, 85.
understand the message of the text. According to Norman Habel the task of retrieving ecological wisdom from the text can be grouped into two:

1. Through the process of suspicion: It has already been stated by exposing the anthropocentric bias in the narrative we will come to realize that the text reveals a number of surprises about the other creatures that have been suppressed or rejected by western interpretative tradition.

2. Through the process of identification: As it was stated earlier, identifying with the text exposes the reader to the voice of the earth through its mourning’s, singing or praising in the text. These have often been classified as symbolic languages but a close reading reveals that they are elements of mere ‘anthropomorphisms’

Recognizing the earth as subject with a voice is key in retrieval process of hermeneutics. The voices may vary from one context to the other, and so, in a context the voice is evident but may be ignored by interpreters, and in other instances, the earth’s voice is present and very powerful. These voices are subjects playing a crucial role in spotting the green messages of the text.

For example, Habel postulates that by recognizing the earth as a subject in the Genesis 1 narrative its voice can be retrieved from the account in different moments:

1. The introduction of the earth in Genesis 1:2 as a primordial entity;

252 Habel, *The Birth, the Curse*.
253 The point of departure in demonstrating the notion is by turning to the prophetic book of Jeremiah. “In a number of passages in Jeremiah we are told the land is mourning (Jer. 4.28; 12.11). A close reading reveals that the text includes a double entendre that could be rendered ‘dries up’. The physical act of ‘drying up’ is a way of expressing Earth mourning”. We are therefore tasked as earth beings to read the text in tune with earth by reclaiming the suffering of the earth in the text as well as it cries. Habel, *The Birth, the Curse*, 12.
254 Habel, *The Birth, the Curse*,11-12.
255 Habel, “Ecology and Bible.”
2. The separation of the waters from the earth in the third day;

3. God formed a partnership with the earth in the creation of vegetation in day three and in the creation of not-humans living creatures in day five.

From the above, the earth served as a mother and a home to all living creatures. However, starting with the creation of humans from vv. 26-28, the character ‘earth’ seems to be suppressed or hidden. Hence the question is: how then can the voice of the earth be heard in the wider context of Genesis 1 in relation to the ecological crisis?

Habel made these statements as a way of retrieving the earth’s voice in the narrative:

At the request of God, I also brought forth, like a mother, the fauna that live on Earth. They are my offspring and depend on me for subsistence. All fauna depend on the vegetation I produce for their survival and enjoyment of life. I am Earth, the source of daily life for the flora and fauna that I have generated from within me.

Sad to say, there is another story that has invaded my world, the story of the so-called god-image creatures called humans. Instead of recognizing that these god-image creatures are beings interdependent with Earth and other Earth creatures, this story claims that the god-image creatures belong to superior ruling class or species, thereby demeaning their non-human kin and diminishing their value. Instead of respecting me as their home and life source, the god-image creatures claim a mandate to crush me like an enemy or a slave. My voice needs to be heard and the intrusive story about the humans in Genesis 1.26-28 named for what it is from my perspective: the charter of a group of power-hungry humans.\(^{256}\)

### 3.4.4 Doctrinal constructs

Interpretation of a text is influenced by its original context and the history of interpretation. Furthermore, meaning is made through the ongoing encounter between the reader and the text.\(^{257}\)

One crucial dimension of biblical interpretation highlighted by Conradie is the act of re-appropriation. This dimension entails interpretative strategies which should not be

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\(^{256}\) Habel, “Ecology and Bible.”

\(^{257}\) Conradie stresses that “interpretation happens in the interaction between the readers’ contemporary context and the ancient text so changing contexts and demands bring new perspectives and doctrines to light.” Horrell, *The Bible and the Environment*, 124.
confused with exegetical methods. Hence interpretative strategies are the ways by which readers establish a link between the biblical text and some aspects of their context. Although interpretative strategies are widely used, they also pose the problem of distortion. This is because such models are widely based on what Conradie terms as doctrinal constructs. The models are shaped by dominant theological motifs within an interpretative tradition such as the beliefs of a group and their values, customs and habits.

Doctrinal constructs have been employed to facilitate biblical interpretations in the history of the church. An example is how the Christian message of salvation has been contextualized. Salvation, interpreted as “victory over the forces of evil, destruction and death,” is been re-expressed in a number of metaphors to make the concept meaningful in the life of the people. Some of the metaphors employed are “liberation from political or economic oppressions, release from captivity, healing from life threatening diseases, etc.”

Similarly, the contextual situation of a group is vital in the use of doctrinal constructs in dealing with the situational problem. For example, Martin Luther in his debate against the ‘sale of indulgence’ used Paul’s concept of ‘justification by faith’, present in the letters to the Romans and Galatians. The doctrine became a lens upon which the bible is read. Martin Luther read the letter to Romans in a specific socio-cultural context, against the practice of sale of indulgence. Similarly, Latin America theologians

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259 According to Horrell, it is key to note that at the centre of Christian theology has been the use of themes or idea in propagating the biblical message to believers. These doctrinal keys are not specifically direct from the biblical texts but they are attempts being constructed between the text tradition and the context. Horrell, The Bible and the Environment, 122. Conradie, “What on Earth,” 300-307.
260 Ibid., 301.
261 Ibid., 301-302.
263 Ibid.
reading the book of Exodus in the midst of a poverty driven context, perceived God as a liberator of the poor and the Exodus as a call to a journey of liberation.

Conradie contributed to the discipline by identifying the following doctrinal constructs as key in ecological deliberations.264

1. *Human responsibility in creation*: This may be understood secularly as exercising responsibility towards the earth or it can be described as responding to the call of God. Again, several biblical metaphors can be applied to this. Such as “a call to obedience, a call to stewardship, a sense of vocation, or as a way of mediating between God and creation.”265

2. *The Stewardship Concept*: This doctrinal construct does not appear in the text but it is a way of helping interpreters to find a strategy of connecting Genesis 1:27-28 with the context of the people, to persuade Christians to care and to be responsible to God’s creation.266 Though several criticisms have been raised against ‘stewardship,’ it plays a vital role in the interpretation of the two Hebrew verbs זכך ו svenska.267

Conradie further added that “we need to search for relatively adequate constructs in order to do justice both to the rich plurality within the biblical texts and the contemporary demands of ecojustice and sustainability.”268 This is because what is required is not a single construct but a cluster of doctrinal constructs to be used where appropriate.269

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265 Ibid.
266 Ibid.
267 Ibid.
268 Ibid., 309.
269 Ibid., 311.
In the following pages, an example offered by Marthinun illustrate how doctrinal constructs has been used in dealing with situation/ problems of a particular group (Zimbabwe) on the African continent.

_Situational Problem._ In Zimbabwe ‘Environmental repair’ was needed in the aftermath of war. Population pressure and poor husbandry led to ecological loss of more land. To the African Initiated Churches (AICs) subsistence farmers, salvation is nothing if the over used and tired land, which is their economic life sustainer, is not restored back to its glories. Hence, they perceived their church as an environmental healer.

Therefore, the struggle to heal the land led to the AIC mobilizing its members in the struggle against their environmental problems. Such a commitment on the part of the AIC’s one way or the other forged a deeper understanding in their healing and liberative ministry. Whereby their healing ministry had a shift towards the “healing of a suffering creation.”270

_The approach used in handling the problem._ Their Earth-Healing Ministry was characterized by ‘gospel propagations’ such as tree planting, sermons, and teachings of Christian stewardship through the in-dwelling Spirit of God. These helped in creating environmental care awareness among the members and the zeal to act in saving their environment.

For example, Bishop Wapendama proclaims that delivering the earth from its maladies lies within the body of believers, that is the church. It is her responsibility to act as earth keepers of God’s creation. We are responsible to care for the earth as well as accountable to God in our relationship with creation. He maintains that the deliverance of the

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Earth takes the form of tree planting and this is seen as an extension of the Church’s healing ministry.

Colossians 1:15-18 and Matthew 28:18 are some of the texts used in their environmental ethic propagations. The texts were used as Christological focus which became part of the church’s earth propagation linking with the body of Christ. For instance, Rev. Tawoneichi spoke on the importance of the body of Christ in environmental care:

Earth keeping is part of Christ's body.....because we as humans are part of his body and the trees are essential for us to breathe, to live......The random felling of trees hurts the body of Christ. Therefore, the church should heal the wounded body of Christ. Tree-felling is only justified when there is a sound purpose aligned to God's will. Otherwise God is angered and will punish us. One of the signs of such punishment is the contributing drought. No trees, no rain! Mwari is disturbed.271

Tawoneichi and Wapendama in their ‘earth keeping sermons’ agree to the notion that environmental injustice is a sin. It makes Christ suffers and causes God to pour out his anger on humanity by judging and punishing them. The punishments can be in the form of drought, global warming among others.

On the contrary, other leaders of the church preferred to be less controversial in their teachings on the body of Christ in relation to the environmental problems. Bishop Farawo expresses his view as follows,

The earth we abuse is not Christ’s body for it is the creation of Mwari. Yet creation is like a person, the image of the body of Christ. Look at the trees. They breathe like humans. So, if we cut them we hurt the spirit of God, because his spirit is in the trees......Earth keeping is like an expression of Christ’s body. Tree-planting during the eucharist is not really part of Christ’s body, but it pleases Christ because we are clothing his earth.272

_Doctrinal constructs used by the AICs._ The following are considered by the researcher as doctrinal constructs adopted by the AIC to propagate their earth care message as well as making believers active stewards of creation.

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272 Ibid.,544.
1. **Baptism:** Baptism is not only about confessing sins against fellow human but also ecological sins. Examples are cultivating along the banks of rivers, cutting down of trees without replacing them, among others. These are regarded as sins that any new believer must confess as a way to personal salvation. It is also a strategy to help new converts to actively participate in the earth’s healing ministry of the church.

2. **Eucharist:** The Eucharist was the most widely used ‘doctrine’ to draw larger numbers of people into the planting of trees. The various local churches participated in this activity which ignited the zeal and spirit of tree planting in the participants. The sacramental ceremony characterized by the integration of the eucharist and tree planting was well received and highly participated by the members. Songs were sung at the service, some people danced, the table was prepared with bread, wine and seedlings. Earth keeping messages were also shared at the ceremony.

In summary, the AICs were successful in the use of this approach in their earth healing ministry. The church used their already recognized doctrine of a healing ministry to help save the environment of their members and community at large. Also, other beliefs of the denomination such as baptism, the Eucharist were utilized by the church in their ecological care ministry.

### 3.4.5 Recovery reading

The Recovery reading of the text is an attempt to defend Christianity against Lynn White’s allegations of a Western anthropocentric reading of the bible.\(^{273}\) Conferring with Horrell, the hermeneutic approach intends to demonstrate that the biblical texts can be employed in the ecological discourse.\(^{274}\) An exponent of the method, Watson

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\(^{273}\) Horrell, Hunt and Southgate, “Appeals to the Bible,” 3. The approach presents a defensive stance that seeks to make the claim that the bible does offer good resources for environmental care ethics. Horrell, *The Bible and the Environment*, 11.

\(^{274}\) See, Ibid., 11-12.
terms the approach as ‘a Strategy of Recovery’ which according to him is an attempt to rescue the biblical text from mis-reading that it is anthropocentric in its narrative. Additionally, it was classified by Paul Santmire as ‘apologetic’ because its aim is to defend the bible against the criticism that it endorses the destruction of the earth. The prejudices surrounding the text led to the recovery reading of the text as a way of restoring the narrative to its original informed understanding as encouraging environmental care agenda. The approach does not consider the bible as a problem, but rather criticizes later interpreters of the bible as distorting the message of the text.

In general, the ecological reading of recovery is a prove that the text challenges Christians to the need to be responsible stewards of creation. For example, a recovery reading of Genesis 1:26-28 suggests that the text does not in any manner present an aggressive dominion of humans on the other living beings. Rather the kind of ‘dominion’ is stewardship, interpreted as caring for creation.

Using ‘favourable texts’, scholars are able to demonstrate that the bible can engage positivity in the environmental discourse. Examples of such texts are Psalm 8:18-25, Genesis 1—2, Genesis 9:1-17, Psalm 104, etc. Moreover, the recovery reading focus

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275 Its focus is to defend the Christian community against criticisms that its anthropocentric reading of the text is a locus for the disregard of environmental ethics. Horrell, The Bible and the Environment, 11-12.
278 Recovery seeks to correspond to what has been perceived as a historical misreading of the Genesis account. Another aspect of the recovery approach, highlighted by Horrell et al. is the notion that “the biblical text is ‘good’, not itself the problem; the problems and distortions arise through the acts of later interpreters, who obscure and distort the positive meaning of the original”. Thus, the biblical text becomes ‘bad’ when it is misrepresented. Horrell, Hunt and Southgate, “Appeals to the Bible”.
279 However, Horrell contends that Genesis 1 is open to several interpretations, therefore, it is difficult to make the claim that the dominion mandate in Gen. 1:26-28 coincides with stewardship. Horrell, “Ecological Hermeneutics,” 4-8.
280 Gatti, “Setting the Agenda,” 151.
281 Ibid., 148-157.
282 Horrell, The Bible and the Environment, 12.
on controversial texts such as Genesis 1:26-28 and 2 Peter 3:10-13, because of the difficulty they raise. Therefore, a recovery reading of these texts proves that the texts are not promoting ‘dominion’ and ‘destruction.’

The following are, however, some limitations underpinning the model, as enlightened by Conradie:

1. The act of selecting favourable texts implies that ecology is “indeed a marginal concern in the bible.”

We cannot simply depend on few green message texts and generalize them as saying the scriptures command humanity to be stewards of creation. This is a challenge in the use of the approach especially when dealing with controversial texts. However, the message of the narrative can easily be softened if it is read within the larger context.

Moreover, due to the circumstances regarding the use of recovery reading of a text, the researcher agrees with Horrell, Hunt and Southgate that “What this re-description then implies, of course, is that we need to articulate (and argue about) the grounds on which we determine what constitutes ‘better’ and ‘worse’ readings,” of a particular text due to the plurality of readings of a text and the historical circumstances that influence the reading of a text.

2. Last, but not least, in order to recover ecological wisdom from the bible, it is plausible to read the whole bible with ecological lens. This way, it can be argued that the bible

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285 Ibid., 296.
287 Horrell, Hunt and Southgate, “Appeals to the Bible”, 16.
288 According to Bauckham, during the period of the Renaissance the Genesis account was interpreted as Humans given the authority to exercise an aggressive rulership over creation. Again, there is no example to explain that there was an attempt by them to re-read the text. Bauckham, *Bible and Ecology*, 5-7.
from Genesis to Revelations indeed is filled to capacity with ecological implications.\textsuperscript{289} This is because the term ‘ecology’ is not present but the theme can be seen through the reading with ecological lens.

Indeed, these contributions from Conradie imply that there is the need for more critical ecological hermeneutics that goes beyond rescuing the text from its critics.

### 3.6 Evaluation of the approaches

In the following section the different approaches are evaluated before explaining the researcher’s option.

**Recovery Reading of the Text.** Recovery reading affirms that green message is clearly visible in a biblical text if only one critically studies and understands the scripture. Therefore, the bible can be defended against any ecological criticism, that is laid against it. In general, the reading’s major stance lies in trying to find a green message in any biblical text.

The positive aspect of the reading is that it supports the stewardship caring responsibility that humanity is to exercise. Hence the reading urges humankind to develop positive ecological attitude towards their surroundings.

However, Horrell argues that because the aim of the approach lies in seeking to defend the biblical texts against any criticisms, it has the tendency to ignore the diversities in the bible because the world of the bible is far different from the contemporary world.\textsuperscript{290}

Indeed, the researcher believes that due to the diversities existing between the text-world and the current world, it is necessary to critically analyse a text before applying it to ecological crisis.

\textsuperscript{289} Conradie, “What on Earth,” 296.

\textsuperscript{290} Horrell, Hunt, and Southgate, “Appeals to the Bible,” 3-7.
Resistance Approach from the Earth Team. Again, the Resistance approach from the earth team offers a positive environmental care agenda. Their ability to critique, expose and reject biblical texts — with the possibility to bridge a gap between the relationship between humans and the earth — places their approach as a strong force in propagating an earth-centric theology in the lives of the people. Their approach further challenges traditional way of reading the scriptures, where the earth is ignored as a central character. It again challenges readers to identify themselves with the earth, so as to hear the voice of the earth, which the earth team believes has the tendency to make people respond positively towards their surroundings.

From the researcher’s perspective, the earth-centric approach presents the possibility of imposing a restriction to the reading of the text. It is in this sense that Van Heerden pointed out that Habel’s option of reading Genesis 1 from the perspective of Earth, is likely to prevent him “from giving attention to the text’s exilic context, as well as its clearly schematic and symmetrical characteristics.”

Suspicion. The suspicion approach to the text generally gives the impression that the “forthright acknowledgment that the Bible is an ‘inconvenient’, ambivalent, and sometimes damaging text that ‘has been used to justify our domination, devaluation and destruction of the planet.’” Furthermore, the demerits of the approach does not rely only on the misinterpretation of the scriptures, indeed these are inherent to some biblical texts.

On a more positive note, Habel is not only interested in exposing the dangerous and damaging features of the biblical text. The current ecological problems require a new approach to read the scripture and the suspicion reading of the text indicates one possibility of reading the text in the midst of an ecological crisis.

294 Ibid., 14-15.
Identification. The identification approach creates the impression that by identifying with the earth its voice can be heard. However, there is the possibility of the interpreter rather creating an imaginative earth voice. Therefore, the approach, according to the researcher, is a reader-centred approach which runs the risk of interpreting a text from the perspective of the reader, creating a pseudo-biblical theology.

Retrieval. The Retrieval approach will not be possible without the first two approaches highlighted by the earth team. The Retrieval approach simply is tasked with the ability to retrieve the voice of the earth from the scriptures. As has been noted in the suspicion and the identification approach evaluation, the retrieval hermeneutics also has the tendency to make the interpreter construct an imaginative earth voice from the scriptures in ecological hermeneutics.

Doctrinal Construct. One aspect of the model that requires much attention lies on the fact that it has the tendency to simplifying and harmonizing the meaning of a scripture, into one single rigid idea. Thus, the approach can be classified under the hermeneutics of suspicion, because an objective analysis of a text will be difficult without exposing the bias in the text. For instance, ‘stewardship’ is not visible in the Genesis 1 narrative, however, by suspiciously reading the dominion mandate, the ‘stewardship’ model has been used as expressing the meaning of the dominion mandate in the text. This can be classified as a rigid fixation in which Doctrinal Constructs have the possibility of highly committing.

3.7 Conclusion

Ecological Hermeneutics originated from the Lynn Whites’ article, as well as other criticisms laid against the anthropocentric view promoted by Christianity. Scholars started to read the bible with ‘ecological lenses’ in order to defend the bible, and to participate in the ecological debate. After presenting the definition and constitutive

elements of Ecological Hermeneutics, the chapter examines five approaches in addition to the researcher’s evaluation.

The researcher opted for the doctrinal construct and the recovery reading of the text approaches. In fact, Christian communities are already used to doctrinal construct messages. For instance, “Love your neighbor as yourself” is central to every church doctrine. It is used to propagate togetherness and friendly relationship among church members and other community neighbours. The theme can be developed to propagate ecological sensitivity and care, teaching that “love your neighbor as yourself” does not involve only relating to fellow human, but it also includes our relationship with non-humans and the environment at large.

In the next chapter, the research explores how the narrative analysis of Genesis 1:1—2:3 can generate new doctrinal constructs to educate Christian communities in Ghana on environmental advocacy and care.

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298 A general observation of the churches in Ghana is likely to make one aware of the various doctrinal themes used by the leaders and preachers of the various churches. Some common themes are Eschatological teaching; Prosperity messages; the Holy Spirit Baptism; the Eucharist as well as Water Baptism, among others. Moreover, we preach ‘loyal and disloyalty’ to members as a way to be faithful to God and church. The doctrine can further be developed to include loyalty to God’s creation and the responsibility towards God’s creation by caring for other creatures same as we care for our church.
CHAPTER FOUR
READING GEN 1:1—2:3 WITH ECOLOGICAL LENS

4.1 Introduction
The chapter presents an analysis on the dominant ecological interpretations of Genesis 1:1—2:3. However, special attention was given to the several readings characterizing the critical unit of Genesis 1:26-28. It is upon these verses that scholars either positively soften the tone of the text or negatively react against with the accuse of anthropocentrism. The three key elements in the text are: humanity created in the imago Dei, the dominion mandate and the mandate to subdue the earth.

The chapter is organized into four sections: delimitation, structure, narrative analysis and theological analysis of the text. In the following section an attempt is made to provide the delimitation of the Priestly account of creation.

4.2 Delimitation of the first creation account
There are two creation accounts in the book of Genesis. The first narrative ranges from Gen. 1:1—2:3 and it has been attributed to the Priestly tradition (P). The second account, 2:4-25, ascribed to the work of the Yahwist writer (J). One significant difference among the two accounts is the use of Elohim by the Priestly writers in referring to God and the use of Yahweh in calling the name of God by the Yahwist writers.299

There are several hypotheses surrounding the literary ending of the Priestly creation narrative. Earlier biblical scholars such Brown, Carr among others consider Genesis 1:1—2:3 a literally unit. Their position is centred on Schmid’s argument that Genesis

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2:4a is not an integral part of the priestly account of creation rather it serves as a closing note of Genesis 1:1—2:3 and the beginning of a new creation narrative.\textsuperscript{300}

Ross ends the first account on 2:3 as he believes the second creation account begins from 2:4. He differentiated the two accounts in this manner. From 1:1—2:3 he termed it as the ‘Creation of all Things’ whiles 2:4—4:1-26, labelled as ‘B,’ which he categorized as ‘The Account of the Succession from the Creation’. He perceives 2:3 as the conclusion of the narrative of creation, which begun in 1:1. As such 2:4 indicates the beginning of a new creation narrative.\textsuperscript{301}

Hamilton concurs and motivates his choice with the presence of the formula הָעֲלָיָן, that appears ten times in Genesis, and in all its occurrences. it indicates a narrative unit of a ‘generation or the story of an entity.’\textsuperscript{302}

Examples of the syntagma are as follows:

a) 2:4a: These are the generations of the heavens and the earth

b) 5:1a: This is the list of the descendants of Adam


\textsuperscript{302} Moreover, it is to be noted that the phrase does not always read ‘this is the generation of….’. Quoting Hamilton: “…at some points it appears preferable to translate the formula “this is the story (or history) of X.” At other points “these are the descendants (or generations) of X” seems better. The choice between these two at any given occurrence depends mostly on the nature of the material following the formula. If the formula is followed by a genealogy, then the preference is for the latter. If it is followed by narrative, then the preference is for the former.” Hamilton, “The Book of Genesis”, 2. Likewise, some commentators, as well as other biblical English versions such as the RSV, NEB, NJB, regards 2:4a as not a heading to the second creation account but rather a postscript to the creation account of 1:1—2:3. They consider 2:4a as a subscription to what precedes, the phrase also functions as a superscript in other instances in Genesis. However, in this context the catchphrase cannot be regarded as a subscript since in Genesis always begins a new development or a story. Therefore, 2:4a is considered as a superscript to what follows.
c) 6:9a: These are the generations of Noah.\textsuperscript{303}

Additionally, Hamilton justifies his stance on ending the first literary unit of Genesis on 2:3 by studying the retrogressive and the prospective nature of the two verses (2:3 and 2:4a). Thus, he asserts that if 2:4a is perceived as retrogressive then it should be read with 1:1—2:3. On the other hand, if it is viewed as prospective then it should also be read with chapter 2:4b. However, the latter creates the problem of whether the ten occurrences of the אֲלֵהָיוֹן אֱלֹהִים formula should be regarded as heading to the next story, or as a conclusion to the earlier narrative.

Similarly, McKeown concurs and structured the first creation narrative to end in 2:3. In his opinion, the Priestly account of creation is well structured and carefully designed. Therefore, the inclusion of 2:4 does not feature well in the pericope of the narrative.\textsuperscript{304}

Similarly, Ramey concurs that the chiastic pattern of the narrative when closely studied neatly brings the narrative to a perfect conclusion in 2:3. For instance the phrase אֲלֵהָיוֹן אֱלֹהִים (1:1) linking אֲלֵהָיוֹן אֱלֹהִים (2:3) gracefully concludes the literary unit.

Additionally, “as a structural unit, the content of the passage is generally understood to outline the creation and ordering of the various parts of the cosmos, with the creation of humans as the climax and the day of rest as a celebrative closure.”\textsuperscript{305} Therefore, the seventh day text makes a great inclusion to 1:1—2:3 account progression. This is

\textsuperscript{303} Hamilton, “The Book of Genesis”, 2.


\textsuperscript{305} Habel, “Geophany,” 34.
because the key terms in the narrative that is ‘created, God, the heavens, the earth’ occurs again in 2:1-3 but this time in a reverse order.\textsuperscript{306}

Against this background, the researcher follows the suggestions of scholars who consider 1:1—2:3 a literary unit.

\textbf{4.3 Structure of Genesis 1:1—2:3}

Different structures are proposed by scholars for the text under study. Based on the days of creation and the various activities which happened on each day, Boaz concurs that the Priestly account has been literary organized in accordance with its six corresponding days of creation: Day 1 (1:1-5) God created the heavens and the earth, night and day, followed by the Day 2 (1:6-8) the creation of the sky and the sea and the creation of the firmament. Day 3 (1:9-13) was next with the creation of land and vegetation (sea, earth and plant life).\textsuperscript{307} Then came Day 4 (1:14-19) the creation of the stars, the sun and the moon which is then proceeded by Day 5 (1:24-31) the creation of seas creatures and birds, and all living creatures that fly and those that live in water. The 6\textsuperscript{th} Day (1:24-31) saw the creation of living creatures, that is, animals and humans and the dominion mandate given to human beings to dominate creation. Day 7 (2:1-3), the Shabbat, concluded the structure.\textsuperscript{308} Furthermore, Brown\textsuperscript{309} and Ramey\textsuperscript{310} divide the six days in two parallel groups of three.\textsuperscript{311} The six days chronological order of the narrative lines up to create two matching columns. Days 1-3 form one parallel on the left column which

\textsuperscript{306} Ramey, “Literary Analysis,” 3.
\textsuperscript{309} Brown, \textit{The Seven Pillars}, 20-21.
\textsuperscript{310} Ramey, “Literary Analysis,” 2-7.
\textsuperscript{311} Brown calls it the “Genesis code due to the symmetry between the domains and its members”. Brown, \textit{The Seven Pillars}, 38.
establishes the cosmic domains of the text. These are then filled in the right column with various entities or characters of the narrative. The entities to be populated are found in day 4-6.  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Days of Forming</th>
<th>Days of Filling</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. “Let there be light” (1:3).</td>
<td>4. “Let there be lights” (1:14).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. “Let there be an expanse in the midst of the water, and let it separate the waters from the waters” (1:6).</td>
<td>5. “Let the waters teem with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth in the open expanse of the heavens” (1:20).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3a “Let dry ground appear” (1:9).</td>
<td>6a “Let the earth bring forth living creatures” (1:24). Let us make man” (1:26).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3b “Let the land produce vegetation” (1:11).</td>
<td>6b “Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is on the surface of all the earth, and every tree which has fruit yielding seed, it shall be food for you” (1:29).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1: The Literary Analysis of the Six Days of Creation by Ramey

The left column, through the establishment of a distinct domain, gives form to the creation narrative. For example, in day 1 there was light, then came day 3 causing a climax whereby there is the growth of vegetation on the land. Therefore, the left column “concluding act vividly changes the earth’s primordial condition from its formless state of barrenness.” Thus, the progression from day 1 to day 3 expresses that the earth is no longer formless and void (יהוּה רָעָה) but rather a plant bearing land to sustain life on the earth. The right column, that is days 4-6, “fill these domains with their respective

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313 Ibid., 5.  
314 Brown, The Seven Pillars, 38.  
315 Ibid.
inhabitants, comprising celestial bodies to human beings. Additionally, on days 5-6 creative acts change the primordial state of creation from emptiness to fullness.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day 1 (1:3–5)</th>
<th>Day 4 (1:14–19)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Light</td>
<td>Lights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 2 (1:6–8)</td>
<td>Day 5 (1:20–23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Firmament</td>
<td>Aviary life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waters below</td>
<td>Marine life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day 3 (1:9–13)</td>
<td>Day 6 (1:24–31)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land</td>
<td>Land animals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetation</td>
<td>Humans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Food</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Genesis Code (1)**

TABLE 4.2 The Literary Analysis of the Six Days of Creation by William P Brown

However, some unpredictable variations in the narrative leave the literary structure of the text exposed to some criticisms. Questions have been raised as to why there was the creation of plants on day 3 and not on day 6 since grouping the vegetations alongside living beings makes more sense than with the earth. Likewise, it can be assessed from Table 4.1 that day 7 has no correspondent.

Furthermore, as a narrative text, it is upon the characters in the text that form the basis on which a literary corresponding structure of the text based on days is developed.

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317 Ibid.
318 Ibid., 38-39.
320 “By its presence, the tight six-day symmetry of the Priestly account of creation is broken. Nevertheless, this distinctly odd day does establish a vertical correspondence to creation’s initial, pre-creative condition, as described in 1:2, which one could call paradoxically Day 0.” Brown, *The Seven Pillars*, 39.
Characters such as God, humanity and the earth cannot be ignored in its analysis especially in the area of ecological hermeneutics. Again, it is based on these characters that key Hebrew verbs in the narrative have received much debate in the churches and globally in the area of ecological crisis. Some of the them are: dominion, subdue, be fruitful and multiply, created in the image of God and the sabbath. Scholars such as

322 Brown, *The Seven Pillars*, 39. Additionally, Brown asserts that the pericope’s structure is more of an ‘itemized list’ of events that took place in each day of creation than being a ‘flowing narrative’ about creation. The seventh day constitutes the climax of the narrative.

Habe, Horrell, Rogerson, Hiebert and Gatti among others, have all centred their ecological analysis of the text on these characters in relation to the verbs.

In terms of the relationship between humankind and the environment, the most widely used by scholars has been Gen. 1:26-28:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genesis 1:26: Then God said, &quot;Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.&quot;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| סְלָלֵמוֹת כְּפַרְוּתִין וְרֹכְבָּר בְּרִיתֵנוּ | נָבַרְם אֶלְלוֹת בְּשַׁחַת אָרֶץ
| מְשַׁפְּחוֹת וְבְבוּמַתָּה בָּכֵלְרָהָרָא | נָבַרְם בָּכֵלְרָהָרָא
| לְכָלְו בְּשַׁחַת | נָבַרְם אֶלְלוֹת | אָלֵוהִים | אָלֵוהִים

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genesis 1:27: God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| הָאֲרָם בָּכֵלְרָהָרָא | נָבַרְם אֶלְלוֹת
| בָּכֵלְרָהָרָא | נָבַרְם אֶלְלוֹת | אָלֵוהִים | אָלֵוהִים

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genesis 1:28: And God blessed them, and God said to them, &quot;Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.&quot;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| נָבַרְם לְכָלְו בָּכֵלְרָהָרָא | נָבַרְם אֶלְלוֹת
| בָּכֵלְרָהָרָא | נָבַרְם אֶלְלוֹת | אָלֵוהִים | אָלֵוהִים

Against this background, the present research adopts a structure motivated by narrative criteria based on the six days parallel structure of Wenham, Mckeown and Okyere. Following the movements in the narrative from the various day to day activities of creation and moving from one character to the other, the researcher was able to observe how the author used narrative as a theological tool to unearth the meaning

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324 Habel, *The Birth, the Curse*, 140.
325 Horrell, *The Bible and the Environment*, 158.
329 Ibid.
331 Mckeown, *Genesis*, 1-3.
of the text in relation to the environment by concentrating on the sixth day of creation (1:26-28). The researcher included also the seventh day in his analysis because it is considered the narrative climax of creation (1:30—2:3).

The proposed structure is therefore divided into three thematic sections:

1. Narrative setting (1:1-25)
2. Dominion Mandate (1:26-30)

4.4 The Narrative setting

The opening words of the Hebrew scripture, “In the beginning God created Heaven and the Earth” (1:1), and the “canonical position as the opening of the scripture has of course be of enormous influence and underpins the Christian doctrine of creation.” Since the beginning of the Renaissance, Genesis 1 and 2 have received much public debate in terms of its authenticity, whether they contain a historical or scientific account of the origin of earth. The current rise of ecological crisis has placed further challenge to the narrative of the first creation account.

The narrative of the Priestly account of creation begins with the opening account (1:1-5) of God creating the heavens and the earth. The earth was formless and empty: creation work “it is a matter of bringing order from and life to what was previously formless.” According to Horrell, some Old Testament texts, such as Psalms 74:12-17 and 89:8-14 present the creation as a battle between God and chaos. In our

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334 Ibid.
335 Questions has been asked about its readings and interpretation in its relationship to humanity and their environment: Ibid., 23-27.
opinion, the imagery cannot be seen in Genesis 1. The narrative is then followed by God’s call: “let there be light:” from there a series of events takes place by making the earth come to life through God’s ordering and separation of realities. Light is separated from darkness to form day and night, each with its allocated time that is evening and morning.

The narrative continues in day 2 with the creation of an expanse (םוֹרֵךְ) to separate the waters (מים) from the waters. God named the firmament heaven (שמים). From verses 9-10, the water, under the sky was gathered into one place, paving the way for the dry land to appear. The dry land was named earth (ארץ), and the gathering of the waters (מים). From the dry land came the beginning of life: the land brought about vegetations (ו 11-12). In verses 20-23, there was the creation of sea creatures and the birds which fly in the skies. God blessed them, saying, “Be fruitful, multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let the winged creatures increase on the earth.”

Okyere described the narrative from day 2 to 5 as ‘concentric progressive’ because, God spoke entities into being, assessed them, undertook some form of arrangement on the created entities, and named them. A temporal framework was in this process superimposed on the act of creation, revealing the systematic and orderly progression of God’s coordinated actions. Though these actions were repeated in the creation of different entities, the narratives indicate they were purposeful. Obviously, the narrator was very much interested in the order with which God carried out creation.

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337 Some scholars, such as Fretheim, believes that it is in the background of the narrative. Ibid., 24.
339 Horrell postulates that the Hebrew word שמים can be translated as sky as such we should be mindful in our spiritual reference to the word ‘heaven’ traditionally we have perceived heaven to mean a place prepared for faithful servants to live with God. Hence reading the word שמים in the context of Genesis 1 should not be viewed as a heavenly abode for God’s children but rather as a sky. Ibid., 24.
Day 6 marks the creation of animals living on the land. These were grouped into three types namely livestock, wild animals, and the animals that crawl on the ground (vv. 24-25).

Following the creation of אָדָם, the narrative takes a unique approach specifying that humans were created in the image (אֵל) and likeness (רֵאשֻׁת) of Elohim. Again, God blesses אָדָם with the command to be fruitful (ברא) and multiply (בראשית, vv. 22 and 28), just as the sea creatures and the birds. Humanity received the blessing and commission to have dominion (דומד) over all living creatures and subdue (תחום) the earth. Surprisingly although humanity was given the mandate to rule, they as well as animals are given plants for food.

The narrative is unified by the repetition of the word טוב (‘good’: v. 4,10,12,18,21,25,31). The verse 31 sums up the whole narrative by emphatically stating that ‘God saw everything that he has made and behold, it was very good’ (v. 31). Interestingly, in spite of the uniqueness of the creation of humans and the mandate given to humanity, the word טוב was not said of in reference to humanity.

Concerning the usage of טוב we cannot ascribe the meaning of morally good. Possibly, it means “good for achieving its purpose.” Hence, perfection refers more to the purpose and the harmony in creation than to its beauty of the entire cosmos. The narrative ends with God blessing creation and resting on the seventh day, the narrative climax, which celebrates the origin and the importance of the Sabbath. The following section then focuses on the most controversial verses as found in 26-28

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342 Horrell, The Bible and the Environment, 24-25.
343 Ibid.
344 Ibid.
345 Ibid, 25.
4.5 Textual Analysis

The section focuses on analysing the text following the structure presented above. Narrative Criticism, as proposed by Powell, is employed for analysing the text. The method examines words, phrases, metaphors, and narrative features used in the narrative for better understanding of the text.

4.5.1 The Dominion Mandate

The popularity of the dominion reading in Christianity has earned it a ‘doctrinal’ name, the ‘dominion mandate.’ According to Gatti the bone of contention has been the meaning of the verb רדיש and יבש (1:26, 28). These verbs have been used to emphasis the anthropocentric and dualistic reading of the text which Lynn White and others believe are the basics for human beings to neglect the care for other creatures. However, to understand their meaning, it is important to analyse how they are used in the narrative.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genesis 1:26: Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Genesis 1:28: And God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over every living thing that moves upon the earth.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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346 Powell, *Narrative Criticism*, 239.
349 Gatti, “Setting the Agenda,” 150.
A. Image (חיה) and likeness (חכמה) of God

The creation of humans in Genesis is unique due to these two instances in the narrative: the use of a cohortative verb in the first person plural form (נַעֲשֶׂה), and the use of the syntagma ‘our image and likeness’ (וּבְצֵלָנוּ כִּדְמֹת). Therefore, the uniqueness of human beings places them in creation as a distinctively theophanic beings. Quoting Brown, “God lacks a blatantly anthropomorphic profile in Genesis 1, humanity is unequivocally ‘theomorphic’ by design.”

The use of “Let us make” has provoked a debate among scholars. Some consider the plural form as referred to the divine assembly of heavenly council, often found in OT text (cf. 1 Kings 22:19-23; Job 1:6-12, 21:1-6), where God speaks to heavenly bodies, angels as well as ‘sons of God’ as used in the book of Job. Hence the consultation of the ‘heavenly council’ by Elohim represents a collaborated effort in the creation of human beings which makes the creation of humans a significant moment in the creation process.

Mckeown adopts a different position. He believes that this attribution is problematic, because it implies that humans are not solely created in the image of God, but also in the image of other heavenly beings. He states that a Christian interpretation of the plural will conclude that God had a consultation with the Trinity to create humankind.

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351 Brown, The Seven Pillars of Creation, 42.
352 ~l,c occurs 17 times in the scriptures. However, on 10 occasions it means a representation of a physical image (Number 33:52, 1 Samuel 6:5). Again, on 2 instances “it compares man’s existence to a shadow (Ps. 39:6, 39:7); and the other 5 are the Genesis references to man being (in) the image of God (1:26,27; 5:3; 9:6).” Wenham perceives the verb to be problematic because on 17 occurrences, 10 refers to various pictures of men (Ezekiel 16:17) or idols (Numbers 33:52) Psalm 39:7, 77:20 likens man’s existence to an image of shadow. And the other 5 (Gen 1:26,27,5:3, 9:6). Wenham, Genesis 1-15, 9-60.
353 Brown, The Seven Pillars, 42.
354 Westermann thinks such a concept lies in the trinity doctrine of the ecclesia. However, the phrase being interpreted as a body of heavenly council has been widely accepted or as what the original author meant in the narrative. Wenham, Genesis 1-15, 9-60.
355 Brown, The Seven Pillars, 41-42.
However, he considered the interpretation ‘anachronistic.’\(^{356}\) Wenham suggests that God was rather addressing himself, that is his spirit, portrayed his active involvement in creation (1:2).\(^{357}\) In addition, Proverbs 8 referred to ‘wisdom’ as God’s partner in creation.\(^{358}\)

On this note, Mckeown concurs with Clines that “it is perhaps not inconceivable that the Spirit could have been similarly thought of by the author of Genesis as another ‘person' within the divine being.”\(^ {359}\) However, the use of a singular verb in verse 27 implies that God worked alone in creation. Therefore, the researcher concludes that the phrase can be considered as God’s proclamation to heavenly bodies about his next creation.\(^ {360}\) In light of this, it can be seen as a narrative tool employed by the writer to announce to his readers the relevance of what follow, that is, the creation of a being in his image and likeness.

Brown discussed four interrelated ways by which the term ‘image’ can be used to understand the relationship that links human beings to God.\(^ {361}\)

**Essentialist Link:** The researcher re-expresses the idea as the ‘Genealogy of the Imago Dei’. The idea is associated with the use of the syntagma in 5:3: “When Adam had lived a hundred and thirty years, he became the father of a son in his own likeness, after his image, and named him Seth”. Although this has been thought to represent the physical resemblance of a son to his father,\(^ {362}\) Schmidt argues “The biblical writer was hardly

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\(^{361}\) Brown, *The Seven Pillars*, 42.

interested in the child’s appearance; he was saying something about the father reappearing in the son and being perpetuated in him – which is very close to the meaning the functional interpretation ascribes to ‘image’ in Genesis 1:26-28.”

The general analogy as expressed by the Priestly narrator can, therefore, means that Seth bears the image of his father Adam, as Adam bears the image of his father/creator Elohim. Therefore, as long as humans are descendants of Adam, the image of God can never be lost because we will continue to have resemblance with God which we will pass on to the next generations.

*Functional Link:* “The image is to be understood not so much ontologically as existentially: it comes to expression not in the nature of man so much as in his activity and function.”

The same concept is expressed by scholars such as Von Rad and Wildberger, when they state: “Dominion is not the image but the immediate consequence of the image.”

Hence, the *Imago Dei* in the narrative symbolizes humanity’s role or place in the created world. The interpretation is based on a common concept present in ANE, of the ‘king’ venerated as image of the divinity. The priestly narrator broadened the royal imaginary applying it to ‘humans’ (man and woman), hence giving humanity a royal status.

Brown considers the process as a ‘democratizing’ move on the part of the biblical narrator. Additionally, the Hebrew syntax confirms the ‘functional’ interpretation: the conjunction *ָָּי* followed by an imperfect (*וָּאֵת*), usually expresses the purpose of the

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364 Brown, *The Seven Pillars*, 42.
366 Ibid., 318.
368 Hart, “Genesis 1:1-2:3,” 318. Extra biblical materials as the contemporary Assyrian and Egyptian texts proclaim that since the spirit of a god lives in a statue means the image or statue can be a kind of a representative of a god for a particular group of people.
preceding verb. Hart confirms the functioning interpretation because the ‘image’ as articulated in the narrative do not fall “on man’s inner spiritual qualities or his communion with God but on his position and task of having dominion over the natural world.”

Summing up, the text suggests that exercising royal dominion over the earth as God’s representative is the basic purpose for which God created human. Hence, a thorough reflection must rather be centred on human beings as God’s delegates on earth. The ‘privilege’ given to man implied the responsibility to care for creation. Hart supported his argument quoting Psalm 72, which presents a long list of how a king should rule and care for the wellbeing of his people.

Status link: In the ANE literature, “human beings were created by the gods in order to do the hard and menial tasks that the gods did not wish to undertake themselves.” However, the Priestly narrator do not share in this view of humans as slaves to God. The narrator perceives humanity as embodying the image of Elohim, thus as His reflectors in the world. Therefore, humanity created in the imago Dei is to bestow dignity upon them: this was missing in the creation narrative of Israel’s ancient neighbours. Hence the divine image in humans have nothing to do with human superiority over the rest of creation.

Gender Link. The expression זכר ונקבה (male and female he created them,” v. 27) casts a glare on what actually constitute God’s own image. Quoting Brown,

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369 Brown, The Seven Pillars, 319-320.
371 Ibid., 322-323.
373 Brown, The Seven Pillars, 43.
Genesis 1 seems to suggest that humanity’s relational and reproductive capacities reflect in some attenuated way the communal and generative dimensions of the divine. Moreover, along with the so-called democratization of the imago there is also its diversification. Created as male and female, God’s image is differentiated. However, differentiation does not indicate inequality. The creation of male and female in the image of God signifies the equality that existed between them. Thus, both man and woman are special in relationship to God, and like all living beings were blessed with the power to ‘multiply and fill’ the earth.

B. The verb הָרִים (To ‘Rule’)

Several explanations have been expressed as to how humans are to ‘rule’ as the consequences of the dominion mandate. The verb is quoted in several instances, for example as the reason why humans are morally right to experiment on animals, exploit the line through mining activities, or overfishing. It is being employed as mandate to exercise stewardship care towards creation. Moreover, scholars such as Erickson and Isaacs argue for a wider understanding of the verb: “we should exercise dominion over our personalities and abilities.” The short literature review indicates the difficulty of

375 Brown, The Seven Pillars, 44.
376 Ibid., 44.
377 Devadass, Towards Responsible Stewardship, 23. Comparing with the second creation account, he concludes that the creation of woman from the rib bone of a man indicates that they are one flesh and not two entities and this is an “incomparable element of communion in the nature of the human being”
378 Devadass, Towards Responsible Stewardship, 42-43.
379 In terms of “be multiply and be fruitful,” Hamilton proclaims it implies procreation. That is, he asserts that God gave two commands to humanity in verse 28 The first is to procreate and the second is to have dominion. Therefore, the scholar contends that the command is similar to that of the animals in v. 22. Hamilton, “The Book of Genesis,” 135-150. On the other hand, Wenham states that the phrase is a blessing signifying a personal relationship between man and God. Thus, he argues that whereas in v. 22 God simply gave a command to the animals to be fruitful and multiply, however in v. 28 the phraseology justifies the notion that it draws attention to the unique relationship existing between God and humans as it has been already stated. For instance, there are scriptures pointing to this personal relationship God has with humankind. God has constantly in Genesis promised humans an ‘implicit’ blessing to be able to fulfill their fruitfulness. For example, the phrase is repeated to Noah in Genesis 9:1, and in other areas such as (17:2, 35:11) among others. Wenham, Genesis 1-15, 9-60.
381 Smaje, “Genesis,” 184.
382 Millard J. Erickson, Christian Theology, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 529.
383 Isaacs, “Is There a Dominion Mandate ?”, 2.
interpreting the verb הָדַּר due to the fact that the root assumes several meanings in different contexts.\(^{384}\)

The verb הָדַּר appears twenty-two times in the Tanak in the Qal stem and, in most instances, it represents human beings relationship with their subordinates.\(^{385}\) Examples of such texts are Leviticus 25:43, 46, 53, ‘rule’ of a master over a hired servant; Psalm 72:8; 110:2, ‘rule’ of a king over his subjects, etc.\(^{386}\)

The primary meaning of הָדַּר is, therefore, authority, power, control, rule among others (cf. also 1 Kings 4:24, 5:16).\(^{387}\) In other instances, the tone of the verb is very harsh as in Ezekiel 34:4 which represents harshly and forcibly ruling the weak. However, in Leviticus 25 the verb does not signifies a master harshly ruling over his servants.\(^{388}\) The semantic field of the verb in pact includes “accompanying, shepherding, leading, commanding.”\(^{389}\) For this reason, according to Alter, the basic meaning of הָדַּר is not ‘rule’, but a responsible governance as the ruling of Solomon in 1 Kings 5 and the one of the just king portrayed in Psalm 72.\(^{390}\) Therefore, Hamilton conclusively argues that הָדַּר implies responsibly caring for what is to be ruled.\(^{391}\)

In the context of the creation narrative, the verb does not manifest the sense of exploitation.\(^{392}\) Besides in 1:30 seed-bearing plants and fruits were granted to both animals

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\(^{384}\) Isaacs, “Is There a Dominion Mandate ?” 2-3.


\(^{386}\) Hamilton, “The Book of Genesis,” 130-140.

\(^{387}\) Alter, Genesis, 6.

\(^{388}\) Humanitv privilege to rule over creation gives them no power to exploit and subjugate creation. Humans are rather commanded to responsibly care for creation. In ancient times it was the responsibility of kings to uphold divine principles and laws in the governing of the poor and weak. They were task to devote to the social and economic welfare of their subjects (Ps 72:12-14). The same way humans are commanded to rule creation as a benevolent king of the ancient times. Wenham, Genesis I-15, 9-60.

\(^{389}\) Ibid., 22.


\(^{391}\) Ibid., 130-140.

\(^{392}\) Gatti, “Setting the Agenda,” 150-151.
and humans as such, there is no competition for these resources as God’s gift is in abundance.\(^{393}\)

‘Dominion mandate’ in the Priestly account is, therefore, far from any “modernity’s well-known triumphalistic anthropology”\(^{394}\): it is characterized by a collaborative manner of life and sustaining practices which Elohim has laid down in creation.\(^{395}\) It expresses a service to a harmonious community flourishing without any reciprocal exploitation.\(^{396}\) Various approaches are proposed by scholars, to validate this positive meaning of the verb.\(^{397}\)

1. *Intertextual Reading*: Psalm 8:7-9 has been described as alluding to Genesis 1:26. According to Bowie, Psalm 8 emphasizes on the notion that God created a beautiful world and all that is within it is good. The wonders of God present in Psalm 8:3 indicate that creation is perfect, and everything was created to serve a purpose.\(^{398}\) Hence, the expression נֶאֱוָה יְבַלְּנָה represents the majestic framework of God’s creation. Moreover, the use of the verb in Psalm 8 expresses humanity as God’s delegated appointees, created in His image and, therefore, have dominion mandate over the rest of creation.\(^{399}\)

In this context, the Psalmist replaces the verb רָדֹד with its synonym mashal מַשַּׁל (cf. 1 Chron. 29; Psa. 145:13, 15-16)

From these texts we can conclude that in the biblical perception, God not ‘human’ is the ruler of creation therefore, the text cannot be anthropocentric. Humans ‘rule’ creation as God’s subordinates, under His authority and with his style of leadership, he is the creator, not the exploiter or the destroyer.

\(^{393}\) Brown, *The Seven Pillars*, 47.

\(^{394}\) Ibid., 47.

\(^{395}\) Brown, *The Seven Pillars*, 47.

\(^{396}\) Ibid., 47-48.

\(^{397}\) Stead, “To Rule Over,” 13-23.


\(^{399}\) Gatti, “Setting the Agenda,” 150.
2. **Comparison with the Yahwist Creation Account.** The second creation account shows how human beings are to have dominion and subdue the earth.\(^{400}\) In fact, in Genesis 2:5-15, humans are commanded by God to work and care for the land.\(^{401}\) The verse 5 signifies that God had the intention of creating Adam to be the gardener of creation or as Calvin writes it, “assistant of nature.”\(^{402}\) The text further explains how humans were formed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genesis 1:27</th>
<th>Genesis 2:7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>וֹיִּיבְּרָָ֙א אֱלֹהִִּ֤ים׀ א ת־הַָֽאָדָם בְּצ לְּמ֔</td>
<td>Then the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the earth and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>הבָּ֣רָּא אֱלֹהִֵּ֖ים בָּ֣אֹתֵ֑וּ זָכֶָׂ֥ר וּנְּק בֵָ֖ה</td>
<td>God created human in the image of himself, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Unlike the Priestly account where humanity was created in the *imago Dei*, in the Yahwist account man was created from the *imago terrae*, in the image of the ground. The narrative emphasized that אתֵֵּּ֖ה אָדָ֖ם (Adam) was created from אָדָּמִים (ground), as the plants and animals (vv. 9:19). The narrative signifies that there is no difference in the creation of humanity and the other creatures. Quoting Gatti, the Yahwist account therefore guides the reader to a deeper understanding of the human relationship with nature.

While the Priestly writer distinguishes humanity from the rest of nature, by describing humans alone as made in God’s image, the Yahwist seems intent on showing that humans are not to be distinguished at all, neither from the Earth itself nor from any other form of life.\(^{403}\)

3. **Reading the Text in its Literary Context.** Whereas the verb רְדוֹ נָ לָּה read outside Genesis 1 can emphasis on the idea that humans are to exploit creation, it discloses a different

\(^{400}\) Stead, “To Rule Over,” 13-23.

\(^{401}\) Ibid.


\(^{403}\) Gatti, “Setting the Agenda”, 151.
meaning when read in its literary context.\textsuperscript{404} Gatti observes that the syntax of v. 26 is a signal in this direction. She proposes to interpret the particle \textit{we} not as a conjunction — “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; \textit{and} let them have dominion over the fish of the sea ...” (NRSV) but as \textit{waw} explicatum: “Let us make humankind in our image to resemble us \textit{so that} they may take charge of the fish of the sea ...” (NEV).\textsuperscript{405} Therefore, humans exercise their dominion not as autonomous rulers, but only as God’s representatives in creation.\textsuperscript{406} Humans power originates from being created in the image of God. Therefore, the power bestowed on humanity is a delegated power. Hence humans are accountable to God because they exercise the dominion mandate not as independent rulers of earth but as God’s representatives in creation.\textsuperscript{407}

As Hiebert states,

\begin{quote}
This representative status has profound implications. If humans rule nature as God’s representatives, then they are delegated to govern nature as God would, the God who created nature to flourish and who valued everything in nature as good (Gen 1:4,10,12,17, 21, 25, 31). Such a role grants human no right to exploit creation, but rather gives them the responsibility to ensure that everything God called good flourishes.\textsuperscript{408}
\end{quote}

4. Interpreting the Text in its Historical Context\textsuperscript{409}

The ‘total control’ of humanity on the environment is a modern concept, absent in ancient time. The medieval western Christians, for example, refer the dominion mandate to the kind of use of other creatures and the environment that were normal in their time, such as farming, building, hunting, mining among others.\textsuperscript{410} They firmly believed that it is God only who have total control over the world, not humanity: “It was Francis

\textsuperscript{404} Gatti, “Setting the Agenda”, 150.
\textsuperscript{405} Ibid., 151.
\textsuperscript{407} Brown, \textit{The Seven Pillars}, 41-44.
\textsuperscript{408} Hiebert, “Reclaiming the World,” 348.
\textsuperscript{409} Horrell, \textit{The Bible and the Environment}, 26-29.
\textsuperscript{410} Bauckham, \textit{Bible and Ecology}, 6.
Bacon in the seventeenth century who hijacked the Genesis text to authorize the project of scientific knowledge and technological exploitation whose exercises have given us the ecological crisis."411

For this reason, scholars affirm that the text needs to be read in the worldview of the original context. James Barr, for example, in its response to White’s claim, manifests the opinion that the Hebrew terms used in Genesis 1:26-28 are not as strong as it had been perceived in contemporary times.412 In his opinion, there is no way the biblical account of creation would command or give humans the license to exploit creation. Rather it guides humans towards a “duty to respect and to protect.”413 In fact,

there is much less direct connection between biblical faith and modern science than has been recently believed in some theological currents. The Jewish-Christian doctrine of creation is therefore much less responsible for ecological crisis that is suggested by arguments such as those of Lynn White.414

Likewise, Norbert Lohfink in his interpretation of Genesis 1:28 postulates that the blessing in the verse refers to God’s plan that nations take possession of their own territories indicating the establishment of peaceful coexistence.415 Mark Brett concurs by stating that the text is a reflection of the ancient agrarian setting, whereby the possession of land and the domesticating of animals were essential in the life of humans.416 Hence the dominion over animals, stated in the text implies, that human beings are to be able to deal with real threats from wild animals “and the desire to control or remove such threats to human wellbeing.”417

411 Bauckham, Bible and Ecology, 6.
413 Horrell, The Bible and the Environment, 27.
414 Ibid., 27.
416 Mark G. Brett, “Earthing the Human in Genesis 1-3,” 73–86.
Bernhard Anderson claims that the narrative does not centre on humanity, but rather on the earth. Hence creation cannot be said to be anthropocentric. Humans share with other forms of living creatures an earthly habitation in which humanity’s dominion mandate simply implies their capacity to populate the earth.  

More so, in the ancient world, the verb רדס belongs to a cluster of common ideas where the notion of a ruler and shepherd were linked together. Therefore, the ancient idea of רדס when applied to the context of Genesis 1 implies tender sympathetic rule.

C. The verb חשב

The command ‘to subdue the land’ is another phraseology causing interpretational problems. The Hebrew verb חשב, which has fourteen occurrences in the Hebrew bible, has a range of meanings. The commonest ones, however, have been subjugate, tame among others. The verb has a forceful connotation in its meaning. Quoting Garr, … kabash (subdue) is a harsh term that empowers, in this case, human beings to control, occupy, and subjugate a vast area by an exercise of mighty force. The ‘image’ entitles humankind to achieve decisive victory over the entire natural world. Stated differently, humankind will act like a victorious king over a conquered land.

Outside Genesis 1 the verb can be found in 2 Chronicles 28:10, Nehemiah 5:5 where it indicates subjugating of someone into slavery. It can represent physical abuse, assault and even rape (Esther 7:8; Jeremiah 34:11).

However, it is problematic to associate the meaning of חשב in these texts to that of the creation narrative. In Gen. 1, in fact, the object of the verb is not a human being but

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420 Ibid., 21-30.
the land. Therefore, it expresses to “occupy or to take possession” (cf. Numbers 32:22, 29, Joshua 18:1, 1 Chronicles 22:18). If the ‘violent action’ requires defeating the enemies who previously occupied the land, “the land itself has only to be possessed. It is not itself an energy to be forcibly subjugated.”

Again, whereas the land is to be subdued by humans, it is to be filled by humanity. Bauckham comments that the relation between the two actions manifests that “subduing the land is likely to be referring to agriculture, since the only way humans will be able to fill the land is by cultivating it to yield more food”. He further states that the forceful element of the term subdue may not be intrinsic, but in reference to the fact that humans are to cultivate the land. Therefore, quoting Buckham,

“Agriculture makes the difference between fish and birds on the one hand and people on the other. Without agriculture the land does not produce enough food for humans to fill it. Since God’s command to humanity is not only that they should multiply, but that they should do so to the extent of filling the land, they must also subdue the land.”

Another way of interpreting the text is studying the role of humanity in creation. Ragnor Kinzelbach, a German environmental scientist seeking to deal with the current environmental crisis, outlined a strategy, called “The Ecological Development.” It states that humanity must first emancipate from nature, before human beings and the world can be saved.

Questions can be raised against what constitute human values to the environment. The global ecological crisis asserts that human values steering the natural environment is greed and exploitation of the environment. This is not what consists of the human values

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426 Ibid.
427 Ibid.
428 Ibid.
towards the environment, however. Kinzelbach employed Exodus 23:9-12 as a framework in scrutinizing what institutes human values in creation.

The point of departure is “a challenge to create a human society that will be capable of living in a world that is the kind of world that God intends” and one way of achieving this is by applying the attitude to the natural world found in Exodus 23:9-12.

The passage’s first command was that the Israelites must graciously deal with strangers, which reminded them that they were strangers in Egypt. Besides, it was the unconditional love of God that made them flee from slavery in Egypt. Therefore, a gracious God desires from His people to do likewise by showing compassion and generosity to strangers.

Kinzelbach linked the generosity the Israelites must show towards strangers to include the natural world. The following points are lessons from the passage:

1. *Showing gracious compassion to others* as well as the natural order.

2. *Living in harmony with nature.* According to Kinzelbach “The origins of the sabbatical year for agriculture have been sought in ancient practices that set a boundary against the extent to which humans could use nature for their own purposes,” a practice that signifies the concern to care and appreciate God’s creations.

3. *Keeping the Sabbath day and making it holy.* The sabbath day in this context emphasizes on the need for the land, animals and humans to rest. This represents an act of respect to the slave and even the animals who work hard all week. Other passages such

431 Ibid., 29.
432 Ibid., 29-30.
433 Ibid., 62.
as Deuteronomy 20:19-20 and Deuteronomy 22 disclose the compassionate love that humanity must show towards nature.\textsuperscript{434}

From the resultant discussion, it became clear that ‘subdue’ does not imply human’s exploitation of nature but rather exercising a gracious compassion towards God’s creation. Kinzerbach’s arguments lie on the fact that if we are to deal with the ecological crisis and save the world, then we “need a new concept of the nature of humanity and the structure of the world community.”\textsuperscript{435}

In contemporary times, people may not have slaves and animals working tirelessly for their owners in our fields, but it is up to humans to think of values that will characterize our attitude towards the environment. This implies that our reading of Genesis must challenge our ecological consciousness.\textsuperscript{436}

4.5.2 The Sabbath

On the seventh day, God rested and it signifies a Sabbath from work.\textsuperscript{437} Elohim’s rest on the seventh day is a significant conclusion of the six days of creation.\textsuperscript{438} Mckeown argues that the statement “God rested from all His work” does not imply that God was exhausted, hence He decided to take a break from creation. The verb should be translated as “to cease, desist” a more accurate rendering that ‘to rest’ (cf. Gen. 8:22; Jer. 31:36).\textsuperscript{439}

Against those who consider the creation of Adam, the centre of the first creation account, many scholars support the assertion that the Shabbat is the narrative climax. For

\textsuperscript{434} Rogerson, “The Creation Stories,” 30.
\textsuperscript{435} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{436} Ibid., 30-31.
\textsuperscript{437} Bishop, “Green Theology,” 8-14.
\textsuperscript{438} Habel, \textit{The Birth, the Curse}, 41.
\textsuperscript{439} Mckeown, \textit{Genesis}, 28-40.
example, Gatti observes that the rhetorical structure of the narrative indicates that the
text is clearly organized in temporal order, with the sequence of days patently indicated
by the author. The fourth day (vv. 14–18) forms the centre of the weekly structure of
the whole creation account. Its centrality, thematically and structurally, is underlined
by the elaborate discussion granted to the purpose of the luminaries, more detailed that
the one given to humanity.

God made the two great lights, the greater light to dominate the day and the lesser light
to dominate the night, and the stars. And God set them in the expanse of the sky to
shine upon the earth, to dominate the day and the night, and to separate light from
darkness. And God saw that this was good. And there was evening and there was morn-
ing, a fourth day (Gen. 1:16-19).

Therefore, the seven-day structure and the emphasis on time seems to indicate that the
Sabbath, rather than humanity, is the crown of creation. The first, fourth and seventh
days are devoted exclusively to the creation of rhythms, and the importance of the Sab-
bath is underlined by the exclusive attribution of sanctity to it. Elohim not only blesses
the Sabbath, as he blesses other creatures, he also sanctifies it. Consequently, the
priestly account of the creation cannot be considered an anthropocentric text but per-
haps a “Shabbat-centred narrative.”

The question is, what lies in the seventh day marked as day of rest, and how significant
it is to the environmental crisis. To understand the meaning of the Shabbat, the fol-
lowing paragraph explore the meaning of the Jubilee year, and the criticisms moved by
scholars to the biblical concept of Sabbath.

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There are three connecting texts, outside Genesis 1, that have been classified as contributing to the explanation of the meaning of הָסַר.444 One of the most significant is Leviticus 25, a text that deals with the Jubilee year, the year of הָסַר for the Jews.445 The sabbath year presented in Leviticus 25 has been recognized to mean a sabbatical year for the land.446 The sabbath is connected to allowing the land to fallow for a period of time before cultivating it.447 The narrative of Leviticus 25:1-7 states,

The LORD spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai, saying: 2 Speak to the people of Israel and say to them: When you enter the land that I am giving you, the land shall observe a sabbath for the LORD. 3 Six years you shall sow your field, and six years you shall prune your vineyard, and gather in their yield; 4 but in the seventh year there shall be a sabbath of complete rest for the land, a sabbath for the LORD: you shall not sow your field or prune your vineyard. 5 You shall not reap the aftergrowth of your harvest or gather the grapes of your unpruned vine: it shall be a year of complete rest for the land. 6 You may eat what the land yields during its sabbath – you, your male and female slaves, your hired and your bound laborers who live with you; 7 for your livestock also, and for the wild animals in your land all its yield shall be for food”.

The following can be observed from the narrative. The Lord gave a command to Moses to speak to the Israelites concerning these matters.

1. Their new land should observe a הָסַר.

2. The Lord explained the הָסַר to mean a complete rest for the land. It implies not cultivating the land and not harvesting the plantation. They should work for six years but on the seventh year should be set for the observation of the Lord’s sabbath.

3. The whole idea implies that a sabbath for the land includes a הָסַר for the animals and labourers or servants who work on the land.448

Furthermore, the following can also be inferred from the text:

God’s concern for the less privileged: The narrative indicates God’s command to the people that on the seventh day not only the land but also, the servants who work on the

446 Ibid., 327.
448 Ibid.,153-156.
land as well as the animals used in cultivating the land should rest. The Jubilee year is, therefore, a “year of liberation” in which slaves regain their freedom, debts are cancelled, and poor families recover their property and there is a sense of family unity. It is a year of radical transformation of the structures of oppression, a year of liberation and restoration.449

God’s purpose for creation: The text reveals God’s purpose for creation: a harmonious relationship between humans and the other creature. For this reason, “The essential element (of the sabbath) is that human relations be based on justice and love.”450 The text indicates the path to liberation: equality for all.451 The text expounds that God is sovereign and the creator of the land, and as such the land belongs to God and not to human. In this context the gift of land signifies the “sacrament of his caring attitude towards his people.”452

The principle was implicit in the initial distribution of the land among the tribes of Israel, according to the number and size of the clans and families in each tribe (cf. Num. 26:52-56; Josh. 13-19). Measures well taken to correct the inequalities that have occurred as a result of social injustice or unpredictable factors,453 in order to return to the socio-economic equality that God desires.454

450 Ibid., 154.
451 The goal of Jubilee was to maintain the solidarity of the various clans in Israel by keeping alive the ideal of the equality of all Israelite citizens under the covenant», J.E. Hartley, Leviticus, Word Biblical Commentary, 4 (Dallas: Word Books, 1992), 443.
453 Wright specifies there can be all kinds of ‘neutral’ reasons why some people become wealthier and others poorer, “These may include harsh climatic conditions in one place; differences of soil fertility; insect attack or blight; lack of children; illness; effects of war in border regions; etc. The point is, poverty is not necessarily the result of injustice and oppression by the rich, even though that is the major reason highlighted by the prophets. The economic laws of Israel, however, were concerned to redress impoverishment, regardless of its causes,” Wright, God and Mammon, 149-150.
454 They constitute a sort of welfare system to relieve poverty and to restore the poor to dignified participation in the community. Following Wright’s analysis, we can list: gleaning right (Lev. 19:9-10; Deut. 24:19-22), control of debt (Exod. 22:25; Lev. 25:36; Deut. 23:19-20; 24:6.10), storage and distribution of the triennial tithe (Deut. 14:22-27; 26:12ff), sabbatical year (Exod. 23:11; Lev. 25:6; Deut. 15:1-3)
God’s continues liberation: From ancient time it has been of a great concern to God to liberate humanity from basic problems such as the love for material gains, the abuse of power and authority as well as the exploitation of the marginalized in the community.455

4.5.3 The Stewardship Model

A highly influential approach has been used to recover the text from a presentation of ‘humans’ as a supreme king ruling over creatures. The strategy has been to reinterpret the notion of human’s domination mandate in a concept known as the ‘stewardship model’. The model has provided a positive value for human interaction with their environment.456 One way of providing these positive values has been to analyse the texts against the background of the kinship ideas present in the Old Testament. In fact, kingly rule does not include dominion and exploitation. According to Westermann, a king in the ancient times is “personally responsible for the well-being and prosperity of those he rules.”457 He does not exploit his subordinates. Therefore, the kingly rule can be said to mean exercising a responsibility of care and protection.458

The model has been widely used by scholars and the ecclesiastic communities in promoting an attitude of care for the environment. Genesis 2:15 has been used to support the stewardship idea, reinterpreting Genesis 1:26-28 from a forcefully ruling on creation to taking care of it.459

For example, the Board for Social Responsibility of the General Synod of the church of England presents the concept of the Christian stewardship as follows:

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456 Horrell, The Bible and the Environment, 28-29.
457 Ibid.
458 Ibid.
459 Ibid.
We share and depend on the same world, with its finite and often non-renewable resources. Christians believe that this world belongs to God by creation, redemption and sustenance and that he has entrusted it to humankind, made in his image and responsible to him, we are in the position of stewards, tenants, curators, trustees or guardians, whether or not we acknowledge this responsibility. Stewardship implies caring, management not selfish exploitation, it involves a concern for both present and future as well as self, and a recognition that the world we manage has an interest in its own survival and wellbeing independent of its value to us.... God’s stewardship requires justice, truthfulness, sensitivity and compassion.  

Bauckham points out that the central value of the stewardship model has been to provide an explanation to the two Hebrew verbs דָּרֵד (1:26-28): the stewardship concept which explains the two verbs as modalities to exercise care and service on behalf of God, and thus making humanity accountable to God. However, the model has been criticized in terms of its value for an environmental ethics. Bauckham contends that the stewardship concept has great limitations that do not solve the problem of וֹאָס וּלְבָנָה. Therefore, he agrees with James Lovelock to discuss the idea of the model as “sheer hubris.” The following criticisms are based on Bauckham’s assessment of the model:  

A. Stewardship’s Concept is not ‘Biblically Based’.  

According to John Reumann the term stewardship is hardly used in the bible. He states that “there are virtually no Old Testament roots for what the New Testament and church fathers define with the Greek term οἰκονομία (stewardship), and οἰκονόμος (house manager; steward). Furthermore, it cannot be claimed that stewardship constitutes a major New Testament theme. Even in places where the term occurs, it does not relate to human’s responsibility to care for nature or other creatures (Luke 16:2-4).
Clare Palmer further suggests that the model contains various negative implications because he perceives the stewardship image to be more of a delegated responsibility which implies that “stewardship is someone given charge of the owner’s property (Luke 16:1-8).”

Therefore, he argues the political message of the model is more of “power and oppression of server and served.”

Palmer lastly argues that the model promotes more of an anthropocentric and patronizing ethic. Hence dominion can be perceived as a historical task, whereby humans played the role as God in relation to the world.

As a result, creation has been perceived as dependent on humans and are also the resources to be utilized by humanity for their survival.

B. Earth is a Self-sustaining Entity

The central focus of Lovelock’s argument on stewardship as hubris resides on the notion that the natural world was created by God to work on its own. Lovelock termed the earth system as ‘Gaia’: whereby he argues that Gaia is like a living organism that is self-regulatory in its survival.

He considered the notion that humans are responsible to care for creation as “flawed by unconscious hubris” because “humans have neither the knowledge nor the capacity to achieve the goals envisaged by this notion.” As such, humans cannot be classified as stewards of earth as we cannot in anyway do what Gaia has been designed by God to do. Besides, Gaia has been able to survive for millions of years before human existence.

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466 Ibid., 30.
467 Horrell, The Bible and the Environment, 30-31.
469 Bauckham, Bible and Ecology, 3.
470 Ibid., 3.
This argument in relation to the creation story specifies that Genesis 1:1-25 describes the world before the creation of humans as a harmonious community. Furthermore, from the earth came other creatures and even Adam was created from the dust. On this perspective, creation narrative can be classified as earth-centred. Lovelock further postulates that the creation of humankind and their ‘dominion mandate’ violated the peaceful harmony or partnership God had with earth. In synthesis, according to this theory earth was designed by God to be self-regulatory, although humanity has a role to play in sustaining it.

Palmer and Bauckham agree with Lovelock’s claims that humanity does not have the capacity to be stewards of earth. In fact, “to be a successful steward either in the feudal or the financial sense, it is necessary to understand what is being controlled. It must be stated here that the natural world is not like an estate nor like money in this respect. It is composed of complex ecosystems and atmospheric conditions that we do not understand and cannot predict.” Bauckham’s argument does not deny that humanity can do something about ecological crisis, especially climate change rather he is of the view that, there are more to the mystery of the self-regulation of earth than what humans know.

The stewardship model presupposes that the rest of creation needs humanity. The environmental crisis has taught us, however, that nature will be better off without human interventions, because humanity have negatively impacted on creation, through the arrogant assumption that it is possible to manage and improve creation. Therefore,

474 Ibid., 4.
475 Ibid., 4-7.
humanity’s ‘management’ of the environment has resulted in the exploitation of the surroundings leading to environmental disasters.

C. The Advancement of Humanity

According to Horrell, the ancient interpretation of the text did not include a mandate of aggressive exploitation towards creation. The development of science and technology made such aims conceivable. This may be due to the fact that there are those who postulates that humanity have the capacity to stand against any disaster, for example, technophiles assume that humanity would be able to create a ‘technological fix’ for ecological crisis; biotechnologists and artificial intelligence scientists have the vision that there will be a time when technology will take over from evolution. This belief makes them have the conception that humanity have the capacity to control environmental disasters. Lovelock again refers to this idea as ‘breath taking hubris.’

He is of the opinion that it is a total waste of effort and time for human beings to take responsibility of tasks that are specifically meant for ‘Gaia’.

In his own words he asserts that

the more we meddle with the earth’s composition and try to fix its climate, the more we take on the responsibility for keeping the earth a fit place for life, until eventually our whole lives may be spent in drudgery doing the tasks that Gaia had freely done for over three billion years. This would be the worst of fates for us and would reduce us to a truly miserable state, where we were forever wondering whether anyone, any nation or any international body could be trusted to regulate the climate and the atmospheric composition. The idea that humans are yet intelligent enough to serve as stewards of the earth is among the most hubristic ever.

A further argument is that if humans are able to develop powerful tools, in the form of an artificial intelligence, to tackle global warming, there is the possibility of the machines taking over our stewardship duties. Again, the relationship existing between

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477 Bauckham, *Bible and Ecology*, 4-5.
478 Ibid., 5.
479 Ibid.
robots/machines and humanity is quite odd especially in the discussion of stewardship, but “if stewardship requires total control of the earth’s processes only post humans will be equal to the task.”

D. The content of Stewardship is not specific

There is no clear understanding of what actually constitutes stewardship. How humanity is to exercise their stewardship responsibility in creation has received several explanations. In the 17th century for instance, it was understood that human intervention was necessary for the good of creation. There was the perception that “nature would run horribly wild if humans were not there to keep it in order.”

Our advocate for contemporary stewardship rests on the fact that we seem to perceive ourselves as the protectors of nature from the damages we have caused it. Hence the need to repair the damages that humanity have caused nature. Since it is God’s intention that humanity forms part of creation, nature now relies on humans in protecting it from human destructions.

E. Stewardship Sets Humans over Creation not within it

Bauckham asserts that the notion of the stewardship concept places humanity above creation and this does not help in the reflection that human beings are also part of creation, and ‘share’ mother earth with the rest of creation.

In the following vertical diagram Bauckham expressed this idea of stewardship as placing humanity, as God’s subordinate, in authority over creation and not “in a community alongside and with other creatures.”

480 Bauckham, Bible and Ecology, 5.
481 Ibid., 8.
482 Ibid., 8-10.
483 Ibid., 11.
Furthermore, the model is a one-way relationship in its concept as it presents humanity as the rulers of creation and nature being the recipient. It does not highlight on the fact that humanity also depends on the rest of creation and not only nature being passive and relying on human beings.

The researcher agrees with Bauckham that stewardship is exclusively “focus on a vertical relationship to the rest of creation,” since we have perceived ourselves as ‘little gods’ presiding over creation that has to be preserved by us. Although the model avoids themes such as dominion, exploitation among others, its vertical relationship, with nature simply invalidates its content because it is a one-sided relationship to the rest of creation as it still places humanity in a higher position and the rest of creation on a lower level.

On this notion the researcher coincides with Baird who proposed another responsible care reading of the text which he labelled as the ‘citizenship’ reading. The positive aspect of this reading, according to Smaje, entails the rejection of White’s claims and a substitute to the weaker anthropocentrism of the stewardship model. The citizenship reading plainly places human beings in a “broader biotic community.”

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485 Ibid., 10.
4.6 Theological Reflections

The analysis of the text has proved that it is difficult to interpret the key Hebrew verbs present in Genesis 1:26-28. Interaction with the numerous scholarly researches on the subject has proved fruitful in interpreting the verbs in the contemporary context characterized by the ecological crisis.

In the following section, some key theological issues emerged from the discussion are underlined:

*The text does not promote exploitation in its narrative context.* The Priestly account makes it clear that God loves his creation and declared all creatures “very good”. Several scholarly debates have concluded that the text cannot be anthropocentric although the focus of the text is still debatable. For example, the Earth team perceives the account to be earth-centred where Gatti defined the text sabbath-centred.

These focus-claims about the text — whether theocentric, earth-centred or sabbath-centred — point to the fact that human beings are only one of God’s creatures, subordinates to God, called to live in the community of creation and to serve all creatures, co-humans and not humans, with the same caring attitude of God.

As a summary, in a word still without violence, the Priestly writers describe humanity as “part of the community of creation, sharing the blessing of God and the command to be fertile, increase and fill the natural environment. As members of this community, humans are called to a further service towards their fellow-creatures, to be performed not as ‘possessors’ but as ‘image and likeness of God.’”

\footnote{Gatti, “From Mastering to Serving,” 34.}
The evangelical interpretation of Genesis 1:26-28 calls for stewardship of nature on the part of human beings. The stewardship model has been widely used as a substitute of the dominion reading in the text. It dictates to human beings their role as caretakers of creation. Besides its positive doctrinal construct, it aims at making the Christian community responsible for environmental activists on earth.

Although the model, like any other model, has its limitations, its concept is still useful in ecological care deliberations. However, the model in future needs more reflection, since it is being critiqued as being anthropocentric, the very problem the model tried to solve. Perhaps, the ‘citizenship’ model proposed by Baird provides a useful alternative to the stewardship model.

The openness of the text exposes it to several readings. The diverse interpretations of the text are generated by alternative reading of the meaning of the verbs רדה and כבש (1:26,28). Several ways have been adopted by scholars to soften the voice of these verbs. The narrative analysis of the text in its large context (first and second account of creation) and use of intertextual reading have proved very useful in the ecological interpretation of the earth.

In fact, it is evident that while Genesis 1:26 introduces ḥāḏām in his/her relationship with God, Genesis 2:7 underlines the relationship between ḥa’ qedām and ḥa’ qedāmah, humans and earth. God made humans out of humus: as Newsom summits: “We share common ground with the Earth because we are common ground.”488 Out of this same fertile land God brings both plants (2:9) and animals (2:19) to life. Therefore, we earth creatures are created because without us, and without rain, the earth cannot realize its creative potential for feeding those that live on it. So, we are created of earth for earth in a symbiotic relation with earth from which we all thrive. Earth is not an

object that we possess for our power or pleasure, but that with which our fate is inex-
tricably entwined, from whom we come and for whom we live.\footnote{489}

The researcher agrees with Gatti that Gen. 1:26.28 does not attribute any power to
‘Adam’ to exploit creation, but “the ecological crisis sadly testifies to the failure of
humanity to realise its original vocation: it is a sign of the broken relationship with the
Creator, the other and the nature that tragically signed the beginning of human journey
(cf. Gen 3:8-19)”.\footnote{490} John Paul II reiterated this concept with strong words, and called
humanity to a ‘ecological conversion’:

Unfortunately, if we scan the regions of our planet, we immediately see that humanity
has disappointed God's expectations. Man, especially in our time, has without hesita-
tion devastated wooded plains and valleys, polluted waters, disfigured the earth's hab-
itat, made the air unbreathable, disturbed the hydrogeological and atmospheric systems,
turned luxuriant areas into deserts and undertaken forms of unrestrained industrializa-
tion, degrading that "flowerbed" - to use an image from Dante Alighieri (Paradiso,
XXII, 151) - which is the earth, our dwelling-place. We must therefore encourage and
support the "ecological conversion" which in recent decades has made humanity more
sensitive to the catastrophe to which it has been heading. Man is no longer the Creator's
"steward", but an autonomous despot, who is finally beginning to understand that he
must stop at the edge of the abyss.\footnote{491}

4.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, we have surveyed the various ecological interpretation characterizing
Genesis 1:26-28. After reading the text in its narrative context (1:1—2:3), we have pro-
posed a literally analyses of 1:26-27 focusing on some key terms:

\footnote{489} R. D. Weis, “We are all Connected: Toward a Biblical Theology of Creation,” \textit{Lexington Theological Quarterly} 45 no. 3-4 (2013): 64.

\footnote{490} Gatti, “Setting the Agenda,”\textit{151}.

Although Genesis 1:26-28 provided many positive insights for an inclusive care of the environment, it can be realised that the verbs proved difficult to interpret. The researcher engaged various readings of the text from scholars such as Hamilton, Wenham, Lohfink among others with regards the meaning of these verbs. These scholarly readings proved that the text cannot be considered anthropocentric, but rather it encouraged the care for our environment.

Similarly, the stewardship model proved vital in the explanation of the Hebrew verbs. The model has been criticised due to the shortcomings in its content. However, the criticisms of the text act as an advocacy for reflection on its contents since it is vital in the interpretation of *radah* and *kabash* as well as an advocacy to promote environmental care attitude in the lives of the people.

Overall the Priestly account of creation calls on humanity to exercise their dominion mandate not in an exploitative manner but rather as responsibility towards the caring and protection of God’s created world, our common home.
CHAPTER FIVE
SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction
The chapter provides a summary of the thesis, enlightens the main finding and offers some recommendations for further studies as well as for educating Christian communities living in Ghana to be ecologically sensitive.

5.2 Summary
The relationship between the environmental crisis and the ecclesiastic use of the first creation narrative in Genesis 1:1—2:3 is at the centre of intense scholarly and ecclesiastical debate. Therefore, the research set out to examine the relevance of the first creation narrative to the ecological crisis and the extent to which the account offers hope in this global menace. Furthermore, it explores how the text can motivate contemporary Ghanaian Christians in environmental care and advocacy.

In achieving this goal, the study applied the three steps suggested by Ossom-Batsa’s Communicative perspective as a guiding framework. The first step discussed the exegesis of reality; the second looked at the exegesis of the text, to discover the call to action, the perlocutory effect that the author intends to have on the readers; and third step proposed the engagement between the text and the reality.

The second chapter dealt with the first step of the theoretical framework: exegesis of reality. It presented an overview of Kwaku Atibie (E.R.) and an evaluation of its ecological challenges before focusing on the attitude of local Christian communities towards the environment. The Intercultural Hermeneutics proposed by Bortey Anum and Quaye was employed to explore how selected churches living in Kwahu Atibie educate their members, particularly the youth, to ecological sensitivity and how this reflect in their contextual reading of Genesis 1:26-28.
The approach proposes three-phase guidelines. The first involved the formation of ordinary readers in three church youth groups, the second concerned the reading of the text Genesis 1:26-28, and the third consisted in the writing a report on the communication with the ordinary readers. The bible sharing revealed that why the ‘ordinary readers’ seemed informed of the ecological challenges facing their town, yet this awareness did not reflect in the reading of the text. Their interpretation of the first creation account sounded anthropocentric. They agreed with the ‘dominion mandate’ and the right of human to exploit the environment. Some hendiadys emerged as hermeneutics keys: ‘image and likeness’; ‘dominion and subdue’ and ‘multiple and fill the earth’.

The interpretation offered by these ‘ordinary readers’, revealed that there is the need to explore a new approach towards biblical interpretation: Ecological Hermeneutics. Two perspectives gave rise to the new branch of Biblical Hermeneutics. The first concerns the ecological crisis facing the world and the need for the Christian communities to respond to it by recovering the ‘ecological wisdom’ present in the biblical texts. The second is Lynn White's article published in 1967 which blamed the ecological crisis to the negative attitude towards creation, promoted by the Western Christianity’s anthropocentric reading of the bible.

The six ecojustice principles developed by Norman Habel and his team492 and various ecological approaches to the discipline were discussed and evaluated. These included suspicion and resistance, identification and retrieval, Horrell’s recovery reading of the text493 and, lastly, doctrinal constructs developed by Conradie.494

492 Habel, *The Birth, the Curse*, 2-10.
The fourth chapter employed two approaches — recovery reading and doctrinal constructs — to analyse the first creation account. After a narrative analysis of the larger context, Genesis 1:1—2:3, the discussion centred on Genesis 1:26-28 because it is upon these verses that scholars either positively soften the tone of the text, or negatively react to matters of anthropocentrism.

Three key elements in the pericope that formed the basis of the exegetical discussion were humanity created in the *imago Dei*, the dominion mandate and the mandate to subdue the earth. In terms of creation in the *imago Dei* the discussion began from the controversial syntagm ‘let us make.’ The discussion delved into Brown’s four interrelated ways by which the phrase ‘image’ is used to understand the relationship linking humanity to God. The ‘essential link’ was first discussed, which indicated our resemblance with God. The ‘functional link’, expressed humanity’s responsibility in the created world, as shown in the interaction. The ‘status link’ represented the bestowing of dignity on humanity, while the ‘gender link’ emphasized that both male and female are created equal and, therefore, there is no inequality in the creation.495

Reading the text in its literal context, comparison to the second account of the creation (2:4-25) and intertextual reading of the text (1Chr. 29, Psa. 8:7-9, Gen. 2:5-15, 2 Chr. 28:10, Neh. 5:5) gave more insight to the meaning of two controversial verbal root הדרד and שבע. Even if they have a wide range of meanings and generally a forceful connotation when referred to interpersonal relationship, researches from scholars such as Kinzelbach,496 confirmed the researcher position that related to the land, the verbs indicate living in harmony with nature by showing the gracious compassion of God towards other creatures.

495 Brown, *The Seven Pillars*, 41-44.
Finally, the narrative reading of the first creation account demonstrated that the text could not be accused of ‘anthropocentrism’. In fact, while scholars disagree on the central perspective of the text (earth-centred, sabbath-centred, theocentric), generally they agree that the creation of human being is neither central nor the climax of the account. Embracing the position of scholars such as Gatti,497 the researcher considered the first creation narrative as sabbath-centred. The significance of the seventh day marked as a day of rest in relation to the environmental crisis was explored in connection with the Jubilee Year (Lev 25).

5.3 Conclusion

The methodological option to explore ‘ordinary readers’ perception of the text has allowed the researcher to fill the gap between academic and pastoral reading of the bible. The contextual bible study with three selected group of Christian youth groups have espoused knowledge about ecological problems, an encouraging sensitivity towards their surroundings and the awareness of the need to drastically deal with its menace. However, the research realized that mass media became a contributing factor that influenced members’ positive concern towards the environment. The ‘ordinary readers’ did not perceive any ‘link’ between their faith and the need to care for the environment, let alone think about their interpretation of the texts to reflect their vibrant positive desire towards the protection of the environment.

The researcher became conscious that the use of the Ashanti Twi Bible had a great influence in their interpretation of the text. The use of the local language created a false impression of ‘familiarity’ with the text that re-enforced the literal interpretation. The readers were not aware of the historical, linguistic and cultural gaps between the culture

of the text and their culture and did not feel the need to ponder on the text for further scrutiny. Another negative influence was their dualistic understanding of reality, ‘physical against spiritual,’ applied by popular Charismatic preachers in their reading of the first and second creation account.

Although members argued that the text clearly commanded humankind to rule and utilize creation for their benefits, they contended that humanity is to exercise the power in a ‘gradual’ manner: thus, not over exploitation but gradual exploitation of the earth’s resources.

These explanations from the participants raised the concern of how biblical hermeneutic could be transformed in a tool to mitigate the effect of ecological crisis, promoting an attitude of care towards creation. Employing the recovery reading and doctrinal construct approaches to the reading of Genesis 1:26-28, the researcher concluded that the text is not ‘anthropocentric’ but theocentric or better shabbat-centred. Another look at the background offers hope in ecological crisis with scholars agreeing to the notion that human beings are not created by God to exploit creation but instead that humanity should to care and protect creation.

Among the different models proposed, the stewardship model has proved useful to initiate the ecological debate in the Christian communities. However, the model has been criticized on several fronts: its biblical bases, its vision of humanity as ‘superior’, the relation of humanity with the community of creation and what constitute the role of humanity as stewards on a planet designed to be a ‘self-sustaining entity’ among others.
The ‘citizenship’ model proposed by Baird to overcome the negativities surrounding the stewardship model was accepted.498

Overall, the Priestly creation narrative invited the readers to rediscover the community of creation. Human, after all, is created in a relationship and for a relationship, and every form of exploitation, violence, reduction of the others (co-humans or nature) to an object is a betrayal of God’s plan.499 Therefore, the creation accounts invite us to rediscover our limitless: we are not God, not even ‘little gods’ but members of the creation community called to serve and to care for all, humans and non-humans.

5.4 Recommendations

Based on the main findings, this section offers some recommendations for further studies and for the ecological formation of Ghanaian Christian communities.

5.4.1 Academic

The thesis proposes the following for future scholarly enquiries:

1. The contextualization of the ‘stewardship’ and ‘citizenship’ model in Ghanaian Christianity;

2. The effect of employing the translation of the bible in local languages on the exegesis and interpretation of the biblical text by Ghanaian Christian Communities;

3. The creation of alternative (and contextualized) doctrinal constructs towards the formation of an ecologically sensitive Ghanaian Christianity.

5.4.2 Pastoral

From pastoral perspective the research recommends that ecological care deliberations should form part of the doctrines of the church. This calls for an inclusive participation of believers to realize that we have a responsibility as citizens of this created world to protect the environment.

Ecological formation is almost absent in the daily and weekly preaching in our various churches. The dualistic teachings of many churches discourage a positive attitude towards the environment. The focus of the church tends to be more spiritual than social issues that care for the environment seems to be a secondary concern to the church. Environmental care teachings, therefore, should not only be done from the secular perspectives: churches must make it a point to include the care of the environment in the heart of the church’s evangelization mission.

From the position of the ‘ordinary readers’, the researcher came to realize that interpretations of the text among the youth groups were on a ‘literal’ level. Critical engagement with the text is, thus crucial to form mature Christians and to transform the life of the people. It is, therefore, important for local bible readers to have access to biblical resources and materials for biblical education.

Hence the researcher recommends that a biblical reference book such as a commentary in mother tongue should be published for the purpose of in-depth biblical study in the lives of the people.

Finally, the churches must be involved in improving the life of their community through action and advocacy. For example, modern washroom facilities should be provided at various vantage areas of the community, for people to use and this will enable them appreciate the need to have clean washrooms on their own.
Lastly, the churches, in collaboration with hospitals, should make a commitment to organize regular environmental care and cleanliness programmes to educate their members and the population at large. Information and monitoring can help to mitigate some of these environmental challenges present in the towns such as dumping of waste into gutters and other unhealthy environment practices.
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