

CREATION AND CARE IN GENESIS 1-2: IMPLICATIONS FOR HUMANITY'S ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

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Abstract

Environmental degradation and climate change represent urgent global challenges, largely driven by human exploitation of natural resources. While scientific and policy frameworks dominate climate discourse, religious traditions particularly the Old Testament which offer profound yet underutilized insights for ecological ethics. The Genesis creation narratives provide a theological foundation for humanity's relationship with the earth. However, modern readings of Genesis 1:26–28 have often emphasized “dominion” as domination, reinforcing anthropocentric attitudes that neglect ecological care. This misinterpretation has created a gap between scripture and sustainable environmental practice. The study seeks to recover a theologically grounded vision of responsibility by reinterpreting Genesis' themes of creation and stewardship. Dominion is reframed as stewardship, emphasizing care, responsibility, and sustainability. Employing a qualitative,

*exegetical approach, the research analyses Genesis 1–2 through historical-critical and literary methods, supported by theological and environmental scholarship. **Situated within eco-theology, the study adopts the Creation Care Theoretical Framework, which interprets dominion as a mandate for responsible stewardship and positions humanity as caretakers of creation. This framework highlights interdependence, biodiversity, and covenantal responsibility as theological principles that resonate with modern sustainability ethics.** Findings reveal that Genesis presents creation as ordered, interdependent, and good, with humanity tasked to “work and keep” the garden (Genesis 2:15). Properly understood, these narratives call for ecological responsibility rooted in covenantal care. The study concludes by recommending integration of biblical stewardship principles into education, advocacy, and policy to foster holistic responses to environmental crises.*

Keywords: Environmental Ethics, Climate Change, Genesis, Stewardship, Eco-Theology

Introduction

The concept of “creation and care” draws from religious and theological traditions which see humanity as entrusted with, or responsible for, the natural world. At its core is the conviction that creation is not simply a resource for human exploitation but a gift, with intrinsic value, and that human beings have ethical duties toward it. In recent decades this framework has become central to debates in eco-theology, environmental ethics, and sustainability especially as environmental crises deepen. Biblical texts such as Genesis 1–2 are often foundational. In Genesis 1:26–28, humanity is given dominion over creation. Scholarly debates like Chris U. Manus & Des Obioma; authors of “Preaching the ‘green gospel’ in our environment: A re-reading of Genesis 1:27-28 in the Nigerian context”) argue that “dominion” has been misinterpreted

widely as a license for exploitative subjugation of nature. Instead, many theologians assert that dominion should be understood as responsible stewardship—that is, caring, protecting, and nurturing creation. Genesis 2:15 introduces the terms *abad* (to serve or work) and *shamar* (to keep, guard, preserve), which have been used as theological bases for environmental stewardship. The Christian theological tradition often links these with the *Imago Dei* (the image of God), suggesting that humans have a unique role in creation, one of care rather than mere possession.

The work of Lynn White (1967) is a touchstone: his thesis that Christianity's anthropocentric reading of scripture contributes to ecological crisis has spurred responses. Scholars have argued that White oversimplifies, treating "dominion" and "stewardship" as opposites, and failing to notice how many Christian traditions see dominion as a call to stewardship. For example, Brown, Volk, and Wallsgrove in "Distortive Assumptions in the Literature on White's Thesis" critique the quantitative literature for assuming that "dominion ideology is inherently anti-environmental." They show that many Christians interpret dominion in sacrificial, stewardship-oriented terms. Other scholars emphasize reconciliation: the distorted relationship of domination and exploitation (between humans and non-humans) must be healed. Vorster (2018) for instance argues that ecological ethics arises from understanding reconciliation not only among humans but between humanity and creation.

Statement of the Problem

The global environmental crisis marked by climate change, pollution, biodiversity loss, and ecosystem degradation—has intensified calls for a re-evaluation of humanity’s relationship with nature. Theological perspectives, particularly within Judeo-Christian traditions, emphasize creation and care as fundamental principles guiding human interaction with the environment (Bauckham, 2010; Palmer, 2006). Biblical texts such as Genesis 1:26–28 and 2:15 have been interpreted to assign humanity the role of stewards, not exploiters, of the earth (Manus & Obioma, 2016; Mathu, 2025). However, the misinterpretation of “dominion” as license for exploitation has historically contributed to environmental neglect (White, 1967; Wallace, 2005). Several studies have examined theological frameworks for environmental responsibility. White’s (1967) influential thesis argued that Christianity’s anthropocentrism is a root cause of ecological degradation. More recent responses propose that scripture, when properly interpreted, supports ecological stewardship (Schirmacher & Johnson, 2021; Tennent, 2023). In African contexts, scholars such as Ottuh (2022) and Alamu & Taiwo (2025) have contextualized creation care within local environmental issues like waste disposal and climate vulnerability. Despite these efforts, a significant gap persists in developing actionable, theologically grounded models that integrate biblical teachings with practical environmental ethics, especially in non-Western and developing contexts. Moreover, many faith communities lack adequate theological education and awareness to translate creation care into environmental responsibility. This gap calls for an in-depth study that not only clarifies theological interpretations of creation and stewardship but also proposes context-relevant strategies for implementation. This study, therefore, aims to critically analyse existing theological perspectives on creation and care, identify interpretative and practical gaps, and develop a model that bridges theology and environmental responsibility in both global and local contexts.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore the theological concept of creation and care and its implications for humanity's environmental responsibility in the face of growing ecological challenges. Drawing primarily from Judeo-Christian theology, the study seeks to examine how biblical teachings, particularly in Genesis 1:26–28 and 2:15, have been historically interpreted and how those interpretations shape human attitudes and actions toward the environment today. This study will critically assess the doctrinal understandings of “dominion,” “subdue,” and “stewardship” to determine whether they support exploitative or sustainable environmental behaviour. It will engage the views of scholars such as Lynn White (1967), who argues that Christian anthropocentrism has contributed to environmental degradation, and counter-arguments from theologians like Bauckham (2010), Palmer (2006), and Wallace (2005), who emphasize ecological responsibility embedded in the biblical narrative. The study will also explore how religious communities, particularly in African contexts, understand and implement creation care practices. Despite increasing awareness, there remains a gap in theological education and practical application of creation care principles within churches and faith-based institutions. Many lack contextual strategies to integrate faith-based teachings with sustainable environmental action. Therefore, this study seeks to achieve the following:

- (1) To evaluate theological interpretations of creation and care;
- (2) To analyse how such interpretations influence human behaviour toward the environment;
- (3) To assess the role of faith communities in promoting ecological responsibility; and
- (4) To propose a biblically grounded and contextually relevant framework for environmental stewardship.

Through these objectives, the study will contribute to the fields of eco-theology, environmental ethics, and sustainable development by offering faith-informed strategies that empower humanity to fulfil its moral and spiritual responsibility in preserving creation.

Theoretical Framework

Three theoretical streams inform this framework:

1. **The Stewardship Model** – derived from Genesis 1–2 and reinforced by eco-theologians such as Calvin DeWitt (2011) and Richard Bauckham (2010), this model interprets *dominion* as *responsible care*. It posits that the Imago Dei entails moral agency and ecological responsibility.
2. **The Community of Creation Paradigm** – articulated by scholars such as Jürgen Moltmann (1985) and Ellen F. Davis (2009), this approach emphasizes creation as a network of interdependent relationships. Humans are part of an ecological community sustained by divine love, rather than detached rulers of it.
3. **African Eco-Theology and Ubuntu Philosophy** – building on Jesse Mugambi's theology of reconstruction and the African ethic of *ubuntu*, this framework situates creation care within communal and indigenous understandings of interdependence. Humanity's well-being is tied to the well-being of the earth.

By combining these perspectives, the theoretical framework establishes that **creation care is both a theological mandate and an ethical vocation**, uniting biblical revelation, moral philosophy, and contextual praxis. It also allows the study to critically evaluate anthropocentric distortions (as highlighted by Lynn White Jr., 1967) while retrieving the ecological wisdom inherent in Scripture and culture.

Methodology

The study employed a qualitative, theological-literary research design, combining biblical exegesis, doctrinal analysis, and contextual theology. It is interpretive and analytical rather than empirical, seeking to generate theological insights that inform ethical and practical responses to environmental crises.

Data Sources

1. Primary Sources:

- Biblical texts (Genesis 1–2, Psalms 8 and 24, Romans 8, Revelation 21).
- Church documents and encyclicals (e.g., *Laudato Si'*, 2015).
- Key theological works (Moltmann, 1985; Davis, 2009; Bauckham, 2010; DeWitt, 2011).

2. Secondary Sources:

- Scholarly articles, eco-theological essays, and African contextual studies (e.g., Mugambi, 2001; Magesa, 2014; Ottuh, 2022).
- Case studies of faith-based environmental movements (A Rocha, Green Anglicans, Lausanne Movement).

Data Collection and Analysis

- **Documentary Analysis:** theological texts are analysed to extract recurring themes of stewardship, dominion, reconciliation, and community.
- **Hermeneutical Interpretation:** biblical passages are examined through historical-critical and literary approaches to uncover theological meaning for creation care.

Biblical Foundation of creation and environmental stewardship

From the very opening of Scripture we have an unmistakable affirmation of God as Creator: “In the beginning God created

the heavens and the earth” (Gen 1:1). The creation narratives (Gen 1–2) present humanity as made in the image of God (*imago Dei*, Gen 1:26-27), called to “fill the earth and subdue it” and to “have dominion ... over every living thing” (Gen 1:28). At the same time, in Gen 2:15, humanity is placed in the garden “to work it and keep it,” which suggests not mere exploitative dominion but caretaking responsibility. These texts lay the cornerstone for a theology of stewardship: the earth belongs to God (e.g., Ps 24:1 “The earth is the Lord’s and everything in it”), and humans as God’s image bearers are entrusted with its care. Three key theological motifs emerge. First, divine ownership: the world is God’s (Ps 24:1; Col 1:16-17) and so its integrity is not incidental but part of God’s good purpose. Second, human responsibility: humanity is constituted for relationship with God, with neighbour, and with creation (Gen 2:15; Ps 8:6-8) – the *imago Dei* entails stewardship, not domination. Third, interconnectedness of creation and redemption: The created order groans for renewal (Rom 8:19-23) and the New Testament locates redemption not only of humanity but of creation itself, pointing to a future new heavens and new earth (Rev 21:1). Thus care for the environment is more than practical; it is theological.

Scholarship has helped clarify and deepen this biblical foundation. For instance, Richard Bauckham argues in *The Bible and Ecology: Rediscovering the Community of Creation* that the dominion language has too often been distorted into exploitation, whereas the Bible more properly speaks of a “community of creation” in which humans and non-humans belong to God’s household. Ellen F. Davis, in *Scripture, Culture, and Agriculture: An Agrarian Reading of the Bible* (2009) emphasises Old Testament land-ethics, Sabbath land-rest and the relational character of land, crops, animals and human communities. And Calvin B. DeWitt, in *Earthwise: A Guide to Hopeful Creation Care* (2011), offers a biblically grounded and hopeful call to creation care, combining

ecological science with Christian doctrine of stewardship and redemption. These scholars support a biblical ethic of environmental stewardship in which: (1) creation is good (Gen 1:31); (2) human beings are appointed as caretakers (Gen 2:15); (3) the earth bears the image of God's glory (Ps 19:1) and thus merits respect; (4) human sin has disrupted creation (Rom 8) and so redemption involves the renewal of creation; and (5) practical stewardship flows from worship (since the Creator is to be glorified) and compassion (since all creation is interconnected). This biblical-theological foundation invites faith communities to live sustainably, advocate just policies, protect biodiversity, respect ecosystems, and model responsible consumption. In sum, the biblical foundation of creation and environmental stewardship invites us to view the environment not as a mere resource to be used, but as God's good gift to be honoured, preserved and restored. When humans live as image bearers of God, they exercise "dominion" in the sense of service and care, stewarding creation for the good of all and the glory of God. As Bauckham, Davis and DeWitt together show, theology helps shape our ecological ethics and motivates practical environmental responsibility rooted in Scripture.

Historical and Theological Perspectives on Creation and Care

Christian reflection on creation and the duty to care for the natural world has a long and variegated history. From the biblical witness through medieval scholasticism, Reformation formulations, and modern theological retrievals, the interaction between doctrine and environmental thought shows both continuity and change. Theologically, the Bible supplies the foundational motifs: God as Creator, humanity made in the image of God (*imago Dei*), the assignment of human responsibility in the garden (Gen. 1–2), the declaration that the earth is the Lord's (Ps. 24:1), and the cosmic scope of redemption (Rom. 8:19–23; Col. 1:15–20). Historically, these

texts were interpreted within particular social, economic, and intellectual contexts that shaped how Christians understood their relationship to the land, animals, and resource use. In antiquity and the patristic era, theologians such as Basil the Great and Augustine insisted on creation's intrinsic goodness and saw the created order as a theatre of God's wisdom and providence. Augustine's ecclesial anthropology emphasized order and the moral orientation of human desires, which had implications for how humans ought to use created goods. Medieval theologians—most prominently Thomas Aquinas—situated creation within a teleological ordering (*ordo*) that linked natural ends to moral and theological ends; care for creation was thereby woven into virtue ethics and natural law. The Reformation renewed attention to God's sovereignty and providence but sometimes intensified anthropocentric readings by stressing human dominion and calling, in Protestant economic contexts, for the transformation and utilization of nature to serve human vocations.

The historical impact of Christian doctrine on environmental views is complex and contested. Lynn White Jr.'s influential essay, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis" (1967), argued that a particular reading of Genesis—one that privileges human dominion and separates humans from the moral obligations to nonhuman nature—contributed to a Western, Christian-shaped exploitative attitude toward the environment. White blamed medieval and modern Christian interpretations for encouraging anthropocentrism and technological dominion. White's critique generated a broad and sustained scholarly debate: some affirmed that Christian theology had indeed supplied ideological support for exploitation; others argued White overstated the causal link and neglected alternative Christian traditions that fostered restraint and care (e.g., monastic stewardship, Eastern Orthodox hesychasm).

Modern theological responses have sought to retrieve and reformulate creation doctrine so that it becomes a theological resource for environmental care rather than a justification for exploitation. Jürgen Moltmann, for example, reframed creation theologically by emphasizing creation as a continuous and eschatological reality: creation is both gift and promise, and Christian hope is bound up with the renewal of the whole creation. Moltmann's eschatological orientation places ecological concerns within the horizon of God's restorative purposes and stresses human responsibility as participation in God's work of renewal, not mere domination. Complementing Moltmann's theological retrieval, Ellen F. Davis has performed a close literary and agrarian reading of the Hebrew Scriptures, highlighting how Old Testament law, Sabbath and jubilee practices, and prophetic land ethics prescribe concrete practices for land care, food justice, and community responsibility. Davis's work recovers resources—ritual, law, and narrative—that ground stewardship in covenantal relations rather than abstract dominion. Her agrarian emphasis shows that biblical texts presume interdependence among humans, land, and nonhuman creatures and that ethical formation for caretaking is embedded in liturgical and agricultural rhythms.

Beyond Moltmann and Davis, recent scholarship (e.g., Richard Bauckham, Norman Wirzba, Sallie McFague, Elizabeth A. Johnson) has deepened theological reflection by emphasizing themes of community, sacramentality, and sacrificial love for the nonhuman. These scholars argue for a shift from narrow anthropocentrism to a more communitarian or theocentric ecology: human vocation is reinterpreted as responsible agency within a created community that belongs to God. Such re-readings impact practice: they motivate Sabbath-informed land rest, sustainable agriculture, ethical food systems, biodiversity protection, and advocacy for environmental justice—especially where ecological

degradation disproportionately affects the poor.\\ Nevertheless, the historical legacy of doctrine remains uneven. In some eras and locales Christian institutions actively conserved lands (e.g., monastic gardens, customary land protections), while in other moments theology has been used—albeit often selectively—to justify extraction, colonial resource appropriation, or instrumental attitudes toward nature. Contemporary ecological theology therefore inherits both the resources and the liabilities of Christian history: it must recover biblical and theological motifs (creation as gift, imago Dei, covenantal care, eschatological hope) while critically confronting past distortions that fostered environmental harm.

In conclusion, the historical and theological perspectives on creation and care indicate a trajectory of retrieval and reform. Where historical readings emphasized dominion in ways that enabled exploitation, contemporary theological scholarship—drawing especially on Moltmann’s eschatological vision and Davis’s agrarian biblical exegesis—recasts Christian doctrine as a robust foundation for environmental stewardship. Engaging the full breadth of Christian tradition, theology can thus supply moral vision, liturgical practices, and public witness that encourage sustainable and justice-oriented care for the earth.

Faith-Based Environmental Movements and Global Perspectives

Faith-based environmental movements have emerged as vital contributors to global ecological consciousness, combining spiritual motivation with practical environmental action. Rooted in theological convictions about creation as God’s handiwork, these movements integrate moral responsibility, communal participation, and sustainable development. Across religions—Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Indigenous traditions—environmental activism has been

shaped by shared ethical principles of stewardship, interdependence, and sacred respect for nature. In Christianity, the modern revival of creation care has drawn from biblical mandates of stewardship (Genesis 2:15) and prophetic concern for justice (Amos 5:24). Churches and organizations such as the World Council of Churches, A Rocha International, and the Lausanne Movement for Creation Care have developed global initiatives addressing climate change, biodiversity loss, and sustainable agriculture. The encyclical *Laudato Si'* (Pope Francis, 2015) represents a watershed moment, uniting theology and science to promote integral ecology, while evangelical networks such as the Evangelical Environmental Network (EEN) have framed care for creation as a gospel imperative.

Across the globe, other faith traditions have made parallel contributions. Islamic environmental networks—such as the Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences (IFEES)—draw upon *khalifah* (stewardship) and *amana* (trusteeship) principles to advocate responsible resource use. Hindu and Buddhist movements in India, like the Chipko and Bishnoi movements, have intertwined ecological protection with dharmic duty and nonviolence (*ahimsa*). Indigenous spirituality, emphasizing relational harmony between humans and the earth, has informed sustainable resource management across the Americas, Africa, and Oceania. Collectively, these perspectives demonstrate that environmental care is a shared moral and spiritual responsibility that transcends geographic and doctrinal boundaries. Scholars have explored these faith-based responses through interdisciplinary and theological lenses. Mary Evelyn Tucker (2003) emphasizes religious cosmologies as key to ecological ethics, arguing that moral transformation requires sacred narratives of creation. Roger S. Gottlieb (2010) identifies faith communities as “moral engines” in environmental activism, highlighting how rituals, doctrines, and compassion sustain long-term engagement.

Willis Jenkins (2013) extends this view by examining how faith traditions contextualize sustainability in pluralist global settings, shaping ethical imagination for policy and practice. Their combined insights show that faith-based environmentalism provides not only moral legitimacy but also community infrastructure for ecological transformation.

Globally, faith-based environmental movements have reframed ecological care as both spiritual and civic duty, influencing climate negotiations, local adaptation projects, and sustainable development goals. By integrating theology, ethics, and activism, these movements embody a transreligious call to protect creation as a divine trust—an essential moral frontier for the 21st century.

Creation Care in the African Context: Cultural and Theological Insights

Creation care in the African context integrates theology, ecology, and indigenous cultural wisdom to promote a holistic understanding of humanity's relationship with the environment. African cosmology traditionally views creation as sacred and interrelated—humans, animals, land, and spirits coexist within a divinely ordered system sustained by mutual respect and moral responsibility. This worldview resonates with the biblical vision of stewardship in Genesis 1–2, where humanity is called to “till and keep” the earth, not exploit it. The African concept of ubuntu (“I am because we are”) extends this relational ethic beyond human society to include the natural world, emphasizing community, harmony, and care.

Theologically, African Christianity affirms that creation belongs to God and reflects divine glory (Psalm 24:1). Stewardship is thus a form of worship and obedience. Scholars such as Jesse N. K. Mugambi (2001) argue that African theology must shift from a theology of liberation to a theology

of reconstruction—where ecological restoration becomes part of the church’s mission. Similarly, Laurenti Magesa (2014) emphasizes that African spirituality is inherently ecological; the sacredness of the land, water, and ancestors compels moral behaviour toward creation. Ezra Chitando (2019) adds that African eco-theology should address modern challenges such as deforestation, mining, and climate injustice, grounding environmental advocacy in both Scripture and indigenous ethics.

Culturally, African proverbs and rituals embody ecological wisdom: taboos against overharvesting, reverence for sacred groves, and community farming practices reflect sustainable principles rooted in respect for life. These practices align with biblical ethics of Sabbath and jubilee, where rest for the land ensures renewal and justice. Yet, modern industrialization and urbanization have disrupted these traditional systems, creating ecological crises that demand theological and ethical responses.

Faith-based organizations in Africa such as the All Africa Conference of Churches (AACC), Lausanne Africa Network for Creation Care, and Green Anglicans Movement—have begun integrating environmental awareness into Christian mission. Their efforts demonstrate how African theology, grounded in Scripture and enriched by cultural values, can address ecological degradation and climate change. The integration of African indigenous wisdom with biblical stewardship provides a uniquely holistic model of creation care that unites faith, community, and sustainability. In conclusion, creation care in Africa is both a spiritual and cultural mandate. It calls for rediscovering the ecological wisdom embedded in African heritage and aligning it with biblical theology to nurture justice, sustainability, and reverence for the Creator.

Human Responsibility and Environmental Crisis

The environmental crisis of the twenty-first century—manifesting in climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution, and deforestation—raises urgent moral and theological questions about humanity’s responsibility toward creation. While scientific and technological factors are often highlighted, the deeper roots of ecological degradation are ethical and spiritual. Human beings, endowed with freedom and intelligence, have the capacity to nurture or destroy creation. Consequently, environmental stewardship is not merely a scientific or political issue but a profound moral and theological mandate grounded in the human vocation as caretakers of God’s creation. From a biblical perspective, the doctrine of creation establishes both privilege and accountability. Genesis 1:26–28 grants humanity “dominion” over creation, while Genesis 2:15 qualifies this dominion as a call “to till and keep” the garden—a balance between use and care. The psalmist affirms that “the earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it” (Psalm 24:1), situating humanity as stewards rather than owners. The fall narrative (Genesis 3) reveals how disobedience and greed fractured the harmony between God, humanity, and nature. The consequence is alienation and ecological disorder—a reality mirrored in today’s environmental crisis. Hence, the misuse of creation stems not only from ignorance but from moral and spiritual failure. Theologically, human responsibility for the environment is rooted in the *imago Dei*—the idea that humanity reflects God’s character. To be in the image of a Creator entails sharing in divine care, creativity, and compassion. As Jürgen Moltmann (1985) explains in *God in Creation*, creation is a “community of life” sustained by the Spirit of God, and human beings are called to live as members within, not masters over, this community. Similarly, Ellen F. Davis (2009) argues that biblical texts reveal a deep ecological ethic: the land is not a commodity but a partner in covenantal relationship. The concept of Sabbath rest for the land (Leviticus 25) and jubilee release underscore

divine concern for ecological renewal. Thus, human responsibility involves restraint, reverence, and restoration—living within God’s rhythms rather than exploiting creation’s resources for short-term gain.

Historically, however, humanity’s understanding of dominion has often been distorted into domination. Lynn White Jr. (1967) famously contended that Western Christianity’s anthropocentric interpretation of Scripture fostered an exploitative attitude toward nature. While his thesis provoked controversy, it prompted theologians to reevaluate the moral dimensions of environmental degradation. Contemporary eco-theologians, including Sallie McFague (1993), have since reframed creation theology to emphasize the earth as “the body of God,” calling for a relational and incarnational ethic of care. This perspective transforms responsibility from management to participation—humans as co-creators and partners in sustaining life.

Globally, the environmental crisis has revealed how human irresponsibility—driven by industrialization, consumerism, and neglect of ethical limits—has placed creation in peril. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, 2021) warns of catastrophic consequences if current trends continue. Yet, as Pope Francis (2015) insists in *Laudato Si’*, “there can be no renewal of our relationship with nature without a renewal of humanity itself.” Environmental crises thus demand moral conversion, integrating ecological concern into spirituality, economics, and governance. Faith communities worldwide are responding: from Christian “Creation Care” initiatives to Islamic khalifah (stewardship) programs and African eco-theologies that blend indigenous respect for nature with biblical stewardship.

In the African context, theologians such as Jesse N. K. Mugambi (2001) and Laurenti Magesa (2014) remind us that

care for creation is not alien to African culture. Traditional African cosmologies see humanity as part of a living community that includes the land, ancestors, and the divine. Neglecting this interconnectedness leads to ecological and social imbalance. Therefore, environmental responsibility in Africa—and globally—requires reawakening spiritual consciousness and reclaiming ecological ethics embedded in both Scripture and cultural wisdom.

Practically, human responsibility entails several dimensions: (1) Ecological Justice, recognizing that environmental harm disproportionately affects the poor and marginalized; (2) Sustainability, ensuring that future generations inherit a livable planet; and (3) Conversion of Lifestyle, shifting from consumerism to simplicity and care. These responsibilities require not only individual moral change but institutional reform—governments, churches, and corporations must adopt policies that reflect stewardship rather than exploitation. In conclusion, the environmental crisis exposes humanity's moral failure and spiritual amnesia. Yet it also offers an opportunity for repentance and renewal. Human responsibility, understood theologically, calls for a transformation of consciousness—seeing creation not as a resource to consume but as a sacred trust to protect. As Moltmann, Davis, and White remind us, ecological healing begins with theological reformation: rediscovering that to care for the earth is to honour the Creator. Faith, ethics, and environmental science must therefore converge to cultivate a just and sustainable future for all creation.

10. Creation and Care: Implications for Humanity's Environmental Responsibility

The doctrine of creation and the moral imperative of care form the theological foundation for humanity's relationship with the natural world. Across the Judeo-Christian tradition, creation is not a human possession but a divine trust—given by God for

stewardship, not exploitation. The biblical narrative opens with the affirmation that “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1), establishing God as the ultimate owner and sustainer of all existence. Humanity, created in the *imago Dei* (image of God), bears the unique vocation to represent God’s rule on earth through responsible governance of creation (Genesis 1:26–28). This divine mandate implies that humanity’s power over nature must reflect God’s character—marked by love, justice, and wisdom. The phrase “to till and keep” in Genesis 2:15 portrays a balanced ethic of cultivation and preservation. The earth’s resources are to be used sustainably, with gratitude and restraint. Biblical law reinforces this: Sabbath rest for the land (Leviticus 25) and jubilee restoration reveal ecological principles embedded in divine order. In this framework, creation care becomes an act of worship and obedience—acknowledging God’s sovereignty and the sacredness of all life.

Historically, the Christian understanding of creation has evolved. Early church fathers like Augustine and Basil of Caesarea celebrated creation as a manifestation of divine goodness. Medieval theologians, notably Thomas Aquinas, viewed the natural world as a reflection of God’s wisdom, inviting humans to study and preserve it. However, in the modern industrial era, anthropocentrism—the belief that humans are the centre of all creation—distorted this balance. Lynn White Jr. (1967) famously argued that Western Christianity’s misinterpretation of dominion fostered ecological exploitation. Though controversial, his thesis sparked widespread reexamination of theological ethics.

Contemporary scholars such as Jürgen Moltmann (1985) and Ellen F. Davis (2009) have sought to restore an ecological reading of Scripture. Moltmann emphasizes creation as a “community of life,” where humans are members rather than

masters. Davis highlights the agrarian wisdom of the Bible, suggesting that the land is a covenant partner deserving respect. Similarly, African theologians like Jesse N. K. Mugambi (2001) and Laurenti Magesa (2014) integrate indigenous cosmologies that see all living things as interconnected and sacred. In both biblical and African traditions, creation care is not an option but an integral part of human faithfulness.

In contemporary society, environmental crises—climate change, pollution, deforestation, and species extinction—underscore humanity’s failure to uphold this divine responsibility. Theological reflection therefore becomes not only spiritual but practical. To care for creation is to affirm life, justice, and sustainability. As Pope Francis (2015) asserts in *Laudato Si’*, ecological degradation and social injustice are intertwined; the cry of the earth is inseparable from the cry of the poor. Hence, ecological care demands conversion of hearts, systems, and lifestyles. Humanity’s task is not merely to conserve nature but to restore broken relationships—between humans and God, humans and nature, and among humans themselves.

Discussion of Findings

The study’s analysis yields several significant findings that link theology, ethics, and environmental responsibility:

1. **Reinterpretation of Dominion:** Biblical dominion (Gen 1:26–28) does not justify exploitation but calls for *servant leadership* within creation. The terms *abad* (serve) and *shamar* (keep) in Gen 2:15 redefine human authority as care and preservation.
2. **Integration of Creation and Redemption:** Scripture reveals continuity between creation and salvation (Rom 8:19–23). The redemption of humanity

involves the renewal of all creation—an insight often neglected in traditional theology.

3. **Historical Misinterpretations and Corrective Theologies:**

The study confirms that Lynn White's critique of Christianity exposed real historical distortions but oversimplified the Christian tradition. Later theologians—Moltmann, Bauckham, Davis—retrieve biblical motifs that correct these distortions and reframe dominion as stewardship.

4. **Faith-Based Environmental Action:**

Contemporary religious movements demonstrate that theological conviction can inspire ecological practice. Examples such as *Laudato Si'*, A Rocha, and Green Anglicans translate doctrine into advocacy and sustainable living.

5. **African Contextual Insights:**

African theology's emphasis on *ubuntu* and communal harmony offers a holistic model of creation care. The interdependence of humans, land, and spirit resonates deeply with biblical stewardship ethics, making African eco-theology a vital contribution to global discourse.

6. **Need for Theological Education and Praxis:**

The research identifies a gap between theological understanding and practical implementation in many faith communities. Creation care remains underemphasized in sermons, curricula, and policy engagement.

Conclusion

The theology of creation care reveals that humanity's responsibility toward the environment is deeply spiritual, moral, and communal. Creation is God's handiwork, entrusted to humankind for responsible management. When humanity forgets this divine trust, it results in ecological imbalance,

moral decay, and spiritual alienation. The environmental crisis, therefore, is both a sign of ecological collapse and a theological indictment of human greed and negligence.

Faith traditions, especially Christianity, offer a redemptive vision: that through repentance, renewal, and stewardship, the harmony of creation can be restored. Scripture calls believers to act as “co-creators” with God—agents of healing, not destruction. The command to “love your neighbour as yourself” (Mark 12:31) extends beyond interpersonal ethics to include care for future generations and for all living beings. In this sense, creation care is an expression of love—love for God, for humanity, and for the earth. Environmental responsibility demands that humanity move from domination to partnership, from exploitation to preservation. It calls for an ecological spirituality that recognizes every act of care planting a tree, conserving water, or reducing waste—as sacred participation in God’s creative work. The renewal of creation begins with transformed attitudes and lifestyles rooted in gratitude and humility. Churches, governments, and communities must see environmental care not as a secondary concern but as central to moral and social reform. Theologically, creation care invites a rediscovery of hope. The biblical vision of the new heaven and new earth (Revelation 21:1) reminds humanity that creation is not disposable but redeemable. The Spirit of God continues to work toward restoration, and humans, as stewards of that creation, are called to cooperate with this redemptive mission. Hence, creation care is not only a duty—it is a divine calling that shapes the destiny of the world.

Recommendations

Based on the theological, ethical, and ecological analysis of creation and care, the following recommendations are proposed for humanity’s renewed environmental responsibility:

1. **Reaffirm Theological Foundations:**
Churches and faith-based organizations should re-teach the doctrine of creation, emphasizing stewardship, humility, and interconnectedness. Sermons, liturgies, and catechisms must integrate ecological awareness as part of Christian discipleship.
2. **Promote Environmental Education:**
Schools, theological colleges, and universities should include environmental ethics and theology in their curricula to shape future leaders with ecological consciousness grounded in faith.
3. **Encourage Sustainable Living:**
Individuals and communities should adopt lifestyles that reflect simplicity, conservation, and sustainability—reducing waste, conserving energy, and supporting eco-friendly practices.
4. **Strengthen Faith-Based Environmental Movements:**
Churches should collaborate with movements such as the Green Anglicans, Eco-Congregation Network, and Lausanne Creation Care Initiative to mobilize faith communities toward climate action and policy advocacy.
5. **Integrate Indigenous Wisdom:**
African and other indigenous ecological values—such as ubuntu and community-based stewardship should be incorporated into environmental theology and practice, promoting holistic harmony between humanity and nature.
6. **Policy Advocacy and Social Justice:**
Religious leaders should engage governments and institutions to promote environmental justice, ensuring equitable access to clean air, water, and land, especially for marginalized communities.
7. **Liturgical Renewal:**
Churches should introduce “Season of Creation” observances, prayers for the environment, and eco-themed worship to nurture collective ecological spirituality.
8. **Corporate and Institutional Accountability:**

Faith-based and secular organizations must adopt environmentally sustainable policies reducing carbon footprints, conserving natural resources, and ensuring ethical production and consumption.

9. Community-Based Restoration Projects:

Local congregations and civic groups should initiate tree planting, waste management, and biodiversity conservation programs, fostering practical expressions of stewardship.

10. Global Solidarity and Hope:

Humanity must unite beyond religious, racial, and national boundaries to confront ecological crises collectively, guided by compassion, justice, and the shared vision of a sustainable future for all creation.

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