

**HUMANS AND ECOSYSTEMS IN THE PRIESTLY
CREATION ACCOUNT: AN ECOLOGICAL READING
OF GENESIS 1:1-2:4A**

by

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to:

1. those who are involved in ecological struggles in order to make the universe a better place for humans and non-human beings.
2. Magguy Kahindo Kyakimwa, my wife and best friend, whose ‘green insights’ and prayers have inspired me.

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DECLARATION

Student Number: **4606-395-1**

I declare that '**Humans and Ecosystems in the Priestly Creation Account: An Ecological Reading of Genesis 1:1-2:4a**' is my own work and that all the sources I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

SIGNATURE

(KAVUSA, K J)

26th October 2012

DATE

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SUMMARY

This study attempts to offer an ecological interpretation of Genesis 1:1-2:4a in view of the question as to what extent this passage bears footprints of anthropocentrism, on the one hand, and/or ecological wisdom, on the other hand. Extant ecological readings of this text tend to either recover its ecofriendliness, or they criticise the text on the basis of its dominion and subdual language in Genesis 1:26-28 which seems to go against the grain of ecological sensibilities.

In resonance with revisionist readings, this study shows that the only way to mollify the dominion language of Genesis 1:26-28 is to read this section as part of the whole Priestly creation account. Elements of the exilic context and many literary features of Genesis 1:1-2:4a present humans as a member of a world of interdependences. Hence, accusing Genesis 1:1-2:4a of lying at the root of modern indifference towards nature, is not the whole story.

KEY WORDS

Earth Community; Eco-theology; Ecological hermeneutics; Image of God; Human Dominion (**רדה** & **כבש**); Anthropocentrism; Stewardship; Eco/earth-centrism; Theocentrism; Interconnectedness; Genesis 1:1-2:4a; The Priestly creation account.

ABBREVIATIONS

AJSL	:	American Journal of Semitic Languages
AJT	:	Asia Journal of Theology
ANE	:	Ancient Near East/Eastern
AO	:	<i>Acta Orientalia</i>
BA	:	Biblical Archaeologist
BASOR	:	Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research
BCE	:	Before Christian Era
BDB	:	The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew & English Lexicon
<i>BetM</i>	:	<i>Beth Miqra</i>
BHS	:	<i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i>
BJRL	:	Bulletin of the John Ryland Library
BS	:	<i>Bibliotheca Sacra</i>
BOTSA	:	Bulletin for Old Testament Studies in Africa
CBCA	:	<i>Communauté Baptiste au Centre de l'Afrique</i>
CBQ	:	Catholic Biblical Quarterly
CBQMS	:	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
CE	:	Christian (common) Era
CTJ	:	Calvin Theological Journal
DRC	:	Democratic Republic of the Congo
Dtr	:	The Deuteronomist Source
E.C.	:	Earth Community
ERT	:	Evangelical Review of Theology
<i>Et al.</i>	:	<i>et aliter</i> (and others)
ExpT	:	Expository Times
FAO	:	The Food and Agriculture Organisation
GICOC	:	Global Issues in Context Online Collection
HBT	:	Horizon in Biblical Theology
HU	:	The Hebrew University
HUCA	:	Hebrew Union College Annual

IPCC	:	The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
IASH	:	Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities
J	:	The Yahwist Writer/Source
JBQ	:	Jewish Bible Quarterly
JHS	:	Journal of Hebrew Scriptures
JBL	:	Journal of Biblical Literature
JJS	:	Journal of Jewish Studies
JLP	:	Jewish Lights Publishing
JPSV	:	Jewish Publication Society Version
JPIC	:	Justice, Peace, Integrity of Creation
JSNT	:	Journal for the Study of the New Testament
JSOT	:	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament
JSS	:	Journal of Semitic Studies
JSSR	:	Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion
JTS	:	Journal of Theological Studies
KJV	:	King James Version
Ltd	:	Limited
LXX	:	The Septuagint
MC	:	Mesopotamian Civilisations
MT	:	The Masoretic Text
NABPR	:	National Association of Baptist Professors of Religions
NET	:	New English Translation (Bible)
NIB	:	New Interpreter's Bible
NIRV	:	New International Revised Version
NIV	:	New International Version
NRSV	:	New Revised Standard Version
NSV	:	New Standard Version
NT	:	New Testament
OED	:	Oxford English Dictionary
OT	:	Old Testament
OTE	:	Old Testament Essays

OTL	:	Old Testament Library
P/Pg	:	The Priestly Writer/Source
RSV	:	Revised Standard Version
SAA	:	State Archives of Assyria
SCE	:	Studies in Christian Ethics
SBL	:	Society of Biblical Literature
SPCK	:	Society for the Promotion of Christian Knowledge
<i>TaNaK</i>	:	<i>Torah Nebiim Ketubim</i> (i.e. Acronym for the Hebrew Bible)
TDOT	:	The Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament
TJ	:	Trinity Journal
UK	:	United Kingdom
ULPGL	:	Université Libre des Pays des Grands Lacs
UNEP	:	The United Nations Environment Programme
UNISA	:	University of South Africa
UMI	:	University Microfilms International
VT	:	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VTS	:	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i> Supplement
WBC	:	Word Biblical Commentary
WCC	:	World Council of Churches
WMO	:	World Meteorological Organisation
WW	:	Word & World
ZAW	:	<i>Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>

Abbreviations for biblical books are in accordance with the prescriptions of the New Testament Society for South Africa (NTSSA)

CHAPTER ONE: GENERAL INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

1. Motivation/Rationale for the study

The earth is under serious threat in various parts of the world due to attitudes of humans towards other members of the 'Earth community' (E.C.).¹ Scientists confirm the evidence of great earth problems and that, unless our behaviour changes, increased threats will affect many plant and animal species as well as human life. The anthropogenic emissions of greenhouse gases, combined with human destruction of ecosystems² largely contribute towards the great global warming³ that is not typical of the earth's natural cycles. There is evidence that many people on the planet may be threatened by rising sea-levels, food shortages, extreme weather, emergent diseases and species extinction.

In this regard, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)⁴ meeting in February 2007 in Nairobi reported that the number of environmental refugees could rise to 150 million by 2050, mostly as a result of global climate change. Animals and plants will also not be spared the consequences of this crisis. In 2004, on a sample

¹ The phrase Earth Community is borrowed from the book of Hessel (1996) to mean the 'entire created world' (humans, plants, animals, inorganic materials, water, air ...).

² The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) has recently reported that the world's tropical forests were reduced by an average of 15.4 million hectares per year (0.8 per cent annual rate of deforestation) from 1980 to 1990 resulting from worldwide human activities. About 90 per cent of Africa's population uses fuel-wood for cooking, and in Sub-Saharan Africa, fire-wood and brush comprise about 52 per cent of all energy sources. For references, see to the online article of Agyei, Y 1998. Deforestation in Sub-Saharan Africa. Online: <http://web.mit.edu/africantech/www/articles/Deforestation.htm> (Accessed 26 July 2012).

³ Without the greenhouse effect, the normal temperature of Earth would be about 0°F (-18°C), well below the freezing point of water. With the natural greenhouse effect, Earth's average surface temperature is actually 59°F (15°C). In fact, as CO₂ and the other greenhouse gases – including methane (CH₄), nitrous oxide (N₂O), and water vapour (H₂O) – increase above normal levels, Earth's atmosphere traps more energy and warms above anticipated cyclic levels (Macfague 2008:10).

⁴ In 1988, the IPCC was created by the World Meteorological Organisation (WMO) and the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) in order to control all the issues concerning climate change. The IPCC involves more than 2500 scientists chosen by all the participating governments. IPCC reports are among the most intensively peer-reviewed summaries of scientific knowledge ever produced about climate change (Hallman 2000:454-5).

including 1,103 animal and plant species, scientists calculated that 15 to 37 per cent of them would become extinct by 2050 because of climate change.⁵

Therefore, this ecological crisis has given rise to worldwide debate and research among governments, ecologists, scholars and theologians in order to discover ways to keep people from further destruction of the ecosystems. To address this issue, the significance of human attitudes towards nature and the implications of social and religious traditions have been included on the agenda as factors that contribute to worsening the current crisis. From now on, the ecological crisis is an interdisciplinary issue that interests sciences as well as humanities like eco-philosophy, bioethics and eco-theology.

The present investigation is done within the framework of the latter discipline: eco-theology. This study aims to grasp biblical thought towards redefining new paradigms for human relations to ecosystems in order to sustain an ecological balance. It is believed that more science and more technology alone are not going to get us out of the present ecological crisis. For Edwards (2006:3), ‘The loss of biodiversity caused by human activity is more a matter of theological view rather than it concerns other human sciences.’

For this reason, some modest steps have been taken by individual churches as well as by organisations such as the World Council of Churches (WCC).⁶ In his January 2001 general speech, the former Roman Catholic church leader Pope John Paul II asserted that respect for the integrity of Creation is a moral obligation that calls for ‘ecological conversion’ in the world because:

If one looks at the regions of our planet, one realises immediately that humanity has disappointed the divine expectation. Above all, in our time, humanity has unhesitatingly devastated wooded plains and valleys, polluted the waters, deformed the earth’s habitat, made the air unbreathable, upset the hydrological and atmospheric systems, blighted green spaces, implementing uncontrolled forms of industrialisation, humiliating – to use an image of Dante Alighieri – the earth, that flower bed that is our

⁵ See GICOC 2012. Climate Change. Online: <http://find.galegroup.com/gic/start.do?prodId=GIC> (Accessed 31 August 2012).

⁶To tackle the ecological crisis, WCC General Assembly held in Vancouver (1983) introduced the theme, ‘Justice, Peace and the Integrity of Creation’ (JPIC) which theme has been established as a commission within the ecumenical community. The theme rebounded in Canberra, Australia (February 1991) on the subject ‘Come Holy Spirit, Renew the Whole Creation. See declarations VII and VIII in Document 19, ‘Justice, Peace, Integrity of Creation’ (JPIC-WCC, 1990).

dwelling. It is necessary, therefore, to stimulate and sustain the ‘ecological conversion’ which over these last decades had made humanity more sensitive when facing the catastrophe towards which it was moving.⁷

The speech of the former Catholic Church leader is a call for extensive ecological actions. However, until now commitment and responsibility for the earth have not yet taken the true place in Christian belief and practice. As the church is called to fight for all marginalised people (poor, slaves, women...) in their struggles for freedom, so the church is invited to ‘ecological conversion’ in support of the groaning creation (Edwards 2006:3). Christians are invited to exercise their role precisely as believers, alongside other people in the great ‘ecological movement’ all over the world, in accordance with the following:

In this global age when the universal questions of justice and ecology ring from every mountain and wetland, from every tumultuous city and sequestered village, and when believers themselves sometimes survey ‘the starry skies above’ with fear or even dread, our faith communities can no longer afford to stay at home with the particularistic theology of yesterday. We must now venture forth to contemplate a new universal horizon in our interpretation of the Scriptures (Santmire 2000:28).

Indeed, Christians will be able to play their particular role only by understanding the ecological meaning and the outcomes of their deepest beliefs. Moltmann (1985:xi) argued that: ‘the earth crisis challenges us to read the Bible afresh and ask whether the biblical text itself, its interpreters – or both – have contributed to this crisis.’ For this reason, there is a great need to develop a comprehensive theoretical and practical eco-theology based on the careful exegesis of the biblical scriptures. Attention must be given to texts that are likely to bear the traits of anthropocentrism: Genesis 1:1-2:4a, for instance.

The first chapter of Genesis is currently the subject of disagreement among ecotheologians. Although this chapter does not contain contemporary ecological expressions, such as, sulphur, dioxide emission rates or toxic waste disposal, it remains relevant in considering contemporary ecological concerns since it has been understood by Christian scholars and others in the Christian tradition as a justification for human

⁷John Paul II. *General Audience Address* (January 17, 2001), quoted in D Edwards 2006. *Ecology at the Heart of Faith. The Change of Heart that leads to a New Way of Living on Earth*. New York: Maryknoll, 2.

plundering of the earth. Briefly, my choice for Genesis 1 is thus motivated by more than one reason:

- First, this text continues to be a matter of great debate for biblical hermeneutics, especially the interpretation of Genesis 1:26-28 which gives humans the mandate of domination over the earth and animals. This mandate has been read as a justification for human despotic exploitation of the earth and its potential for his benefit;
- Second, Genesis 1:1-2:4a has at the same time been employed in various ways to retrieve ecological wisdom from terms like רוח אלהים, the motif of two groups of three days of God's active work and one separate day of Sabbath, the motif of stewardship, the motifs of biodiversity and vegetarianism, among others.

Hence, this study will hopefully contribute to raising an awareness of the issues that gave rise to eco-theology in general and the interpretation of Genesis 1:1-2:4a in particular.

2. Problem statement

The biblical creation account of Genesis 1:1-2:4a, ascribed to the Priestly writer, has been accused, both by biblical scholars and eco-theologians, of playing an influential role in current humans' despotic exploitation of nature. The allegations concerned are found mainly in the sequence of Genesis 1:26-28 where humans received the mandate to have 'dominion' over animals and to 'subdue' the earth. Habel (2009:2) has argued that Genesis 1:26-28 is a 'grey text, a text that is ecologically destructive, devaluing Earth⁸ and offering humans a God-given right to harness nature.'

Throughout the Priestly creation account, God's procedure of creation involved either the separation of the existing domains of the primeval world or the generation of new things from the ordered realms. In the text, light is separated from darkness (Gn 1:4), waters above from waters below (Gn 1:6-7), day from night (Gn 1:14), animals and plants are generated from the land, sea and air (Gn 1:11-13). However, for the creation of humans, no relation is made with any existing domain of the primeval

⁸ For Habel (2008:7), 'Earth' is a personal name that must not be preceded by the article 'the.' Its first letter will therefore appear in a capital letter wherever we quote this author.

world or with the created order. Humans are not created (בריה) from earth (ארץ) as is the case for fauna and flora, but they are made (עשה) in God's image for the purpose of domination (Gn 1:26-27). In the words of Habel (2008:6), 'Humans are not one among many living creatures formed by God to share the planet, but that superior species who is given the mandate to rule (רדה) over other living creatures.'

Although biblical scholars have attempted to sanitise this domination mandate by sensing it as 'sympathetic mission' to sustain the earth and its members, most of the proposed interpretations of the text are human-centred. They regard humans as either the intermediary or the pinnacle of the creation, and thereby continue to negatively impact people's attitudes toward the Earth community. Three elements⁹ of Genesis 1:26-28 indeed bear the footprints of anthropocentrism, namely the concept *imago dei*, (בצלם אלהים), the mandate to dominate (ורדה) over animals, and to subdue (וכבשה) the earth.

Numerous studies on Genesis 1:26 interpret the concept *imago dei* in connection with the Egyptian kingship ideology viewing Pharaoh as the *Re*'s representative on the earth. Westermann (1992:35) affirms that humans (male and female) being made the image of God (in *imago dei*) imply the 'democratisation of the kingship metaphor'. Regardless of how *imago dei* can be interpreted, the concept puts humans in a superior position to non-human beings. The concept clearly provides humans with the status of greater created beings as well as the 'right to exercise power over nature and conquer it as might do any ancient king' over his subjects or enemies (Habel 2009:4). Hence, the concept *imago dei* still needs a thorough exegesis for current ecological purposes.

Another troublesome problem for ecological reading of Genesis 1:1-2:4a resides in how to interpret the Hebrew verbs רדה (dominate) and כבש (subdue). Generally, the Hebrew verb רדה refers to a monarch's power to govern his subjects and enemies (1Ki 4:24; 5:6; Ps 114:2). Scholars have tried to alleviate the sense of the verb רדה by suggesting that Genesis 1:28 implies the notion of kinship or sympathy with the earth. Fretheim (1994:346) proposed to read כבש in the sense of 'development' and רדה as a

⁹ Habel argues that these three issues make Genesis 1:26-28 a 'grey' text as opposed to 'green' text. See Habel, N C 2009. *An Inconvenient Text: Is a Green Reading of the Bible Possible?* Hindmarsh: ATF Press, 2.

care-giving responsibility, rather than exploitation. His interpretation is influenced by the Yahwist text of Genesis 2:15 about serving and keeping the garden of Eden.

However, this kind of reading is not obvious in the Priestly creation account, and thereby susceptible to discussions. The problem is that the text itself does not give any precise indication/way on how this ‘domination’ is supposed to be executed. Does this dominion preclude agriculture or domestication? One could probably say yes, because of the mention of cereals and fruits, on the one hand (Gn 1:29), and cattle and wild animals, on the other (Gn 1:24-28). But, since the invitation to ‘dominate’ includes also the fish of the seas and the flying beings, one cannot easily indicate well-defined ways in which this domination is expected to be executed (De Pury 2004:65).

More significant is the attempt of eco-theologians and biblical scholars who are trying to sanitise the meaning of Genesis 1:26-28 in accordance with a pro-earth reading perspective. One of them is McDonagh (1990:119) saying that *רדה* means ‘emulating divine kindness and love, rather than a ruling activity with harsh control.’ In his words:

The original commission was, in fact, a challenge to humans to imitate God’s loving kindness and faithfulness and act as his viceroy in relationship to the non-human component of the earth. This is the original meaning of the verb *radah* used in the text (McDonagh 1990:119).

This kind of reading is based on the assumption that humans are the climax of God’s creation, and thereby have a special responsibility toward the creation. Loader (1987:20) confirmed that humans are the crowning of the creation and bear a special place to humbly exercise dominion over nature like a subject-king, ‘viceroy of God’. He argued that, ‘if God’s style is love, care and respect for his creation, then that is also [what] human dominion over the earth should mean’ (Loader 1987:20). However, the text itself and the several occurrences of *רדה* in the Hebrew Bible leave doubt that the mandate to dominate could imply a peaceful intent.

Lastly, the Hebrew verb *כבש* (subdue) is also a violent verb in the Old Testament. Its meaning refers to ‘crushing under one’s foot’ (Mi 7:29) and ‘subjugating’ (Jos 18:1). This verb also relates to the action of raping a woman (Es 7:9; Neh 5:5). For this reason, many people have even said that humans ‘raped earth’ due to their aggressive

attitudes towards the earth (Tucker 1997:4). Aware of this problem, the editors of the New English Translation Bible (NET) proposed rendering the verb ‘to subdue’ by ‘the action to bring one’s control for one’s advantage.’ In this sense, Genesis 1:28 is read as, ‘harness the earth potential and use it for your benefit.’¹⁰ This interpretation is also characterised by anthropocentrism viewing nature only as an object for human interests.

In short, these Priestly words hardly express a peaceful intention. In other texts, both Hebrew verbs refer exclusively to a dominion against the will of the subjects. In Psalm 72, for instance, the verb רדה is used in the context of a conquered land in which the enemies are forced to lick the dust. It is in this sense that the Israelites cried that God had abandoned them to the רדה of their enemies (Neh 9:28). Similarly, Garr (2003:171) stated the following about the aggressive potential of the verb כבש:

כבש 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.

Clearly, the problem remains critical and still needs the further attention of a thorough exegesis for its ecological implication. Indeed, it is possible that the verse 28 by itself implies that humans will rule the earth community with great and imperious power that is not restricted (Jüngling 1981:30). In Genesis 1:28, the earth appears to be a domain for human conquest and control. It seems that within its immediate context, Genesis 1:26-28 views humans as absolute rulers with potentially despotic power over nature (Van Dyk 2009:192). The dominion mandate of Genesis 1:28 seems to provide a justification for devaluing and disempowering not only the earth beings, but also the earth itself for human advantage.

In view of this problem, my study will investigate the following main research question: Is there any possibility to retrieve ecological insight from a text that clearly bears the footprints of anthropocentrism?

This research question implies a number of sub-questions:

¹⁰ See the reference on Genesis 1:26 on the NET Bible 2000.

- To what extent can Genesis 1:1-2:4a be described as anthropocentric?
- How should we understand the three matters that most often are regarded as clear proof of the anthropocentric potential of Genesis 1:26-28, namely the human being created in the image of God; humans receiving the mandate to rule over (הָרַד) other members of the Earth community; and humans receiving the mandate to subdue (כַּבַּשׁ) the earth?
- Does Genesis 1:1-2:4a offer ecological wisdom?

3. Hypothesis

Given the nature of the problem to be investigated in this study, the following hypothesis will guide my research: Although the Priestly creation account bears the footprints of anthropocentrism, it offers valuable ecological wisdom. This hypothesis can be presented in a more focused way in terms of two sub-hypotheses:

1. Anthropocentric tendencies find their clearest expression in Genesis 1:26-28 (the account of the creation of humanity).
2. An ecological interpretation of Genesis 1:1-2:4a involving a careful literary analysis of the passage as a whole brings valuable ecological wisdom into view.

My study will be an attempt to determine the validity of this twofold hypothesis. I need to show whether and to what extent anthropocentrism characterises the Priestly creation account. Irrespective of the answer to this question, I also have to determine whether the passage as a whole offers some ecological wisdom.

This hypothesis – also expressed in terms of two sub-hypotheses – will guide my research endeavour. The hypothesis provides the focus of my research and also offers the principle according to which the relevance of sources will be determined.

4. Objectives and aims of the study

This research will attempt to address the problem of the interpretation of human dominion over the earth and animals presented in Genesis 1:26-28. Using ecological hermeneutics as a hermeneutical key and using methodology that contains diachronic and synchronic elements, this study explores whether Genesis 1:26-28 offers valuable ecological insight if it is read in its socio-historical and literary contexts of the Priestly creation account.

Genesis 1:1-2:4a, as a whole design, depicts the creation order as essentially supported by the intrinsic ‘principle of interconnectedness.’ The text conveys the principle that, ‘the flourishing of life also depends upon sustaining various kinds of interdependent relations through cooperation, collectivity, and balance’ (Brown 2010:61). It is a world of internal relationships of its parts. The structural symmetry of the text resulted from the acts of differentiation or separation teaches that ‘everything in creation stands in relation to something else, and that they all have a common origin’ (Van Heerden 2012:8). Therefore, the objectives of this study will be threefold:

1. To critically investigate the text concerning the creation as described in Genesis 1 and its ideal of interdependence binding its members (sun, moon, stars, air, waters, flora, fauna, humans...).
2. To critically examine the implication of the expressions ‘image of God’ and ‘human dominion/subduing’ over animals and earth in the historical and literary contexts of Genesis 1:1-2:4a.
3. To question the belief that the Priestly creation account is an invitation to a free-for-all and irresponsible abuse of the earth and its resources potential.

5. Methodological considerations

5.1 Introduction

Most of the earlier dominant ecological readings on Genesis 1:1-2:4a have mainly been conducted from methodological tools of theological readings and eco-feminist hermeneutics. In the first approach, the text is read in connection with Genesis 2-3 (the

Yahwist creation story) (see Fretheim 2005:33), while the second examines the text by the hermeneutics of suspicion, identification and retrieval in an eco-centric perspective (see Habel 2008:8). This research will be conducted with an ecological perspective that uses methodological elements of historical criticism and the ones from the literary (close) reading.

When applied to biblical texts, these two approaches bring illumination for a global understanding of the text. Rather than viewing them as opposites, the two biblical methods complement and enrich one another. Indeed, properly understood, a synchronic reading (close reading) is not incompatible with the diachronic reading (history), but rather it tries to study history as one aspect of the final form of the text (Dunnill 1992:53). Therefore, this research will examine how the historical setting and the literary outline of Genesis 1 can aid in understanding the ecological issues of the text.

5.2 A historical critical reading

Historical criticism started within the worldwide context of the Enlightenment period and dominated the academic study of the Bible until the late twentieth century (Baird 1992:730). It is often believed that historical criticism is more a matter of ‘genetic’ searching of the original meaning of the text, what it meant to first readers, and not what it might mean to modern readers. Indeed, source-criticism is one aspect of historical criticism, but not its only defining character. The approach also includes the matters of form-criticism, redaction-criticism and text-criticism (Moyise 2004:13-68).

Barton demonstrates what historical criticism really means when it is applied to a text. For him, historical criticism is also a literary process interested with the ‘genre recognition’ of the text and its possible meaning, the semantics of the entire text, as well as of individual words or sentences (Barton 2007:6). Thus, the method also requires deep sensitivity to hidden meanings and various options of interpreting the text in order to avoid assuming the meaning of the text prior to a thorough analysis of its historical and semantic settings.

The exegete’s role is not to ‘restate the meaning in such a way that the text is evacuated of its content and replaced by the exegete’s interpretation’, but to bring the

reader into the text to appreciate what the text really says (Cunningham 2002:73). As noted by Schleiermacher (1998:7), ‘as soon as one restates a text’s meaning, one has produced a new text that is subject to the hermeneutical constraints of any text.’ For this reason, historical criticism argues for reading the text in connection with its socio-historical background.

In this hermeneutical process, the reader searches the historical and social context of the text, before analysing its internal syntax: its themes, genre, structure and literary units. The approach deals with analysing how these units relate thematically, formally or chronologically before trying to reconstruct (text-criticism) the text itself (Habel 1971:7). Therefore, the approach will need to utilise relevant information about the genre, culture, history, mentality and religions that prevailed in the socio-historical context of Genesis 1. The aim is neither to investigate the original meaning, nor the historical sense, nor the intended sense, nor the literal sense but the ‘plain sense’ of the text, in accordance with the following:

Biblical criticism [historical criticism] so understood is concerned with the ‘plain sense’ or ‘natural sense’ of the text. It is usually harmless to describe this as the ‘historical’ or ‘original’ sense, meaning ‘what the writer meant by the text.’ But strictly speaking these are not exactly the same. Where we do not know who wrote the text or what he or she meant by it, we may still be able to say that the text ‘could mean A’ or ‘could mean B’ on the basis of our knowledge of the language in which the text is written ... So-called ‘historical criticism’ has the task of telling the reader what biblical texts can or cannot mean, not merely what they did or did not mean to say of this or that interpretation (Barton 1998:17).

Historical criticism must not be seen as an archaeological excavation of the ‘original meaning’ of biblical texts, because the approach transcends the matters of introduction (history, authorship, literary context) to the concern of meaning and implication of the text (Barton 2007:69-71). It is also not a search for the ‘intended sense’ otherwise the research is not worthwhile as the author knows in advance the outcomes of its investigation. Its role is neither about the ‘literal sense’, nor is it about the ‘history itself’, even if it is concerned with the historical text meaning. Indeed, it is not the ‘historical’ (diachronic) fact that is the defining element of historical criticism, but its ‘critical’ character (Barton 1998:18-19). The method is defined by its emphasis on

asking free and critical questions about the meaning of the text, regardless of any constraints of church traditions or individual interests.

Historical criticism is concerned with ‘plain sense’ because it offers a wide range of possible interpretations of biblical texts beyond the historical or literal sense of the text. Using its historical skills, the approach assumes that the context influences the meaning of a word, but the context never annihilates a word’s dynamic meaning. In fact, one of the most basic functions of this approach is ‘to deconstruct people’s understanding of the Bible by showing that biblical texts mean more than what they have commonly understood’ (Barton 2007:102).

In this sense, the historical critical method will be employed to analyse Genesis 1 not only in relation to its exilic/postexilic settings and Ancient Near Eastern (ANE) cosmogonic elements, but also in its position in the Priestly literary source. The work includes then the critical analysis of genres, culture and thoughts related to Genesis 1. This aspect is important to connect with the way of thinking of the text in order to avoid questions that are foreign to the text. Given its ecological awareness, the study will ask questions that transcend previous anthropocentric-related historical critical assumptions on the text. Special attention will be given to how the text transcends its ANE analogues, and creates meaning in the midst of crises experienced by the Judeans in the new configuration of the world after 587/6 BCE.

Our analysis of the text will take into account the basic literary unit that has been traditionally identified as the Priestly creation account, namely Genesis 1:1-2:4a. The *Biblia Hebraïca Stuttgartensia* (5th edition, 1997)¹¹ will be utilised as the basis in the analysis of the Masoretic text although some insights of the Septuagint version (LXX) will also be adopted. The textual criticism and lexical analysis will be used to provide our reconstruction and translation of the text. The analysis will then focus on specific key-words, images and ANE context in order to uncover the wide ecological patterns that are hidden or implied in the text. The abbreviations for the books of the Bible follow the prescriptions of the New Testament Society of South Africa (NTSSA).

¹¹ It is the publication of Elliger, K & Rudolph, W 1997 (eds). *Biblia Hebraïca Stuttgartensia*, ediz.5. Amended by A Schenker. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft.

5.3 A literary reading

Literary or so-called synchronic readings gained momentum in the twentieth century with the assumption that the Bible as literature can be submitted to principles of analysing any text, narrative, poem, prose, myth or fiction. This argument was fully shared by people like Chatman¹² and Booth¹³ in their rhetoric and fiction analysis; Ricoeur¹⁴ and Genette¹⁵ in their narrativity analysis; Uspensky¹⁶ in his textual poetry study; and finally Iser¹⁷ for the notion of reader response criticism.

Close readings are essentially ‘text-centred’ claiming radical shift of focus from the diachronic dimension (the intention of the author and the text original context) to the synchronic stance (the text alone) in determining the meaning and significance of the text (Jasper 1998:27). By focusing its attention upon the text rather than on its context, close readings claim reviving insights of biblical texts that were obscured by religious and theological interpretations, and that historical criticism has abandoned for its interest in historical and diachronic ways of reading biblical texts.

However, as close readings are complex and difficult to apply to one single text, this research will utilise the skills of ‘biblical structuralism.’ Structuralism is a general theory of interpretation that can be applied in almost all kinds of investigation, in science as well as in humanities (Barton 1996:106). For instance, a structuralist reading of human behaviours towards nature may try to examine actions, codes, words and gestures of humans in relation to a given cultural society or system where they are rooted and thereby have meaning. There is a great debate about whether structuralism should be viewed as a method or as a tool in biblical studies.¹⁸ My aim is not to describe and analyse this debate about the transition from structuralism as theory to structuralism as an exegetical approach. My intention is to apply this approach and use its literary skills in the study of Genesis 1:1-2:4a.

¹² Chatman, C 1978. *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in fiction and film*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

¹³ Booth, W C 1983. *The Rhetoric Fiction*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

¹⁴ Ricoeur, P 1990. *Time and Narrative*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

¹⁵ Genette, G 1983. *Nouveau Discours du Récit*. Paris: Seuil.

¹⁶ Uspensky, B 1973. *A Poetics of Composition: the Structure of the Artistic Text and Typology of a Compositional Form*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

¹⁷ Iser, W 1974. *The Implied Reader: Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction in From Bunyan to Beckett*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press.

¹⁸ A concise discussion on the issue is given by Thiselton, A C 1978. Structuralism and Biblical Studies: Method or Ideology. *ExpT* 89, 329-35.

Structuralism argues that no words or sentences have any ‘inherent’ meaning, and that their meaning is ascribed in the system or structure in which they belong (Barton 1996:110). Saussure distinguished two kinds of relatedness within the system: the ‘syntagmatic’ or horizontal relations of signs and symbols in sentences, and the ‘paradigmatic’ or vertical relations of metaphor and synonymy (Saussure 1974:12). My analysis will demonstrate, for instance, that the importance and meaning of the expression ‘image of God’, which is syntagmatically or horizontally confusing, lies in its vertical relation – with God – in the cosmic structure of Genesis 1:1-2:4a.

Therefore, structuralism is a valuable literary approach for dealing with the mythopoeic languages, including Genesis 1:1-2:4a. In these kinds of literary works the meaning is often a function of relationship within a pattern, a system, rather than of correspondence between a word and its object – between the ‘signifier’ and its ‘signified’ (Dunnill 1992:49), or of the diachronic dimension of the text. Here, the primary question should not be about ‘what did the writer mean by that?’ but ‘what does this sentence/text mean?’ While traditional literary criticism was interested in the diachronic search, structuralism trains us to approach any text as a system in which meanings are produced through its structures, in accordance with the following:

The meaning of a text is found within the deep structures of the text rather than in the intentions of the author or in the perceptions of the reader, who also may not fully understand the grammar of literature. By analysing a text’s communicative strategy, structuralists intend to become fully competent readers who may understand the work in a way that even the author did not (Powell 1990:13).

Here, attention will be given to Beauchamp’s structural analysis of Genesis 1:1-2:4a. Instead of beginning his investigation with the authorship questions about sources and redactors, this scholar reads the text as a logical and aesthetic structure. The assumption is that the meaning of the Priestly creation story resides not simply in its context and content, but also in its shape, its structure, in the relations between its parts and sequences that reveal further insights than commonly expressed. Beauchamp explains that,

Dans le terme composition littéraire se déclare l’intention d’étudier le texte selon ses rapports internes en restant toujours guidé par le niveau de l’expression : à travers

les différents jeux de correspondances verbales ou stylistiques, les identités et les différences se font valoir les unes les autres. Il se dégage ainsi un principe d'organisation, à la fois esthétique et logique, qui anime le texte et en développe et hiérarchise les intentions ... Tout texte suppose un principe de continuité qui, selon les points de vu, peut être fourni par le sujet, le ton ou les formules : les valeurs d'expressions sont l'effet des modulations (accidents ou variantes, équivalences et contrastes) repérables sur cette ligne de continuité' (Beauchamp 1969:18-19).¹⁹

Therefore, one needs to understand not only the 'ideas' directly communicated in the text, but also the literary syntax of the passage before extracting its whole meaning (Barton 1996:123). In this sense, structuralism needs to know not only what Genesis 1 says, but also the way this text is constructed to produce the meaning. The method will help us to observe how Genesis 1:1-2:4a is densely structured, matching eight creative acts with ten words of God within a temporary scheme of seven days. This strong narrative scheme has the purpose of echoing the orderliness of creation in putting each element into its proper place, and separating things from one another so that the structure and the order can come about (Van Dyk 2001:77). Further details will be given in chapter five about the proper literary analysis of the text.

5.4 An ecological hermeneutics

In singular, hermeneutic is best understood as a systematic and reflection on the praxis of the interpretation. The term hermeneutic derives from Hermes, the mythical messenger of the Olympian gods known for his cunning and swiftness to interpret gods' intention in the language of humans (Brown 2010:12). The plural Hermeneutics is used in many disciplines to refer to various forms of readings seeking to clarify the confusion around what interpretation entails (Conradie 2010:296). This means that hermeneutical reflection arises when something becomes obscure. In the field of biblical studies, the emergence of ecological hermeneutics means that biblical

¹⁹ This French statement can be translated as follows:

Studying a text as literary composition [structuralist approach] implies the reader's intention to analyse internal relationships of the text and remains always guided by expressions, because through different verbal correspondences or stylistic changes, the identities and differences [of words] value one another. In the process, the approach will reveal the aesthetic and logical principle of the structure that animates the text and defines its development and hierarchical intentions ... Any text supposes a principle of continuity that, according to some points of view, may be provided by the subject, the tone or the expressions: the values of expressions are the effects of modulations (accidents or variants, equivalences and contrasts) located throughout this line of continuity.

interpretations over centuries have been subject to ‘systematically distorted forms of communication and need to be rethought again’ (Conradie 2010:297).

Therefore, ecological hermeneutics is not properly a method, but a key-focus visible in the way the interpreter asks questions and deploys ecological sensitiveness in his analysis of biblical texts. In the words of Conradie (2010:298), ‘Hermeneutics comes to the aid of the interpretation gone awry, but it cannot replace the primary need for interpretation’. In his introduction to ecological hermeneutics, Habel (2008:3) defines the task of ecological hermeneutics not as an exploration of what a given text may say about creation, nature or ecology, but as a radical change of posture in relation to Earth as a subject in the text.

Ecological hermeneutics joins several ideological readings such as feminist hermeneutics or liberation theology (Conradie 2005:5). Rather than reading the text from the perspective of women or poor, the text is read in the interest of the ecosystems: ‘we are reading the text as creatures of Earth, as members of Earth community in solidarity with Earth’ (Habel 2008:3). By this, ecological hermeneutics defies traditional exegesis, not to concentrate only on historical, linguistic, socio-scientific and classic meanings of biblical texts, but to link interpretations with contemporary concerns.

Indeed, several propositions have been made concerning how ecological reading or hermeneutics should be applied to the text. Most of these suggestions will be given in the second and third chapters of this study. However, the dominant and most detailed is the approach proposed by The Earth Bible Project²⁰ involving a threefold hermeneutics of suspicion, identification and retrieval. Alongside this threefold hermeneutics, the Earth Bible Project has developed six eco-justice principles²¹ to act as a starting point and guide for the hermeneutical process. As shall be showed later, the Earth Bible Project argues for the rejection of the so-called ‘grey’ texts as opposed to ‘green’ texts.

²⁰ The Earth Bible Project was established in the Flinders University of Adelaide in Australia, and since 2000, has produced five volumes of Earth Bible series and one Earth Bible commentary on how to read biblical texts from the perspective of Earth. Habel is the main editor of the project. The project is believed to be the most arrayed in the area of ecological hermeneutics and has become a starting point for several ecological investigations on biblical texts. For reference, see The Earth Bible Team 2000. Guiding Ecojustice Principles, in Habel, N C (ed), *Reading from the Perspective of Earth*, 38-53. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.

²¹ The Earth Bible Project will be critically examined in both chapters two and three of this study.

Another project has also been created in the United Kingdom (UK) by the name of Exeter project, arguing that a proper ecological hermeneutics should learn carefully from the history of Christian tradition in order to reshape it (Horrell 2010a:10). While the Earth Bible Project concludes its analysis with an imaginative narrative of the reader, the reading of the Exeter project might be limited by the burdens of the tradition. Indeed, an ecological hermeneutics can be fruitful only if the reader allows the free expression of the text, regardless of his interest, church traditions or historical exegetical inheritance.

Biblical scholars should be aware of the fact that the biblical texts were written in a preindustrial society, and thereby ignore contemporary ecological concerns. So our confrontation with them puts questions to the Bible of which the biblical texts know nothing. For this reason, the reader must first consider the whole ecological complex in such a way that biblical statements and contemporary questions can be usefully related to one another (Steck 1980:15). Yet, we must have in front of us the outline of our present problems that will direct our ecological questions on the text, but the biblical texts may freely reveal their character as something unique and different in relation to our current threats if we allow them to talk by themselves.

Therefore, I will examine Genesis 1:1-2:4a in historical and literary approaches and my ecological insights will be found in the way I articulate questions and analysis on the text. Contrary to the previous ecological projects, this study will neither be submitted to six ecojustice principles nor the authority of the Christian tradition. The aim of this kind of hermeneutical attitude is to lead us to what the biblical texts say exactly, in such a way that they might reveal their critical power and their continuing stimulus for our time (Steck 1980:16). In Genesis 1, the earth is indeed subjected to human dominion, but not to human violence or plundering. I have assumed this both in the hypothesis and the objectives of this research, and the whole study will be about testing this statement.

6. Scope and delimitation

This research is not an overview of interpretations of Genesis 1:1-2:4a in general, nor a digest of ecological interpretations in particular, but an exploration of a particular issue raised by interpreters using an ecological hermeneutical key. The study examines the question to what extent Genesis 1:1-2:4a provides an anthropocentric view of the relationship between humans and non-human beings. In addition to this, the research explores to what extent Genesis 1:1-2:4a offers ecological wisdom.

7. Outline of the proposed chapters

Chapter One: General Introduction and Methodological Considerations

This chapter presents the motivation for the study, the problem that will be studied, the hypotheses, the objectives and aims of the study as well as the methods that will be used in the investigation.

Chapter Two: Ecological Hermeneutics and the Interpretation of Biblical Texts

This chapter deals with ecological reading as a hermeneutical lens to the interpretation of biblical texts. In this chapter, the study will look at the origin of ecological hermeneutics as well as several prevailing ecological approaches to the interpretation of biblical texts, their strengths and weaknesses. A case will be made for the use of a particular ecological hermeneutical model.

Chapter Three: Extant Ecological Interpretations of Genesis 1:1-2:4a

This chapter focuses on ecological interpretations of Genesis 1:1-2:4a. This chapter is a systematic analysis of how the existing ecological interpretations have been applied to the text.

Chapter Four: Socio-historical and Literary Contexts of Genesis 1:1-2:4a

This chapter explores contextual matters of the text: the world behind the text (its historical setting), the world of the text itself and the world in front of the text (the world of the reader). With regard to the literary content of Genesis 1:1-2:4a, brief

reference will be made to a number of other biblical texts in which the creation motif plays a central role, namely Genesis 2:4b-3:24; Job 38-41; Psalm 104; Proverbs 8:22-31 as well as sections in Ecclesiastes and Deutero Isaiah.

Chapter Five: Literary Analysis of Genesis 1:1-2:4a

This chapter offers a literary analysis of Genesis 1:1-2:4a that focuses on the structure of the passage as a whole. Attention will be given to the function of the key concepts and motifs.

Chapter Six: Findings and Implications of the Study

The final chapter presents a summary of the findings, a number of conclusions, and some implications of the study.

CHAPTER TWO: ECOLOGICAL HERMENEUTICS AND THE INTERPRETATION OF BIBLICAL TEXTS

1. Preliminaries

This chapter tries to explore critically the three main hermeneutical modes in which interpreters operate in recent attempts to apply ecological hermeneutics. After defining the terms hermeneutics and ecological hermeneutics in relation to interpretation, I will explore the factors that influenced the rise of ecological hermeneutics within biblical studies. Thereafter, the study will comment on three forms of ecological hermeneutics, before making a critical analysis offering essential conditions for a fruitful biblical ecological hermeneutics that will be utilised in this research.

1.1 Definition of the term ‘hermeneutics’

Traditionally, the term hermeneutic derives from the Greek verb *hermēneuō* that seems to have meant ‘imitating Hermes’, the mythological messenger-god, whose task consisted of ‘transmuting what is beyond human understanding into a form that human intelligence can grasp’ (Palmer 1969:13). This means that the word hermeneutic primarily comprises expressing divine matters in human speech. Hermes had to understand and interpret for himself what the gods wanted to convey to humans before translating, articulating, explaining and explicating their intentions to humans (Mueller-Vollmer 1985:1). The verb *hermeneia* has been rendered as interpretation or exegesis, but the Greek word might mean more than simply interpreting. Gadamer (1975:150) insists on the sacral origin of the Greek word: Hermes explains the complex meanings of gods’ orders in the language that human beings can understand.

In the singular, the term hermeneutic refers to the general theory of interpretation dealing with matters of understanding/language as maintained in the philosophical insights of scholars such as Husserl, Heidegger, Schleiermacher and Ricoeur. In the plural, hermeneutics refers to modern and postmodern hermeneutical stances focusing either on the explanation (*Erklärung*) of the text or on its understanding (*Verstehen*)

(Lim 2002a:16). In light of Hermes' function, hermeneutical enterprises will involve techniques and strategies applied to texts that appear to be obscure and offer various possibilities of meanings, or are simply difficult to understand (Conradie 2010:296).

In theological scholarship, the word hermeneutics is used in theories like feminist hermeneutics, liberation hermeneutics, African hermeneutics, and recently ecological hermeneutics. Its occurrence refers to a particular theological ideology or 'doctrinal key' influencing and shaping one's reading focus of the Bible. For instance, the cited kinds of hermeneutics assume that 'any reading and interpretative strategies are socially, politically and institutionally situated' (Marlow 2009:85). They propose to reread and understand the text from the perspective of the marginalised and oppressed groups by searching to discover voices in biblical texts that have been ignored, suppressed or hidden by traditional readings (Barton 1998:18). The form of ecological hermeneutics adopted in the Earth Bible Project is an example of a radical ideological hermeneutics where the biblical texts, written by humans, are suspected of reflecting human interests at the cost of non-human members of the earth community, and need to be retrieved.

1.2 Ecological hermeneutics as a reading-focus

Ecological theology/hermeneutics is an attempt to retrieve the ecological wisdom from biblical traditions as a response to ecological crisis. At the same time, it is also an attempt to reinvestigate, rediscover and renew the Christian traditions in the light of the ecological challenges (Conradie 2010:295). As previously indicated, hermeneutics contributes to rescue the interpretation from the underlying confusion. This task urges ecological hermeneutics to go beyond what has generally been seen as the meaning of the biblical texts in order to generate fruitful and revived re-readings of the wider biblical traditions (Horrell 2011:164).

The field of ecotheology/ecological hermeneutics started to emerge in the early 1960s in the writings of Joseph Sittler and Richard Baer, and gained more interest with the publication of Lynn White's article which stated that 'Christianity bears a huge burden of guilt' for ecological crisis (Marlow 2009:82). This thesis raised critiques from almost every aspect of theology: Biblical studies, the history of Christianity and

spirituality, systematic theology and Missiology trying to give an ecological defence. To refute that thesis, biblical scholars and theologians engaged with the problematic texts such as Genesis 1:26-28 and some cosmic eschatological texts. The positive aspect of this exegetical effort has been the scholarly attempt to demonstrate that these biblical texts offer ecological wisdom, generally hidden or implicit, that can contribute to re-evaluate human relationship towards Earth²² (Horrell 2009:165).

In fact, the rise of ecological readings attests that biblical texts have been subject to systematically distorted forms of understanding. As a new key reading of the text, ecological hermeneutics offers a twofold critique: ‘a Christian critique of the cultural habits underlying ecological destruction and an ecological critique of Christianity’ (Conradie 2004:126). In doing so, ecological hermeneutics bears obvious similarities with several contextual theologies, such as the liberation and feminist hermeneutics. The difference is that the text is read, not from the interests of the poor and women, but within an ecological perspective (Habel 2011:8).

Ecological hermeneutics are therefore based on the insights of the hermeneutical suspicion of Schleiermacher/Ricoeur, Marx, Nietzsche and Freud who respectively pioneered hermeneutical sensitivity to interpret language, economic oppression, power relation and the subconscious (Conradie 2010:297). Previously I noted that scholars relied on hermeneutics when the meaning becomes obscure. Ecological hermeneutics intends to fix/repair distortions within the interpretation/meaning, but does not claim to replace it. While interpretation is practical, hermeneutics is rather theoretical because:

Interpretation is a form of praxis, a way of continuously re-appropriating and responding to the significance of signs in everyday life. It is like jurisprudence: a practical skill. [The finality of any hermeneutics is to lead toward this practical aspect, because] biblical texts do not only teach (*docere*), but they also move (*movere*) and change people’s lives for better or for worse (Conradie 2010:298).

The distortions of the meaning claimed by ecological hermeneutics have been described in several ways. In the famous article of Lynn White (which I will discuss later), the problem is explained in terms of anthropocentrism and dualism of Christian

²² For Habel, the word Earth should be seen as a personal name, and thereby should not be articulated. Earth is the name for the total ecosystem, which is the domain of nature with which humans are a familiar, integral part and with which they face the future (Habel 2008:3).

traditions. Other scholars noticed the deep sense of alienation between humans and other beings, and focused on various forms of domination, namely the differences of gender, race, status, culture and species. Therefore, biblical texts were subjected to the hermeneutic of suspicion adopted by a great number of biblical scholars operating in the field of liberation and feminist hermeneutics. The Bible then becomes the 'site of struggle' where readings come into conflict with each other (Conradie 2010:297).

In her analysis, Reuther (2000:98) confirmed that the earth devaluation that is attached to Christian tradition is deeply rooted in the ancient Near Eastern patriarchal domination of the priestly and warrior-king's control over women, land, animals and slaves that are property of the powerful male. It is this ideal that will be embedded in most of ecological hermeneutics, mainly those which are committed for the resistance reading in the Earth Bible Project and eco-feminism. Before exploring different types of ecological hermeneutics, let us consider the facts that have contributed to the rise of ecological readings of the Bible.

2. Factors leading to the rise of ecological hermeneutics

2.1 The ecological crisis

The objective of this point is not to describe the issues about the ecological crisis, which can be found in good scientific resources of the IPCC, WMO and UNEP. This point needs to assess the ecological crisis as one of the factors that influenced the rise of ecological hermeneutics in biblical studies. Introducing the first volume of the Earth Bible series, Habel (2000b:26) explains that the complexity of the current ecological crisis has stimulated the rise of a new 'Earth awareness' in which all forms of life are seen as continuously dependent on the complex interaction of relationships that allows life to flourish on Earth. For Limburg, the cosmic crisis has challenged that 'It is time for the churches to think about what the Bible says about our connectedness to the natural' (Limburg 1991:129-30).

The earth crisis is defined in terms of climate change and global warming caused by the pollution of the air, the extinction of species by the depletion of forests that generate oxygen, the poisoning of fertile soils by salinity and pesticides and the

pollution of water by chemicals and waste. Through greed, self-interest, ignorance and injustice, humans deliberately cause devaluation and disfiguration of God's creation. Words such as ecocide,²³ geocide or biocide are now employed for naming the great extinction of species and ecosystems that are supposed to contribute to the ecological balance (Johnson 2000:15).

The situation of the earth is so hideous, destructive and challenging that it has become the preoccupation of scholars, ecologists and theologians. Moltmann (1985:xi) has argued: 'the earth crisis challenges us to read the Bible afresh and ask whether the biblical text itself, its interpreters – or both – have contributed to this crisis'. Yet, biblical texts were written in the context that knows nothing about modern problems such as air pollution, ecological crisis, global warming. However, since several critics showed the religious tradition's potential to shape human attitudes towards nature, the importance of re-examining biblical texts has interested theological scholarship hoping to offer spiritual and ethical power for ecological awareness that no secular institution is able to do. Lynn White himself recognised this religious potential and observed that:

What people do about their ecology depends on what they think about themselves in relation to things around them. More science and more technology are not going to get us out of the present ecological crisis until we find a new religion, or rethink our old one (White 1967:1207).

In this statement, White recognises the potential of biblical traditions to tackle the crisis. In this sense, he identified St Francis as the 'patron saint for ecologists', because Francis 'tried to depose [humans from their] monarchy over creation and set up a democracy of all God's creatures' (White 1967:1206). Francis' sense of solidarity with the whole creation is regarded as something that, in White's view, can help us to discover the values we need to deal with nature. Accordingly, in his preface to *Reading from the Perspective of Earth*, Tutu argued that the task of resolving the earth crisis should not be left to scientists. For him, 'since we contributed to the problem, we

²³ The words ecocide, geocide and biocide refer to adverse alterations, often irreparable, to the environment – for example ecological destruction through nuclear explosion (recently in Japan), chemical weapons, serious pollution and acid rain, or destruction of the rain forest – which endangered the life of the entire populations (See Schabas, W A 2009. *Genocide in International Law: The Crime of Crimes*, 2nd edn. New York: Cambridge University Press, 235).

are also part of the solution, that is to utilise the forces that have created this crisis and the resources within our traditions that can motivate us to resolve the crisis' (2001:7).

Aware of both this religious potential and the underlying devaluation of the earth crisis, some steps of ecological hermeneutics took place in the area of theological scholarship. That is to say, the earth destruction motivated the attention for rereading biblical traditions in order to awaken a 'paradigm shift in which the earth can be viewed as a subject rather than object; a kin rather than mere matter; partner rather than pawn to be dominated' (Habel 2003:296). The ecological crisis has led not only to the fact that Christianity could and should make an important contribution to a more adequate understanding of the role of humanity towards nature, but also led to the need for a critical re-examination of the Christian faith itself (Conradie 2004:125).

2.2 Lynn White's thesis

More than forty years ago, Lynn White wrote his famous article entitled 'The historical roots of our ecological crisis' where he deplored that 'Christianity bears a huge burden of guilt' for having established a dualism between humans and nature. For him, Christianity insisted that it is God's will for humans to exploit and rule over nature for their benefit, and thereby made possible the active modern technological conquest of nature that caused the ecological crisis (White 1967:1207). White did not directly cite biblical texts, but gave an overview of the biblical creation story. On the making of humans in God's image, he concludes that in the Christian tradition, 'man [sic] shares, in great measure, God's transcendence of nature' (White 1967:1205).

Lynn White's article has served as a provocative stimulus. It is probably the most cited source in eco-theological debates. It has been viewed as a watershed publication, similar to Luther's 95 theses during the time of the Reformation (Santmire 2000:11). Many early contributions to ecological readings were answers to the thesis. Derr (cited by Santmire 2000:12) said that White, ensuing the way of 'paganism, authoritarianism, and brutality', is trying to propose some *final solution* for humanity, according to which the numbers of humans on the earth would have to be reduced in order to preserve other species' life. White deplored the dualistic thoughts embedded in the Christian interpretations.

Dualist thinking has, indeed, affected biblical exegesis and devalued the natural world in theological scholarship. Dualism is characteristic of the idealist theory of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, mostly dominated by the philosophy of Hegel who in turn influenced modern biblical scholarship. As idealist scholar, Hegel inherited a long tradition of western philosophy and theology represented by Plato, Descartes and Kant (Hiebert 1996:16). This philosophy perceives the world in two metaphysical orders, the spiritual and material, spirit and matter, soul and body, in which the second half of each pair is seen as alien, an object, and of lesser value than the first.

In his thesis, Hegel (1984:141-7) viewed the history of religion as a dialectical process passing from the religion of nature (pantheism) to the absolute/revealed religion (Christianity) via the religion of spiritual individuality. For him, the ANE cosmogonies fit in the first stage, while the Israelite religion stands at the second phase dividing the world between the natural and the spiritual. The third (Christian religion) de-divinised and devalued nature on its way towards a religion of humanity (Hegel 1984:183-4).

The key element of Hegel's dualism between nature and spirit is visible in the works of Wellhausen, whose theory has dominated the study of the Pentateuch in the twentieth century. He contrasted natural and historical religion and viewed in Israel's literature, especially in the Priestly source, the denaturalisation and finally the absolute negation of nature (Wellhausen 1994:376-91). From this perspective, White claimed that Bible traditions erased the ancient mythological cosmogonies with their cyclical views of time and their animistic sacralisation of nature, and established a dualism between humans and nature (1967:1205).

The dualistic thought is clearly exposed in the book of Plumwood (1993:43), and extended by The Earth Bible Team (2000:40-2) in the context of ecological readings. Indeed, this dichotomist view separating humanity from the E.C. is evident in various works on Genesis 1 by biblical scholars. For example, Tucker (1997:7) declared:

First [in Genesis 1], there is God, transcendent over all creation; second, there is the deity's steward over, third, the rest of the world. Although like other beings, living or

not, human beings are creatures, they are the 'pinnacle of the pyramid', able to view the rest of the world at some distance.

One can read in this statement the highest elevation of humans, describing them as the top of the creation while other beings stand afar at the bottom of the pyramid. In this case, there is a link between dualistic thought and human behaviour against the earth. This is even visible in the way of terming non-human beings in many languages. For instance, the common word for nature is the isolationist concept 'environment' implying unilateral direction toward the interest of human existence. By definition, this word means 'non-humans living and nonliving that surround and affect human being' (Wehmeier 2005:511). This definition is only a result of viewing the world in two distinct blocks where 'nature' exists to serve only humans interests. By means of such a hierarchical view, White claimed that Christianity has encouraged humans to think of themselves as nature's absolute masters, for whom everything that exists was destined (White 1967:1207).

The deepest significance of White's thesis is that nature must not be viewed as having secondary status or as being merely an object, but a subject alongside God and humans in the texts. He vigorously criticised Christianity for the dualistic thought that has impacted the interpretation of biblical texts for years in which nature became a thing, losing its intrinsic value, and it could be objectified, studied, analysed, exploited and conquered by humans (Loader 1987:8). Indeed, the Cartesian duality between sentient beings and non-sentient things, between subjects and objects, is totally absent from the OT thinking (Wittenberg 2007:160). With this strange dualistic thought, the natural world became marginalised in the biblical exegesis for centuries.

2.3 The marginalisation of nature in biblical exegesis

For years, Biblical theology was meant in terms of the history of salvation (in German: *Heilsgeschichte*) where the OT in general, and creation stories in particular, were read not for their own sake, but for their usefulness for Israel's people (humans) and Christian belief. In his famous essay on 'the theological problem of the Old Testament doctrine of creation' that originally appeared in 1936, Gerhard von Rad subordinates creation/nature to the history of human redemption. He stated that, 'the Yahwistic faith

of the Old Testament is a faith based on the notion of election, and therefore primarily concerned with redemption,' the salvation of humans, and of Israel in particular (Von Rad 1984a:131-43).

In Von Rad's theology, non-human beings are secondary. For him, 'the creation of the world is not to be considered for its own sake, or as of value in itself, but rather it performs only an ancillary role to stimulate faith in the redemption: it is a brilliant foundation for the message of salvation' (Von Rad 1984a:138-9). In this sense, the aim of creation stories is not faith in creation, but faith in salvation and election of Israel. By this, Von Rad lowered nature. He described it as magnificent, but it is to serve the history of human salvation about which the Bible is entirely interested. For him, Genesis 1-11 must be read as a prologue to the salvation history of God's people (Von Rad 1984b:144). One can read in his view a dichotomist presupposition between redemption and creation, human domain and the world of non-human, and that the whole Bible is about human salvation.

In this view, the redemption of humans and of Israel in particular, surpasses all other interests and thereby, the realm of non-human beings appears as background and becomes less important. The creation accounts serve the purpose of understanding the history of salvation, rather than describing the universe for its own sake (Hiebert 1996:5). Although Von Rad's focus was not about addressing ecological problems, his theological insights caused the relegation of non-human beings to the secondary status. Nature is not only separated from human history, but it is also viewed as secondary, an object and inferior to it.

This conception offered the basis for most of later biblical scholars' publications about nature/creation in biblical texts. Like Von Rad, Wright considered nature and history as two distinct domains and believed that human history is the main concern of biblical writers. For him, 'biblical theology is exclusively the history of recital in which humans confess their faith by reciting the formative events in their history of salvation made by God' (Wright 1952:38). For this scholar, creation/nature is also not an independent subject, but an object made to serve the understanding of the history of redemption of Israel. Redemption and creation are then distinct domains that may be

separated from one another, relatively studied apart, and variously compared or contrasted (Hiebert 1996:5).

Similarly, Anderson maintains that creation motif is not presented in the Bible as an independent doctrine but it is inseparably related to the basic story of Israel in which God is presented as the actor and the redeemer (1994:7). For Anderson, the first thing that Israel said was not ‘in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth,’ but rather, ‘in the beginning Yahweh created Israel to be his people and allotted him a task and a future in his purpose (1994:5). By this way of thinking, Christians only thought about themselves and the salvation of their souls. Their mission frequently focused on saving souls for heaven, instead of saving the earth for living, leaving the cause of the earth to scientists and ecologists (Habel 2003:294).

Only later scholars made some efforts to recover a prominent role for creation or nature in biblical studies. Scholars that deserve attentions are: Westermann, Schmid, Steck,²⁴ Hiebert,²⁵ Brown,²⁶ Garr²⁷ and Barr.²⁸ Their assumptions will be integrated in the process of our analysis. These authors discovered that biblical interpretation was so absorbed with human redemption and radically oriented away from the natural world that they became dysfunctional and should be reset and replaced by a new view of the universe. I will briefly refer to the first two scholars for their relevance in opening a way for ecological awareness in biblical exegesis, even if their works were not mainly concerned with ecological readings.

Westermann (1974:11) takes some steps against Von Rad by declaring that the creation accounts do not have a historical purpose (whether interpreted as act of salvation or other views), rather they are a witness to God’s ‘ongoing’ creative work in every present moment. Genesis does not describe a thinker’s investigation about his history, but someone endangered by his surroundings: ‘the background of creation stories was an existential interest, rather than an intellectual inquiry’ (Westermann 1974:11). There is awareness that the human history should not be contrasted to nature

²⁴ Steck, O H 1980. *World and Environment*. Nashville: Abingdon.

²⁵ Hiebert, T 1996. *The Yahwist’s Landscape: Nature and Religion in Early Israel*. New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press.

²⁶ Brown, W P 1999. *The Ethos of the Cosmos: the Genesis of Moral imagination in the Bible*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

²⁷ Garr, W R 2003. *In His Own Image and Likeness: Humanity, Divinity, and Monotheism*. Leiden: Brill.

²⁸ Barr, J 1993. *Biblical Earth and Natural Theology*. Oxford: Clarendon

since ‘human activity is an integral part of the history of a particular environment, and the environment embodies the history of a community (Van Heerden 2012:5).

Schmid further explains this idea showing that creation/nature in Israel is mostly interpreted in terms of the continuing order, which is similar to the Egyptian *ma’at* referring to justice and world order built by God into the network of creation. Therefore, wherever humans practise righteousness in the socio-political spheres, that act promotes the proper integration of social and cosmic orders. In the Old Testament, justice, politics and nature are interrelated as part of one comprehensive creation order; the unrighteousness of human beings results in adverse consequences against the entire creation (Schmid 1984:106).

Although Westermann and Schmid did not write for an ecological response, their arguments can be unwittingly seen as precursors of ecological awareness in biblical exegesis. Thus far, the theological exegesis on creation/nature is mainly preoccupied by the future/existence of humans rather than of the universe itself. For that reason, most ecological hermeneutics that appeared, either reject Lynn White’s accusation, or emphatically take the side of the earth against humans. Before analysing the prevailing forms of ecological hermeneutics, I wish to mention another factor at the origin of ecological hermeneutics: the anti-ecological eschatological reading.

2.4 Anti-ecological eschatological readings

Biblical texts on the imminent end of the world are also among the factors that motivated ecological hermeneutics. Several biblical texts announce the future cosmic destruction which will happen on the day of the Lord, the coming day of God’s judgement and salvation of believers (Jl 1:15; Am 5:18-20; 1 Th 5:22). Other texts insist that the final day of salvation will be preceded by catastrophes on the earth (Mt 24; Mk 13:8, 24-25) before believers go up to meet the Lord in the air (1 Th 4:16-17). These texts are often used to teach that the ‘real’ ecological disaster comes, not from global warming, but rather from the fire of judgement, which God will bring upon the earth. Thus, an internet search on ‘Beware of Global warming and 2 Peter 3’ showed the following:

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 which are now’ 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 judgment, 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.²⁹

Therefore, some eschatologists negate any motivation for preserving the earth since the disasters on the earth are the signs that the return of Jesus is not far. For them, working to preserve the earth is not only pointless, it is working against God’s eschatological purposes – and thus for Satan’s (Horrell 2010a:16). In other words, since the destruction of the natural universe must happen before the end, there is no need to care for earth. With this belief in mind, Christians would passively assist ecological disasters knowing that it is God’s will.

This kind of eschatological expectation has a significant impact, albeit indirect, on the ecological agenda to the extent that these beliefs consider natural disasters as indicators of the imminent end (Horrell, Hunt & Southgate 2008:229). With this kind of perception, the implication would be that the present earth is unimportant; it is to be abused, exploited and even destroyed with impunity. This belief also reinforces Christian hope on the rescuing of the elect from a doomed earth, rather than (say) on the liberation and renewal of all creation (Boyer 1992:34). One will therefore detect that:

[The] growing popularity of eschatological and apocalyptic stories ... give little or no motivation for care of the earth ... once the prerogative of Darbyites and Sectarians, [it] is now popular and widespread in the USA, and in other American influenced evangelical movements (Creagan 2004:33).

Although, such eschatological views had little interest in academic scholarship, they deserve our attention, since they still have popular influence in some evangelical and fundamentalist areas, notably in the USA and in Africa. Lynn White and sociologists have made a link between such belief and anti-ecological behaviours and practices

²⁹ Strickland, S 2008. Beware of Global Warming! (2 Peter 3:6-7). Available online from: <http://jeremiahdanielmccarver.wordpress.com/2008/08/07/beware-of-global-warming-2-peter-36-7/> (Accessed 10 April 2012).

(Eckberg & Blocker 1996:343-55). An example of this influence is the statement of James Watt, President Ronald Reagan's Secretary of the Interior in the USA (on February 5, 1981). Responding to a question about the keeping of resources for future generations, Watt said, 'I do not know how many future generations we can count on before the Lord returns' (Bouma-Prediger 2001:71). Differently stated, since Jesus is coming back, and as when he returns everything will be destroyed, the care for the earth is secondary.

This kind of anti-ecological understanding of eschatological texts motivated biblical scholars to reread the texts concerning the imminent end, and try to retrieve ecological wisdom from them. In particular, the dominion mandate given to humans in Genesis 1:26-28 has been one of the most analysed texts in ecological hermeneutics. Below, attention is given to a number of attempts at ecological hermeneutics that arose in response to the above challenges.

3. Approaches to ecological hermeneutics

3.1 Introduction

In response to the above challenges, the discipline of eco-theology has developed diverse and creative thoughts about the relationship between humans and non-human members of the E.C.³⁰ However, not all ecological reflections used biblical exegesis to address ecological issues even if they appealed to biblical texts in order to support their perspectives. In most of them, a thorough exegesis of biblical texts is not usually a predominant feature and basis for their reflection.³¹ It is partly for this reason and the intention to provide a valuable biblical response that biblical scholars get involved in the ecological readings of the Bible. In the following sections, I give an overview of four modes of ecological hermeneutics prevailing in current biblical studies before ending with a critical assessment.

³⁰ Hessel described four emphases within ecological theology: the recognition of the value of the entire creation; the attempt at exploring the complex relation between cosmology, spirituality, and ethics; the bringing together of sacramental and covenantal commitments; and the connection between the plight of the earth and that of its poorest human inhabitants (Hessel 1996: xxxv-xxxvi).

³¹ Here, we may mention the Gaia theology of Primavesi (1991:92ff) or Berry's adoption of the philosophical insights of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin (Berry 1988:35ff) or the eco-spirituality of Fox (1988:5ff). Drawing from spiritual insights and intuitions of all ages, cultures and wisdoms, these scholars viewed the earth as a spiritual entity, a source of sacred power, and a special living presence in the cosmos (Habel 2003:294).

3.2 Recovering ecological wisdom from the Bible

This hermeneutic is in fact an attempt to respond to Lynn White's accusation by demonstrating the eco-positivity of biblical texts. This hermeneutical approach was named by Watson as a 'strategy of recovery'³² of the eco-friendliness of biblical texts. The readings of recovery argue that the Bible is not itself the problem, but the problem came through the acts of later interpreters, who obscured and distorted the positive meaning of the original (Horrell *et al.* 2008:221). The intention is to rescue the Bible from the charge that biblical texts endorse an anthropocentric vision legitimising utilitarian and abusive attitudes towards the natural world.

Previously, Barr delivered a lecture about the 'ecological controversy and the Old Testament' in which he deliberately reacted to Lynn White. He argued that the Hebrew verbs used in Genesis 1:26-28 are not as strong as often suggested by eco-theologians. He confirmed that biblical traditions of creation are not about the exploitation of the earth but its protection and preservation: 'away from a license to exploit but towards a duty to respect and protect' (Barr 1972:30). In this regard, the World Council of Churches (WCC) argued for the idea of ecojustice calling for a just, participatory, and sustainable society and it committed to use its ecumenical resources for ecological balance (Santmire 2000:7).

The assumption is that the Bible can indeed offer profound ecological wisdom, but that this has often remained hidden or implicit in the text. The recovery exegetical task consists in uncovering such ecological potential and defends Christianity against its detractors. Santmire defined this tendency as 'apologetic' in which the aim consists of defending Christian tradition by underlining 'its positive ecological implications, above all the tradition's support of good stewardship of the earth' (2000:7). For this reason, several Biblical scholars selected a wide overview of Old Testament and New Testament texts favouring the insights of stewardship or caring for the earth.

³² The wording 'reading of recovery' and 'reading of resistance' are borrowed from Watson. In his analysis of the Pauline reception of Genesis 1-3 and feminist readings of the texts, Watson depicted two modes of biblical interpretation, recovery and resistance. The first corresponds to the Genesis myth, that is a revisionary reading seeking to rescue the text from what is taken to be a history of misreading. The second, fits with the Exodus myth that, instead of seeking to return to a positive and valuable origin, masked beneath subsequent layers of distortion, here the original itself is seen as the locus and cause of oppression, which must be exposed as such and resisted (Watson 1992:81-2).

Among several selected texts, a few green texts are given below: the creation texts of Genesis 1-2, the theme of the covenant (Gn 6-9), the Sabbatical laws (Lv 25), Job 37-39, some of the Psalms (8, 19, 24, 98, 104), some prophetic texts such as Isaiah 9-11, 40f, 65 and Ezekiel 36. Attention has been given also to some of Jesus' speeches (e.g. in Mt 6:28-30, 10:29-31), Romans 8:18-23, Colossians 1 and Revelation 21-22. Sider (2000:47) argued that anyone who thinks that non-human creatures do not have an intrinsic value in biblical texts, forgets that God feeds the birds and clothes the lilies (Mt 6:26-30), and that after the flood God makes a covenant, not just with humans (Noah and his family), but also with non-human beings (Gn 9:9-10).

However, the texts that appear to be anti-ecological are thoroughly sanitised in an eco-friendly way. The cosmic catastrophes in Joel 2-3 and Mark 13 are read not as the rejection and destruction of the existing earth, but rather its renewal. Accordingly, Wright (1992:299-332) affirmed that the eschatological language in Mark 13 does not mean the literal 'end' of the present space-time universe, but an 'end' of the present 'world order', since most of Jews of this time longed for the renewal, not the desertion, of the present space-time world as a whole. Regarding this critical ecological problem of biblical texts, Barr (1972:30) said that, 'there is much less direct relation between biblical faith and modern science than has been recently believed in some theological currents.' The Jewish-Christian traditions are then argued to be much less responsible for the ecological crisis than was suggested by Lynn White.

More significant is the project of 'The Green Bible' edition. In the project, the so-called green texts are intentionally selected in 'green ink' to include every possible passage or occurrence of relevant words, as well as the texts demonstrating how God and Jesus interact with, and are intimately involved with all of creation. Attention is made on the way the elements of creation – land, water, air, plants, animals, humans – are interdependent, on how nature responds to God, and the way humans are appointed to care for all God's creation (The Green Bible 2008:1-16). Yet, the publication has the value to contribute towards a growing ecological awareness and the greening of the churches.

Therefore, on human dominion of Genesis 1:28, for instance, Bauckham declared that the command 'to subdue the earth' implies a 'responsible stewardship' rather than

a selfish destruction and plundering of the earth potential. For him, the human-centred vision is not an intrinsic feature in the text itself, but emerged only when it was read through the lens of non-biblical Greek thoughts and then much later in the context of Renaissance philosophy of human strength and progress (Bauckham 2002a:141). In this sense, the root of current ecological crisis should be traced back to this context, but not further. Similarly, Loader declared ‘it is wrong to blame biblical faith for this [ecological crisis], and in this sense, White’s indictment is wrong ... neither Christian faith itself nor biblical faith, but the interpretations and emphases of modern Christianity, are to blame’ (Loader 1987:9). Put simply, the problems lay not in the texts themselves, but in the traditions of their later interpretation.

However, 2 Peter 3 remains difficult to supporters of the reading of recovery. Bauckham admits that this text really affirms a radical discontinuity between the old and the new age, but that it nevertheless intends to depict a renewal, not a destruction of Creation (Bauckham cited by Horrell 2010a:110). Similarly, Lucas (1999:97) said, ‘although 2 Peter 3 is speaking of a radical transformation of the heaven and the earth, it is a renewal through transformation, not a total destruction of the old and its replacement by something quite different.’

This kind of reading aims to show that biblical texts do not sanction an exploitive form of human dominion over the earth, but rather promote a sense of the goodness of the whole created order and transmit an inclusive picture of redemption of ‘all things’ and not only human beings (Horrell *et al.* 2008:222). Several texts are carefully selected to sustain the recovery model viewing God as the Creator and sustainer of the earth, and humans as his delegated representatives. The majority of the works in recovery readings assume that the Bible is eco-friendly and often quote biblical texts uncritically to support the fact that an ecological thrust is inherent in the texts (Habel 2000b:30).

In sum, the recovery reading tries to show that biblical traditions offer valuable resources for ecological balance, and that the anthropocentrism and anti-ecological aspects resulted from the history of interpretation, rather than the text itself. Just as the feminist confronted the patriarchal orientation of biblical texts, and drew attention to the androcentrism of biblical traditions, recovery readers identify the anthropocentric

thoughts that have affected the reading of biblical texts, and attempt to recover the texts' ecological potential (Horrell *et al.* 2008:225). Other scholars saw in these readings a forceful intention to retrieve ecological wisdom where sometimes the text is clearly grey. They therefore suggest a resistance stance in their hermeneutics of biblical texts.

3.3 Resisting biblical texts in favour of the earth

This approach is fundamentally earth-centric rejecting both the anthropocentric reading that is liable for species extinction, and the stewardship model considering humans as inevitable link between the Creator and other living beings. Its supporters believe that Earth does not necessarily need the participation of human beings to solve its problem, because Genesis 1 shows that nature existed before humans. On this issue, a Catholic scholar declared:

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 (Berry 1988:35).

This reading tendency, also called the 'Reconstructionist stance',³³ argues for a new model of reflection rejecting the classical kerygmatic and dogmatic traditions of Christianity as the base of ecological hermeneutics (Santmire 2000:7). Its supporters believe that, due to its hierarchical view of reality, biblical Scriptures and its testimony provides few viable resources to help believers responding to the ecological crisis and related current cosmic threats. The imaginative eco-theology of Fox³⁴(1988:7) and the eco-feminist thoughts of 'Gaia: Earth goddess' are some examples of these readings

³³ This expression is borrowed from Santmire (2000:6).

³⁴ Fox and his fellow scholars draw from mystical traditions in the Christian West, as well as from the mystical traditions from the East (such as Taoism) claiming to find new ways of spirituality in favour of the earth. They consciously or unconsciously reject the classical kerygmatic traditions of Christianity as their main matrix of theological reflection. Fox proposes to sweep away the dominance of the ecologically bankrupt theology of fall-redemption of the West and replace it by a more ecologically viable theology for our time: the theology of blessing and the coming cosmic Christ (see Fox, M 1988. *The Coming of the Cosmic Christ: Healing of Mother Earth and the Birth of a Global Renaissance*. New York: Harper & Row).

arguing for a radical reform of traditional Christian theology, sometimes for its total deconstruction and rejection (Young 1994:126).³⁵

The most coherent of ‘Reconstructionist reading’ is the ecological hermeneutics developed in The Earth Bible Project. The works of the Earth Bible Project stands at least as the most significant example of ecological readings of biblical texts. Since 2000, The Earth Bible Project has published five volumes offering several insights for ‘Readings from the Perspectives of Earth’. More significant is the newly published volume entitled ‘Earth Bible commentary series’ that is, in the author’s words, ‘the natural extension of the Earth Bible Series published between 2000-2002’ (Habel 2011:ix). In this exegetical volume, Habel employs his ecojustice ecological hermeneutics to comment on Genesis 1-11.

In both series, Habel argues for new reading lenses in which the interpreters are invited ‘not to reflect *about* Earth in the text, but rather to reflect *with and within* Earth and see things from the perspective of Earth’ (2000b:34-5). The interpreter reads the text not as steward over creation, but as a kin, a relative and full member within the Earth community. In other words:

[The approach] involves a move away from searching the text to study the theme or topic of Earth, as part of a creation theology or any other theology. Rather, we are identifying, as far as possible, with Earth or the earth community, as we converse with the text. We no longer consider ourselves readers within the hierarchy of creation, but fellow members within the community of Earth. We are no longer reading as stewards over creation, but as kin, relatives within the Earth community. We no longer see ourselves as pilgrims *on* Earth, but as a species *in* Earth, beneath a common protective skin called the atmosphere (Habel 2000b:34).

With this idea in mind, the interpreter assumes not to read ‘about the creation’ – as if he was not one of it – but ‘reading as full member’ of the Earth community, sharing with it benefits and problems. Thus, the reader examines whether the earth is simply a ‘background’ in the text or if it is actively being suppressed, devalued and relegated to a secondary status. In the words of Habel, ‘This new Earth consciousness invites us, as

³⁵ Eco-feminists identified the universe to *Gaia*, the Greek word for *the goddess of the earth*, the great mother from which all creatures find life. The word Gaia is used by several ecologists to mean that the entire planet is a living system, behaving as a unified organism. The idea is that Gaia should be used to replace a male transcendent God with an immanent female deity, source of life for all living beings (Ruether 1992:4). As such, the earth should no longer be ravaged, but revered and sacred as the unique source of life for all living things.

(sic) members of the Earth community, to return to the Bible, and in dialogue with the text, ascertain whether a similar kinship with Earth is reflected there' (2000b:26). Horrell (2010a:13) compared this approach with feminist writings in which biblical texts are exposed as inherently patriarchal and promoting sexist values against women.

The works in the project carefully showed how many texts of the Bible devalue Earth and the Earth community. For instance, in most of God's sentences against a particular people (humans), whether Israel, Egypt, Sodom and Gomorrah or another nation, the land (earth), nature and living creatures are often victim and suffer unfairly. In Ezekiel, the land is made more desolate than the wilderness, not because the land did anything wrong deserving such a fate, but because of human evils (Ezk 6:14; 12:20). In Jeremiah, however, there are indications that the prophet hears the land mourning under the weight of these judgments (Jr 12:4, 11).

Authors in the Earth Bible series partly agree with White at least, and propose to resist against biblical texts that depict humans as superior rulers of the world and the earth as victim. One of the authors writing in The Earth Bible Project has asserted that the Bible has few, if any, positive insights for the future of the planet. This scholar, Brady (2000:13) sets it out as follows:

The Earth Bible Project confronts ... the accusation that the lack of care for earth and its creatures – the arrogant assumption that they exist merely for us to use and exploit – can be traced back to the Bible and, in particular, to God's command to increase and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over ... every living thing (Gen 1:28). In this view, far from being the word of life, the Bible brings the word of death and has little or nothing positive to contribute to the struggle for Earth and for the future of humanity.

This radical resisting statement resulted from her analysis based on a threefold hermeneutics of suspicion, identification and retrieval on the text. The suspicion task suspects that biblical texts, written by humans, reflect the primary interests of human beings, their welfare, their relationship to God and their personal salvation (The Earth Bible Team 2000:39). The reader keeps a critical suspicion on the anthropocentrism of biblical writers as well as their later readers. He/she identifies himself with the non-human characters in the text and retrieves or tries to recover the voice of Earth where this is silenced or opposed by the explicit perspective of the text (Habel 2000b:36).

For this reason, the reader identifies himself with Earth in order to grasp the injustices experienced by Earth in the text. The approach advises that before reading or seeking to identify with Earth in the text, the reader must accept the prior ecological reality of his kinship with Earth: ‘we are born of Earth, and we are living expressions of the ecosystems that emerged on this planet’ (Habel 2011:10). This identification step relates to the ecojustice principle of interconnectedness of the Earth Bible. For the writers in the project, identification with Earth raises readers’ awareness of various injustices against Earth reflected in the text and portrayed as consequences of both the actions of humans and God (Habel 2011:10).

Thereafter, the reader moves to the hermeneutic of retrieval where he must resist or reject the anthropocentrism of the text and create an imaginative narrative in which the voice of Earth can be heard. The interpreter exposes various anthropocentric loci of the text – the ways in which human interest are sustained either by the reader or the implied author. The relevance of this step is that Earth or non-human characters may be revealed as playing a key role or be highly valued in the text, but because of the Western interpretative influence, this aspect of the text has been ignored or suppressed (Habel 2011:12). This step ends in voicing Earth through an imaginative narrative of the reader. Habel (2011:18) compares this attempt to the efforts of scholars in the past who sought to reconstruct the social, historical or cultural world of the narrator from the clues contained in the text.

Alongside this hermeneutical process of suspicion, identification and retrieval, the Earth Bible Project has developed six ecojustice principles³⁶ acting as ethical guide and standard canon by which biblical texts are measured. These principles aid in asking new questions to the biblical texts that may lead to uncovering new concepts, insights and dimensions embedded in the text that may not have been acknowledged before. Like the interests of women had priority over both misogynist texts and social structures, these six ecojustice principles – called a ‘small dogmatic’³⁷ – are employed to judge both the validity of the text and contemporary culture. The key-task is to

³⁶ For further development of these six ecojustice principles, see The Earth Bible Team (2000:38-53).

³⁷ The word is borrowed from Conradie (2010:308)

discern whether the text favours the earth, or if the text is in conflict with any of the following ecojustice principles:

1. The Principle of Intrinsic Value: the universe, Earth and all its components have intrinsic worth/value.
2. The Principle of Interconnectedness: Earth is a community of interconnected living things that are mutually dependent on each other for life and survival.
3. The Principle of Voice: Earth is a subject capable of raising its voice in celebration and against injustice.
4. 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 that design.
5. The Principle of Mutual Custodianship: Earth is a balanced and diverse domain where responsible custodians can function as partners, rather than rulers, to sustain a balanced and diverse Earth community.
6. The Principle of Resistance: Earth and its components not only differ from injustices at the hands of humans, but actively resist them in the struggle for justice.

According to the Earth Bible Project, these principles were deliberately formulated in non-theological and non-biblical terms in order to facilitate dialogue with biologists, ecologists, non-Christian religions, and scientists who may not function with God or God's creation as an a priori assumption (The Earth Bible Team 2000:38). Thus, the specific religious terms such as God or creation are simply avoided in accordance with secular movements and natural science. The Team suggests that this ideal allows the reader or the interpreter to focus on Earth itself as the object of investigation in the text, rather than on Earth as God's creation or property.

The logical outcome of this interpretation is that humans are viewed as simply part of the complex whole of the universe, where they cannot assume a higher or lower position than any other part of nature. It considers that 'humans have no more intrinsic value than a rock since both are emanations from the same cosmic force, and both will eventually merge back into that force' (Young 1994:126). Here humans do not hold a special place within the 'Earth community': they are equal to other species. Probably,

the second form of resistance rose to resist against this idea and any ecological reading of biblical texts in general.

3.4 Resisting ecological focus in favour of biblical authority

This approach is exactly the opposite of the ecological hermeneutics of the Earth Bible series. The biblical texts are viewed as a non-negotiable locus of authority that no contemporary reality can challenge. Environmentalism is therefore rejected for its character of criticism which is viewed as the influence of secularism, and therefore a mask of Satan. Cumbey (1983:162-9) argued that terms such as the friends of Earth, stewardship, earthkeeping or planetary awareness belong to the New Age movement,³⁸ which is itself a mask of satanic influence.

In addition, adherents are keenly committed to the text of Revelation 13 where it is stated that ‘God will create a new heaven and a new earth.’ In this regard, any actions of friendship with the world/earth are unbiblical since God is going to make all things new, rather than redeeming nature alongside humans (Wilkinson 1987:26). The idea is that Christian support of globalisation belongs both to monism³⁹ and animism.⁴⁰ For this reason, Cumbey opposed any interest in the word stewardship, for instance, since it is claimed by great figures of anti-Christianity. In her own words, she declared:

Christians are urged to support internationalism in the interests of stewardship [of the world/earth]. Of course, what they are not told is that the people heading up the internationalist efforts – 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 [the patron saint for ecologists] were [sic] 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 (Cumbey 1983:166).

Although such anti-ecological thoughts are hardly represented within academic and theological scholarship, they deserve our consideration since they have gained a

³⁸ The New Age movement is an umbrella term referring to a variety of people, organisations, events, ideas and practices. Sociologically, it is not a centrally organised movement with one human leader. Rather it is a collection of like-minded people and groups all desiring a spiritual and social change that will usher in a New Age of self-actualisation (Groothuis 1988:18).

³⁹ The concept *monism* contains the idea that God created the earth and then diffused himself equally throughout the universe. This refers to the idea of God immanent in all things, a common term for every pagan and Eastern religion.

⁴⁰ This concept conveys the notion of ‘everything in nature is god’.

popular influence in some evangelical and fundamentalist areas, particularly in USA and Africa. Some fundamentalists had literally quoted 1 John 2:15-17 to warn against the love/care for the natural world:

Do not love the world or the things in the world. The love of the Father is not in those who love the world; for all that is in the world – the desire of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, the pride in riches – comes not from the Father but from the world. And the world and its desire are passing away, but those who do the will of God live forever (NRSV).

With such popular ecological beliefs in mind, Dyer cited by Horrell (2010a:18), made six provocative and critical norms that he calls ‘the six Biblicists eschatological principles.’ These principles clearly reflect a popular human-centred eschatological interpretation firmly rooted – consciously or not – in the beliefs and practices of today’s fundamentalist Christians:

1. The principle of imminent cataclysm: Earth is headed for disaster which will happen sooner rather than later;
2. The principle of disconnectedness: we humans do not have to share or feel responsible for Earth’s fate. Salvation is for humans, not for Earth;
3. The principle of inevitability: there is nothing we (humans or Earth) can do about it;
4. The principle of transcendence: what really matters is the next world. This world is ephemeral and ultimately unimportant compared to the better future existence.
5. The principle of sovereignty: God is in ultimate (even direct) control of all this.
6. The principle of self-interest: God will rapture ‘believers’ out of this mess at the End.

These six principles have been deliberately formulated to oppose any ecological reflection on biblical texts. The believers must consider themselves as pilgrims on the earth, and long for the forthcoming new earth. There is no need to care about this earth since it is God’s will to destroy it for the salvation of believers.

3.5 Revisionist ecological hermeneutics

‘Revisionist readings’ may be situated between recovery and resistance readings. More than the hermeneutics of recovery or resistance, revisionist readings do not aim to defend (recovery) or to reject (resistance) the classical Christian tradition, but to ‘re-

claim' it historically in its ecological and cosmic fullness (Santmire 2000:10). The supporters of this approach define it not only as an innovative orthodox reading, but also as the reformation and reconfiguration of the theological reflection on ecological and related global issues (Horrell *et al.* 2008:233).

Revisionist readers claim the dynamics of the classical Christian tradition that constantly call forth a re-forming of the tradition itself. Learning carefully from the history of interpretation, current readers will recognise that earlier interpreters did not share our ecological threats and awareness. This might indeed have helped to reinforce the anthropocentrism aspect of the theological tradition. However, it is also possible to find potentially fruitful interpretative perspectives in previous engagements with the biblical texts, as reflected in the following:

Any attempt to develop such a theological ecological hermeneutics [revisionist] will need to learn carefully from the history of Christian theological interpretation in order to consider the kinds of twist and turns that have been taken – for better or worse – as the biblical texts have been read through the centuries, and will need to foster engagement between scholars and theologians in order to consider how the texts might fruitfully be interpreted now (Horrell 2010c:10).

The revisionist Santmire (2000:8) regarded this interpretative analysis as the 'rebirth of nature' within the classical Christian tradition. Rather than simply defending or rejecting the tradition, revisionist readings claim to reshape ecologically the same tradition that has been largely interested by the issue of human salvation at the cost of non-human earth members. This scholar has defined revisionist readings in the sense that:

The revisionists have worked mainly within the milieu of classical Christian thought ... Since, moreover, the Old and New Testaments are the font of the classical theological tradition in the West, and since these scriptures are taken as the chief norm for all teachers and teachings (*norma normans*) by the tradition itself, the revisionists, as a matter of course, also have given the highest priority to biblical interpretation. At the same time, however, the dynamics of the classical tradition, thus understood, constantly call forth a *re-forming* of the tradition itself, as that term itself has historically suggested (Santmire 2000:7-8).

Unlike Reformation hermeneutics that basically involve anthropocentric readings of creation and salvation texts, revisionist readings claim to rediscover, to identify, to

revise and to celebrate the cosmic promise of Biblical texts (Santmire 2000:9). Here, the analysis shifts from human salvation to creation history in order to renovate the idea of ‘nature reborn’ in biblical exegesis. In this sense, the revisionist claims to ‘re-envision’ the classical Christian tradition for serving the worship, the teaching and the public witness of the church in current ecological and existential crisis (Santmire 2000:9).

Therefore, the Revisionists argue for the reformulation and critical assessment of Christian traditions prior to their re-appropriation. In practising both recovery and resistance strategies, this approach argues for revitalising and renovating them so that:

The ecologically and cosmically rich thought of traditional Christianity – not those strains in the tradition that have been essentially unecological and sometimes acosmic, which have been especially dominant in the modern period – must be reformulated in the context of our own cultural situation and in our own public language, so that we can indeed make it our own, both practically and reflectively (Santmire 2000:9).

The intention is to venture forth a new reading of biblical texts in which the voice of both humans and other species is present in the kerygmatic teachings of the church. In fact, in the current context of growing awareness of the ecological challenges facing the planet, this is time for a further reconfiguration of the Christian tradition through an innovative oriented biblical hermeneutic: the ‘revisionist reading’ (Horrell *et al.* 2008:236).

In this regard, some revisionist writers have developed an interpretative horizon that views the Christian tradition in the framework of the ‘first things’ (protology) and the ‘last things’ (eschatology). It is protological since it draws on an inference from God’s intentions at the initial created order (Genesis 1), and eschatological for bearing a vision of what the redeemed creation is intended to become (Southgate 2008:247). On this interpretative model, Santmire proposes ‘the future and the fullness thereof as a revitalised doctrinal construct’⁴¹ of the Saint Augustinian notion of ‘first things and

⁴¹ The term ‘doctrinal constructs’ is due to Conradie. They are typically based on the dominant beliefs, value, customs and habits of ecclesial traditions and communities. They are not literally taken from the biblical texts or the contemporary world, but are precisely the product of previous attempts to construct a relationship between text, tradition and context. In Conradie’s views, doctrinal constructs have a triple role: they offer a strategy to identify both the meaning of the contemporary context and of that of biblical texts. At the same time, they enable an interpreter to establish a link between text and contemporary context. Finally, they are employed, not only to

last things.’ In this sense, Biblical texts are interpreted through the ecological lenses of the universalising hermeneutic of the future and the fullness thereof, attentive to the land of fecundity and justice, on the one hand, and the fecundity of the earth on the other hand (Santmire 2000:36).

Therefore, the Sabbath day of Genesis 1 is interpreted in terms of the future, the eschatological fulfilment of the whole creation. Santmire (2000:36) asserted that we are living in the sixth day of the Priestly creation text awaiting the dawning of the fulfilment of the whole creation – the day of perfect universal peace, *shalom*. In this sense, a text like Genesis 9:1-7 is meant not to be the protological world, but the world affected by violence between humans and animals, and where the divine will for the future of the whole creation of Genesis 1:29 is renewed by the peaceful covenant with all creatures (Gn 9:8-17).

Indeed, revisionists offer valuable readings in trying, neither to defend Christian tradition nor to reject it, but to reform it ecologically. Yet, revisionist hermeneutic is compelling, at least for it to reshape Christian orthodoxy, since it avoids the pitfalls of the preceding strategies of reading. Revisionists believe that modern ecological threats are a call for rethinking Christian tradition through the renewal of biblical reading. The idea is that our modern problems and biblical texts will be approached in the context of engagement with Christian theological *kerygma*, as asserted in the following:

[The] ecological interpretation of the Bible does not and cannot consist in trying simply to establish what the texts say, but requires instead a constructive engagement in which, ... the horizon of the text and the horizon of the reader are brought together, and that this engagement is both shaped by, and in turn intends to shape, the Christian theological tradition. In this sense, the approach [Revisionist] may be described as an attempt to construct an ecological theology which, while innovative, is nonetheless coherent with a scripturally shaped Christian orthodoxy (Horrell 2009:169).

However, the main problem is what should count as orthodox? Also, the interpretative framework proposed by Santmire will oblige the interpreter to read every text with a universal and eschatological perspective. I think biblical writers intended neither to resolve universal matters, nor the questions in future, but firstly their readers’ daily

find similarities, but to ‘construct similarities’, to ‘make things similar’ (*idem-facere*), if necessary (Conradie 2010:301).

challenges. Although the text may bear an eschatological potential, this must not be viewed as the primary focus of the text. In this research, the attention will be given to both diachronic and synchronic aspects to avoid this issue.

3.6 Critical comparison and assessment

The readings of recovery easily give the impression that ecological wisdom can simply be extracted from any text of the Bible when the text is rightly understood, and that the Bible can be defended against all the critical charges addressed against it. This reading tries to find ecological wisdom in whichever text. Indeed, recovery reading strategies supporting the key-concepts of stewardship and caring responsibility have the value of urging humans to love and care for creation. The recovery mode reflects a strong commitment both to ecological values and to the authority of the Bible.

In seeking only to defend biblical texts, this reading fails to acknowledge both the ambivalence and the otherness of biblical texts on which ecological hermeneutics are necessary. One of the problems of readings of recovery is that they give the impression that one may leap from biblical exegesis to contemporary theology without considering the gap that separates the world of biblical texts from our contemporary concerns (Horrell *et al.* 2008:234). I think, we should acknowledge that biblical texts – written in pre-modern times – contain diverse and ambivalent materials that need critical analysis before their application to our ecological issues.

By contrast, the reading of resistance practised in the Earth Bible series offers a strong commitment to ecojustice and a willingness to criticise, resist and even reject and abandon biblical texts that are likely to sustain a negative status of the earth and its relationship to humans (Horrell 2010a:19). Yet, The Earth Bible Project depicts a clear and explicit commitment to reading the texts with ecological sensitiveness. It offers valuable insights challenging traditional readings and current attitudes towards the earth, and enables the interpreter to retrieve hidden ecological wisdom that could not be found in traditional reading of the biblical texts.

However, while generating much ecological material, this kind of reading does not sufficiently articulate how such creative and critical interpretation can contribute to reconfigure a proper biblical ecological theology, a theology in which the Bible plays a

formative and authoritative role, rather than proposing a text of the imagination of the interpreter (Horrell 2010c:9). Obviously, such imaginative text does not bear the same power as a new interpretation of biblical texts themselves could do. It is uncertain whether such imagination can motivate ecological liability. Moreover, its earth-centric perspective imposes a restrictive influence on the text rather than bringing illumination for ecological commitment. It is in this sense that Van Heerden (2005:384) pointed that Habel's option of reading Genesis 1 from the perspective of Earth, prevents him 'from giving attention to its exilic context, as well as its clearly schematic and symmetrical characteristics'.

In addition, the six ecojustice principles are ecologically fruitful when the text complies with them. Their purpose is audacious, innovative and attractive in various ways, hinting at new insights for ecological reading of biblical texts (Conradie 2010:308). The problem is that the interpretative authority lies not in the Bible or the Christian tradition, but with the ecojustice principles, regarded as a 'small dogmatic,' the norms by which the validity of the text is measured (Horrell 2009:168). They are radically made with a secular vision avoiding any reference to religious wording. For this reason, when the texts do not comply with them, the hermeneutics of suspicion and resistance is vigorously used to expose and reject their anti-earth focus and propose a new formulation of a text, a product of the reader's imagination.

The second kind of resistance that rose within the fundamentalist areas, is mostly interested in defending the authority of the Bible against any challenges from modern reality, whether ecological, political or womanist interests. The so-called six Biblicist eschatological principles offer eloquent disagreements and even rejection of any ecological interest. We have mentioned this kind of resistance only for its underlying popular influence on evangelical beliefs of contemporary Christians.

Lastly, by reclaiming and envisioning Christian tradition, revisionist readings have the value not to abandon or to defend Christian tradition, but to renew the interpretation of the biblical texts in relation to ecological threats. Revisionist reading is somehow cogent for an approach that needs to remain in positive relationship with Christian tradition. The problem is that the reader will probably be submerged by the burden of the so-called tradition and not freely develop an innovative interpretation. In

addition, searching to rediscover the ‘universal meaning’ of biblical texts in the interpretative framework of the ‘future and fullness,’ gives the impression that each and every biblical text contains the idea of the present and the future. We should know that few biblical writers were interested in the future, but rather in the present threat or problems of their readers.

Indeed, this research partly agrees with the ecological theology of the revisionist approach of the Exeter Project.⁴² While innovative and critical, the Exeter Project is nonetheless coherent. It can be situated somewhere between the reading of recovery depicted in the evangelical writing, and the reading of resistance developed in the Earth Bible Project. It assumes that a fruitful ecological hermeneutics will need to learn critically from the history of Christian theological interpretation in order to avoid previous misinterpretations of the biblical texts (Horrell 2010c:10). This will enable the engagement between scholars and theologians in order to reconsider the way biblical texts might fruitfully be read and interpreted for today’s readers.

However, I do not agree with the Exeter project on the issue of recommending an ecological hermeneutics that is scripturally shaped within Christian orthodoxy. Such hermeneutical reading will not give appropriate freedom to the self-expression of the text because of the burden of the tradition. Moreover, one would need to know what must be count or considered as Christian orthodoxy since Christianity is ‘plural’ and regularly needs to be reformed, in accordance with the Latin adage *ecclesia reformata semper reformanda*?⁴³ Below, I suggest what this study will use as ‘key-insights’ for a fruitful ecological hermeneutics in addition to the Exeter assumptions.

4. Towards a fruitful ecological hermeneutics

4.1 Recognising the otherness of biblical texts

A fruitful ecological reading must admit that biblical texts were formulated in the world that knew nothing about modern ecological problems. Our confrontation with these texts should acknowledge their otherness to our world to avoid forcing foreign

⁴² The Exeter Project develops an ecological hermeneutics that is likely to be a revisionist reading. Most of their hermeneutical stance can be found in Horrell, D G, Hunt, C, Southgate, C & Stravakopoulou, F 2010 (eds), *Ecological Hermeneutics: Biblical, Historical and Theological Perspectives*. New York: T&T Clark.

⁴³ For the Latin adage, see Nash cited by Conradie (2004:126).

meanings to the text. Therefore, having in front of him the outline of current problems, the interpreter must carefully listen to biblical texts that may reveal their character as something unique and different in relation to contemporary ecological questions (Steck 1980:16). The aim of this reading posture is to direct the reader towards the critical power and relevant stimulus of biblical texts for our questions.

Discerning the text's meaning involves interpreting the text in the light of one's experience and within a community, but this enterprise would never mix in one mould the biblical statements and the interpreter's realities. This means that our realities should never dictate the direction of biblical interpretation, but both worlds should remain in constant enrichment dialogue. In the words of Horrell (2010b:182), 'A message only emerges when an interpreter makes an attempt to articulate what the text says.'

The gap separating the concerns of the modern interpreter and the world of the ancient author, is enough to prove this fact. Brown declared that 'we cannot fully grasp what an ancient text said to its intended audience anymore than we can transport ourselves back in time and conduct interviews: the historian, even the biblical historian, cannot raise the dead' (Brown 2010:13). We should know that any methodological tool helps us to develop a 'matrix' of possible meanings, but the full texts' meaning is ever elusive (Brown 2010:13). It is unlikely that any hermeneutics claims to have access to their full meaning.

Therefore, those who seek to view biblical texts from a uniform and coherent ecological perspective should know that the ancient editors of the Bible, for instance, were already aware of the uniqueness and divergences between Genesis 1:1-2:4a and 2-3 and preferred not to combine and harmonise them into a single and comprehensive account of Creation. Thus, any fruitful ecological hermeneutics must seriously take the world of the text as it stands in its synchronic aspect, the world in front of the text and its theological complexity, the historical background of the text, and the contemporary realities in order to grasp the meaning of the text in all its aspects.

In sum, before any contemporary appropriation of the text, biblical traditions must be taken on their own, in their historical and literary contexts. In this research, the interpreter adopts a hermeneutical roundabout moving from biblical texts to ecological

realities without distorting the uniqueness of both worlds. This movement is usually called the ‘hermeneutical circle’ in which the ancient text and the reader’s context are brought together into an enrichment dialogue (Brown 2010:16). This hermeneutic mode pays respect to the otherness of biblical texts and their ambivalence for today’s readers. However, the approach will be aided by doctrinal constructs as the intention is to read the text for modern people.

4.2 The role of doctrinal constructs

Interpretation of biblical texts in light of contemporary realities often appeals to what Conradie calls ‘doctrinal constructs’ (2010:301). As the term states, these are simply the constructions of the reader to act as the orientation for his/her interpretation, but they are not intrinsic features in the text. They are not directly derived from either the Biblical texts or the current world but are precisely the product of previous attempts to construct a relationship between text, tradition and contexts⁴⁴ (Conradie 2006:306). Doctrinal constructs may be viewed as the fruit of a reading perspective.

In this sense, they play a crucial role in the interpretation and the appropriation of biblical texts. Not only do they provide a strategy to unlock both the meaning of biblical text and current context, but also enable the interpreter to establish a link between the text and reader’s reality. Conradie explains the role of doctrinal constructs in a more comprehensive sense that:

Doctrinal constructs are not only employed to *find* similarities but to *construct* similarities, to *make* things similar, if necessary. The scope of such doctrinal constructs is often quite comprehensive: they purport to provide a clue to the core meaning of the contemporary context *as a whole* and the Biblical text *as a whole* (2006:306).

For instance, the notion of stewardship which is so central in the readings of recovery does not visibly appear in several texts such as Genesis 1 and Psalm 8, and nowhere the Bible ‘expressly’ says that humans are appointed ‘stewards’ of creation. For this reason, the term stewardship acts as a ‘doctrinal construct’ in an ecological hermeneutics. This should be regarded as a ‘product of interpretation,’ not something

⁴⁴ The contexts of the text and the ones of current readers.

intrinsically contained and to be discovered in biblical texts themselves (Conradie 2010:305). The same applies to the six ecojustice principles of the Earth Bible Project. Their authors have even affirmed that these principles act as the ecological orientation, the starting point and hermeneutical framework of the Earth Bible series (see The Earth Bible Team 2000:38). The six ecojustice principles are the construction of the reader, but not something literally contained in the text.

The main danger of doctrinal constructs is the tendency of simplification and harmonisation of the meaning of the text to one single aspect. Rather than bringing illumination, they run the risk of harmonising differences when contemporary realities do not cohere with some aspects of biblical texts. Yet, they play a crucial role in the contemporary re-appropriation of biblical texts, but they must not be confused with the text itself. All doctrinal constructs must be subjected to a hermeneutics of suspicion in order to allow a free-expression of the text. Obviously, doctrinal constructs distort both text and context, bringing certain things into focus, skewing or marginalising others, perhaps ideologically, in prioritising, legitimating and concealing the interests of dominant social groups (Horrell 2010b:184).

Indeed, while doctrinal constructs enable the interpreter to identify and construct the meaning of the text, they have the potential of leading to a kind of fundamentalism, fixation and rigidity. The text would be merely interpreted in order to confirm what the reader knew would be in the text. As result, no surprises, no challenges, no revelation can be expected from the text other than what the reader constructed in advance. Yet, it is not possible to move from biblical texts to a specific contemporary reality without using a given doctrinal construct.

Therefore, for the ecological hermeneutics of Genesis 1, I adopt the following doctrinal construct: the framework of the earth community. By this I agree with Hessel who refers to the concept 'Earth community' as meaning the integrity of the created world in which all living things – including humans and non-human beings – live together and are interconnected through various kinds of relationships (1996:1). In this membership model, the readers particularly focus on what humans have in 'common with' non-human beings before interpreting the power relationship between them. This ideal will be carefully sounded in the fifth chapter of this study.

5. Summary and conclusion

The above survey showed the context in which ecological hermeneutics emerged and how scholars applied it on biblical texts in different perspectives. As I pointed out, ecological hermeneutics originated as a response to four challenges: the ecological crisis, Lynn White's thesis, the marginalisation of nature in biblical scholarship or exegesis and the anti-ecological reading of eschatological texts. In response, scholars oscillated between three tendencies: the first articulated the theory of reading of recovery in which the Bible is rescued from the so-called misreading and is described as a valuable locus for ecological wisdom. Here the concept of responsible stewardship and the care for creation are most used. This kind of reading is typically found in the fundamentalist evangelical areas.

By contrast, the second argued for the hermeneutics of resistance against biblical texts that reflect an anthropocentric vision. The approach proposes to resist, reject and rephrase the so-called grey texts – the texts which are ecologically destructive. This approach is notably found in the writings of the Earth Bible series. Employing the six ecojustice principles and the hermeneutics process of suspicion, identification and retrieval, the reader assumes that both the text and the interpreting traditions are likely to be anthropocentric, giving priority to human interests and values. In such contexts, the texts are resisted because both the original writers and modern interpreters expose Earth to the mercy of human exploitation.

The third tendency is another form of hermeneutics of resistance, but a resistance against any ecological reflection on biblical texts. Its proponents argued that any use of terms like 'ecological awareness' or 'stewardship' is a mask of Satan, typical to secularism. They drew on the infallibility and non-negotiable authority of the Bible that no contemporary reality can challenge. This kind of reading is not represented in the academic area. We have mentioned it for its popular influence on Christian belief and practices, notably in the fundamentalist evangelical areas.

The last one is the approach developed by revisionists claiming to re-articulate and reformulate biblical tradition. This approach stands between recovery readings and resistance stances. Since it situates in intersection of the two positions, it avoids at the same time the pitfalls of both. Rather than simply claiming the eco-friendliness of

biblical texts (recovery), or only opposing the text (resistance), revisionists claim to re-read biblical texts critically in relation to contemporary threats in order to offer a proper resource for an ecological theology.

I have ended the chapter with a critical comparison and assessment of these three readings before proposing two directions for a fruitful ecological hermeneutics. These are the recognition of the otherness of biblical texts and the judicious use of doctrinal constructs. Indeed, biblical texts were not originally written to give specific solution to our contemporary problems. Doctrinal constructs enable the interpreter to bridge the gap between the ancient text and current reader, but these doctrinal constructs must only be considered as ‘products of interpretation’ and not intrinsic features in the text. The following chapter concentrates on precisely how these readings have been applied on Genesis 1:1-2:4a.

CHAPTER THREE: EXTANT ECOLOGICAL INTERPRETATIONS OF GENESIS 1:1-2:4a

1. Introduction

This chapter presents an arrayed analysis on prevailing ecological interpretations of Genesis 1:1-2:4a. Special attention will be given to several readings of the critical unit of Genesis 1:26-28. Scholars have developed a number of analyses in which they either soften or react against the three matters of Genesis 1:26-28 that most often are seen as clear proof of the anthropocentric nature of the text. These are: humans created in the image of God, human dominion over animals, and the mandate to subdue the earth. In the following sections, an attempt is made to group different scholars according to their ecological approaches⁴⁵ to the reading of Genesis 1.

2. Readings of recovery of Genesis 1

These readings have simply reacted against Lynn White's thesis (1967:1203-7) and demonstrated that the text cannot be regarded as responsible for legitimating wide-ranging destruction of the earth. Important attempts have been made to show that Genesis 1:26-28 does not promote a negative attitude towards other earth members as implied by Lynn White. These readings aim at proving that Genesis 1:26-28, read properly, is an eco-friendly text.

2.1 The pastoral and aristocratic dominion

Lohfink refutes the charge that the creation of human beings in the image of God in Genesis 1:27 forges a gulf between humans and the natural world. For this scholar, the

⁴⁵ The wordings (recovery, resistance and revisionist) used for naming various ecological approaches are owed to the works of Watson, F 1992. *Strategies of Recovery and Resistance: Hermeneutical Reflections on Genesis 1-3 and its Pauline Reception*. *JSNT* 45, 79-103, see pages 82ff; Santmire, P H 2000. *Nature Reborn: the Ecological and Cosmic Promise of Christian Theology*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 6-10; Horrell, D G, Hunt, C & Southgate, C 2008. *Appeals to the Bible in ecotheology and Environmental Ethics: a Typology of Hermeneutical Stances*. *SCE* 21, 219-38; and the two most recent publications of the Exeter project, namely: Horrell, D G, Hunt, C, Southgate, C & Stavrakopoulou, F 2010 (eds), *Ecological Hermeneutics: Biblical, Historical and Theological Perspectives*, New York: T & T Clark; and Horrell, D G 2010a. *The Bible and the Environment: Towards a Critical Ecological Biblical Theology*. London, Oakville: Equinox, see pages 11-20.

expression ‘image of God’ does not establish a gap between humans and other earth members, but restores the dignity of human beings, something lacking in the traditions of Israel’s neighbours (Lohfink 1994:7). The passage is suggested to be read as Israel’s counterpart against ancient world creation stories in which humans were created for the purpose of enslavement to gods. For Israel, humans have been created to serve as loyal, brave and effective instruments of the divine rule on Earth (McBride 2000:18). Thus, in Genesis 1, humans exist not to perform gods’ tedious and arduous works, but to rule over animals and to subdue (כבש) the earth.

However, for Lohfink the original meaning of the verb כבש⁴⁶ is not to conquer or to subjugate, something like trampling down, but something like ‘placing one’s foot on something’ in the sense of ‘claiming ownership’ (1994:9). This meaning can also be read in Joshua 18:1 in which the verb is used to mean ‘the land laid under their feet’: they took possession of it. In the book of Micah 7:19, the verb is used to forgive sins as sins are like fire that God crushes underfoot. For Lohfink, the Hebrew verb intends that in their process of filling the earth, human beings will occupy and control the land (ארץ) that previously only beasts inhabited, and will exercise a rulership function in respect to the animal world (1994:9).

Indeed, when this verb is used with humans or nations as objects, its meaning refers to something like ‘taking by force’ or ‘to make subject’ (2 Sm 8:11; Es 7:8; Jr 34:11). With land (ארץ) as its object, the verb כבש would refer to the action of taking possession of something, or to occupy the land (Nm 32:22; 1Chr 22:18). In this case, the verb implies defeating nations who previously occupied the land, but the land itself has only to be taken. In Genesis 1:28, the land that is to be subdued is the same land that is to be filled by humans, and the two actions are closely connected (Bauckham 2010:17).

Therefore, without any reference to White’s thesis, Lohfink argues that the text of Genesis 1:28 is a blessing – not a command (1994:7). In this sense, the priestly verse refers to God’s plan of Genesis 10 for each nation to subdue (take possession of) its own ארץ (*erets*). Thus, since the text relates to the human civilisation ideal of

⁴⁶ Regularly Lohfink refers the Hebrew verb כבש (*kabash*) to other semitic languages, especially the Akkadian *kabasu* and the Arabic *kabasa* for whom the meaning is similar.

expansion on earth, it is inappropriate to use Genesis 1:26-28 as a justification for destructive cosmic evils of modern humans. Indeed, the biblical tradition ‘regards human beings very highly, but it would never designate them as absolute rulers of the universe’ (Lohfink 1994:17).

Likewise, Lohfink rendered the verb *radah* (רָדָה) as accompanying, shepherding, or leading to [pasture], recalling the Akkadian word *redu* for which the meaning is ‘to rule’ or ‘to conduct’ (1994:11). Yet, the vegetarian diet of Genesis 1:29 for both humans and animals, excludes every kind of domination and exploitation of the animals by hunting or slaughtering. The text is in fact, a kind of revision of a peaceful relationship between humans and animals, a relationship which is not possible after the flood (Gn 9:1-17). The post-diluvian state shows that Genesis 1:29 was a prophetic text picturing the divinely created world where humans and animals lived in a perfect nonviolent harmony (Rogerson 2010:23). Reading in this way, the dominion sense of *radah* in Genesis 1:28 implies something much more peaceful and normal.

Lohfink adopted the common idea of the ancient kingship ideology for which the notions of ruler and shepherd were linked together: have dominion, therefore implied tendering, sympathetic and supportive dominion of peace among all species (1994:13). This means that *radah* points to the ancient fundamental notion of accompaniment, particularly of animals. In Genesis 1:28, *radah* in itself does not express any special severity or cruelty, but simply means to rule, to lead, govern, to direct to pasture: to domesticate animals (Lohfink 1994:12). The point is that human beings are meant to domesticate animals and establish a form of peaceful co-habitation between the worlds of humans and animals. In this case, the implied goal of the text seems to be the ‘domestication’ of animals in all realms of reality: in the water, in air and on the land.

It is on this special issue that De Pury partly differs from Lohfink. While agreeing with the idea of ‘accompaniment of animals’, De Pury has doubts about the notion of universal domestication in the statement of Genesis 1:28. For him, since the invitation to ‘dominate’ stretches the domain of living creatures to include the fish of the sea and the birds of the sky, one does not see how such a domination could take a concrete form (De Pury 2004:65). For this reason, he proposed reading human status

within the creation as simply an ‘aristocratic dignity’ rather than a responsibility for the creation, as he asserted in the following:

Domination over animals expresses a form of aristocratic dignity or royal status rather than a power to be executed, and then, in spite of the use of strong verbs like to dominate or to subdue, humans are invited to reign, not to govern⁴⁷ ... Humans are not the Creator, not the emperor. Ultimately, they cannot control everything, because many vital elements are beyond their grasp and beyond their means. If something goes wrong, the blame must not always and automatically be laid on their shoulders ...
(De Pury 2004:69).

Critics have shown that there is no irrefutable place in the Hebrew Bible where כבש and רדה are used in the way claimed by Lohfink.⁴⁸ Actually, if כבש indeed has the basic meaning of ‘placing one’s foot upon something’, this is virtually a violent meaning. Whatever can be said about these Hebrew verbs, their several occurrences in the Old Testament lead inevitably to the basic meaning of כבש as ‘to subdue’ or ‘to subjugate’ and רדה as ‘to dominate’ or to rule over (Brown, Briggs & Driver 1968:921-2). That is why, without denying the violence of these verbs, De Pury proposed that they should be interpreted as reigning rather than governing (2004:69).

In this sense, revisionist scholars think that it is not easy to recover the Hebrew verbs כבש and רדה of Genesis 1:26-28 with a friendly ecological wisdom because they are formally violent (Horrell 2010a:34). For example, the close reading of the so-called loyalist Psalm 72:8-9 shows that רדה means ruling over a domain in which all conquered foes have been forced to lick dust. The problem is that the so-called loyalist Psalm 72 has nothing to do with justice and caring duty. Moreover, the verb רדה is not distinctively used to design kingship over Israelites, but it usually occurs in reference to dominion over foreigners, enemies, and control of slaves and conscripted labour (see 1 Ki 4:24; Is 14:6; Ps 72:8; 110:2).

⁴⁷According to the Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary (7th edition), the verb ‘to reign’ could mean either ‘ruling as king’, or the fact of being the most important in a particular area of skill, or, literally, to be the most obvious feature of a place or a moment. This does not necessary imply having control over something. However, the verb ‘to govern’ implies the legal control over a country and being responsible for its well-being. The verb implies the action to control or influence somebody/something to behave, to happen or to function in a fixed way. De Pury argues that Genesis 1 is about the first verb: to reign, since humans are not meant to influence the order of the universe in a certain way.

⁴⁸For an exhaustive discussion of *radah* and *kabash*, see Neumann-Gorsolke, U 2004. *Herrschen in den Grenzen der Schöpfung. Ein Beitrag zur alttestamentlichen Anthropologie am Beispiel von Psalm 8, Genesis 1 und verwandten Texten*. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, see pages 274-300.

Thus, Westermann (1984:153) opposes the kingship model since, for him, it does not correspond with the Priestly theology in which God is transcendent and revealed in specific holy places. As such, P could not possibly think of humans as replacing God on earth. Also, since, there are other ancient Near Eastern texts about the creation of human in God's image, the proper comparison of Genesis 1 should be with these cosmogonies, and not with the texts about kings (Houston 2011:99). I think, as shall be argued later, the only way of softening the implications of these verbs can be found in the literary and contextual setting of the text itself.

2.2 The stewardship reading of Genesis 1:26-28

Stewardship is described in the Evangelical Declaration on Care for Creation⁴⁹ as the proper human relationship to the rest of the creation. Some Christian ecologists had established it as a kind of Eleventh Commandment – ‘Thou shalt cherish and care for the earth and all within it’ (Fowler 1995:77). In fact, the steward is someone who cares for what belongs to another one, and in our context, someone who is responsible for God's creation. The main idea of stewardship insists that the world belongs to God alone and humans have been assigned the role of caring for other beings (Darragh 2000:59).

This approach assumes that Genesis 1:26-28 should be read in light of Genesis 2:15 where the role of humans is to ‘till and keep the garden.’ Viewed as being in the image of God and the climax of the creation, humans stand in the place of God in order to serve as a lynchpin that holds creation together (Wilfong 2000:46-7). Humans are viewed as the heart of God's creation, and the on-going link between God and nonhuman beings. They are appointed not only to reproduce like other species (Gn 1:22), but to exercise jurisdiction or guardianship over other living beings that inhabit with them (McBride 2000:15). The idea is that humans are set upon the earth as stewards to carry out God's sovereign rule over other creatures in Genesis 1.

⁴⁹ ‘The Evangelical Declaration of the Care of Creation’ (1993) has been signed by more than 300 evangelicals – pastors, theologians and scientists. The Declaration is the charter document of the Evangelical Environmental Network. For the content of the Declaration, see <http://creationcare.org/blank.php?id=39> (Accessed 25 September 2012).

Therefore, humans are made in God's image in order to be kings of creation because only humans are God's partners (Loader 1987:18). They are the only creatures with whom God can dialogue and speak to as 'you,' and it is an 'I' who is responsible to God (Barth 1958:182-85; Birch & Vischer 1997:4). The dominion of Genesis 1 is then referred to the Israelite kingship in which kings were appointed to act not as absolute rulers and sovereigns, but viceroys of God to foster and care for their subjects (Loader 1987:18; Bauckham 2000:99). Usually, the loyalist Psalm 72, the Deuteronomist laws (Dt 17:14-20), and some prophetic critics levelled against the deviation of Israelite kings are raised to sustain the steward motif.

The power that the humans of Genesis 1 have to implement over creation is meant to be 'servanthood,' as a brother or a sister may rule over others in the family (Dyrness 1987:53). In the words of Bauckham (2002b:48), 'just as the king of Israel was not to exalt himself over and against his brother and sister, so the human dominion over other living beings is not domination of superiors over inferiors but the responsibility of some creatures for their brothers and sisters creatures'. For Israel, the king is first and foremost a brother set over his brothers and sisters, but still a brother (Dt 17:15).

In Deuteronomy 17:14-20, several limitations to the king are clearly stated: no marrying of many wives, no accumulating of much wealth for himself, but always bound to law observance. Proponents of stewardship compare these limitations to the dietary provision of Genesis 1:29. In this text, humans are forbidden the right to kill animals for food, but both are expected to remain herbivores. This vegetarianism motif implies that human kingship, like God's, is a matter not of use but of care and respect of mutual sharing of earth resources (Baukham 2010:19).

Human ruling is described not as a strictly monarchical view of kingship in the ancient Eastern world, but merely as 'organic' – serving the God-ordained order – imaging the ministry of Jesus Christ who came not to be served but to serve (Dyrness 1987:53). In this case, humans are banned from any way of auto-exaltation in entrenching their power over their fellow-creatures of Genesis 1. It is argued that this is what the image of God means for humans: 'humans are to rule like God, following his model, which is loving and caring' reflected in the loyalist Psalm 72 (Loader

1987:18). Like Jesus Christ, human dominion will consist on caring with compassion and justice for the non-human beings for the glory of God.

Supporters of the stewardship model maintain that the dominion motif of Genesis 1 refers to a ‘servanthood’ mission. Human rule is read both as a reflection of God’s own righteous rule and an expression of God’s purposes for the bearers of his image to exercise his intended dominion. In this view, the only role of humans within creation is to facilitate and enjoy the bounty of the earth. Hence, human dominion is a delegated responsibility for the care of the created order under God’s authority. This is what McDonagh (1990:119) asserted when he said that the verb *רדה* challenges humans to imitate God’s loving kindness acting as viceroy in relationship with the non-human members of the earth community.

In this view, the verb *רדה* is carefully altered in accordance with the caring role for the earth. It is said that the verb itself does not basically bear a despotic sense that often is expressed by additional words, like the Hebrew word *perek*⁵⁰ (see Houston 2011:98). As this word does not follow *רדה* in Genesis 1, by implication it refers to a benign rule. In this sense, the kind of dominion entrusted to humans is to reflect God’s rule of protecting and nurturing, not a despotic rule that exploits (Bullmore 1998:139). To sustain this, Bauckham argued that a despotic reading of the dominion motif of the text of Genesis 1:28 is not an intrinsic feature in the text itself, but emerged during Greek and Renaissance influences of human greatness (2002a:141).

Steck argued that God ended his activity on the seventh day, and has delegated humans to represent him within the created world. For him, the expression ‘image of God’ implies the ‘central position’ that humans occupy in the priestly creation as God’s stewards for promoting life of all beings (Steck 1980:103). Therefore, the entire creation takes its posture from humanity and it is oriented toward him who is seen as the ‘provider’ of order in God’s Creation. As beings created in the image of God, humans are made co-creators to be stewards and accountable to God for their fellow creatures (Weaver 2010:206).

⁵⁰ The grammatical construction would be *radah* + *preposition* + *perek* (literally, *rule in harshness*). This syntax is used in the book of Leviticus 26:43, 46, 53; Ezekiel 34:4. Also Isaiah 14:6 uses a different construction to mean the same: rule in anger.

Human dominion is not about violating the existing Godly creation order, but to be respected and enhanced by the proper exercise of the limited dominion within it (Bauckham 2010:32). The text of Genesis 1:29-30 rejects hostility between humans and other beings, but urges sharing of the earth resources. Therefore, humans must examine if their own use of the land does not negate this sharing ideal. Bauckham concludes that dominion read as a caring responsibility for other beings implies not only saving them from destruction, but also saving human future which is inseparable from the future of all living things (2010:33).

In contrast, Palmer (1992:76) criticises the stewardship model on Genesis 1:26-28 because for him, the political message encoded in stewardship is one of power and oppression. In criticising the anthropocentric view of Genesis 1:26-28, he maintains the stewardship model falls into an implicit form of anthropocentrism. This statement can be observed in the following:

Created in God's image, humankind stands in the place of God in relation to the rest of creation. Like earthly rulers who set up statues of themselves to assert their sovereignty in places where they were not present, so humankind is set upon the earth to assert and carry out God's sovereign rule over all creation (Wilfong 2000:45).

Indeed, in this statement there is a hidden motif of auto-exaltation of humans at the cost of other creatures. That is why Palmer exposes various problems connected to the stewardship approach in the sense that it bears:

A strong sense of humanity's separation from the rest of the world; the idea that the natural world is a human resource that humans are really in control of nature, that nature is dependent on humanity for its management ... Stewardship of the natural world, whether Christian or otherwise, then, remains profoundly anthropocentric and unecological, legitimating and encouraging increased human use of the natural world (Palmer 1992:77-78, 84).

While combating the autocratic exploitation, the stewardship model gives a great role to humans, which is not evident in the structure of Genesis 1. In fact, the close reading of the Priestly creation reveals that even before human creation, God partnered with **מִים** and **אֲרֶזֶן** to generate new life (animals) on earth (Gn 1:8-22). In the priestly creation story, there is no motif of caring for others, but the co-responsibility of all. The life of the universe depends on how each individual creature implements its distinctive role

allotted to him by the Creator. Humanity is not the centre of gravity for the continuance of life in God's Creation project. The task of ensuring continuance in God's creation is not attributed only to humans; other rulers (sun, moon, stars) also share this responsibility by providing light/life on the earth.

The notion of stewardship, or caring for, is obvious in the Yahwist story (Gn 2-3), but not in Genesis 1:1-2:4a. P describes God's Creation as essentially a hierarchical system. To use the words of Hiebert (1996:157), in P humans are regarded as 'land's masters,' whereas in J אדם is the 'land's servant' (עבד). The interpreter should accept that, the verbs רדה and כבש in Genesis 1, are powerful Hebrew words employed to mean a forceful subjection. Thus, interpreting the Hebrew verb רדה as a caring function or stewardship is simply its transformation, since the word regularly occurs to describe control and power executed by kings over their subjects and foes (Hiebert 1996:157). Moreover, the verb כבש, as stated above, is mostly used to mean defeating the enemy, enslaving people and raping women (see Brown *et al.* 1968:921-2).

While this approach has the value of increasing human creativity for the well-being of the creation, it ironically bears an 'implicit' form of anthropocentrism. Stewardship means that 'in all of God's creation, humans stand for God's presence, policies, and power – the same power that created biodiversity as the divine design for the world and that pronounced it good' (Hiebert 2009:281). In this regard, the word stewardship means human precedence in the creation to care for the good of earth members, but this may run the risk of viewing humanity as a necessary intermediary between God and other creatures. It may suggest that non-human beings do not hold their intrinsic value or their own relationship with the Creator.

As shall be demonstrated in chapter five, Genesis 1 does not say that humanity is the 'pinnacle' of the creation because the creation project ends, not with humans, but with God's Sabbath. Humans are neither the climax/centre, nor the intermediary in the creation account of Genesis 1. Rather they belong to the diversity that makes God's creation project 'very good' (Gn 1:31). It is clear that prior to human creation, God worked with ארץ as partner in producing life on earth (Gn 1:8-25). Aware of these issues, scholars turned to another possibility of reading the priestly creation story.

2.3 Theocentric ecological reading of Genesis 1

Theocentrism conveys that God is the centre of the universe and that he alone is the source and sustainer of its meaning, purpose, values, ethics as well as the exclusive ruler of the universe (Young 1994:128). The idea is that all existing things find value and meaning in the transcendent God. In this sense, only God has the unique power to decide on the destiny of his creation, because the entire created world depends only on him. Theocentrism claims that the whole created order exists for the sake and purposes of God. Thus, human dominion in the creation is not autonomous, it is ‘theonomous’ – restricted by God’s regulation, and empowered by God’s *רצה* (Beisner 1997:17). Thus, human dominion is meant to imitate God’s own dominion, and should have as its goal the fulfilment of God’s purpose for creation.

In one of his articles published in 2002, Bauckham developed a thesis of caring responsibility for the creation intermingling with the notion of theocentricity. For him, the domination mandate of Genesis 1:28 must be combined with the lively sense that considers all beings as part of the theocentric created world’s order in the relationship of complementarity (Bauckham 2002b:48). Thus, God alone is exalted, all creatures exist for God’s glory, and humans learn to respect non-human beings not for the ways in which they are useful for them, but for their own value (Ps 148:13). In a more ecological metaphor, the earth (as biosphere) is God’s ‘household’ (*oikos*) in which human beings dwell with other forms of life in dependence and relationship (Conradie 2007:4).

Dyrness (1987:52) asserted that human responsibility toward the earth and earth members must begin with the recognition that God, not human efforts, gives fertility to the earth prior to the creation of humans. In Genesis 1:1-25, God instructs the water and the land to produce living beings, and all of them to be fruitful and multiply. God made humans fruitful just as he had made all creation fruitful before them. The implication is that the fruitfulness of the earth and earth members is not dependent on the proper use of human dominion, but rather on God’s blessing. The notion of *imago dei* finds here its meaning: ‘humankind, created in the image of God, is called upon to emulate in real actions the sustaining will of God with respect to the good of creation’

(Meyer 1987:45). Yet, humans have to rule, but this dominion must be an image of God's presence in his creation.

On this issue, Santmire asserted that theocentricity is the appropriate ecological model to avoid human arrogance on one side, and the tendency to equalise humans with other earth members, on the other side. He formulated his opinion as follows:

To avoid setting the human creature over against nature on the one hand (the tendency of anthropocentrism), and to avoid submerging the human creature and humanity's cries for justice on the other hand (the tendency for cosmocentrism), I am suggesting that we see both humanity and nature as being grounded, unified, and authenticated in the Transcendent, in God. This is the theocentric framework (Santmire 1985:150).

Accordingly, Bauckham has recently depicted Genesis 1 as a God-given order of relationships. For him, the expression 'image of God' does not make human beings demi-gods, but enable them to participate in the ordered interdependence of creatures portrayed in Genesis 1 (2010:19). That is why in Genesis 9:15, God made the covenant not only with Noah and his descendants (humans) but also with all 'living creatures of all kinds'. In Genesis 1, human dominion is over fellow-creatures and must serve, not change the created order that God has established. Their dominion is not granted so that they may violate the already God-given created order of the world, but to maintain and respect its goodness and order on God's behalf (Wilfong 2000:46).

The analysis of Bauckham carefully escapes the implication of the verb *kabash* and claims that the *imago dei* motif is connected not with the subduing of the earth but with the dominion over other living beings. For him, Genesis 1:28 is made up of two distinct sequences, and that verse 28a 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue (*kabash*) it' does not form part of the dominion mandate (2010:16). This corresponds rather to what the Creator said to the sea creatures and birds, with the difference that humans are told to subdue (כבש) the earth. In the words of Bauckham (2010:19):

When humans obey the command to be fruitful and to multiply, to fill the earth and to subdue it, they are not imitating God in a unique way but behaving like other species. If the human dominion over other creatures were merely a matter of power, it too would be only the superlative version of what other creatures have. What links it [dominion] to

the image of God is that it is a delegated participation in God's caring rule over his creatures.

Therefore, the fact that humans are ordered to do what other species do as well, means that creation is designed and meant to be 'God's' (theocentric) and 'ecological'. Humans are seen merely as an integral part of the community of the creation rather than its centre, because God alone is the 'goal' of his creation. In this sense, human dominion would reflect God's rule and intention in a required creaturely way. An autonomous rule that ignores or seeks to overthrow God's ultimate dominion over creation is not appropriate (Wilfong 2000:46). Genesis 1:1-2:4a does not conclude in human creation, but in God's rest. The idea is that creation is God's property of diversity in which the dominion of humans does not place them in God's position, as noticed in the following statement of Bauckham (2010:15.19):

In its own way, the Genesis 1 account of creation is 'ecological'. It stresses the profusion and diversity of living things, and it portrays the creation, animate and inanimate, as an interdependent whole. Humans belong integrally to that interdependent whole. They are essential to the design of the whole, but so are the other parts of creation ... The dominion God gives them [humans] is over fellow-creatures and it reflects God's rule in a necessary creaturely way. It is to be exercised within the created order that God has established and must serve that order.

The point being made is that, by electing human beings to rule over the creation, God has not granted them an absolute power to alter and exploit the creation for their own use. By their dominion, humans do not replace God, the designer and the redeemer of the created world. God did not retreat from the creation area, but rather, he continues to sustain his creation so that each creature executes its particular role to maintain the ecological balance. It is God who continues to enable his people to be involved for the restoration of the whole creation according to his purpose of Genesis 1:31 (Gnanakan 2006:10). The creation will survive if it is understood in the way the Creator intended it to be. As God cares for his creation, human dominion would do the same.

Writers using this approach favour the theocentric reading of Genesis 1:28 to mean a responsible mandate for the land that belongs to God alone. Since they are made in the image of God, humans are meant to utilise their superior power (*radah*

and *kabash*) in the way that reflects God's own rule over his creation. Genesis 1 views the God of the universe as the source and Lord of existence, the first and current cause, directly or via mediation, of all creation (Brisson 2000:55). In this sense, creation is God's domain, and must be understood in a theocentric perspective in order to avoid any abuse of power within it. As one declared:

The peculiar purpose of [human rule and] creation is theophanic: to represent or mediate the sovereign presence of deity within the central nave of the cosmic temple, just as cult-images were supposed to do in conventional sanctuaries (McBride 2000:16).

Contrary to stewardship, theocentrism teaches simultaneously that humans have a special status in the creation, and belong to the integral community of creation rather than being the pinnacle of it (Young 1994:129). Therefore, after having thoroughly favoured the stewardship model, Steck combines the latter with a theocentric accent, maybe because he assumed that a responsible stewardship derives from God. One can read his ideas in the following:

The interconnections between living things and their habitats, between animals and their food, between man and beast, and between man and the earth, all take their course by way of God, as processes relevant to life; and they need to express regulation and empowerment through the actions and words of the One who created the world as a whole destined for life (Steck 1980:108).

The weakness of this approach is that the roles of other partners fall before God's greatness. Indeed, God is the Creator and the sustainer of all created beings. However, since he established the principles of the earth community's existence, Genesis 1:31 ends with God's satisfaction: 'it was very good,' it is perfect. In this appreciation, one could possibly read God's confidence in his creation to work properly by itself. The reason is that Genesis 1 does not suppose incessant interference of God in the normal function of his creation. On the contrary, after putting each individual creature in its real place, God ends his duty in Sabbath. The normal function of the created world depends now on the proper execution of creatures' roles within the creation in order to

‘make-it-work.’⁵¹ Given the hiatus of interpretations raised by readings of recovery, other scholars have proposed readings of resistance.

3. Readings of resistance of Genesis 1:1-2:4a

3.1 The Earth Bible Project

This approach rejects any idea of recovering of the so-called ecological wisdom from the text. Rather, the analysis established a careful classification of two distinct texts within Genesis 1 in terms of the adjectives ‘green’ and ‘grey’. The ‘green text’ refers to Genesis 1:1-25 and 1:31-2:4a where God works with Earth as partner to produce life on earth. By contrast, Genesis 1:26-30 is a ‘grey text’ – a text that is ecologically destructive, devaluing Earth and gives humans a God-given right to harness nature (Habel 2009:2). Thus, this text must be resisted by means of a threefold hermeneutical process of suspicion, identification and retrieval.

3.1.1 *The hermeneutics of suspicion*

This process consists of exposing various anthropocentric loci of the text in order to identify how the voices of non-living beings were suppressed in biblical traditions and texts. According to Habel, this is a legitimate task to discover how biblical traditions have portrayed and devalued Earth in the texts. For him:

Earth Justice obligates us, as members of the Earth community, to be advocates for Earth and to interrogate our biblical heritage to ascertain whether Earth is silenced, oppressed or liberated in the Bible (Habel 2000b:27).

Therefore, the reader must start by assuming that the writers of biblical texts and potentially their readers were mostly preoccupied by human interests at the cost of Earth or earth members. Applied to Genesis 1:26-28, the process exposes the greyness of the text in terms of three main issues: the image of God, the dominion mandate over animals, and the commission to subdue Earth. Regardless of how *imago dei*, *radah* and *kabash* may be interpreted by several scholars, scholars in the Earth Bible Project maintain that this text portrays the creation of human beings as unique, different, and

⁵¹ This expression is owed to De Pury (2004:67).

clearly reflecting the anthropocentric bias of the text. About *kabash*, Habel (2000a:46-7) declared:

The verb *kabash* (to subdue) not only confirms the status of humans as having power on Earth; it also points to harsh control ... Subduing the land meant crushing opposing forces. There is nothing gentle about *kabash* ... The orientation of the human story (Gen 1:26-28) is overtly hierarchical: humans are authorised to rule other creatures and to subdue Earth.

Therefore, Genesis 1:26-28 ruptures the basic story pattern of the whole account. The idea is that the basic narrative pattern of Genesis 1:1-25 is typical of origin myth stories of the ancient Near East. In these stories, the various scenes of the narratives progressively describe the way the primeval world is transformed from formlessness into the ordered world (Habel 2011:26). Similarly, scenes of Genesis 1:1-25 progressively reflect the way Earth is revealed from primal chaos, associated in partnership with God to generate vegetation and other forms of life, replenished with all forms of life, and finally blessed by God.

However, the creation of humans in Genesis 1:26-28 is something far different from the creation of the rest of the world. It ruptures the basic monotonous framework of the course of creation that started from Genesis 1:1-25 and continues with Genesis 1:31-2:4a (Westermann 1964:21). For Habel, human creation is not only a rupture of the basic rhythm of Genesis 1:1-2:4a – *Erets myth* – but also a violation of the role of the main character of the account (Habel 2011:26). Earth is no longer a partner, but an object of human subjugation. Likewise, the earth-born creatures are not celebrated, but objects of dominion by humans. In Habel's words (2000a:47), one reads:

The orientation of the human story (Gen 1:26-28) is overtly hierarchical: humans are authorised to rule other creatures and to subdue the earth. The preceding Earth story of the unified cosmos is interrupted by the human story which reduces Earth to a force or a thing that must be subjugated. The two stories are in conflict; humans are set over and against Earth.

The reading of resistance suspects that the writer of Genesis 1:26-28 – the *Tselem myth* – aims to exalt humans at the cost of Earth and earth-born living beings. Perhaps, thinks Gardner (2000:24), the author of this unit reflects a hidden polemic against

Earth as a power that natural religions of the neighbouring nations deified in their literature. In this text, there is a kind of power transference from God to humans who are given authority over all realms of the former partner of Elohim, *Erets*. Hillel (2006:242) clearly states that Genesis 1:28 is a divine ordination of humans to rule over Earth and use every non-living and living thing on it for their own purposes, without restraint or reservation. It is said that Earth is presented here as a slave or raped woman under control (כבש) of humans.

The approach claims that the God of Genesis 1:26-28 ignores the former partner (Earth), and turns his interest to a new species called humans that have no connection or kinship with Earth and the creatures derived from Earth. Humans are made in God's image, meaning beyond the means of Earth. God is presented as an overlord giving humans a mandate to dominate all life and to subdue Earth. While the God of the first sequence valued Earth as a partner to produce life on Earth, the God of Genesis 1:26-28 presents Earth as 'background' and secondary, and gives one single species the right to put Earth and Earth-born under foot (Habel 2009:68). It is in this sense that the approach declares 'grey' the text of Genesis 1:26-28.

3.1.2 The hermeneutics of identification

Contrary to traditional readings of the text, this approach argues that when the reader identifies him/herself with non-human creatures in the narrative, he/she will discover that the primeval world is not a situation of chaos. Tsumura (1989:43) claims that the word תהו ובהו (*tohu wabohu*) does not refer to Earth's chaos, but to its unproductivity prior to its final shape. This assumption is based on both Deuteronomy 32:10 and Job 6:18 where the word *tohu* refers to מדבר (desert) situation. In accordance with this scholar, Habel (2011:29-30) denies the motif of chaos in Genesis 1:2 as he declares:

Clearly *Erets* exists, but as yet has not assumed its final shape and function and has not yet filled with life forms. This transformation takes place in the course of the narrative. There are no specific indications within the setting [of the text] itself that the idiom *tohu wabohu* means chaos in this text ... The use of the verb *rachaph* [reference to *ruach* of Gen 1] in Dt 32:11, describing an eagle mother hovering over her young before teaching them to fly, suggests an image of parental nurture rather than primal disturbance.

For Habel, if the reader locates him/herself within the primeval situation of *Erets* (Earth) in Genesis 1:1-2 and identifies with Earth as a character in this primal scene, he/she will discover various forces all around: Earth is enclosed in waters called the deep and the darkness (2011:30). In this sense, Habel (2011:30) maintains that Genesis 1:1-2 should be seen not as a situation of chaos, but of anticipation and calm of the primeval world prior to the separation process. The scene of the wind of God hovering above the deep on the face of Earth suggests a nascent formless thing without fertility that will be later associated with the land called ארץ that will play a main role in generating life on the earth (Anderson 1972:650).

Applying the insights of kinship with Earth, the approach claims that the writer of Genesis 1:26-28 has a forceful attitude towards nature and its products. The reader will then identify with non-human beings that arose, in the earlier stage of Genesis 1, from land, water and sea, but are forced to the conquest of a new species of Genesis 1:26-28. This process of identification will enable the interpreter to become aware of the hiatus between humans and non-human beings that led to exploitation, oppression and abuse of nature (Habel 2008:7). From the perspective of Earth and earth members, the related results of such a gulf are unjust and incompatible with the ecological reality of our planet. That is why the Earth Bible Project argues for resisting against this text through the hermeneutics of retrieval.

3.1.3 The hermeneutics of retrieval⁵²

The text quietly states that humans are given the mandate to subdue Earth – an action that might naturally imply silencing or suppressing the voice of Earth and earth members. On the basis of this text alone – excluding Genesis 1:1-25 – one may assume that Earth is intended to be silent and object rather than subject or main character in the Priestly creation account (Habel 2008:7). On this basis, Habel announces the voice

⁵²Retrieval does not overlap recovery. The latter, as we said, consists in demonstrating that it is possible to extract ecological friendliness in each and every biblical text. However, by retrieval, Habel means, not the recovery of ecological wisdom from the text, but the related ‘resistance’ to take in respect of the result gained from the hermeneutics of suspicion and identification. In other words, as the reader has exposed the anthropocentric bias of the text (by suspicion) and identified with non-human living beings in the text, the next action (retrieval) consists of ‘voicing’ the so-called suppressed or ignored creatures through an imaginative narrative/text/poem, the fruit of reader’s analysis.

principle in his imaginative narratives in which he portrays Earth crying and resisting against human dominion (see Habel 2008:8; 2011:44-5).

Likewise, scholars writing in The Earth Bible Project identified the same harsh rule in other texts, such as Psalm 8. According to Carley, this Psalm depicts an apology for human domination and portrays Earth as inanimate object of human rule rather than the vital source of life (2000:111). Given that this does not conform to the ecojustice principle of intrinsic value of earth members, Carley (2000:123) argues that this Psalm, like its co-text Genesis 1:26-28, must be resisted and rejected, and be replaced by an imaginative Earth's psalm.

Critics saw, indeed, in the earth-centric reading is a counter-force for the egotism that resulted from a human-centred approach to reading the priestly creation, but it is accused for isolating Genesis 1:26-26 from its literary context. An earth-centric focus is another extreme similar to the anthropocentric bias claimed on the text. As pointed out by Wilkinson (1987:28), 'In our affirmation of humans as creatures embedded in the web of life, we might have come close to forgetting that we are also creatures made in God's image'. As shall be argued later, both contexts of Genesis 1 and current concerns must be considered by their own *prior* to any interpretation.

In this sense, Van Heerden (2005:384-91) has shown that both Genesis 1 and the Earth Bible Project have a crisis context (the exile and the ecological crisis), both give focus on the victim in the crisis, and both use a cosmological framework when giving possible responses to deconstruct destructives forces (six days of creation and six ecojustice principles). However, Van Heerden (2005:384) pointed out that the Earth Bible Project's option of reading Genesis 1:1-2:4a from the perspective of Earth prevents Habel 'from giving attention to its exilic context, as well as its clearly schematic and symmetrical characteristics.'⁵³

For instance, heard in the exile time, the word *imago dei* would mean for victim people (the exiles) to recover their dignity and royal-priestly⁵⁴ responsibility as God's

⁵³ The original idea is in Afrikaans as follows: '...Hy laat hom nie lei deur die skematiese en simmetriese eienskappe van die teks nie (Van Heerden 2005:384).

⁵⁴ One should remember that in the historical context of the Priestly Writer, Judah and later Jewish rulers had very little and limited power at the head of an Assembly, not a Nation. The *imago dei* motif would then be drawn on the fact that Judah's kings acted (imaged) on behalf of a faraway real king (Persian king). The kingship in Judah was not actually exploitation since the king would never act by his own power, but by a given power.

agents in the world (Brown 2010:48). In this sense, Genesis 1 offers an edifying vision for people who are committed to restore their land (אֶרֶץ) from ruins. Indeed, Genesis 1 confirms the uniqueness of humans, but this text can be viewed as doing justice to Earth if it is read as a whole design and ‘harmonic’ system from the perspective of the victim, as Van Heerden declares (2005:391):

Die genesing van individuele menslike kwale, die herstel van sosiale ontwrigting én die instandhouding van harmonie tussen mense en hulle natuurlike omgewing is volgens hom deel van één proses. Genesis 1 wys immers dat fokus op die uniekheid van die mens en tegelyk die mens se verweefdheid met alles, hand aan hand kan gaan.⁵⁵

The earth-centric reading of Genesis 1:1-2:4a should re-examine its insights in relation to these contextual and exegetical features. The Earth Bible Project’s approach has the strength of fighting the anthropocentric views that dominated Christian exegesis for centuries, but Genesis 1 as whole would reveal other exciting insights into the text.

3.2 Eco-feminist readings of Genesis 1

Ecological feminism (eco-feminism) has been depicted as the third wave of feminism: a kind of convergence of ecology and feminism into a new social theory and political movement (Plumwood 1993:39). It emerged in the early 1970s mostly in North America, while the word eco-feminism itself was later coined by the French feminist Françoise d’Eaubonne in 1974 to raise women’s potential for an ecological revolution. As such, ecological feminism offers a framework both for reconsideration of feminist theory and for developing an ecological ethic that takes seriously the links between the rule of men over women and the abuse of nature (Warren 1995:172). Eco-feminist readings can be depicted as something like a reformation of ecological movement and feminist perspectives in the sense that:

Eco-feminism brings together elements of the feminist and the green movement, while at the same time offering a challenge to both. It takes from the green movement the

⁵⁵ The statement can be translated into English as follows:

According to him the healing of ailments of individual human beings, the redress of social disruption, and the maintenance of harmony between humans and their natural environment are part of a single process. Genesis 1 indeed shows that the uniqueness of humans and, at the same time, the interwovenness of humans with everything, go hand in hand.

concern about the impact of human activities on the non-human world and from feminism the view of humanity as gendered in ways that subordinate, exploit and oppress women (Mellor 1997:1).

Eco-feminism is seen as the symbolic and social connection between the oppression of women and the domination of nature. In other words, eco-feminism brings together these two entities in their deep explorations, since each are objects of male dominion and power both in cultural ideology and in social groups. The idea is that through the course of time, male dominion over women came to determine human life and cultures about all kinds of relationships, including those of people with the rest of the natural world (Fowler 1995:124). In this sense, patriarchal power stands as the large context of the current ecological and biodiversity crisis.

In theological scholarship, eco-feminists explore various ways in which Christian traditions have contributed to establish women-nature social constructs and the rupture between culture and the natural world. Eco-feminists confirm that women and nature have been assimilated to the rank of objects that lack respect and ethical responsibility. That is why these two entities are identified as interconnected stances that need to be liberated from a male conception of the world contained in the creation stories. One can read this idea in the statement of a fervent Roman Catholic eco-feminist:

Domination of women has provided a key link, both socially and symbolically, to the domination of earth, hence the tendency in patriarchal cultures to link women with earth, matter, and nature, while identifying males with sky, intellect, and transcendent spirit (Ruether 1992:3).

Biblical eco-feminist theologians are categorised into two waves of reflection. Some appear to argue in a kind of revisionist approach to Christian tradition, but others commit to its total resistance and rejection. However, both categories of biblical eco-feminists assert that Genesis 1:26-28 is a clear reflection of the patriarchal power relations of dominion of men over women, masters over slaves, and humans over animals and earth (Eaton 2000:55). As such, the revisionist eco-feminist tendency argues for a kind of redefinition of the basic doctrine of creation in relation to the oppressed regarding women-nature.

The ideal is not the removal or domination of others by a female-nature power, but ‘respect and commitment to the well-being of the other’ (Larkin 2001:152). As examples, let us mention eco-feminists such as Anne Primavesi (1991:92) and Grace Jantzen (1995:287) who advocated, not for the rejection of the Christian tradition of creation, but for resisting against the male supremacy embedded in biblical traditions. In this sense, eco-feminists’ efforts will consist of reformulating the whole basic kerygma of Christian doctrine since,

This [enterprise] will mean rethinking its [Christianity] own basic presuppositions about human nature, gender and the natural world embedded in church doctrine and structures, and, the way all of these assumptions have conspired to create a culture of domination and exploitation (McDougall 2003:29)

By contrast, other eco-feminists argue that Christian traditions of creation must be deconstructed, resisted and rejected altogether and be replaced by another theory that is more eco-friendly. The most prominent figure of this tendency is Ruether (2000:99) who concurred that this resistance must be done in all the spheres of Christianity because there cannot be a solution to the ecological crisis in a society that is basically defined in the interest of male dominion over others. Her point is that patriarchy and hierarchy are so rooted in creation stories, and thereby in Christian praxis and doctrine, that is impossible for Christianity to respond accurately to the earth crisis.

Therefore, eco-feminist-resistance readings argue for a kind of ‘post-patriarchal spirituality’ where they embrace an eco-theology that is radically eco-democratic in accordance with The Earth Bible Project and people such as Berry.⁵⁶ The attention is now put on the liberating power of the ‘Gaia, the goddess mother-earth’ in which the highest value is given to women and nature, and the gap between culture and nature is abrogated (see Ruether 1992:1-5). The argument is that the hierarchical, dualistic and patriarchal thoughts contained in Genesis 1-3 have led to current disastrous effects on women, earth and humans (McDougall 2003:30). Christianity must then be resisted altogether.

⁵⁶ This Catholic theologian argues for an eco-democracy in the natural world where no one, even humans, can claim supremacy over others (See Berry 1988:35ff).

Biblical eco-feminists maintain that the liberation of women and nature can only be attained by a radical change in the prevailing patriarchal and eco-social view of the world (Littig 2001:15). The point is that oppressed women (misogyny) and the abuse or destruction of the natural world are seen as interlinked objects of a patriarchal view of the world. In the goddess perspective, women are seen as having a closer or more empathetic relationship with nature than men. It is argued that there is a kind of link between women and nature since both are seen as sources of life (Ruether 1992:2-3). In what she coined as an *ecobosadi*⁵⁷ reading of the so-called androcentric Psalm 127:3-5, Masenya (2001:222) conveys that mothers and earth suffer a common abuse from the male drive to multiply children.

Therefore, this type of resistance thinks that the re-location initiatives of God's image (humans) of Genesis 1:26-28 within – not above – the cosmos will consist of destroying first the power relation between male-female. It is the women freedom that will be extended toward the respect of the natural world. Resistant feminists recognise that this task is not too easy since patriarchal thought has dominated Christianity for centuries. It will need a large exegetical and liturgical reform and resistance in order to replace the male conception of the world by a holistic and inclusive reading of biblical texts, as asserted in the following:

Overcoming these bad theological habits involves decontaminating inherited Christian doctrine and liturgy and reconstructing faith affirmations and worship patterns to express more holistic organic models of God's relation to nature, and to undergird the human vocation of earthkeeping on a finite, fragile planet (Hessel 2001:188).

Clearly, eco-feminists argue that nature's abuses are the result of the extension of male dominance. They assert that nature is presented as subordinate in this text of Genesis because of the influence of cultural hierarchical thought of biblical writers (Ruether 1992:2). As Gebara noted, 'the Bible is not the Word of God, but the words of humans about God, and as such it reflects not merely the point of view of God on nature,' but the ones of the writers, who were mostly male (1995: 209-11). The affirmation of eco-

⁵⁷ *Bosadi* is a word from Sotho (one of local South African languages), and relates to something like femaleness (*mosadi* in Sotho means woman/mother). Therefore, the South African Old Testament scholar Masenya used this term to indicate the distinctiveness of her approach, which is mostly committed to address issues affecting African women, and Earth in extension. For her, in acknowledging the interconnection between women, children and the land, one's focus turns from filling Earth to preserving Earth as part of our identity (Masenya 2005:222).

feminists is that nature is good as well as women who are viewed as the paradigmatic expression of nature. The great threat is the male rule.

3.3 Resisting ecological readings of the Bible

This type of resistance is hardly represented in scientific and theological study, but it has considerable influence on popular belief and practice. It is for this specific reason that it is mentioned in this research. Due to its radical way of viewing the Bible authority, this approach resists any interest in the ecological agenda, either clearly or implicitly. Most of its holders are fundamentalist Christians from evangelical areas in USA. For instance, the earlier books of Cumbeys warned Christians against the danger of the New Age influence, which is hidden in the interests of stewardship and the 'earthkeeping' interpretation of Genesis 1-2 (see Cumbeys 1983:166).

This author saw in ecological readings of biblical texts a hidden idea of monism and pantheism intermingling creation and God too easily. The idea consists of warning Christians against a sort of unconscious tendency of ecologists who have almost made biblical Christianity a kind of worship for earth. For this reason, any environmentalist interest is seen as a mask of the New Age. A popular evangelical writer said that such interest seeks to return to the formless and empty primal world in which the diversity of creatures is totally dismissed (Groothuis 1988:21). Supporters of this approach affirm that the human mandate of Genesis 1:26 is a God-given non-negotiable right for humans to exploit nature in their interest.

The protestant fundamentalist Robertson maintains that Genesis 1:26-28 ordains the right of human beings to exploit the earth for their interests. For him, 'it is the word of God; it accords with the historic practice of Christianity; and it means that human use of nature is legitimate, no matter how much stewardship is also lauded' (Robertson cited by Fowler 1995:82). One will find these same assumptions in some earlier evangelical publications, whether clearly or implicitly stated. Interpreting Genesis 1, a fervent fundamentalist said that 'a human-centred view is not a problem, as long as it is understood in a God-centred context' (Barnette 1972:14).

More recently, Beisner (1997:103) has agreed with Habel that the verbs כָּבַשׁ and רָדָה of Genesis 1:28 convey a violent and forceful dominion. Yet, he agrees that this

text puts humans in a position of power over the earth and earth members, but for him, these verbs are violent because their objects may instinctively choose to resist humans' power (Beisner 1997:104). For this approach, it is wrong to claim anthropocentric bias in this text because it is only by recognising humanity's exalted status as God's stewards on earth that will give humanity the motivation and energy to enact the necessary changes (Barnette 1972:15).

In its ideal, this approach implicitly argues in favour of the progress of human technology, which is considered as the restoration of the groaning creation described in Romans 8. Beisner (1997:49-53) adds that humans take precedence over the natural world and that wilderness is a negative image showing the absence of human dominion. He believes that natural disasters are often described in the Bible as God's judgement in response to human sin and rebellion, and that the cursed fig tree of Mark 11:14 should teach us that 'nature really should be expected to meet man's needs.'

To sustain his argument, scholars pointed to another theological issue, the 'curse' of Genesis 3. The claim is that we should not forget that currently we are living during the period following both the Fall (Gn 3) and the flood (Gn 9). The cursed earth outside the Garden – subjected to frustrations and violence (Rm 8:21-21) may choose to resist against human rule. In other words, 'the curse is on earth, and the curse specifically mentions a degradation of the earth that makes it less fruitful than it initially was' (Beisner 1997:19). Instead of producing abundant fruits for the needs of Adam, it would yield thorns and thistles (Gn 3:17-19) and violence. Murray (1992:34) explains that in Genesis 9:

Mutual relations between creatures here on Earth are now envisaged *as they are*, not as they were idealised in Genesis 1 and 2, or in any other vision of universal peace. The Bible contains, in fact, two models for thinking about humans and animals: one paradisaical, the other this-worldly and realistic.

In other words, in this present world, it is evident that humans utilise violence or forceful dominion towards earth in order that it would be fruitful for his sustenance. Humans have to exercise their God-given rule in order to survive on this realistic earth. Obviously, this scholar resists against the anthropocentrism accusation of Genesis 1:26-28, and more than readings of recovery, he sustains the harsh dominion

as legitimate for humans to survive on this present earth, the world after the flood. Human dominion, rightly understood, is a legitimate power received from God to subdue and rule the earth, gradually fitting it to his (humanity's) needs and the glory of God (Beisner 1997:17). What modern people are doing is exactly this and as such, there is no anthropocentric bias.

Therefore, the approach praises technological progress that is seen as the best way by which humans can improve – not pollute – their environment (Horrell 2010a:15). Human dominion over earth is unavoidable and inescapable. In other words:

This [human dominion] is simply a fact, which cannot be wished away. The massive brain of our species, its possession of speech, its capacity for innovation and organisation, make it [human dominion] inevitable that its will should prevail in relation to the natural world. The ethical conclusion from this is surely not to entertain fantasies of a world without such dominance, but to accept the responsibility which that entails, of making conscious reflective decisions about any action affecting other living creatures and earth systems (Houston 2011:103).

In accordance with the above statement, Beisner (1997:110-1) asserted that the dominion task will then consist of transforming and turning earth from wilderness into garden in order to increase its productivity, thus reversing the effects of fall and curse. For him, there cannot be proper ecological balance without the intervention of human dominion. He is supported by Houston, who thinks that it is impossible to conceive any balance in the natural ecosystems without human actions. For Houston, if there is any balance, it is not balance/harmony, but equilibrium of competitive efforts resulting from the rising and declining cycle of species (2011:103). This means that humans are the ones who can establish the true balance in the natural world.

4. Revisionist readings of Genesis 1

Previously in the second chapter of this study, I showed that revisionist readings claim to construct an innovative ecological hermeneutics within the framework of the classical Christian tradition. Revisionists pledge to reclaim and reform this tradition so that creative readings of the Bible reshape the tradition that has long been preoccupied with the issue of human salvation at the cost of non-human beings (Horrell 2010c:10).

In this sense, rather than using extra-biblical expressions like stewardship or ecojustice principles, Rogerson (2010:6) argued that the language of dominion and subjugation of Genesis 1:28 may only be mollified in the broader narrative context of Genesis 1-9.

In fact, the vegetarian diet of Genesis 1:29-30 is a biblical way of describing a world that is in harmony with itself, a world without bloodshed images. It is only in Genesis 9:3-5 that human beings are granted permission to slaughter and consume animals' meat as a concession to a human propensity for violence towards other humans (MacDonald 2008:18). Obviously, this meat-eating permission radically differs from Genesis 1:29. In Genesis 9:2-3, humans are permitted to have control over all food resources, including those feeding animals, as well as being allowed to eat animals themselves. This is significant for the interpretation of the Hebrew verbs *רדה* and *כבש* because, argued Rogerson (2010:5), whatever they might mean in another biblical text, in Genesis 1:28 they occur in the context of a non-violent world.

The coercion potential of these verbs cannot be denied, but the element of coercion appears differently when the passage is read in the context of vegetarianism, a conflict-free world implied in Genesis 1:29-30 (Rogerson 2010:7). With regards to this, Lohfink (1994:13) amplified:

Genesis 1:28 [argues for] the universal domestication of the animal world conceived in terms of something like a paradisiacal peace among all species which, however, is no longer possible after the flood. Whatever measure of animal domestication still existed *after the Flood* must probably be regarded as a remnant of that peace. But it is always mixed with war.

For this statement, Genesis 9:1-7 is meant to be read in contrast to Genesis 1:27-30. The meat-eating permission launches hostile relationships between humans and animals in which humans are defeaters. Ironically, Genesis 9:2 implies a weakening rather than a strengthening of human original power: since they are themselves involved in the violence, they cannot prevent it (Houston 2011:100). Yet, the words 'fear and dread' inspired by humans against the animal world maintain their authority, but it is a meagre remnant of the charismatic dominion bestowed on them in the original blessing of Genesis 1. In this sense, 'Genesis 1:28-30 could be said to express

the divine intention for the world: it is the cosmos in the mind of God, the ideal, the priestly utopia' (Houston 2011:97).

This priestly 'utopia' is renewed both by the covenant with all flesh (Gn 9:8-10) and the interdiction of meat with blood, which means that the consumption of animals' flesh is granted, but not their life (Gn 9:4). The idea is that, while humans may kill animals, the latter remain under God's protection in the rainbow covenant made with all living creatures (Gn 9:9-10) (Birch & Vischer 1997:7). The later P's materials in Leviticus 11 further restrict human power to a certain kind of fauna. In this P's text, the permission *כל־רמש אשר הוא־חי* (Gn 9) is limited to a number of species defined as 'clean'. In other words:

Lev 11 introduces the 'requirement of *differentiated* consumption of meat, as opposed to the undifferentiated consumption characterizing Genesis 9. In this regard, the legislation of Lev 11 offers to Israel the possibility of an intermediate position between the – *now impossible* – vegetarian ideal [utopia] of origins [Gn 1:29-30] and the general [and *undifferentiated*] permission of feeding from all living beings (Gen 9) (Nihan 2007:338).

Similarly, Rogerson asserted that, 'Genesis 1 read in the context of Genesis 9 is not a mandate for the human exploitation of the world; it is a critique of the actual state of human behaviour' (2010:6). Genesis 1:29 presents a world in which humans and non-human beings share earth-vegetation in mutual respect and in a non-violent way, something lacking in the post-diluvian world of 'meat-eating'. Most revisionist scholars agree that Genesis 9 conveys God's concession to human appetite for animal meat and a human propensity for violence against other human beings (MacDonald 2008:19). In this sense, one concurred that whatever can be said about Genesis 9, it is obvious that this text:

Represents a *permission* rather than a positive command, and that it is a permission which reflects the fact that human-animal relationships are not what they should be; it constitutes 'an accommodation to human sinfulness' (Horrell 2008:44).

In this context, Genesis 1:29 becomes a prophetic oracle describing a herbivore ideal for both humans and animals, but that is not possible after the flood. In this case, the *imago dei* does not mainly insist on humans' high power over other living beings of

the earth community, but it lifts up humans' special status to bear God's presence in the world for God's creation purpose (Brown 2010:65). For Lohfink, the expression image of God itself, 'permits no conclusions about a ruling position given to humans or any responsibility for the earth on their part' (1994:7). In other words, the priestly vision of Genesis 1:29-30 describes a world in which:

It is able to believe that a mastery over the earth is possible without exercising a mastery over other beings, which are intermediate beings between the master and the earth ... The Bible does not think of peace between human beings without peace between humans and animals⁵⁸ (Beauchamp 1987:170,80).

While the Priestly writer situates this utopia at the beginning of creation, the prophetic traditions of Isaiah envisage it in the future during the reign of the ideal king from the stump of Jesse who will rule with justice and destroy oppressors (Is 11:6-9). Isaiah's eschatological kingship is figured in the peaceful coexistence reigning in the animal world, a kind of reconciliation of the wild, dangerous animals with the animals that were part of human community of semi-nomadic pastoralists (Bauckham 1998:57-60), as asserted in the following:

The wolf shall live with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them...and the lion shall eat straw like the ox...and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den. They will not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea (Is 11:6-9, NRSV).

To sustain this ideal of peaceful utopia between humans and other members of the earth community, revisionists pointed to other texts of the Christian tradition in the Pentateuch. Unlike the neo-Assyrian empire⁵⁹ and soldiers that showed no mercy either to defeated people (humans) or the natural world, Deuteronomy 20:19-20 forbids the felling of fruit trees of the besieged city. The same motif is behind Deuteronomy 22 ordering caring treatment for lost animals, mother birds with their

⁵⁸ The French original text states: 'elle a pu faire croire qu'une maîtrise de la terre était possible sans que fût exercée une maîtrise sur d'autres êtres, intermédiaires entre le maître et la terre... La Bible ne pense pas la paix entre les hommes sans la paix de l'homme avec l'animal.'

⁵⁹ Among the reasons for the defeat of Sennacherib was also his arrogance of felling the tallest cedars and choicest cypresses of Lebanon (2 Ki 29:23-24). For further details, see Rolston, H 1992. Does Nature Need to be Redeemed? *HBT* 14, 143-72.

young and asses that must be reinvest with the much stronger oxen. The text of Exodus 23:9-12 exhorts the practice of generosity not only towards strangers (humans), but also to the natural order in observing the Sabbath day. Likely, the Sabbath order in Deuteronomy 5:14 is applied not only to humans, but also to domestic animals living with them. The idea consists of ensuring the well-being of the whole earth community: ‘the future and fullness’ of humans as well as animals.

That is why another revisionist, Santmire (2000:36) commented that, ‘we are living in the sixth day, awaiting the dawning of the final fulfilment of the whole creation – the day of the perfect universal peace, shalom.’ Denying any extra-biblical doctrinal construct used in recovery and resistance readings, Santmire argues for a universalising hermeneutics of ‘the future and fullness thereof.’ The Priestly creation account is presented as the locus in which all communities of created beings are created and continue to be made because God wishes to bring them into being toward an eschatological fulfilment (Santmire 2000:37).

With the perspective of ‘the future and fullness thereof’, humans and animals are made on the sixth day envisioning the original state of *shalom* between these beings. Their commonality is not defined only in terms of the single day of their existence, but also insofar as both are requested to be vegetarian (Gn 1:29). Protologically, Genesis assumes a world in which humans and animals enjoy their commonality and where the Creator visibly has purpose for the whole creation that transcends instrumental human needs (Santmire 2000:39). In other words, the protological implication of Genesis 1:29-30 asserts that the vegetarian lifestyle was God’s intention for both humans and animals, but that this ideal was ruined in the post-diluvian times (Southgate 2008:248).

This has significant ethical implications for the ‘future’ of all living beings on earth. Although later, a certain violence is permitted between humans and animals in the ‘rainbow covenant’ text of Genesis 9:1-17, the divine will for the ‘future’ of the whole creation is vigorously announced to be *shalom*, a will which is sealed by the divine covenant with all creatures (Santmire 2000:37). Thus, the future of humans and animals is rooted in the mutual respect of this divine purpose.

The much-discussed motifs of dominion and subdue of Gen 1:28 are then read in terms of fecundity of humans replenishing their godly given niche on earth alongside

other creatures, which also have their divinely given places. The *imago dei* refers merely to the relation between male and female, for Genesis 1:26-28 is a community text showing that it is by means of their fecundity that they may survive on earth (Santmire 2000:39). Obviously, Santmire agrees with those who think that dominion means the capacity of humans to multiply and fill the earth [habitat], just as the fish multiply and fill their habitat [waters] and the birds theirs (sky) in order to ensure the future of their species. Thus, what is presented in this text is the coming into being of all creatures meant for life with God in a communal world, not a dominion motif of humans over other species (Santmire 2000:38).

One can see that there is no unique doctrinal construct for revisionist readings. The only unifying fact of these readings is that they try to find interpretative keys, not outside the Bible, but within the biblical tradition itself. Each scholar chooses an interpretative key from the larger property of the Christian tradition and texts. Here again, especially in Santmire's hermeneutics, there is a tendency to find in each and every text its protological and eschatological ideal.

5. Attempts at retrieving ecological motifs in Genesis 1

Apart from the motifs of *imago dei* and the dominion mandate of Genesis 1:26-28, scholars have pointed to other ecological matters in the whole chapter of Genesis 1. These are the motif of רוח אלהים, the motif of biodiversity, vegetarianism and the Sabbath. In this section, I wish to present an overview on how these four motifs have been ecologically retrieved in distinct analysis of biblical scholars and ecotheologians. This will enable us to seize the strength and weakness of their assumptions that will be useful in chapter five of this research.

5.1 The רוח אלהים (*ruach Elohim*)

Several attempts have been made to retrieve ecological wisdom from the Hebrew word רוח אלהים. In his article entitled 'Air, the first sacred thing ...', Hiebert (2008: 10) argued that the Hebrew concept רוח אלהים refers in Genesis 1 to atmosphere, the envelope of air surrounding Earth. Indeed, the basic meaning for רוח is both 'wind' – referring to physical air that produces climatic changes – and breath of life (Albertz

1997:1203). In Ecclesiastes 1:6,⁶⁰ the word רוּחַ is used to mean the great rhythms of nature – the orbit of the sun, the flow of fresh water to the sea, the recurrence of human generations – to describe annual atmospheric variations. In the text of Genesis 1, רוּחַ refers to physical wind identical to the winds that blew on the Red sea in Exodus 14:21 (Beauchamp 1969:170).

Therefore, due to its basic meaning of ‘air,’ רוּחַ is used for both atmosphere and breath of life (see Ezk 37:4-10). In this sense, both humans and animals depend upon רוּחַ, the environment that they inhabit and breath that they respire. רוּחַ is then the primary signifier of life in biblical thought: its presence brings life; its absence means death (Hiebert 2008:13). This premise would teach us that we (humans) breathe the same air with animal and to take our atmosphere very seriously since our survival and the survival of animals depends upon it. God’s רוּחַ is the vital-principle for all living creatures.

In Genesis 1, the word רוּחַ is connected directly with God and God’s activity of creation. The expression רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים implies that ‘air’ – the atmospheric winds and the breath of life has something of divine identity, it is sacred (Hiebert 2008:15). However, this does not attribute to רוּחַ an immaterial aspect. The expression רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים means only that God is present as a hovering wind, the potential atmosphere that will offer life-giving breath when אָרֶץ is born (Habel 2011:30).

Obviously, the רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים in the Priestly writer refers to natural winds hovering over the primeval sea, similar to the Babylonian epic *Enuma elish* in which Marduk used winds as divine weapon to subdue the chaotic sea (Tiamat) before he created the world (Brown 2010:24-25). Therefore, the Hebrew word רוּחַ does not contain any idea of spiritualisation. In Genesis 1, it is an integral part of the natural primeval world. In this regard, its translation as ‘spirit’ would come from the western dualist thought and theological tradition rather than from Hebrew texts themselves (Hiebert 2008:18). Ecologically, רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים – as both atmosphere and breath of life – implies a strong belief in the unavoidable link of humans and animals to the natural order upon which all life depends.

⁶⁰ Qoh 1:6: קְרוּחַת וְעַל־סִבְיָתָיו שָׁב קְרוּחַת: ‘... and on its (wind) circuits, the wind returns’.

5.2 The motif of biodiversity

The biodiversity motif is clearly endorsed in Genesis 1:11-13. In his attempts to demonstrate that the Bible is about science – ancient science yet different from modern scientific view – Hiebert turns on Genesis 1:12 as the scientific locus for biodiversity. For him, in this particular verse, the Bible depicts different forms of life, their specific species and environments as well their interrelationships (Hiebert 2009:274). He then proposed his own translation of the verse as follows:

The earth germinated plants (*deše'*): grasses (*'ēšeb*) producing seed (*zera'*), each according to its species (*mîn*), and trees producing fruit (*pěri'*) with its seed (*zera'*) in it, each according to its species (*mîn*), and God considered it good (Gn 1:12).

The first Hebrew word *deše'* is meant to be the defining concept for the entire flora kingdom which is subdivided into two branches: grasses (*'ēšeb*) and fruit (*pěri'*). In Genesis 1, grasses refer primarily to cereals, probably wheat and barley, which were the ancient Israel's grain-based agricultural wealth (Hiebert 1996:37). In the same chapter of Genesis, grasses are identified as the required food for humans and animals (Gn 1:29-30). As a result, all recently made creatures on earth – plants, animals and humans – are related to one another while distinct and dependent. As example, animals differ from the plants and humans, but at the same time they depend on the plants for food and are subjected to human dominion (Van Wolde 2009:17). That is what makes Genesis 1 a locus of clear biodiversity, a world of relatedness of all creatures.

In the nomenclature of Genesis 1:11-13, grasses are further presented in several species (*mîn*) which in turn are identified with their distinct seeds (*zera'*). Thereafter, birds, sea animals, land animals, and all living beings are presented as earth-born – generated by אֶרֶץ, the source of all living beings except humans (Habel 2011:34). Moreover, the priestly creation story shows that this biodiversity is generated by the words of God in partnership with Earth. Biodiversity is then part of the divine project for the natural order. Ecologically, this premise has strong ethical implications in the sense that:

If biodiversity is part of the divine plan for the earth, then placing it under threat, as we humans are now doing, can only be seen as an act against God. For the heirs of

Scriptures, the diversity of life is not just a natural wonder on which our health depends ... but it is a part of the earth as God intended it (Hiebert 2009:279)

This ecological motif is reinforced by the repeated affirmation ‘it is good’ used for the creation of each form of life – plants, sea and land animals and birds (Gn 1:12,21,25) and ‘very good’ for the diversity of the whole natural order (Gn 1:31). Saint Augustine clarifies the flora and fauna diversity in terms of the intrinsic value of each and every creature when he said that:

All nature’s substances are good, because they exist and therefore have their own mode and kind of being, and, in their fashion, a peace and harmony among themselves ... it is the nature of things considered in itself, without regard to our convenience or inconvenience, that gives glory to the Creator.⁶¹

Violating this diversity through the extinction of any of these species that are stated ‘good’ by the Creator is regarded as simply an act against God and God’s plan for the natural order of the world (Hiebert 2009:279). In this regard, the human dominion of Genesis 1:28 will be used in respect of the inherent created value of each species to ensure its flourishing as God intended it. Otherwise, endangering the life of this biodiversity will be interpreted as merely an act of aggression against God himself, as asserted in the following:

The point is that God’s fate and the world’s future are fundamentally bound up with one another. God is so internally related to the universe that the spectre of ecocide raises the risk of deicide. To wreak environmental havoc on the earth is to run the risk that we will do irreparable, even fatal harm to the Mystery we call God (Hessel 2001:192).

To retrieve this motif, any eco-theological attempt must commit to this divine valuation of the diversity of life as the starting point for any contemporary ecological action. The priestly creation account grants absolute value for all forms of life – called biodiversity – that the creator valued ‘very good’ (Gn 1:31). The point is that we should not be ambivalent in our confession: if we respect God as the creator, we should also learn to respect the product of his work – the diversity of his creatures.

⁶¹ Augustine, *The City of God*, book 12, chapters 4-5, cited by Hiebert (2009:280).

5.3 The motif of vegetarianism

The priestly creation account allots plants for food for both humans and animals:

God said, See, I have given you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. And to every beast of the earth, and to every bird of the air, and to every creeping on the earth, everything that has breath of life, I have given every green plant for food. And it was so (Gn 1:29-30, NRSV).

In this quotation, while animals are given green vegetation – that was not highly valued by ancient Israelites, humans are allotted grains and fruits. Although humans are mandated to ‘rule over’ animals in verse 28, Genesis 1:29-30 shows that this power excludes animal consumption. Visibly, animals are absent from the divine allocation of food to human beings. Both humans and animals are requested to be herbivores.

However, MacDonald identifies in Genesis 1:29-30 hidden/implicit features of anthropocentrism. For him, these seed-bearing plants offer not only what are, from an Israelite perspective, the quintessential human foods – bread, olive oil and wine – but also echoed ‘the filling and subduing earth’ of verse 28 (MacDonald 2008:18). In this sense, ‘fill the earth and subdue it’ means to work the earth so that it produces fruits and crops for human consumption and survival. This means that animals are offered what is of second importance for humans. The divine attribution of flora may reflect that God decided to give humans the more valuable species of vegetation for their food (Habel 2011:41). In such belief, even the vegetarianism motif does not free the priestly creation account from the footprints of anthropocentrism.

MacDonald adds that Genesis 1:29-30 is at least preferable compared to Genesis 9, in which animals are added to human food: ‘Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you; and just as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything’ (Gn 9:3). In this post-diluvian world, slaughtering of animals is allowed but not their life because meat with blood is forbidden⁶² (vv4-5). Nevertheless, it is clear that the world of Genesis 9 – the world where all flesh are corrupted – is not the kind of world that God initially intended – a world of relations and interdependence.

⁶² By drinking animal blood, one shows disrespect to life as such (both for humans and animals), because blood symbolises life (see Gn 9:4-6). In this sense, Genesis 9 limits the power of humans over animals: they may eat animal’s meat (flesh), but not their blood. Any disobedience against this Priestly command was passible of punishment.

5.4 The motif of Sabbath

In previous analysis, we realised that P presents the Sabbath as the culmination of the universe – the created world. Genesis 2:1-4a climaxes God's works of six days of creation showing that its focus is not human-centric, but cosmic embracing the completeness of שמים (sky) and ארץ (earth) as well as the celebration of the divine Sabbath (Habel 2011:42). The NRSV reads as follows:

¹Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their multitude. ²And on the seventh day God finished the work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all the work that he had done. ³So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done in creation. ⁴These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created (Gen 2:1-4a).

This text-unit of Sabbath announces that the process of separating the domains of the universe – שמים and ארץ and their host (צבאם) – was completed before stating three important actions of God on this day: God rested, blessed and hallowed (sanctified or separated) this day. In blessing the day of Sabbath, Elohim invests it with a power similar to ones of procreation given to all living creatures (Habel 2011:4). Hence, the 'very good' of creation completeness of Genesis 1:31 is now sealed by the sacred day, the rest of God. As Van Wolde noted, the blessing and declaration of holiness, makes Sabbath distinct from other days (2009:18).

In this sense, the ארץ (land) belongs to God alone, who honoured it and expects it to be kept as his sanctuary, free from any polluting idols (Lv 26:1-2). In Leviticus 25:2-4, Israel is requested to gather enough food in six years, because the seventh is declared 'Sabbath for the Lord.' It is as if YHWH is addressing this law to the land itself, a land that is capable of responding to the way Israelites handle it (Habel 1995:102). People (Israelites) are land tenants, since on the Sabbath the land must return to its owner, YHWH. In the seventh day, the land is to be made free from agriculture in order to allow its rejuvenating, renewal and restoration of its fertility.

In this sense, the future or well-being of humans is dependent on the Sabbath of ארץ (*Erets*). Its practice safeguards the economic life of humans as well as biodiversity's life. Sabbath is vital for the rejuvenation of the earth, the source of provision for all living beings. Sabbath is not only the cessation of work, but also an

opportunity for the created world to renew in order to work as God intended. Moltmann writes, ‘the God who rests in the face of his creation does not dominate the world on this day, [rather] he feels the world; he allows the world to be affected, to be touched by each of its creatures’ (1985:229). Productivity and fertility of *Erets* is dependent on its rest (Sabbath).

However, Habel is more violent towards the human stance when he said that ‘there would be adequate rest time (Sabbath) without the influence of external human forces that may have depleted Earth’ (2011:43). Yet, if Sabbath is for the internal renewal or restoration of the domains of *Erets*, one should not forget that humans are also part of these domains. The same way that Sabbath concerns animals and plants in Genesis 1, it also assumes the rejuvenation and restoration of humans who belong to the diversity of the priestly creation account. Also, human actions should not be viewed as external forces to the earth domains, but rather they are one of the aspects that characterise the beauty of Genesis 1.

6. Summary and conclusions

In this chapter, we have sought to survey how various ecological appeals to the Bible have been applied to the specific text of Genesis 1. We have tried to group them into three forms of readings: recovery, resistance and revisionist. Through recovery, I mentioned the works that are apologetic aiming at defending the eco-friendliness of Genesis 1 in relation with Genesis 2. The pastoral and aristocratic dominion, the stewardship and caring responsibility and the theocentric readings are the main forms of the readings of recovery.

While there are many positive insights from recovery readings, they nonetheless fail to acknowledge the footprints of anthropocentrism in Genesis 1:26-28. It should be known that this text is still open to a variety of readings. Moreover, Von Rad would advise recovery readers that even Genesis 2, that is most often seen as green-text, is not free from anthropocentrism. According to Von Rad, to name or to know the name of a person or animal (Gn 2:19) implied, in the ANE thought, also having control or power over them (1972:83). Despite the completely different depiction of the material, this language of ‘name-giving’ stands, thus, close to Genesis 1:28.

The Priestly creation account's verbs **רדה** and **כבש** certainly imply ruthless and forceful domination in its immediate context. I agree with those who think that Genesis 1:26-28 cannot easily be rescued or recovered for an eco-friendly theology (Horrell 2010a:35). Visibly, in its immediate context, the text views humans with potentially despotic power over earth and animals (Van Dyk 2009:191). One should recognise that biblical texts were written not for animals and other beings to read, but for the formal lecture of humans, so there is great possibility that they may convey a certain form of anthropocentrism that must be acknowledged.

Concerning the readings of resistance, we found two major forms of resistance. The first commits to resisting and rejecting Genesis 1:26-28 that is seen to promote abuses against Earth and its members. The unit is said to be grey text in contrast to the green text (Genesis 1:1-2:4a). Eco-feminists added that that text-unit is a clear reflection of a patriarchal view of the world that has led to current disastrous effects on humanity and nature. The second form of resistance resists/rejects all ecological readings of biblical texts due to its strict view of the Bible.

While there is clear diversity between the two kinds of resistance, their similarity is that both accept that Genesis 1:26-28 conveys human uniqueness and subordination of earth and earth members to humans. The main difference concerns whether one should resist/reject the text in accordance with an ecojustice ideal (the Earth Bible Project and eco-feminism), or resist/reject the so-called secular/liberal thought of ecological awareness in favour of closeness to the authority of the Bible. In this sense, the major differences lie not in the text itself, but in ethical commitment of the interpreter, and on the conviction as to where the locus of authority stands (Horrell *et al.* 2008:231).

In the first case of resistance, the interpretative authority lies in the ecojustice principles and eco-feminist theory, while in the second, no secular interest is tolerated to question the absolute truth of the Bible. While the first resistance may result in inviting rejection of the biblical texts by those who consider that they are irrelevant in today's world, the second do encourage the rejection of any concern for the earth and environment for those for whom the Bible carries authority as sacred Scripture (Marlow 2009:94). Also, it is uncertain whether the relations of humans towards the

natural world can be gendered as implied by eco-feminists. In his article on eco-theological scholarship in South Africa, Van Heerden (2009:714) thinks that the question of 'interconnection between gender and earth' is one of various issues (such as poverty, human rights ...) that still require further examination in ecological debate.

Moreover, there is no evidential data, either in the ancient world, biblical texts or currently, that the female has a closer or more empathetic relationship with nature than the male as argued by eco-feminists (Marlow 2009:91). The main criticism against the Earth Bible Project and eco-feminists is their attempt at judging ancient societies through the standard of the present time. Critics have argued that the goddess reading simply reverses patriarchal hierarchy with a form that puts a female-nature power on the top of the system. It is exactly the same remark that has been addressed against the Earth Bible Project that reversed the anthropocentric by an earth-centric focus.

Indeed, it is dangerous to interpret a biblical text such as Genesis 1 exclusively from current ecological threats – issues that were unknown in biblical times (Simkins 1994:34-35). The ecological crisis was known as a global threat in the late twentieth century, and then it became part of the theological debate. In ancient times, people faced local crises that would unlikely become objects of theological reflection since the disaster could be solved by simply relocating to a place of more natural abundance (Van Dyk 2009:195). Thus, interpreting Genesis 1 only from the perspective of today's crisis means that the reader is trying to question the text about matters that were unknown at the time of its composition. An enquiry of this kind not only implies anachronism, but also it would never find appropriate results.

Therefore, revisionist readings aimed neither at defending nor resisting Genesis 1, but tried to interpret this text in the framework of the classical Christian tradition. We mentioned the works of people like Rogerson (2010), Santmire (2000) and others who employed, not secular doctrinal keys like stewardship and ecojustice principles, but read Genesis 1:29 in relation with Genesis 9 or eschatological texts (Is 11:6-7) of the Christians traditions, for instance. Revisionists do convey useful insights for a proper biblical ecological reading. The great problem is that the reader might be overwhelmed by the constraints of Christian orthodoxy that is said to be the canon for interpretation.

Finally, we pointed to several attempts at finding ecological motifs in the overall framework of Genesis 1. We acknowledged with several scholars that these motifs do suggest ethical responsibility for modern ecological threats. The *ruach elohim* read as air and breath of life, the motifs of biodiversity, vegetarianism and Sabbath, all provide positive insights that may be useful when addressing current ecological threats. Most of these motifs will be dealt with in the fifth chapter of this research, but from the perspective of our study orientation.

The great constant is that Genesis 1 offers an uneasy work for ecological readings of biblical texts in general. Genesis 1 poses, therefore, complex ambivalent questions to modern readers. As we mentioned in the second chapter, an alternative way forward in reading Genesis will consider the otherness of Genesis 1 itself before relating its ideal to our contemporary realities. That is why the next chapter will try to explore the socio-historical and literary contexts of Genesis 1 in order to understand the world in which this text emerged and ancient Israel's view of the natural world.

CHAPTER FOUR: SOCIO-HISTORICAL AND LITERARY CONTEXTS OF THE PRIESTLY CREATION ACCOUNT

1. Introduction

This chapter aims to explore contextual matters of the text, namely the socio-historical contexts and the literary context of Genesis 1:1-2:4a. With regard to socio-historical contexts, this chapter explores the text in relation to ancient Near Eastern cosmogonies and historical settings of the Persian Empire. Hence, the world behind the text and the ones of its first readers will be taken seriously in the analysis. The task of exploring the literary context consists of reading Genesis 1:1-2:4a within the overall Priestly literature in order to understand the text in relation to biblical texts that belong to the same source. Finally, a brief reference will be made to other biblical texts in which the creation motif plays a major role, namely Genesis 2b-3:24, Isaiah 40:12-31, Psalm 104, Job 38-41 and Proverbs 8:22-31.

2. Socio-historical contexts of Genesis 1:1-2:4a

2.1 The exilic-postexilic⁶³ contexts of the Priestly writings

The Babylonian event was probably one of the most traumatising events that Israelites had ever experienced until the sixth and fifth centuries BCE. The Southern kingdom of Judah was left in ruins, the Temple was destroyed and people were confronted to new religious and social orders. After the conquest of 587/6 BCE, the captured vessels of the Jerusalem Temple were placed in the temple of Marduk in Babylon to symbolise the defeat of people and their god/s (Smith-Christopher 1997:20). This act belongs to a series of traumatic disasters that Babylonians imposed on both the expelled Jewish community in Babylon and in Judah. Sociologists inform us that a disaster is:

⁶³ My assumption is made on the basis that the Priestly creation account is deemed to be the work of the late exilic period and probably in the early Persian or Postexilic context. In both periods, Israel was not an autonomous nation. Postexilic Hebrew writing, like Ezra has pointed out in his prayer, indicates that the Jewish people were 'slaves in their own land' under the Persian reign (Neh 9:36-37).

A severe, relatively sudden, and frequently unexpected disruption of normal structural arrangements within a social system, or subsystem, resulting from a force, 'natural' or 'social,' 'internal' to a system or 'external' to it, over which the system has no firm control. It is a particularly intense form of collective stress situations (Borkun 1974:51).

The exile was a time of cultural, social, religious and ecological experiences in which the expelled people of Israel had to maintain their identity within a diversity of challenges. Indeed, it was the rationale of the ruling empires (Babylonian & Assyrian) that the uprooted nations be intermingled within the entire defeated populations so that they would progressively lose their traditional identities and get assimilated into an imposed order of the imperial policy (Hillel 2006:10). The dispersed people of Judah, without a king or a shepherd after 587/6 BCE, were then expected to disappear in the giant Babylonian empire, as people of the Northern kingdom of Israel had got lost in the Assyrian empire after the conquest of Samaria in 722/1 BCE.⁶⁴

Remarkably, this did not happen since the exiled people of Judah, due to their élite stratum, succeeded in living together (close to Judah⁶⁵) and renovated in writing the oral traditions in response to new adversities (Gerstenberger 2002:209). We know from other contemporary writings that this enterprise aimed not only at preserving the traditions, but the physical survival and Israel mission to nations. Separate from other people, Israel had to be at the same time a 'priestly kingdom and a holy people' (Ex 19:6). It is an initiative of reconstruction and resistance to the new challenge. Smith (1989:49) comments that it is 'reconstruction in the sense of maintaining identity in a new circumstance, and resistance to pressures of a human or ecological nature that would threaten the continued existence of this reconstructed identity'. This ideal is repeated in the Priestly writings from cosmogony to the erection of the cult (Gn 1-Ex 40).

Specialists inform us that 'when changes occur within culturally defined limits, explanations for them come readily to hand' (Borkun 1974:54). The Priestly writing as well as its contemporary writings are then a way of explanation and response to the Babylonian experience. In this situation of sorrows and anxieties, the old traditions

⁶⁴ Indeed, the exile was really a disaster, though recent findings assert that after the event the remaining groups tried to continue its economic and social life in the land, and that Judaic groups in exile were living in relatively positive social conditions (Talstra 2009:161).

⁶⁵ The book of Ezekiel 3:15 says that the deported settled in Tel-Abib: Hill of Ears; Tel Harsa: Plough Hill; Tel Melah: Salt Hill (see also the book of Ezra 2:29).

received a new interpretation in order to maintain Israel's distinctiveness in this condition of *תהו בהו*. Nihan (2007:339) noted that the practice of circumcision (Gn 17), the Passover (Ex 12) and the differentiated diet (Lv 11) distinguished those who practised them from the rest of humanity. In this sense, the old customary rituals are now given a fundamental mark of exclusiveness by the Priestly writer:

[The] circumcision, which was probably customary in Egypt and among Israel's eastern neighbours ... but not in Mesopotamia, became now a distinguishing feature and 'sign of the covenant' (Gen. 14P). The strict observance of the Sabbath commandment too became constitutive for adherence to the Yahwistic faith (the work of the seven days in Gen. 1...) (Schmidt 1983:254).

Genesis 1 arises then in a crisis context in which the Jewish landless victims and those left behind in Judah had to maintain their distinctive identity. To achieve this goal, Van Heerden explains that the text gives special prominence to the victim in the crisis and employs the means of a cosmological framework when offering alternative stances in an attempt to deconstruct dominant, destructive forces (2005:371). This ideal has been reinforced with the rise of Cyrus ending the Babylonian despotic reign, and decreeing the return of the defeated people to their homelands by 539/8 BCE (Is 45). In this sense, Goldingay (2003:96) explains that:

When the creation story [Genesis 1:1-2:4a] portrays God definitively bringing order out of unrelated pieces, this particularly encourages people whose life world has fallen apart in the way it had for Judah in the sixth century. God's project from the beginning involved bringing order, and it promises that disintegration will not have the last word.

As it can be observed, Genesis 1 belongs then to the large contextualisation project of the Jewish religious and social identity in relation to the new ecumenical structure of the world. It was a time to broaden Israel's world vision in every aspect of life while remaining faithful to their belief. In the exile, the questions that had probably not been asked in Palestine arose with urgency. These are the issues of the worship of the stars, the identity of the creator, the hope for returning to Judah, and life without the king, temple and land. The Priestly creation account attempted to offer his point of view in response to these questions. The intention is to encourage the disaster victims that God can work with the void and vacuum state to bring order out of disorder. The Priestly

writer used cosmological terms in response to several other creation epics prevailing in Babylon challenging both the beliefs and world vision of the conquered people.

2.2 Ancient Near Eastern cosmogonies

This excursus in the ancient world does not aim to establish merely a comparison of these cosmogonies with the text of Genesis 1:1-2:4a. Such parallels can be found in a number of works of Assyriologists, Egyptologists and some biblical scholars.⁶⁶ This subsection explores ecological motifs found in the literature of Israel's neighbours that parallel the Priestly creation account. We assume that the Priestly writer was aware of the ANE cosmogonies' impact on the community for which he addressed his vision of the created order. Three cosmogonies will be examined, namely from Ancient Egypt, Ugarit and Mesopotamia. These nations are not chosen randomly, but for their major ecological influences on the biblical conception of the natural order.

2.2.1 Natural order in Egyptian cosmogonies

The Ancient Egyptian conception of the natural world is found in four creation myths produced in rival sanctuaries: Heliopolis, Hermopolis, Memphis, and Thebes.⁶⁷ These creation myths are written in four texts, namely the *Pyramid Texts*, the *Coffin Texts*, the *Book of the Dead* and the so-called *Shabaka Stone*.⁶⁸ The pyramid texts originated in Heliopolis and deserve our attention since they present a more coherent cosmogony.

⁶⁶See Gunkel, H 1964. *The Legends of Genesis: The Biblical Saga and History*. New York: Schocken Books; Sarna, N M 1970. *Understanding Genesis*. New York: Schocken Books; H Brunner 1975. Egyptian Texts, in Beyerlin, W (ed), *Near Eastern Religious Texts Relating to the Old Testament*, 1-67. Trans. by Bowden, J. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press. Reproduced by UNISA, 1999, with permission; Foster, B R 1997. Atrahasis, in Hallo, W W (ed), *The Context of Scripture: Canonical Compositions from the Biblical World*. Vol.1, 450-452. Leiden: Brill; And more recently in the article of Johnston, G H 2008. Genesis 1 and Ancient Egyptian Creation Myths. *BS* 165, 178-94.

⁶⁷ For more details about Ancient Egyptian cosmogonies and cosmic order, see Allen, J P 1988. *Genesis in Egypt: Philosophy of Ancient Egyptian Creation Accounts*. New Haven: Yale University. (Yale Egyptological Studies 2); Lesko, L 1991. Ancient Egyptian Cosmogonies and Cosmology, in Shafer, B E (ed), *Religion in Ancient Egypt*, 88-122. Ithaca: Cornell University Press; Van Dijk, J 1995. Myth and Mythmaking in Ancient Egypt, in Sasson, J M *et al.* (eds), *Civilisations of the Ancient Near East, 1697-1709*. New York: Charles Scribners Sons; And more recently Redford, D 2002. *The Ancient Gods Speak: A Guide to Egyptian Religion*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

⁶⁸ For more detail about these texts, see the publications of Allen, J P 1989. *The Cosmology of the Pyramid Texts*, (Yale Egyptological Seminar). New Haven: Yale University Press; Ritmer, R K 2000. Coffin Texts, in Hallo, W H & Younger, K L (eds), *The Context of Scripture: Inscription from the Biblical World*. Vol.2, 57-58. Leiden: Brill; Faulkner, R O 1985. *The Ancient Book of the Dead*. (Revised edition). Austin: University of Texas Press; Iversen, E 1990. The Cosmogony of the Shabaka Text, in Israelit-Groll, S (ed), *Egyptology Presented to Miriam Lichteim*. Vol.1, 485-493. Jerusalem: The Magnes Press, the Hebrew University.

We could say, however, that Egyptian cosmogonies/theogonies are mostly interested in the self-generation of gods and in the way they mythically made the cosmos, rather than in the physical aspects of the cosmos (Walton 2008:57).

Ancient Egyptians believed in a world of many gods and powers that filled various parts of the cosmos. Even though ancient Egyptians did not perceive these deities as totally separate entities, they were interchangeably used (Van Dyk 2001:42). For instance, the Elephantine creator-god Knum was often identified with Rê, and was then named Knum-Rê. This close designation of two gods with one another meant that the creative power of Knum was only another form of power that was normally devoted to the creator sun god Rê (Clifford 1994:105).

Most Egyptian cosmogonies present the same basic pattern of creation stories of the Ancient East. They start by showing the primeval, undifferentiated and limitless waters (Nun), the primeval flood, and total darkness. What is important is that these elements of the pre-created world are not presented as transformed into the existent and erased. On the contrary, the primal flood, stygian darkness, inertness, and negation remained in the created world in two ways: as the final limit of the world of being, and as present within the ordered world of creation (Clifford 1994:102). Nun (waters) is then viewed as the deity of the primeval ocean or power of chaos and inactivity.

In Egyptian cosmogonies, the created world originates through diversification from this primeval endless deep and by separation of the previously united elements. The Heliopolis myth describes the creator-god emerging from the unruly waters. By this, the creator-god launches the process of ‘separating out’ and the coming into being of things from the endless deep (Clifford 1994:102). Thereafter, earth and skies, once united, are separated by god Shu, land from primeval water and light from darkness.

The universally praised sun god Rê appears in most Egyptian cosmogonies. For instance, the Heliopolis myth associates the generation of Rê with the creation of the sun – his godly eye – since its dawning on the primeval hill marks the first sunrise, thereby launching the creation order, the *ma’at* (Johnston 2008:182). The daily recurrence of sunrise and sunset is viewed as a continual process of one-day creation mythology. That is why sun god Rê appears in almost every creation account, although

his role varies from creating to sustaining the daily life through his warm and lighting rays (Clifford 1994:102).

As said previously, Egyptian cosmogonies are often mixed with theogony. Rê-Atum generated the Ennead, the nine gods of Egypt among which are Osiris and Isis. In a rainless Egypt depending on the Nile, these gods are among the most important cosmic providers. Osiris and Isis represent the fertility of the earth and humans, while the hermaphrodite god, Hapi, is the provider of regular inundations that are important for agricultural activity (Hillel 2006:33). There is no primeval conflict between gods, but creation is presented as self-generated.

The creation of humans is hardly presented in Egyptian cosmogonies, and where it appears is something like an accidental event. Humans are viewed as emerging from the ground from the weeping tears of sorrows/joy of the creator-god. The Heliopolis cosmogony tells that when the sun god Rê saw the earth so desolate and lifeless, he lamented and cried, and his tears (*rmit*) fell down on earth and became humans (*rmt*) (Redford 1992:396-9). A *Coffin Texts* add, 'I brought the gods into being from my sweat; men are from the tears of my eye' (Faulkner 1973 cited by Clifford 1994:104). Likewise, Khnum of the Elephantine deity, employed clay to form gods, humans and animals on his potter's wheel, and breathed into them the breath of life (Dussel 2007:18; James 1960:207). In the city of Memphis, creation is viewed in terms of the spoken words of Ptah, the creator-god. Ptah ordered the cosmos and created humans, animals and gods by spoken words (Brown 2010:31; Van Dyk 2001:44; Westermann 1974:41).

Thereafter the creator-god rested in satisfaction. Creation myths end with the mythical birth of Pharaoh, presented as the firstborn of Rê-Atum and the ruler of the natural realm, similar to the ruling role of sun god in the celestial domain (Johnston 2008:183). The king Pharaoh is designed as representing god and his life-bringing actions of order on earth. Pharaoh is then meant to be responsible for caring for the *ma'at*, which is order and justice – the foundation for the maintenance of the natural order.

With regard to this, Pharaoh is meant to be the provider of the universe order. He stands as *imago dei* on earth and cares for *ma'at*, the issues upon which stand both the

stability of the empire and the stability of the universe. In his thorough analysis of the Egyptian *ma'at*, Schmid understood that this concept refers not to legal matters, but to the maintenance of the creative order in שלום (peace) and צדקה (justice) (1984:105). This divine order is expected to be protected since it was always threatened by the powers of chaos. The act of separating out the universe is therefore regarded as *ma'at*, an act of justice and order on which the universe stands (Brown 2010:31). As son of creator-god, the king was the representative of this order on earth.

Therefore, in all Egyptian temples, Pharaoh was regarded as the high priest, and as such he represented the whole society before the gods. The creator-god spoke his decrees/instructions directly to Pharaoh alone who, in turn, would transmit the gods' wills to his subjects. This meant that Egyptian temples' services had the purpose of ensuring that the creator-god would be permanently with his creation and that the divine order (*ma'at*) would be maintained in state affairs, on earth and in the daily life of people (Van Dyk 2001:47). The question whether Egyptian cosmogonies relate in genre and sense with Genesis 1:1-2:4a shall be examined later.

2.2.2 *Creation in Ugarit cosmogonies*

Somewhat closer to cultural habits of Israelites is the so-called Baal epic which was found in the ancient coastal city of Ugarit, now known by its Arabic diction as *Ras-Shamra*. The probable cosmogony is hardly found in the so-called Baal cycle, six tablets describing the violent battles of Baal against Yam (sea) and Môt (death). It is not easy to affirm whether the conflict between Baal and Yam related to kingship, temple building or creation in Ugarit cosmogony. Most leading Ugarit scholars had argued in favour of the kingship as the result of the conflict. Greenfield even said that 'the Ugarit texts record no creation or flood story although fragments from Akkadian texts excavated at Ugarit deal with elements of these stories' (1987:547).

Previously, Marvin Pope affirmed that there is almost nothing that could be said to be a creation story or any clear reference to cosmic activities in the Ugarit texts (1955:49). Baal's battle with Yam is a struggle for kingship where Baal must defeat a rival who is supported by the former head of the Canaanite pantheon, El, and wrest from him the kingship of the gods (Brown 2010:28; Kapelrud 1952:138). Another

hypothesis favoured the temple building motif in the sense that the conflict of Baal with Yam was a requirement for Baal's desire to build his temple on the 'Height of *Shapon* cast of precious metals' (Obermann 1948:71). His victory over Yam freed him to build his palace for his enthronement on the top of the pantheon.

However, in comparison with most ancient Near Eastern cosmogonies, it seems that conflict, kingship, order out of chaos, and cosmos as temple (or temple building) are all thematically related to a larger picture of creation (Fischer 1965:316; Van Dyk 2001:37). In this sense, Gray (1957:71) concurred that the Ugarit texts are about a cosmic theme – Baal-type⁶⁹ – since the conflict between Baal and the 'utterly deep', resulted in Baal securing kingship and establishing fertility, peace and order on earth/cosmos. That means, the Baal victory over Yam (watery chaos) does not only put him in a prominent place among gods, but also gave him authority to assure fertility and seasons on earth (Van Dyk 2001:36). The point is that conflict and the kingship battle had the definite goal of establishing order, not only in the divine realm, but also on earth. Another factor is that the Canaanites regarded Baal's temple as symbolising the whole world. Therefore:

If the Canaanites believed that the king-god's palace, of which the earthly temple is a reflection, is a microcosm of the universe, and that the ordering of this temple or palace corresponds to the creation of the cosmos, then we must recognise that creation is the main concern of the Baal texts (Wakeman 1969:315).

Indeed, unlike the Babylonian *Enuma elish* epic where Tiamat posed a problem in the divine court, in the 'Baal epic' the problem consisted of the fact that El declared Baal the slave of the goddess Yam (Brown 2010:28). After defeating his rival Mot and dismembering Yam (the sea monster Litan) – whose biblical equivalent is probably Leviathan⁷⁰ – Baal made a building project for his residence, a palace for his crowning that took seven days to complete (Smith-Christopher 1997:133-34). The outcome of

⁶⁹ Scholars found in Ugarit cosmogonies two kinds of creation: the El-type of creation in which god El made (*qana*) the first things (mainly the Canaan deities), and the Baal-type of creation referring to the continuous creative process and seasonal renewal of earth fertility. For more details see Miller, P D 1980. El, the Creator of the Earth. *BASOR* 239, 43-46; According to Fischer (1965:321), the Baal-type creation epic was more useful and meaningful to the Hebrews than some kind of a creation of the El-type dealing with theogony or the birth of gods: cosmos order was more important than ultimate origin quests. The only difference is that the God of Israelites is alive and never defeated like Baal.

⁷⁰ See the equivalent of Litan-Leviathan in Apocalyptic texts such as Is 27:1 and Ps 74:12-15.

the Ugarit cosmogony is therefore creation order, kingship and temples in heaven and on earth. This Ugarit picture of creation will certainly be useful in the analysis Genesis 1.

2.2.3 Natural order in Mesopotamian cosmogonies

The Mesopotamian cosmogonies are mostly argued to be closely related to the Priestly creation account. Three important cosmogonies have gained attention: the Babylonian epic of *Enuma elish*, the Akkadian epic of *Atrahasis* and the epic of *Gilgamesh* from the Sumerian side. This section will concentrate on the first and the third, where we find the specific motif of creation order. The *Atrahasis* epic,⁷¹ indeed gives more details about the creation of humans, but it shows many similarities with the biblical flood story so that it is even named ‘the Babylonian story of the flood’. For this reason, it will be discussed in complement to the *Enuma elish* epic.

2.2.3.1 The epic of *Enuma elish*

This epic was written in honour of the young god Marduk whose victory over the watery goddess Tiamat made him the head of the Babylonian pantheon. The epic was very important since ancient Mesopotamian people lived in fear of battles between the cosmic order and chaos that persistently threatened life on earth (Van Dyk 2001:38). For this reason, the *Enuma elish* was yearly recited in the sense of cultic re-enactment in which people partook in a ‘new creation’, a repetition of Marduk ordering the cosmos after defeating the watery chaos (Anderson 1987:29).

The idea is that every New Year, the victory over chaos is re-won and the world is renewed. In this sense, the myth was a kind of ritual ideology to sustain Babylonian hegemony throughout the ruled land and to re-settle the world order (Brown 2010:22). Therefore, the epic starts, not with cosmogony, but theogony. Primal condition is described in terms of nothingness as follows:

When on high neither the heaven [skies] had been named,
nor the earth below pronounced by name.

⁷¹ Frymer-Kensky, T 1977. The Atrahasis Epic and its Significance for our Understanding of Genesis 1-9. *BA* 40, 147-55, see pages 148-9; Lambert, W G & Millard, A R 1969. *Atra-Hasis. The Babylonian Story of the Flood*. New York: Oxford Press.

There was only primordial Apsu, their progenitor,
 and creator Tiamat, who bore them all.
 Because their waters were intermingling,
 no pasture land was yet formed, no marshes yet found –
 When none of the gods had yet appeared,
 no names yet received, no destinies decreed,
 the gods were created therein.⁷²

The above lines present the primeval state in total scarcity: no skies, no earth, no pasture, no wetland, even no gods. Initially, there was only *Apsu* – the primal power of sweet-water – and Tiamat – the elementary power of sea and salt water – who begot four generations of gods. Ea and Damkina begot Marduk who made so much noise that it upset god *Apsu*. When the latter wanted to react, Ea killed him and built his palace on his corpse (Clifford 1994:83). This provoked Tiamat’s anger who plotted to kill the young god Marduk to avenge *Apsu*. In a terrible battle between Tiamat and the young god, Marduk used wind as a divine weapon to force open Tiamat’s mouth, into which he shot a lance that sliced her belly (Brown 2010:25).

Thus, Marduk won the deity of watery chaos, and the north wind carries her blood off as ‘good news’ to Marduk’s fathers. This theogony/theomachy – conflict, war and Marduk’s victory– opens the way for the creation of humans.⁷³ In consultation with his father Ea, Marduk instructed that the blood of Tiamat’s lover Qingu be utilised to make humans who would be charged to do the work of gods, thus making possible the gods’ rest. Thereafter, Marduk sliced Tiamat’s corpse, and from one half he made a roof for the sky, while with the other half he made the earth to confine the subterranean waters so that they could not escape (Hillel 2006:47). In ordering the cosmos, Marduk set the months of the year, the moon, the clouds, and with Tiamat’s eyes, he made the Tigris and the Euphrates rivers (Brown 2010:25).

⁷² For more details about the epic, see Talon, P 2005. *Enuma Elish: the Standard Babylonian Creation Myth*. Helsinki: The Neo Assyrian Text Project, University of Helsinki. (SAACT 4).

⁷³ Human creation is further detailed in the Akkadian epic of *Atrahasis*, the parallel of the biblical narrative of primeval flood. As in *Enuma elish*, two lines of the Akkadian epic state: ‘I have imposed your load on mortals; You have bestowed noise on humankind.’ Of course, it is such noise that often caused trouble in the gods’ realm. Due to humanity’s unruly increase, human noise later caused gods’ restlessness and insomnia so that gods decided to decimate them by famine, drought, diseases and, later, flood. Only *Atrahasis* and his family survived. Grateful, *Atrahasis* offered sacrifice to the gods who gathered ‘like flies over the offering.’ Does it echo Genesis 1:28 on multiplication of humanity, and Genesis 6-9 on the flood story? [For more information on the *Atrahasis* epic, refer to Dalley, S 1991. *Myths from Mesopotamia: Creation, the flood, Gilgamesh and others*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. (World’s Classic), see pages 9-38].

For his victory, other gods affirmed Marduk as the supreme deity of the Babylonian pantheon. For this reason, they built him a city (Babylon) and a temple, and glorified him with fifty names, pointing to various aspects of Marduk as ruler of the universe: skies and earth (Clifford 1994:83). Thus the cosmos order has found its completion in a kind of cosmic temple. It is clear that conflict (among gods), kingship and temple building were also part of the Babylonian myths on creation.

2.2.3.2 The epic of *Gilgamesh*

This Sumerian epic is a poem of around 300 lines concerning ‘Gilgamesh, Enki and the underworld.’ Written probably 2000 BCE, the epic depicts creation in acts of separating heavens and earth, as follows:

...In primeval day, in distant primeval days...
 In ancient days when everything vital had been brought into existence...
 When bread had been tasted in the shrines of the land [Sumer]...,
 When the heaven had been moved away from the earth,
 When earth had been separated from heaven,
 When the name [seed] of man had been fixed,
 When *An* had carried off heaven,
 When Enlil had carried off earth
 When Ereshkigal had been carried off into the Ekur⁷⁴ as its prize ...
 (Clifford 1994:23)

In the Sumerian thought, creation starts with goddess *Nammu* (the primeval sea) who begot the god of sky *An* and the goddess of earth *Ki*. Thus, the universe is meant as *an-ki*, that is the union between *An* (sky) and *Ki* (earth). *An* and *Ki* begot many gods but *Enlil* is the most prominent in the theogony/cosmogony because he is the firstborn of the created phase, and he is the one who ordered the universe (Clifford 1994:16). The cosmic motif of the poem is aware of three phases in creation: a primeval period (embryonic world), the day of creation through various separations and emersions (separation of earth from skies, rising of humans, plants ...), and the spread of civilisation (Van Dijk 1964:5).

⁷⁴ In ancient times, *Ekur* was the leading sanctuary of Sumer.

Although creation is presented in complexity in the poem, it may be resumed in a single act: the union of heaven and earth with life and organisation flowing from it. The Sumerian creation poem makes use of repeated key words, such as day, night, year, divine plan, flowers, land of Sumer, heaven, earth ... that pictured diversity of creation. *Gilgamesh* is linked to the underworld, the primal chaos that confined *Ereshkigal* and fought against *Enki*, the god of wisdom. Wisdom, in the Sumerian word *me*, refers to preordained divine decrees by which the natural order, religion and society are ordered (Van Dyk 2001:38). The Sumerian *me* is likely to be the equivalent of the Egyptian *ma'at*.

2.2.4 Observations and synthesis

The above survey shows that ordering of the cosmos, kingship, conflict between gods and temple building motifs formed parts of the larger theme of creation in ANE. All cosmogonies depict the primal watery chaos that has been later ordered by creator-god/gods. Most important is that the ancient Near Eastern cosmic motif does not view sky and earth as separated and rivals, but interdependent domains of one block called the universe (Clifford 1994:15). Their union explained that the universe resulted from a cosmic marriage in which sky (*An*) fertilised earth (*Ki*), and from their union emerged gods, humans, and plants (see the epic of *Gilgamesh*).

The point is that in this ancient mentality, one would not normally think of earth and sky as distinct blocks, but one cosmic reality. As such, their interconnection can be seen in the flowing of the narratives: gods rose from waters (see Egypt); theogony (gods' conflict) always led to cosmogony (earth formation). That is why the problems on earth (human noise) mostly resulted in restlessness and insomnia in the divine world (epic of *Atrahasis*).

It is amazing that these ancient creation stories were already aware of the idea of interdependence of the cosmos' parts, though these elements were personalised into deities. In all ancient cosmogonies, the world order is conceived as systems to be maintained through order/decrees (*ma'at* in Egypt and *me* in Sumer, are the concepts used for this purpose). We shall see that in the book of Pr 8:22-31, חכמה (wisdom) functions in the same way as *ma'at* or *me* in God's creation.

It is also exciting to find that people of the ancient Near East did neither expect to yield a standard cosmogony, nor a single coherent story on creation, but tolerated the coexistence of various versions on creation. Likewise, the compilers of biblical texts did not harmonise Genesis 1 and 2, but preferred to present them as two independent versions on creation in the Bible. For this reason, other creation motifs throughout the Bible will also be presented in order to situate Genesis 1 in its relationship with other biblical traditions on the created order. The following subsection will focus on the way Genesis 1:1-2:4a adopted and surpassed motifs from ancient cosmogonies in creating a unique view of the natural world.

2.3 Genesis 1 as counterpart to ANE cosmogonies

The above section showed various cosmological motifs that obviously connect Genesis 1:1-2:4a to the ecological motifs of the ancient Near Eastern cosmogonies. However, the form and structure of the cosmos of the Priestly writer suggest that this biblical text expected to be a new account which on several key issues transcends all cosmogonies known hitherto.

2.3.1 The identity of the creator

Most discussed cosmogonies depict conflict in the world of gods where the victor god is crowned the head of the pantheon (see Ugarit texts and *Enuma elish*). In the Priestly creation account, there is no plurality of gods, but only Elohim whose words command the cosmos order. Indeed, like its ancient Near Eastern analogues, Genesis 1:1-2:4a presents God dealing with the watery chaos in the ordering process of the cosmic temple. However, for Genesis 1, the created order emerged without hint of conflict or caprice, in response to the articulated will of God (McBride 2000:9). Order comes from sovereign word and action, not from triumphing over others in combat or a battle (Moberly 2009:52).

Furthermore, the God of the Priestly writer did not rise from watery chaos (Nun in Egypt, *Nammu* in Sumer or *Apsu* in *Enuma elish*), but is the absolute ‘uncreated’ creator of the cosmos. While Elohim is transcendent to creation, ancient cosmogonies’ deities are all immanent in nature from which they arose, and often associated with

parts of the cosmos. The ten⁷⁵ stances introduced by the expressions וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים, (the wind of God) not only command the structured cosmos out of chaos, but also produce various forms of life and provide them with the capacity to flourish in their God-given realms (McBride 2000:10). Elohim created not by conflict, but by mighty spoken-decrees. The latter were identified in later interpretative writers as Wisdom (Pr 3:19-20; 8:22-31), Torah⁷⁶ (Sir 24:1-29) or Logos (Jn 1:1-5). God made the cosmos in sovereign and uncontested power/commands/decrees.

Most interpretations read the name Elohim (אֱלֹהִים) as a *pluralis maiestatis* in the sense of God's majesty (see Zoran 1995:402-3), but the mighty actions of God throughout the text would possibly lead to a complementary way of interpretation. The word אֱלֹהִים is similar to various other nouns whose plural form does not refer to numerical plurality, but to something like strength/power. For instance, the word אֹנִים means 'strength' in Isaiah 40:26, while גְּבוּרָה refers to 'might' in Isaiah 63:36. These verses are significant since Deutero and Trito-Isaiah are probably contemporaries of the Priestly writer, namely during or soon after the Babylonian exile. With regard to the above examples, the God of Genesis 1 – אֱלֹהִים – would be defined in terms of his might and power to defeat various types of chaos – including the exile experience – and command order on the universe.

In other texts, such as Job 20:25, the concept אִימִים means 'terror', while נְקִמָה refers to 'vengeance' in Judges 11:36. It is clear that all of these expressions bear a kind of inherent strength or forceful power. Therefore, as for the word בְּהִמּוֹת (Gn 1:22) and others, the concept אֱלֹהִים would express the same feature of intense power. Thus, God's name Elohim reveals his intensive power by which he suppressed chaos and commanded order within the cosmos (Garr 2003:215). This God is different from the Egyptian or Sumerian cosmogonies where the creator-god rose out of water to proceed to the ordering of the universe. In Genesis 1, the creator-god neither rises out of the primeval ocean, nor is a warrior or procreator, but uncreated creator whose actions commanded and produced order of the universe (Von Rad 1972:49).

⁷⁵ Gn 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26, 29, 28.

⁷⁶ Scholars identified the ten creation commands with the Decalogue, the ten foundational 'words' by which God defines the ethos of Israel's society (Ex 34:27-28; Dt 4:13) (see Brown 1999:30ff).

2.3.2 *The motif of Tiamat and תהום (the deeps)*

There is a great debate about the relationship between the watery chaos of ANE epics (Tiamat) and the word תהום of the Priestly creation account. Some scholars have even argued for total rejection of any association of this watery motif with Genesis 1:2, as illustrated in the following:

The background of the Genesis creation story has nothing to do with the so-called *Chaoskampf* myth of the Mesopotamian type, as preserved in the Babylonian ‘creation’ myth *Enuma elish*. In Gen 1, there is no hint of struggle or battle between God and this *tehom* – water (Tsumura 2005:143).

Indeed, while this study does not aim at arguing for determining the dependence of Genesis 1 on ancient cosmogonies, we maintain, however, that the Priestly creation account bears the motif of primeval water. As observed by Heidel (1963:100), both words *tiamat* and *tehôm* alongside other Babylonian terms such as *tiamtu* or *tamtu* derive from the Semitic root *thm*, and mean ocean, sea or deep. The same meaning is also evident in Ugarit roots *thm/thmt* or in Arabic *Tihamatu* or *Tihama*.⁷⁷ All reviewed cosmogonic epics agreed that gods, humans and animals rose out of waters. Although they personified these waters by chaotic deities, we should at least acknowledge that it is a mythical language describing primeval waters that were seen as acting against cosmos order and fertility of earth.

The originality of the Priestly creation account is seen in its depersonalisation not only of primeval waters, but also of any creature in the natural world that was hitherto seen as deity – sun, moon and stars, for instance. Genesis 1 rejected the deification of any part of the cosmos, and teaches that Elohim alone is the creator of the universe. Therefore, the primeval waters are rendered as merely natural waters that later played a major role along with earth in generating life in the created order (Gn 1:11-13, 20-21). Later in the Priestly material of Genesis 6-9 and Exodus 14-15, the images of sea and waters are not seen as foes – in contrast to the *Enuma elish* – but as divine weapons to defeat corruption on earth. In Genesis 1, Elohim made the universe order,

⁷⁷ For further details, see Wakeman, M K 1969. The Biblical Earth Monster in the Cosmogonic Combat Myth. *JBL* 88/3, 313-20.

not through *Chaoskampf* (battle against chaos), but by confining waters within fixed limits (Simkins 1994:108).

In Genesis 1, *tehôm* is not personified as a deity, but simply a part of the cosmos. It only refers to unspecified waters or the immeasurable expanse of waters existing before the creation of the firmament that divides waters above from waters below (Gn 1:6). The word *tehôm* implies the pre-creation state of the world in which the primeval waters are simply present in the cosmos in anticipation of the created order that will be made possible by Elohim's acts of separation (Habel 2011:29). Thus, the deeps are not rival forces or deities against Elohim's project. Elohim made the world with 'ease' that is expressed in the *Qal* form of the verb *בָּרָא* (Gn 1:1) This is to say that, unlike Marduk and Baal, Elohim does not need to utilise intensive force to establish the world order.

While in *Enuma elish*, order resulted from Marduk's victory over Tiamat, in Genesis 1 the harmony of the universe is commanded by the mighty word of Elohim. Whether the word *רוּחַ* of Genesis 1 echoes the wind that Marduk used to defeat Tiamat is a matter of debate. The idea is that *רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים* is not a spiritual matter, but an integral part of the primeval world (Hiebert 2008:10). Unlike Marduk, Elohim does not divide waters by dismembering the defeated chaos, but by constructive words of separation that establish order out of disorder. As in the Baal myth (Ugarit text) and Job 7:12, the primal deep is not suppressed, but only put under guard (Wakeman 1969:314).

2.3.3 The status of the luminaries

All ancient Near Eastern cosmogonies regarded at least astral bodies as divine beings. In Egypt, the sun god was viewed as the supreme god whose actions sustain life in the world. In Babylon, the stars are defined as uncreated (as gods) due to their great significance for the astronomical and astrological role controlling the destiny of humans. In *Enuma elish*, Marduk fixed the astral likeness of the gods as constellations in the sense that the gods cannot be separated from the stars (Hasel 1972:13). In this sense the stars were perceived as mighty rulers whose actions control life on earth. The most honorific esteem for the king was to compare him to the star (Gunkel 2006:8).

In Genesis, luminaries are only part of the created order, and are assigned, not an unlimited rule, but restricted dominion over day and night. They are also part of the interdependent system of the cosmos, since their place is fixed in the firmament. They are formed and set in delimited motion in the dome of sky to serve as temporal signs and sources of light on earth (Gn 1:14-18). One of the main goals of the Priestly text is also to reject the absolute divinity of the planets, which was a dominant factor in the astral cult of the neighbour world. The sun and the moon differ from Elohim and for that, P allots them a limited role within the created network (Westermann 1974:44). By virtue of their function, they merely belong to the physical order of creation to sustain life of the living beings. Wenham (1987:21) puts it more rhetorically that:

The most obvious reason for the detail in the fourth day's description is the importance of the astral bodies in ancient Near Eastern thought. In neighbouring cultures, the sun and the moon were some of the most important gods in the pantheon, and the stars were often credited with controlling human destiny ... So there is probably a polemic thrust behind Genesis' [1:1-2:4a] treatment of the theme ... [in which] the sun, moon, and stars are created by God: they are creatures, not gods.

This P's perspective is a kind of Copernican revolutionary vision – yet before the term itself – on the cosmos in the ancient times. Nothing in the cosmos can be identified with God who is alone the Lord of all that exists. Genesis 1 indeed avoids the naming of the sun and the moon to escape any hint of theogony or personalisation of the cosmic forces involved, and attributes the power of creation to God's fiat alone (Firmage 1999:99). In emptying the planets of their recognised divinity hitherto, P reduced the planets to mere parts of the natural world that is basically accessible to all created beings.

2.3.4 The creation of human beings

In most ancient cosmogonies, humans are created to work for gods, and their creation is always a matter of divine council. The common motif of divine council is perhaps a remnant preserved in Genesis 1:26. Does P's God need gods' approval, involvement, cooperation and participation in his decision to make human beings? This question will be further discussed in the form-critical analysis of this verse. In short, biblical scholars waver between two competing and conflicting hypotheses. Either the allusion

to the divine council in verse 26 is a remnant of the ancient mythological motif, or it is a deliberate feature of the Priestly creation account. In this latter sense, the motif emphasises the relationship between humans and God, and perhaps launches Israelite monotheism (Garr 2003:92).

In the epic of Atrahasis, a group of lesser deities to whom were assigned the daily hard works, revolted and the assembly of the gods decided to create humans and impose on them the tedious works of gods (Westermann 1974:50). In fact, to introduce the creation of humans, the epic states: ‘When the gods worked like man’. Obviously, this clause serves as depicting the *raison-d’être* of human creation as a means by which the gods will be discharged from the labour, since the expression ‘working like man’ has here a negative connotation. In this case, humans are made to do the menial tasks of the gods, so that the latter may rest (Frymer-Kensky 1977:149).

Similarly, in *Enuma elish*, humans are made from the lifeless blood of the deity Qingu. In ancient Egypt, human creation is something like an accidental event from the tears of gods. Briefly, ancient mythologies present human creation as incidental, a kind of afterthought where human beings are menial slaves of gods to feed and satisfy their need (Hasel 1972:16). In other words, the creation of humans is then unilaterally oriented towards gods’ advantages.

In the Priestly creation, the destiny of humans is totally different. We should therefore understand that the Priestly creation account aims at restoring the dignity of humans, which is lacking in the ancient cosmogonies. Contrary to *Enuma elish*, P’s humans were not created from the blood (*dam*) of defeated gods, but in the divine likeness (*demut*) to rule over animals and earth rather than serving gods (Gn 1:26). For P, humanity is not a slave of gods, but a ‘godlike’ and ‘God-like’ community of beings that have a special binding relationship with Elohim (Garr 2003:219).

Yet, both Genesis 1 and its analogues agree that humans have been created for a purpose. While neighbourhood creation traditions perceived humans as gods’ slaves, in the Priestly creation, they are first *imago dei* and given dominion over animals and earth. The goal of human creation is not firstly directed toward the world of Elohim, but indelibly linked to the world of other beings with which humans share the natural food and the fertility blessing. The God of the Priestly text is not needy like the gods

of ancient Near East cosmogonies. In P's text, Elohim did not create things firstly for the divine world, but rather to enable each creature to play its role to sustain the created order. As observed by De Pury, Genesis 1 is the Priestly way of thinking of the created order and measures that have been taken to 'make-it-work' (2009:103).

Moreover, unlike the Priestly creation account, nowhere in Ancient Near East are humans expressly said to be created in *imago dei*. In Egypt, it is Pharaoh alone who is said to be the image of Amon-Rê.⁷⁸ In this regard, he has been given the task of caring for the *ma'at*, a principle of moral and cosmic order upon which depends the stability of the created order (Knight 1985:149). Pharaoh was responsible for all aspects of the State, including 'the direction of the economy, the administration of justice, the maintenance of the civil order, the defense (sic) of the realm and the organisation of the divine cult' (Fried 2001:70). In this sense, several essays linked the Priestly *imago dei* motif to the Egyptian thought. The idea is that, by applying the word *imago dei* to human beings, P conveys a kind of democratisation and universalising of the kingly status to the human race (Brown 2010:42). The implication would be that it is not Pharaoh alone who is *imago dei*, but the whole community of humans.

A great number of leading scholars including Von Rad,⁷⁹ Westermann,⁸⁰ and recently Garr,⁸¹ sustained this kingly model adding that ancient kings often erected statues or images of themselves to represent their authority in the conquered lands. In this sense, humans are made to represent God's community of co-rulers, responsible for enacting the sovereign justice and will of God (Garr 2003:219). Like the planets before them (vv14-18), God provides humans with dominion over terrestrial, aviary and marine life as well as on the earth itself (Gn 1:26-28). *Imago dei* is thus defined as the only human kingly dominion on earth. While this reading is compelling in its form, one should look at recent revelations of the form-critical analysis.

The form-critical analysis has shown that the concept *imago dei* originated independently from the kingly motif, and that P had probably combined these two

⁷⁸ Here is the speech of Amon-Rê to Pharaoh Amenophis III: 'you are my beloved son, produced from my members, my image which I have established on the earth. I have made you to rule the earth in peace' (Anderson 1987:127).

⁷⁹ Von Rad, G 1961. *Genesis: A commentary*. Trans. by Marks, J H. London: SCM, 57-59.

⁸⁰ Westermann, C 1974. *Creation*. Trans. by Scullion, J. London: SPCK, 125-30.

⁸¹ Garr, R W 2003. *In his Own Image and Likeness: Humanity, Divinity and Monotheism*. Leiden: Brill.

elements of the traditions later (Miller 1972:396). This is suggestive of the basis of Psalm 8 in which the motif about human dominion over fauna could be developed and explained without any reference to human creation in the image of God. Likewise, the Priestly text of Genesis 9:6 states human similarity to God without any reference to his dominion over other creatures. It is therefore possible that *imago dei* and dominion are two independent motifs that are joined together in Genesis 1:26-28.

Therefore, I agree with Barr for whom the concept *imago dei* implies that indeed humans share something of God, but this is not specifically explained in the Priestly creation (1968:23-24). Westermann has convincingly argued that P's theology would never think of humans replacing the Priestly transcendent God of Genesis 1 in the creation (1984:153). That is why, even in the unit of Genesis 1:26-28 in which the two motifs (*imago dei* and *dominion*) are combined, human power over animals is visibly linked not to their *imago dei*, but to the blessing that they received from Elohim. The fact that human dominion appears in the blessing (Gn 1:28) would tend to indicate that dominion probably does not form part of either צלם or דמות. It is an additional gift to humans rather than being inherently included in the concept of *imago dei* (Crouch 2010:9).

Indeed, because of the concept *imago dei*, human beings of the Priestly creation account are totally different from other creatures over which they have dominion. Humans are the only creatures to whom God speaks 'indicatively' as 'you' and 'I' who can respond (Barth 1958:182). By linking the two motifs *imago dei* and 'dominion', the Priestly creation account restores human dignity (lacking in ancient cosmogonies) and, in addition the kingship function is granted. This means that the word *imago dei* in itself 'permits no conclusions about a ruling position given to humans or any responsibility for the world on their part' (Lohfink 1994:7). Also, it is clear that even the dominion motif excludes animal consumption (Gn 1:29).

2.3.5 *Genesis 1 as a cosmic temple*

The idea of the cosmic temple is implicitly included in all reviewed cosmogonies. Marduk's triumph over Tiamat led fellow gods to build him a city and a temple, and praised him with fifty names, highlighting various aspects of Marduk as ruler of the

skies and earth. Likewise, after his victory over Yam (watery chaos), Baal proceeded to build his residence, a palace (הֵיכָל in Hebrew) for his enthronement on the top of the pantheon. Fischer maintained that Baal's palace or temple was also 'symbolically the whole world' (1965:318). More remarkable is that Baal's temple is based on a similar numerical pattern as both the temple of Jerusalem and the cosmic temple of Genesis 1, so that it is possible to think:

If these temples were constructed in terms of 'seven' it is really no wonder that the creation poem of Gen.1 is inserted in a seven-day framework. One must speak of ordering the cosmos in terms of seven even as the construction of the microcosm must be according to the same pattern (Fischer 1963:40-41).

There were beliefs in the ancient Near East that the temple service holds people and nature together through language and rites. In this sense, the proper maintenance of temple service (cult) results in the pouring of blessing on the land, the preservation of the created order, and the prevention of God's attack (Carr 1996:130). It is therefore the reason why the Priestly code (Pg) extends from cosmic temple (Gn 1) to sanctuary building (Ex 40). In both temples, order, fertility and blessing stand at the centre of their importance. In this sense, when the temple is properly maintained, the creative power of God is active in the land around it: both the land and the people are fertile and the disasters (famine, war, defeat) are prevented (Carr 1996:130). Written shortly after the Babylonian exile, the message of the Priestly creation account argued that the wealth of both the ruined land and people depended on restoring temple services.

Moreover, it is not a coincidence that the triune structure of the ANE temples corresponds to the literary symmetry of the Priestly creation account. This tripartite design of the הֵיכָל (temple) matches the timely and thematic arrangements of the seven days of the Priestly creation account. The cosmic temple is built on the sevenfold scheme of days of creation, an ordered mathematical aesthetic that is fully stable, life-sustaining and separated in contrast to the world of *tohu bohu* before creation (Brown 2010:40). By virtue of their correspondence, the first six days establish the structural limits of the cosmic temple, while the seventh is the capstone of the entire structure, the most holy place. The obvious analogy between ancient temple building and the

Priestly creation account is expressed in the fact that Elohim created the earth in seven days, while the Solomonic temple took seven years to complete (Van Dyk 2001:78).

Contrary to *Enuma elish*, the cosmic temple of Genesis 1 is not presented as a kind of reward to a champion god over others. The Priestly God of Genesis 1 is a non-imperious God that commands the ordered complexity of creatures. In a more cosmogonic metaphor, 'the world of Genesis 1:1-2:4a is a construction zone in which various building blocks are joined together to build a cosmic edifice embedded with order and variation' (Brown 2010:37). The idea is that the Mosaic tabernacle and later the temple of Jerusalem should be regarded as a micro-cosmos of the macro-cosmos of Genesis 1. The structure as presented in Exodus 40 and 1 Kings 6, reflects all the important elements of the design of the cosmos and simultaneously converges between the earthly temple and God's heavenly palace (temple) (Van Dyk 2001:77).

It is evident that the account of Genesis 1:1-2:4a presents a number of motifs similar to building a sanctuary. Through the Priestly activities of separating out, the universe is made a sanctuary that is fit for God and creatures to dwell in. It is not an accidental fact that the Priestly creation account ends with the rest of Sabbath. In this case, Genesis 1 is a macro-cosmic temple of God in temporal and spatial terms. By this structure, the 'Creation becomes not only a divinely created space, but also divinely created time' (Brown 1999:50). The seven-day week of creation, concluding in God's rest, pictures the basic structure of both time and space – typifying Sabbath observance and tabernacle cult – that will define the ethos as an elected people (McBride 2000:12, footnote 22). One would infer that just as God rested after ordering/creating the cosmos so must Israel after building the sanctuary.

Blenkinsopp established similarities between the words of the Priestly creation account and the construction of the sanctuary (see 1976:280). For this reason, most leading scholars of pentateuchal criticism maintained that Exodus 25-40 is a kind of human continuation of the first work of creation in six days.⁸² The text starts by showing the glory of YHWH covering the Sinai mountain for six days, and on the

⁸² See the synthesis made by Lohfink, N 1994. *Theology of the Pentateuch: Themes of the Priestly Narrative and Deuteronomy*. Augsburg: Fortress Press, 16; and MacDonald, N 2008. Food and Diet in the Priestly Material of the Pentateuch, in Grumett, D & Muers, R (eds), *Eating and Believing: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Vegetarianism and Theology*, 17-30. London: T & T Clark.

seventh, Moses is revealed a heavenly model for the earth sanctuary for YHWH's dwelling among his people (Ex 24:16). The repeated formulae of command-execution are present in both texts. It is therefore accepted that the account relating to sanctuary building (Ex 25-40) mirrors Genesis 1:1-2:4a, as shown in the following list of parallels:

Table I: Parallels between Genesis 1 and Exodus 25-40⁸³

Creation of the universe (Gn 1:1-2:4a)	Construction of the sanctuary (Ex 25-40)
And God saw everything that he had made (כל אשר עשה), and found it (והנה) very good (Gn 1:31);	And Moses saw all the work (כל־יהמלאכה), and behold, they had done it (והנה עשה אותה) (Ex 39:43);
Thus the sky and the earth were finished (ויכלו) and all (וכל) their host, (Gn 2:1);	Thus all the work of the tabernacle of the tent of meeting was finished (ותכל כל) (Ex 39:32);
On the seven day God finished his work which he had done (עשה ויכל אלהים...מלאכתו) (אשר) (Gn 2:2);	So Moses finished the work (ויכל משה את) (המלאכה) (Ex 40:33);
So God blessed (ויברך) the seventh day (Gn 2:3);	And Moses blessed (ויברך) them (Ex 39:43);
And sanctified (ויקדש) it (the seventh day) (Gn 2:3).	...to sanctify (ויקדשת) it and all its furnishings (Ex 40:9).

This creation-centred cultic perspective of P makes clear the importance of time and space in comparison with non-P material. For P, creation is therefore not only a divinely (holy) created space, but also a holy created time (Brown 1999:50). Unlike non-P layers that linked Sabbath to the Exodus experience (Dt 5:15), P originated this festival time at the creation. As Barker (2010:36) observed, 'Genesis 1:1-2:4a is the inspiration for the design for the Temple in all its detail; therefore all temple based worship ... is worship that assumes an essential ordering of creation.' For P, the cosmos as a whole is the macro-cosmic space that assumes the presence of Elohim in the world.

⁸³ For the parallels, I am indebted to Blenkinsopp (1976:280) and Weinfeld (1981:503).

Unlike non-P layers that ignore or disregard the world outside of Israel, the Priestly traditions carefully link cosmos and ethnos, humanity and Israel, and earth and the land (Carr 1996:131). The Priestly time and space point outward and forward: from God's presence in creation (Gn 1) to the constitution of the people whose centre is the cult – God's presence in the sanctuary (Ex 40). Thus, P views Israel's installation on the land as echoing God's broader creation intention for humanity to fill the earth and subdue it (Lohfink 1994:8).

2.4 Genesis 1:1-2:4a in the Persian context

Earlier critics from Wellhausen (1994:376-91) to Von Rad (1975:138-9) argued that Pg is unthinkable before the fall of Jerusalem and it was during the Babylonian exile that it was written. Recently, a number of hypotheses favoured the late exilic or early postexilic period (Carr 1996:136,139; Van Dyk 2001:75). There are several features in Genesis 1:1-2:4a, as well as in the whole Priestly work, that support the late exilic and probably the beginning of the Persian hegemony, as the historical setting of the source.

2.4.1 Genesis 1 as addressing the exile experience

The imperious Babylonian exile of 587 BCE left the land of Judah in a situation of *tohu bohu* (void and formless). The Israelite Golah (the exiles) viewed this national trauma as something like the resurgence of cosmic chaos that left the land in shame, expelling people from their national identity and reducing the temple to ruins. The message of Genesis 1:1-2:4a is therefore that the God who brought forth creation order out of formlessness can indeed transform any chaotic situation into a new creation (Boshoff, Scheffler & Spangenberg 2000:163; Brown 2010:48). In previous points, I mentioned that the Priestly creation order is made not on defeated chaos but on its organisation and transformation. As Levenson (1994:127) clearly states:

Genesis 1:1-2:3[4a], the Priestly creation story, is not about the banishment of evil, but about its control ... [In] building the new structure that is creation, God functions like an Israelite priest, making distinctions, assigning things to their proper category and assessing their fitness, and hallowing the Sabbath.

For the exiles, Genesis 1:1-2:4a provided a hopeful programme on the way to proceed with this re-building project, notably by involving all sectors of the dispersed peoples and by enlisting them in the enormous – if not cosmic – cooperative task of reconstruction (Brown 2010:48). The idea for eager survivors of the exile is not to be discouraged by the void state of the land (Judah), but to join forces and focus on the bright future. In this sense, the Priestly creation account offered a programmatic and cosmic vision for a restoration that did not require a monarchy (forbidden under the Persian hegemony) but instead the partnership and kingship of all (Brown 2010:48). The text offered an inclusive vision that could be read as the restoration project launched with the late exile era, the rise of Cyrus.

In Genesis 1, Elohim made the universe with ease and natural power similar to the way Cyrus ended the despotic kingdom of Babylon. To avoid violence, the new king tactically surprised the Babylonians during the New Year festival, and attributed his victory, not to Ahura Mazda, but Marduk (Smith-Christopher 1997:19-20). Several scholars argued that the cooperative skill, as opposed to conquest actions, embedded throughout the Priestly creation ideal might relate to something like the ‘violence-free’ principle that Cyrus aimed to establish in replacement of the Babylonian tyranny (De Pury 2009:103). For this reason, Cyrus is celebrated in Deutero-Isaiah (Is 44:28; 45:1) as the Messiah of YHWH.

Contrary to the Babylonian power, Cyrus decreed in 538 BCE the authorisation of the exiles to return and rebuild their homelands including their deities’ temples. It is possibly in relation to this new policy regarding politics and religion that the Priestly creation account is written. In the post-exilic context, the restoration of Judah’s land and temple requires the involvement of dispersed sectors of the community. In this sense, the creation of Genesis 1:1-2:4a is presented as a self-sustaining cooperative realm conveying a fully ordered cosmos made possible by the implicit teamwork of its various components, all serving the ultimate purpose: the adverb ‘very good’ of the created order (Gn 1:31).

2.4.2 *The ideal of network and stability*

Like the Persian Empire project, the Priestly creation account is a project of structures, a process aiming at creating stability and networking in the overall cosmos. Contrary to Babylonian authoritarian rule, the Achaemenid policy restored the autonomy of local entities, institutions and traditions in the sense that central systems (the Persian court, the satrapies) were meant to be as discrete and unobtrusive as possible (Frei 2001:38). In this case, the Persian State was relatively non-interventionist compared to the earlier Babylonian and the later Hellenistic kingdoms. Local institutions were promised legal security on condition that their plans served imperial interest, *pax persica* (Blenkinsopp 2001:45). This liberal hierarchy enabled self-regulation of local entities while serving not only their own interests, but also the stability of the whole system.

Likewise, the project of the Priestly creation aims at establishing stability in the cosmos order through various structures and hierarchies that are meant to function in network. Each creature is assigned its place in space and time, luminaries are invited to rule over day and night, humans are given rule over animals and earth, but there are no explicit rules for dominion, nor provisions for coercion. In brief, there is no need for violence (De Pury 2009:103). The cosmos order is meant to function and to stay in constant stability and permanence of day, night, seasons and years.

Just as the stability of the Persian reign was not assured by repeated interferences of Cyrus, the world order of Genesis 1:1-2:4a is not guaranteed through repeated interventions of Elohim, or the continuous exercise of his power,⁸⁴ but self-regulation of the created system. Just as the exiles viewed Babylonian reign as chaos, Genesis 1:1-2:4a defines the world before creation (infinity) as chaos (De Pury 2004:66). That is why Genesis 1 is not about creation *ex-nihilo*, but creation that is founded on the existing realms and forces to create new things, as we will discuss more fully in the exegetical analysis of Genesis 1:1-2:4a which ensues.

Like the building-project of the Persian empire that used existing materials of previous empires (humans, religions, lands), the Priestly author presents his creation as

⁸⁴ God's intervention in the cosmos (Gn 9) arose when the principles of the origins (Gn 1:29-30) are not respected

only the setting up of limits in space and in time. One will detect that the first three days of creation deal with establishing the habitations, while the three latter days concern the installation of inhabitants. In this sense, creation is meant to be a process of the organisation of existing potential of the cosmos in a situation turned from *תהו ובהו* (void and vacuum, Gn 1:2) to *טוב מאד* (very good, Gn 1:31). Similarly, the exiles regarded in Cyrus' decree of 538 BCE the transformation of chaos made by the Babylonian tyranny into non-violent structures that re-valued local entities and assigned them a limited autonomy in the overall network of the empire.

Similarly, the world of Genesis 1 is built on a complex network of dynamics. Each sector of the created order has to find its dynamics to prosper autonomously in its own interest, but thereby precisely for the benefit of the whole system (De Pury 2009:104). Possibly the allotment of distinct niches in the creation refers to the Persian ideal of self-autonomy of entities that guaranteed tranquillity in the empire. Like Cyrus, Elohim is the main subject while the earth and the waters are depicted as agents in the creation process. The remaining creatures are ordered to be involved in the maintenance of the created order, all within a rigorously consistent structure (Brown 1991:371).

We should note that the allocation of autonomy and self-regulation to the Persian entities aimed also at avoiding rivalry and conflict in the empire. To avoid violence in the world of the Priestly creation account, luminaries inhabit the skies, birds the air, sea animals the sea, and land animals as well as human beings inhabit the dry land. The conflict that could result regarding food for survival of the latter beings – as both are herbivores – is avoided by naming their specific flora species: grass for animals, while humans eat fruits and cereals (Gn 1:29).

3. Literary contexts of Genesis 1:1-2:4a

3.1 Introduction

In this section, the author needs to situate Genesis 1, not in its present canonical context in the Bible, but in its original literary context. It is now more than a hundred years that critical biblical scholarship has revealed that Genesis 1 is the opening of the

so-called ‘Priestly Source/layer’ – in German: *Priester(grund)schrift* (Pg) – a coherent literary document that was written in the latter period of the Babylonian exile. Before grasping the structure and cosmogony of the Priestly Source, this study firstly needs to present the current state of biblical criticism on the sources in the Pentateuch.

3.2 Overview of pentateuchal criticism⁸⁵

It is currently accepted that the Pentateuch is composed of various materials from different periods that were brought together in a complex process of compilation. The first assumption is owed to Astruc in 1753 who thought that Moses had used two different documents in the composition of the Pentateuch: the Yahwist and the Elohist. Since the nineteenth century, this premise has been reformulated and the Mosaic authorship is now unthinkable. Beyond Astruc, critical scholars identified within the Pentateuch four sources: the Yahwist (J), the Elohist (E), the Deuteronomist (D), and the Priestly layer (P) (Garett 1991:14). This theory of four sources is also called the ‘documentary theory’, for which Graf and Wellhausen are regarded as pioneers.

The Yahwist starts in Genesis 2:4b and includes large units of Genesis, Exodus, Numbers and a few texts in Deuteronomy. It was seen as the oldest source and dated in the early Solomonic monarchy (tenth century BCE). J refers to God as YHWH, for, according to the theory, people used the name YHWH even before the flood times (Gn 4:26). For Von Rad, the present state of the Pentateuch is a theological product of J (1972:86). E was seen as being later than J, but follows the same basic story of J, and originated in the northern kingdom (eighth century BCE). It starts in Genesis 15 and refers to God as Elohim because E assumes that the name of YHWH was not revealed prior to the exodus (Ex 3:15). It was stated that the Elohist Source is more linked to moral values than J, but viewed God as more distant from humans (Garett 1991:15). D was associated with the Josianic reformation (2 Ki 22), while P was linked to the exile period.

⁸⁵ For more details about the pentateuchal criticism, see De Pury, A & Römer, T 1999 (eds), *Le Pentateuque en Question*. Geneva: Labor & Fides; Dozeman, T B & Schmid, K 2006 (eds), *A Farewell to the Yahwist: the Composition of the Pentateuch in Recent European Interpretation*. Atlanta: SBL; Rogerson, J W 1996 (ed), *The Pentateuch*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press;

However, in the mid-nineteen-seventies, several publications contributed to shake the common consensus on source criticism that had prevailed from Wellhausen to Von Rad. The works of Rendtorff,⁸⁶ Schmid⁸⁷ and Van Seters⁸⁸ are among the great classics that fiercely attacked the theory. In his earlier article, Van Seters (1972:448-59) had already doubted the existence of an independent Elohist source. The author confirmed later that J started his literary project at the time of Deutero-Isaiah and finalised it in the exilic era (Van Seters 2011a:251-6). He supported his argument with the presence of the verb *ברא* in Exodus 34:10 relating to the divine intervention in humanity's affairs as expressing something completely new (cf. Isaiah 48:6-7).

Indeed, the relative earliness of J to P has gone unquestioned: scholars still accept that J was written before P. The modern debate is now not whether J is earlier but how much J is earlier than P (Wenham 1999:240). Moreover, one should note that whatever can be said on the issue, clearly J bears traditions from the earlier history of Israel and his literary project must have started in the tenth century BCE even if it developed after the monarchical period (Boshoff *et al.* 2000:87). The image of God doing pottery is more linked to life in Palestine than to the exilic period. The Deuteronomist does not pose many problems since it is basically linked the book of Deuteronomy and includes the books of Joshua, Judges, 1-2 Samuel and 1-2 Kings to form the Deuteronomist historiography (Ska 2006:121-2). Written during the exile, the source interpreted and assessed Israel's history and monarchy in light of Moses' Law.

P is the only element of the documentary theory that has been less criticised. Its materials present a coherent and autonomous literature that can be isolated and joined together, but the most serious problem concerns its ending: the death of Moses (Dt 34:9) (Carr 1996:121; Van Dyk 2001:76), or some units in Joshua (Jos 18:1; 24; 19) (Lohfink 1994:136-72) or the sanctuary building in Exodus 40 (De Pury 2006; Pola 1995). The following section deals with this question while situating Genesis 1 in the Priestly source.

⁸⁶ Rendtorff, R 1976. *Das überlieferungsgeschichtliche Problem des Pentateuch*. Berlin/New York: De Gruyter.

⁸⁷ Schmid, H H 1976. *Der sogenannte Jawist*. Zurich: Theologischer.

⁸⁸ Van Seters, J 1975. *Abraham in History and Traditions*. London: Yale University Press.

3.3 Genesis 1:1-2:4a as part of the Priestly layer

3.3.1 *Current debate on the Priestly source (Pg)*

A growing number of current critical scholars agree that the Priestly layer (Pg) is an independent work that was originally written to provide another version of Israel's history. It is not an interpretative writing that was meant to be added to a pre-existing text, even if it might have been composed to offer an alternative historiography to an older (different) Deuteronomist description of the origins of Israel (Blenkinsopp 1976:278; Carr 1996:46; De Pury 2006:63-5; Wenham 1999:240). For most scholars, a pre-exilic Priestly work is unthinkable⁸⁹ and the source was conceived to stand for itself, as observed in the following premise of Carr (1996:47):

If one understands P as a reworking of earlier non-P material, then P material as a whole stands as the most prominent final redaction responsible for the present shape of Genesis [or the Pentateuch]. [But], if one understands much of P as having originally existed separately from non-P material of Genesis [or of the Pentateuch], then the last major redaction of Genesis [Pentateuch] consisted of the compositional interweaving of P and non-P material into a new whole.

Currently, the major disagreement consists, not on P's starting but on its ending. Critical scholars have identified in P's materials two literary development stages: the first is the so-called Pg (an originally independent or once separated Priestly narrative) and the second is named Ps (later Priestly insertions). The problem is to identify texts that are linked to Pg's original theology and those that might have been inserted later to the main document. The ten *toledoth* formulas in Genesis followed by the ten stages of Israel's wondering in the desert have been more listed (Lohfink 1994:136-72). Traditional critics from Wellhausen to Von Rad, as well as some current scholars, argue for Pg's end at the death of Moses in Dt 34:9 (Carr 1996:121; Van Dyk 2001:76).

Perlitt (1988:68), however, criticised this thesis, claiming that Pg ends in Numbers 27.⁹⁰ For him, in addition to the fragmentary nature of Moses' death text (Dt

⁸⁹ Blenkinsopp, J 1996. An Assessment of the Alleged Pre-exilic Date of the Priestly Material in the Pentateuch. ZAW 108, 495-518.

⁹⁰ Perlitt, L 1988. Priesterschrift im Deuteronomium? ZAW 100, 65-88.

34:1-9), its language is not typical of P but shows affinities with other pentateuchal traditions.⁹¹ In this sense, Levin argued that the death of Moses in Deuteronomy 34 belongs not to Pg, but to J (2007:209). According to Nihan and Römer, Pg concludes in Leviticus.⁹² For Nihan (2007:613), the independent Priestly source ends either with the consecration of the priests (Lv 8-9) or with the account of the Day of Atonement (Lv 16), since a sanctuary is unthinkable without the function of priests or law of purity. Lohfink, Blenkinsopp and Ska extend the source to some sequences of Joshua (Jos 18:1, 19:51).⁹³ Finally, Elnes followed by Pola and De Pury argued for Pg conclusion in Exodus 40.⁹⁴

These different structural attempts are based on diverse views of the very nature or the primary focus of the Priestly narrative. It is likely that the perception of what is the ending of Pg involves a certain understanding of what Pg is, which dictates in turn the reconstruction of its literary profile (Nihan 2007:31). Those who maintain Joshua as the end of Pg think that Pg would be another version of Israel historiography from the origins to the subduing of the land of Canaan – echoing the *ברך* and *נבש* motifs of Genesis 1:28 (Blenkinsopp 1976:291). In this regard, Pg would be primarily interested in the conquest of the land of Canaan. However, if we say that Pg is firstly concerned with the establishment of the cult, then the Priestly writer might have finished his work in Leviticus 16 or even earlier in Exodus 40.

Current debates tend toward sustaining Pg's culmination in the construction of the tabernacle (Ex 25-31, 33-40) as echoing the creation arrangement of Genesis 1:1-

⁹¹ According to this author, the mention of 120 years of Moses' life (Dt 34:4) combines the notice in Exodus 7:7 (Moses is 80 years old when the exodus occurs) and the Dtr tradition concerning the 40 years of wandering in the desert, which has no equivalent in P, but assumes the non-P text of Genesis 6:1-6 (Perlitt 1988:68). Dt 34 is a redactional frame identifying the day when Moses read the content of Deuteronomy with the day of his death, and thereby making Deuteronomy the testament of Moses (Pola 1995:13-14). In this sense, Nihan argues that the notice about the death of Moses makes much better sense in the context of the book of Deuteronomy rather than of the Priestly narrative, with which they share few thematic links (2007:23).

⁹² Nihan, C 2007. *From Priestly Torah to Pentateuch: A Study of the Composition of the Book of Leviticus* (FAT 2/25), Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck. 613ff; Römer, T 2005. *The So-called Deuteronomistic History: A Sociological, Historical, and Literary Introduction*. London: T&T Clark, 82, 178–80;

⁹³ See Blenkinsopp, J 1976. The Structure of P. *CBQ* 38:275-92, see pages 287-91; Lohfink, N 1994. *Theology of the Old Testament: Themes of the Priestly Narrative and Deuteronomy*. Augsburg: Fortress, 136-72; Ska, J L 2006. *Introduction to Reading the Pentateuch*. Eisenbrauns: Winona Lake, 120ff.

⁹⁴ Elnes, E E 1994. Creation and Tabernacle: the Priestly Writer's Environmentalism. *HBT* 16, 144-55; Pola, T 1995. *Die ursprüngliche Priesterschaft: Beobachtungen zur Literarkritik und Traditionsgeschichte von Pg*, (WMANT, 70). Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchner; De Pury, A 2006. The Jacob Story at the Beginning of the Formation of the Pentateuch, in Dozeman, T B & Schmid, K 2006 (eds), *A Farewell to the Yahwist: the Composition of the Pentateuch in Recent European Interpretation*, 51-72. see pages 63-65. Atlanta: SBL.

2:4a (MacDonald 2008:19). In this sense, Leviticus 8-9 and 16 might be seen as later ritual supplements to Pg elaborating further details and aspects of the cult services. It is likely that Exodus 40 constitutes a neat *inclusio* of the original Priestly source (Levenson 1994:78-99). In this sense, the Priestly writing extends from creation of the universe to the creation (building) of the sanctuary. In other words, ‘the wide significance of P’s whole scheme of creation stands out prominently in the tabernacle account in Exodus 25-31 and 35-40. These chapters serve as the climax of the Priestly writing...’ (Elnes 1994:147). The textual and thematic parallels between Genesis 1 and Exodus 25-40 are significant to assume that the latter presupposes the Priestly creation of the cosmos.⁹⁵ Weinfeld (1981:503) puts it clear that:

Genesis 1:1-2:3 and Exodus 39:1-40:33 are typologically identical. Both describe the satisfactory completion of the enterprise commanded by God, its inspections and approval, the blessing and the sanctification which are connected with it.

The main goal of the Priestly document is not firstly the conquest of the land, but the proper maintenance of the cult services on which depends the fertility of both the land and people living upon it. For Pg, Elohim, God of the universe, is not restricted to one place (land); he can be worshipped outside of Judah, even in Babylon. The Postexilic Israel was not viewed as an independent nation, but a religious assembly – Israel is now identified through cultic institutions, including the Sabbath and circumcision (Ska 2006:189). For Pg, the acquisition of the land cannot fail if the cult is fully maintained in the community. The link between sanctuary and land provides an explanation that for Pg and P alone, the possession of the land depends on the divine presence among Israel. De Pury clearly indicates that from this time the Jewish community is identified in the expression,

Living before the face of Yhwh (Gen 17:1.18) ... That expression, which has a cultic meaning in line with the thrust of Pg’s entire work, shows that Israel’s destiny is not primarily to form a political entity – a state, a kingdom, or a province, even if that is not excluded, of course – but that its vocation is of cultic nature: Israel is destined to become God’s Priestly nation among God’s humankind (2009:119).

⁹⁵ For other similarities between Genesis 1 and Exodus 25-40, see also Kearney, P J 1977. Creation and Liturgy: the P Redaction of Ex 25-40. ZAW 89, 375-385, see pages 375-78.

In this sense, the probable framework of Pg extends from creation to the building of a sanctuary – two motifs that are inseparably linked in the Priestly thought. For Pg the basic goal of securing the land is the re-establishment and restoration of the cult. In contrast to a state-centred focus of non-Priestly layers, Pg develops the identity of Israel in terms of a genealogical and landless-centred utopia featuring a movable tent of meeting (sanctuary), a kinglike priest, a community defined in landless-focused terms as an assembly and a cult-centred camp (see Gottwald 1985:480). One will understand that P's mention of the land (Ex 6:2-8) aims only at motivating those who lack enough belief to return to the land (Ezk 36:13-14), while his main focus is the cult.

For this reason, I agree with those who think that the originally autonomous (Pg) literary work ends in the erection of a holy dwelling for YHWH (Exodus 40), whether this *משכן* (tent, Ex 25:9) for YHWH is viewed as a movable tent or as a sanctuary (*מקדש*, sanctuary Ex 25:8), and later a permanent temple. In Exodus 40:2, Moses dedicated the tabernacle on the first day of the month. This reflects both the first day of creation and the day the new creation rose from waters (Gn 8:1) (Elnes 1994:149). It is obvious that P was opposed to the political view of Israel. In Genesis 17, the monarchy is depicted as part of the blessing-promise to Abraham, not its centre. In this sense, while the land and monarchy are assumed by the Priestly writer, it is possible that what the whole work of P seems to have done is to:

Emphasise the building of the sanctuary rather than accession to kingship as the climax of creation. As a result, Israel was provided with its own highly unique and appropriate version of creation as a foundation or charter myth for the rebuilt sanctuary and the cult which was to be carried out in it (Blenkinsopp 1976:286).

Like the cosmic temple motif of Genesis 1, the aim of the sanctuary is to allow God's dwelling on earth among his people: 'the tabernacle is both the image projected onto the cosmos and the micro-cosmos lodged in the heart of Israel's existence' (Brown 1999:385). In other words, Pg adopted the construction and structure of the tabernacle as a scheme to describe the creation of the cosmos. For Pg, the cosmos should be regarded as an enormous temple built by God similar to the earthly temple constructed

by a king (Van Dyk 2001:77). In the following section, I need to explore cosmogony in the wide Priestly framework (Pg).

3.3.2 *Cosmogony in the Priestly utopia (Pg)*⁹⁶

Given its ecological key-insights, this study does not pretend at searching the whole material attributed to Pg. The author will point to specific themes and texts that have a significant function in the Priestly utopia of the created order. Therefore, the texts that are directly linked to Genesis 1:1-2:4a receive further attention in this section. Among other texts that the reader will find in this section, let us mention the flood and ברית עולם (everlasting covenant) with the postdiluvian creation (Gn 6-9), Genesis 17 and the building of the tabernacle (Ex 25-31; 33-40).

3.3.2.1 Genesis 1:1-2:4a in relation to Pg

In Genesis 1-5, the Priestly layer presents Elohim ordering the cosmos, filling it with its inhabitants and the תולדות (generations) of ארץ (earth) and שמים (sky) (Gn 1:1-2:4a) as well as the תולדות of ante-diluvian humanity (Gn 5). Elohim is the personal name for the creator of the universe (Gn 1) and for the sons of Noah (Gn 6-9). The descendants of Abraham⁹⁷ call him El-Shadday (Gn 17), while Israel worships him under the name YHWH (Ex 6:2-3).⁹⁸ In Pg, Elohim made two ברית עולם (everlasting covenants): with post-diluvian creation (Gn 9:1-17) and with Abraham (Gen 17). By this, Pg repeats his primal vision of a harmonic and non-violent world both between humans (nations), and also humans with animals expressed in Genesis 1 (De Pury 2009:125).

In his kerygma, Pg shows that the waters that were ordered in Genesis 1:2 are used to destroy the corrupt and violent world at the time of Noah (Gn 7), while in Exodus 14, the primal רוח blew again upon the sea in favour of Israel. In both cases, God acts as the creator of the universe in commanding/ordering waters and makes the appearance of the יבֶשֶׁת הָאָרֶץ – the dry land (Gn 1:9-10; 8-14; Ex 14:16,22,29). While

⁹⁶ For the structure of P, see Blenkinsopp, J 1976. The structure of P. *CBQ* 38, 276-77 and Carr, D M 1996. *Reading the Fractures of Genesis: Historical and Literary Approaches*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 124-5.

⁹⁷ Abraham is the ancestor, not only of Israel, but of some of his neighbours (Ishmaelites, Edomites ...). In the report of Abraham's encounters with the king of Sodom and with Melchizedek – priest and king of Salem – אל (or אלהים) is associated with אל עליון who is identified as קנה (creator or maker) of שמים וארץ (Gn 14:17-24).

⁹⁸ 'Elohim spoke to Moses and said: I am YHWH. I appeared to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as El Shadday, but under my name YHWH I did not make myself known to them' (Ex 6:2-3).

the divided waters re-covered the dry land to destroy the wicked Egyptians (Ex 14), the re-appearance of the יַבְשָׁה הָאָרֶץ allowed postdiluvian creation to leave the ark and starting to replenish the land. This would echo Genesis 1:9-12 for which, the presence of the dry land enables fertility on earth. In Genesis 8:14, the earth fertility is renewed – the fertility that is protected by the divine ברית עולם (eternal covenant, Gn 9:1-17).

In a more ecological style, the ordered cosmos that was brought from a situation of chaos – a universe covered by תהום (the deeps) and חשך (darkness) Gn 1:2; 9-10), returned to its primal situation in Genesis 6-7. Elohim used again waters to cover the earth, and thereby destroy all flesh and the earth. When יַבְשָׁה הָאָרֶץ (the dry land) re-appeared (Gn 8:14; cf. Gn 1:9-10), Noah, his family and animals left the ark to repopulate the world (Gn 8:16-17). In Mesopotamia, the temple-ziggurat represented the creation mound, the first heap of dry land to appear over the flood waters (Blenkinsopp 1976:285). In the post-flood creation, Elohim renewed the blessing of Genesis 1:28, modified the regulation of food that had been given in Genesis 1:29, and made a ברית עולם (eternal covenant) with all living beings (Gn 9:8-10).

The blessing that God granted to the humans in Gen 1:28, is also reflected in the covenant given to Abraham (Gn 17:2, 16, 20), and later in the blessing of Jacob (Gn 35:11-15). The God who assigned provisions to the living creatures on the sixth day of the creation (Gn 1:29-30; 6:21), also fed his people in the desert by giving them manna (Ex 16:15). In Exodus 16:22-23, the Israelites worked hard (twice) on the sixth day to gather enough food since the next day would be Sabbath, the rest that Elohim launched on the seventh day when he finished his creation work.

Thereafter, follows an account of the erection of a tent of meeting (sanctuary), a text that contains much of Genesis 1. For instance, the cloud covers the mountain for six days, and on the seventh day, YHWH calls Moses to give him orders regarding the building (Ex 24:16; cf. Gn 1:1-2:3). The completion of the sanctuary linguistically reflects the cosmic temple of Genesis 1 in terms of ‘finishing’ (כלה), ‘seeing’ (ראה), and ‘blessing’ (ברך) (Ex 39:32, 43; 40:33; cf. Gn 1:31; 2:1, 2, 3) (Boorer 2012:54). In both texts, the command-execution motifs convey the sense of order and purpose in which everything occurs according to God’s project.

Moreover, like the cosmos of Genesis 1, the sanctuary is not a creation *ex-nihilo*, rather it is a product of the divine word acting through distinct realms. Just as Elohim commanded the earth to generate flora and fauna, the sea to bring forth sea-creatures and he blessed them, so God commanded and empowered Moses and Bezalel to build the sanctuary. For the Priestly writer, God's creative act involves not only his mighty word, but also distinct realms that carry out God's commands of creation while they are themselves related and dependent upon other entities within the web of creation (Elnes 1994:151). This principle is inherent in both texts of Genesis 1 and Exodus 25-40. While in Genesis 1 God is the key-figure, in the latter the people of Israel work in interdependence under the leadership of one person invested with the **רוח אלהים**.

It is purposely that Pg does not mention the intended location of Jerusalem. For Pg, the future **משכן/מקדש** (sanctuary/tent, Ex 25:8a; 40:16) was first built in an open environment (in desert, on Sinai, Ex 24:16), awaiting the future limited place. For Pg, the world as a whole is the sanctuary of God, who can be met not only at a particular place, but in the cult. For this reason, the Sabbath is encrusted into the structures of the universe of the Priestly creation. For Pg, there are no false gods because all nations are venerators of Elohim, the creator of the universe, although he is named differently by nations.⁹⁹

3.3.2.2 Genesis 1 in relation to Genesis 6-9

One will observe that Pg does not know any violence before the time of Noah. In contrast to the J flood reason (Gn 6:1-4), the Pg parallel (Gn 6:11-12) explains that not only **אדם** (humanity) is the cause of the flood, but the entire world was corrupt – all flesh failed to live according to the created order of Genesis 1. In this case, the 'inner order' of Genesis 1 is destroyed. It is obvious that all living things are intentionally involved in the current degraded mess. By the words, **וּתְמַלֵּא הָאָרֶץ חָמָס** (and the earth was filled with violence, Gn 6:11), the Priestly text compares **חָמָס** (violence) on earth with the abomination to God that calls forth the judicial intervention of Elohim (Garr 2003:188):

⁹⁹ The Persians think that Elohim is Ahura-Mazda, but Babylonians name him Marduk. The descendants of Abraham call him El Shadday, while for Israel he is called YHWH. For this reason, Pg concluded that Elohim is God of the descendants of Noah, implying the entire nations known hitherto (in the Persian Empire) (De Pury 2009:124-5)

Now the earth was corrupt in God's sight; and the earth will filled with violence. God saw how very corrupt the earth was, for all flesh had corrupted its way upon the earth. And God said to Noah, 'I have determined to make an end of all flesh, for the earth is filled with violence because of them; now I am going to destroy them along with the earth' (Gn 9:11-12).

Like Genesis 1, the next narrative is made upon introductive formulas depicting God's speeches: 'Then God said' (Gn 6:13-22). The narrative is carefully structured in a good Priestly style of a threefold decision-command-execution model. In Genesis 6:13, God's decision to destroy all flesh is followed by the command to build the ark (Gn 6:14-16), while the notice of imminent *מבול* waters (Gn 6:17-18) is followed by the command to supply food for those to be rescued (Gn 6:19-21). Just like Genesis 2:1-3 and Exodus 39:43, Genesis 6:22 concludes the unit with an execution formula: 'Noah did this; he did all that God commanded him.' Genesis 8 recapitulates the same formula: command-execution units. God's command to leave the ark (Gn 8:16-17) is followed by the fertility of the animals, and the leaving of the ark (vv18-19).

The idea is that the God who created the cosmos and defined living behaviours on earth, saw that the world of Genesis 6 is a contrast or perversion of the harmonic order of Genesis 1, and thereby an insult to himself (Lohfink 1994:107). Whereas the God of Genesis 1:31 deemed everything on earth (the ordered cosmos) *טוב מאד* (very good), in Genesis 6:11 he saw that that world is filled with violence (*והתמלא הארץ הזמם*). The word *הזמם* refers to criminal, destructive, injurious, pollution and evil of any sort that is seen as acts of violence destroying/harming the created order (Frymer-Kensky 1977:153). In Genesis 6:11, the earth is filled with *הזמם* since all flesh had polluted its way upon the earth so that God decided to erase everything on earth and start anew.¹⁰⁰

It is clear that the world of Genesis 6 is an antithesis of Genesis 1. While the cosmos of Genesis 1 is a pure and perfect created order regulated by the principles of diversity and a conflict-free, Genesis 6 typifies a world of violence. In Genesis 1, the components of the cosmos are interdependent, non-adversarial and non-contentious in the sense that each species is assigned its distinct space and provision, and thereby, there is no rivalry for survival (Garr 2003:191). In Genesis 1, nothing could lead to

¹⁰⁰ In this sense, Frymer-Kensky (1977:153) explains that the flood is not a punishment, but a means of getting rid of a totally polluted world and starting again with a clean and well-washed one.

violence. Human rule over animals was expected to be non-violent since both humans and animals were requested to remain herbivores (Gn 1:29). However, the world of Genesis 6 is wholly different: violence and competition.

In response to violence, the decision of Elohim is bitter: the destruction of the earth with its inhabitants. Elohim decided to destroy not only all flesh, but the earth itself since the latter was filled with חַמָּס of its inhabitants. Habel (2011:86) saw in this an act of injustice: destroying Earth for the fault of its residents implies that Earth does not have an intrinsic value before God. As in Genesis 1:2, the watery chaos again covered the earth. It is as if the world had reverted to its primordial situation when the deep flooded everything (Anderson 1994:70). Furthermore, after the flood event, God permitted a different form of relationship between humans and animals, a relation that is expressed in war language:

The fear and dread of you shall rest on every animal on the earth, and on every bird of the air, on everything that creeps on the ground, and on all the fish of the sea; into your hand, they are delivered. Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you; and just as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything. Only, you shall not eat flesh with its life, that is, its blood (Gn 9:2-4).

In this statement, animals are added for the provision of humans. The good news is that this is not without restriction. Although they are allowed to eat animals' meat, humans are forbidden to consume meat with blood. For Pg, dominion is not tyrannical, but a feature belonging to the created order. In Genesis 1:28-29 humans were given both the mandate to rule over animals and the order to be vegetarians. In Genesis 9, humans are simultaneously given permission to eat animals' meat and commanded to abstain from their blood¹⁰¹ which, as the carrier of life force, belongs to God. For Pg, whatever the imperious power, human rule must not surpass the limits that separate it from violence (Garr 2003:192). In this sense, the possibility of disregarding animal life is excluded:

¹⁰¹ God permitted, not recommended, animals' meat. That is why, in contrast to Genesis 1:29 where the verb נתן (to give) is used in *Qal* and God speaks in active voice (אֶתְּתִי לְךָ , I give to you), in Genesis 9:2 the same verb is used in the Niphal (אֶתְּתִי לְךָ , are given into your hands) expressing a passive voice. God conceded or allowed what humans had inaugurated (i.e. carnivorousness), but interdicted 'meat with blood' (Gn 9:5).

For your own lifeblood I will surely require a reckoning: from every animal I will require it and from human beings, each one for the blood of another, I will require a reckoning for human life (Gn 9:5).

The most significant feature is that the next verses depict the covenant, not with humans alone, but with the entire postdiluvian creation (Gn 9:1-17). The passage is divided into three parts, each introduced by a divine speech formula or an equivalent of it: ‘Then God said’ (Gn 9:1, 8, 12). Contrary to the J flood (the *Adamah* myth¹⁰²), for Pg Elohim remembered not only Noah, but also all the wild and tame animals that were with him in the ark (Gn 8:1a). These postdiluvian creatures are those announced in Genesis 6:18a to be rescued from the flood. The ברית עולם (eternal covenant) will be contracted, not just with Noah, but with every living being of all flesh that is upon the earth (Gn 9:8-11).

God’s remembrance of Noah and the remnant in the ark (Gn 8:1a) is confirmed in an everlasting covenant whose sign is the rainbow (Gn 9:12-17). In this act, the קָמַט in the world order (Gn 6:11-12) is resolved into the harmonic order of a new covenant. This is visible in the renewing of the blessing of Genesis 1:28 (cf. Gn 9:1) and by restating the *imago dei* status of humankind (v6) (Anderson 1994:72). Moreover, the covenant is signed by God’s unconditional commitment to never again threaten the earth by a flood – a kind of return to a primeval watery chaos (vv11, 15).

The above survey not only tried to situate Genesis 1 in its historical context, but also relocates the text within its original literary context, the Priestly Source. However, as the Priestly creation account is also part of the canonical context of the Bible, the following section tries to understand Genesis 1 in relation to other creation motifs throughout the earlier and later biblical traditions.

4. The creation motif in other Old Testament texts

In this section, I need to explore the Priestly creation account in relation to other OT texts where the creation motif also plays a significant role. The enterprise is based on the fact that Genesis 1 is the canonical opening chapter of the Bible. The target is not

¹⁰² This expression is borrowed from Habel (2011:83) to name the Yahwist flood narrative (Gn 6:5-8).

the apology of Genesis 1, but exploring a number of ecological motifs raised by other biblical texts in relation to the Priestly creation account.

4.1 Creation motif in the Yahwist epic

The Yahwist account of creation is usually claimed to be more eco-friendly than the Priestly creation account. Tradition-criticism identified it in the text of Genesis 2:4b-3:24. Like Genesis 1:1, the text starts with the indication of time (ביום), the act of creating of God (יהוה אלהים) and the created spaces (ארץ ושמים) (Gn 2:4b). Moreover, the status of the earth before creation (v5) is ‘not-yet fertile’ (Levin 2007:213). Contrary to Genesis 1, the fertility of the earth depends upon both the rain caused by the creator and human action of tilling the ground (v5cd). For this reason, the role of אדם (humanity) creation is to work the land, turning it into what can sustain life, while God’s role is providing the rain. For Hiebert (1996:72), these two functions are ‘the most fundamental facts of existence, the absence of which signify the situation of the world before creation.’

Another important feature is the word אר (v6) referring to waters below the earth that irrigated the surface of the ground. The linguistic similarities between the Hebrew words used in this verse portray eloquent interdependence. אדמה (the ground) will only produce vegetation if אר (water) irrigates the earth and אדם serves the arable ground of the earth (Van Wolde 1998:29). The coupling of the words עבד and שמר (v15) implies that what is expected from אדם is to serve/care for and preserve/protect the אדמה. For Habel (2011:49), the focuses of Genesis 1:28 and Genesis 2:15 are mutually exclusive in the sense that the Yahwist אדם is a servant and protector while the Priestly אדם is a king over Earth.

While the earth is described as dependent on human action for its fertility (v5c), אדם is also said to be made from אדמה. More than a place for human labour (vv8, 15), אדמה¹⁰³ is also the realm from which humans and animals derive (vv5-7, 18). In the Yahwist perspective, all living beings rose from a common realm that binds them in a solid relationship: ‘*Adamah* is a co-agent with YHWH Elohim in the formation of both

¹⁰³ The Yahwist employed ארץ to refer, either to the entire earth or to all regions where rainfall and vegetation are present (2:4b-6). In following verses, the narrator no longer uses ארץ but uses אדמה to mean the arable land. By this, the narrator makes a difference between the entire earth (ארץ) and the cultivable ground (אדמה).

humans and forests; *Adamah* is God's partner in the creation of all life on Earth' (Habel 2011:51). Finally when humans are expelled from Eden, they are sent to till the אדמה for their survival (Gn 3:23). Unlike the *imago dei* status of humans in Genesis 1:26, אדמה (arable soil) is the beginning and the end of human life: 'as the first human was derived from arable soil, so all humans are destined to return to it at death' (Hiebert 1996:35).

The text is designed to suggest interconnectedness of all creatures on earth. Both אדם and fauna (typified by the snake) are naked. איש and אשה (man and woman) were ערומים (naked, Gn 2:25), while the snake is introduced as ערום (knowing or shrewd, Gn 3:1). Prior to eating the fruit of the tree, humans were ignorant of their nakedness, but after eating they acquired an awareness of their limits. The words ומאץ הדעת טוב ורע (the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Gn 2:17) symbolise the limits between the human and the divine, and this אץ is established to test the way humans will relate to other beings of אדמה (arable soil) in Eden (Habel 2011:54).

Both humans and animals are called בפש היה, living beings (Gn 2:7 & 2:19). The book of Ecclesiastes is more radical on the issue.¹⁰⁴ In Ecclesiastes 3:18-21, the Wise finds no vital distinction between animals and humans. For Ecclesiastes, humans are animals sharing a common breath of life and their destiny is the same:

I said in my heart, as for human beings, surely God has tested them to show they are themselves only animals. For the fate of humans and the fate of animals are the same. As one dies, so dies the other. They all have one breath, and humans have no advantage over the animals, for everything is vanity (הבל). All go to one place; all are from the dust (אדמה). Who knows whether the life-breath (רוח) of humans ascends on high and the life-breath (רוח) of animals descends to the netherworld? (Ec 3:18-21, NRSV)

In J's theology, animals are depicted as having wisdom and speech, as did the snake in the garden (3:1). In Numbers 22:22-35, the donkey had more wisdom than Balaam

¹⁰⁴ Probably, the socio-historical context of the book of Ecclesiastes had much contributed to its dispassionate thought. The late Persian period and the inauguration of the Hellenistic age was the time of social anxieties favouring those who had great capitals to have more and disadvantaging the lesser. Probably, Ecclesiastes' dispassionate tone is hurt by this fact. Ecclesiastes opens its cosmic reflection with ironic questions (1:3), and concludes with demonstrating how הבל are humans, whatever they are and have (12:7). For Ecclesiastes, creation has no goal and is filled with toil and frustration. Unlike Genesis 1-2, Deutero-Isaiah, Job 38-41 and Psalm 104 claim that creation was made by God for a purpose, Ecclesiastes excludes cosmogony, as for him creation is הבל (vanity, 12:7-8). As generations rise and pass away (1:5), so creation as a whole will eventually go and never return (Brown 2010:181).

(human) in recognising the messenger of YHWH. However, unlike Ecclesiastes, the Yahwist view of life origin (אדמה) does not preclude that all of its parts hold the same status or that there is no sense of hierarchy in his creation epic. However, אדם had been granted the power to name animals. According to Von Rad (1972:83), ‘to name’ or ‘to know the name’ of a person or an animal in the Ancient Near Eastern thought implied having power and control over them. By naming animals, אדם carried out a dominion role over the animal kingdom.

However, animals are first proposed to be עוזר (helper) for אדם, even if the latter did not find one that was right for him (v19). This verse does not imply that animals are lesser beings or lack an intrinsic value, but serves as a literary narrative link to the new creature: אשה (woman). Furthermore, the word עוזר is often used to refer to God’s helping needy peoples/humans (Dt 33:7; Ps 20:5). The word then does not suggest weakness or even subordination of any kind, but partner. In Genesis 2:19, human partners are ‘every animal of the field’ and ‘every birds of the air.’ According to Habel (2011:55), the עוזר role of animals apparently consists of helping אדם to preserve the forest ecosystem of Eden. In this sense, the disorder in Eden involved only the creatures of אדמה: humans, animals and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. For this reason, the after-garden situation is depicted in painful relations: אדם will get his food from אדמה through hard-work. The surface of the earth will need enormous effort to produce vegetation, and hostility was launched between the worlds of humans and animals (Gn 3:8-24).

In conclusion, let us say that Genesis 1:1-2:4a has a broader vision of the world than the Yahwist. While the Yahwist concentrated on one aspect: the relationship between man and woman (איש and אשה) and ארץ or אדמה (earth or arable soil), Genesis 1:1-2:4a conveys the creation of the entire universe (the skies and the earth) (Van Wolde 1998:37). The agrarian thought of the Yahwist epic corresponds to the limited agrarian vision of people in Palestine, while the Priestly writer is addressing more challenges happening in the wide exilic context. The description of God as a potter (יצר) and a planter (נטע) (Gn 2:7,8) is replaced by a sovereign God whose words and actions command the structure of the cosmos (Gn 1). It is this mighty portrayal of God that is also described in the Second Isaiah.

4.2 Creation in Deutero-Isaiah

4.2.1 Introduction

The book of Deutero-Isaiah is significant for the study of Genesis 1 since it also relates to the exilic context. As said before, the Babylonians proclaimed Marduk as the creator of the universe and the agent of their political hegemony. During the New Year party, obviously Israel faced the recitation of the *Enuma elish* epic that concludes with Marduk ruling supremely from his temple in Babylon (Mann 2000:136). In contrast, Second Isaiah invoked Israel's God as the creator of the ends of the earth and as the creator of Israel (40:28; 43:15).

For this reason, Isaiah 40-55 present two broad cosmogonic categories. The first focuses on the temple or temple-city re/building motif (40:12–31; 44:24–45:13; 45:1–25; 54–55 ; cf. the whole Pg), while the second concerns the exodus-land taking motif (41:17–20; 42:13–17; 43:1–7; 43:16–21; 49:8–12; 51:9–11). The second group is mainly concerned with the creation or re-creation of Israel in light of exodus traditions. For this reason, it is often called *ethonogony* of Israel after the exile (Mann 2000:145). Thus, I will give attention to the first group that is proper cosmogony. I will seek to show to what extent these cosmic texts of Isaiah relate to Ancient Near Eastern and the Priestly creation account. Isaiah 40:12-31 will be used as the paradigmatic text for the category.

4.2.2 Creation motif in Isaiah 40:12-31

This unit invites the reader to look at the universe structures in order to recognise that YHWH, who created the three storeys of the cosmos (waters, skies, earth), also created their inhabitants (v26). Whether these inhabitants threaten Israel – nations (in person of their kings) and stars (venerated as gods) – there is nothing to fear since all stand under the power of YHWH. In contrast to Marduk's temple, Zion/Jerusalem plays a significant role in the collection (40:9; 44:28). Although the figure of Zion derives from the traditions linked to the Davidic dynasty ברית (covenant) in Isaiah 55:3 the ברית is provided to the entire universe, and the term משיח (the anointed) is used for

Cyrus (Is 45:1) (Mann 2000:138). The structural shape of the text is: nations (40:12-17), rulers (vv18-24), the stars (vv25-26) and Israel (vv27-31).

The entire sequence assumes that the cosmos is a system in which the inhabitants of its three blocs (earth, skies and waters) are under God's authority. The cosmogonic parallels with Genesis 1 are visible. YHWH is presented as a storm God employing wind as weapon over desert and sea for the emergence of Israel (or Zion, the temple-city [40:16-21]). YHWH is the creator of the ends of the earth, and his identity affects the cosmic order, political and divine powers (vv26-28) (Mann 2000:138). Compared to the cosmic power of YHWH, nations are as nothing, yet, less than nothing and empty (v17). Like Genesis 1:2, the word תהו is used in reference to chaos before the creation of the world (45:18-19), or emptiness of idols and rulers (40:23; 44:9). Princes/kings are compared to grass that is dried up and blown away (40:23).

In Isaiah 40:25-26, the audience is invited to look at the stars, not as deities, but as parts of the natural order. For Isaiah, the power bestowed on stars is originated in YHWH (v26). This apologetic stance of Second Isaiah, like Genesis 1, serves as opposition to the Babylonian *Enuma elish* epic in which Marduk established the astral constellations (Mann 2000:140). Both Second Isaiah and the Priestly creation account, portray the stars as emptied from divine powers and reduced to ordinary natural parts of the universe order made by Elohim, the 'creator of the ends of the earth' (Is 40:28).

With this perspective, Second Isaiah is probably among the first of all biblical texts to use the verb ברא for God's activity in the cosmos (Stuhlmüller 1970:209). Elsewhere in the biblical traditions, ברא is used by the Priestly layer and other writings that relate to the exilic settings (Dt 4:32). While the verb ברא occurs twelve times in the Priestly source, it appears sixteen times in Second Isaiah out of its forty-four uses in the Old Testament (Humbert 1958a:150). Its occurrence appears for the creation of the stars (40:26), the ends of the earth (40:28), the darkness (45:7b), the skies (42:5), humans (45:12) and the non-chaotic or ordered skies and earth (45:18b). In Second Isaiah, ברא is directly linked to the sovereign power of God to call forth the world order and re-creation of Israel, while in the Priestly creation account it refers to all the actions of the ordering of the cosmos.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ The meaning and implication of ברא in Genesis 1 will be discussed in the next chapter.

God commanded that the temple and temple-city be rebuilt (44:26), that the deep be controlled (44:27), and that the king and his agents execute his order (44:28). This syntax reflects not only aspects of the Priestly creation process, but even more of the ancient cosmogonies process. Cosmogony results in a world made for gods – with temples, cities, king, people, raw materials for temple worship, and the planets to sign cultic festivals (Clifford 1994:175). The Priestly creation and Deutero-Isaiah followed this scheme but with a different perspective.

In Genesis 1, as well as in Isaiah 45:12, 18, the earth, the skies and their hosts are the work of God. Isaiah 45 and Exodus 25-40 have much in common with Genesis 1. While Genesis 1 is the Godly, cosmic temple, Isaiah 45 contains features that serve as motivation for the rebuilding of the Jerusalem temple. As for Genesis 1, the building of Jerusalem or its temple needs the cooperation of all sectors. The historical purpose of Second Isaiah as well as Genesis 1 consisted of motivating for the reconstruction of the ruins that resulted from the Babylonian exile.

4.3 The manifold aspects of ecosystems (Psalm 104)

This psalm, which is wholly about God's creation, is perhaps the most extensive creation-related text outside the book of Genesis. As in Genesis 1, the hymn delineates the structures or broad domains of creation before detailing various forms of life and their habitations. The structural outline moves from the divine realm (vv1-4) towards the earthly realm: the sea (6-9, 25-26) and the land (10-18), with specific emphasis on God's provision for all life (27-30; cf. Gn 1:29-30). The hymn ends with words of praise to God for all creatures (27-35). In doing so, the psalmist aims not to offer information about how the world works, but to invite God's praise and sustaining joy in creation (Brown 2010:145).

The psalmist is probably aware of the present post-diluvian world of Genesis 9. He recognises predators and prey which are aspects of creation as it stands, not as it once was at the beginning (Gn 1:29-30), or as it will be in the future fulfilment (Is 11:6-9). In this sense, the psalmist acknowledges the possibility of famine (v29), as well as earthquake and volcanic threat (v32). It is possible that the socio-historical context of the psalmist is embedded with depletion of natural resources and natural

disasters. Unlike Genesis 6-9, the psalmist's creation is not maintained by God's covenant, but by God's joy in creation (v31), as declared by Brown (2010:148):

By ceasing to rejoice, God could at any moment turn creation back into a quivering mass of chaos. The possibility of cosmic collapse in the psalm is attributed not to the divine wrath set against an obstinate creation, not to threatening chaos poised to overtake creation, but to something much less dramatic but much more possible, namely, God's lack of joy in creation.

In the opening strophes, light and skies are linked to the identity of God (1-2). Like Genesis 1, the hymn was probably composed against the epic (poem) *Enuma elish* that was written in honour of Marduk, the creator-god of the Babylonian empire (Humbert 1958b:77). The Psalm aims at challenging this Babylonian myth that not Marduk, but YHWH is the creator and provider of the universe. It is possible that all three texts – Genesis 1, Psalm 104 and *Enuma elish* – were written to be read during the New Year festival.¹⁰⁶ As in Genesis 1, the first creative activity is not the separation of light and darkness, but the 'presence' of light, which is part of the very nature of God (Miller 2000:89).

Like Genesis 1, תהום is demythologised and turned into a piece of clothing. Here, the deep is not pre-existent, but compared to a garment that covered the earth before the ordering and stability of earth (v6). As in Genesis 1:6ff, waters are set in boundary so that they may not cross and re-cover the earth (v9). The creation of earth occurs, therefore, in two stages: the covering of the earth with the watery deep and the movement of these waters towards places where they may function positively for animals (v11), fertility of earth (v14) and food for creatures (vv14-15). By his power and thunder the primeval waters fled, the mountains rose and the valleys sank, and YHWH set bounds for the chaotic waters to restrain them from destroying cosmic order (Ludwig 1973:351). The rise of earth from the deep gives place for habitations and earth's fertility: the appearance of vegetation and further details of fauna species (vv13-18).

¹⁰⁶ For further details, see Humbert, P 1958. La relation entre Genèse 1 et Psaume 104 avec la Liturgie du Nouvel-An, in *Opuscule de l'Hébraïsant*, 60-82. Neuchâtel: Université de Neuchâtel.

As in Genesis 1, God is the provider of food for all living creatures: ‘he provides grass for the cattle and crops for people to cultivate’ (v14). This strophe enlightens the diet motif of Genesis 1:29: grass is for animals, but humans can have more vegetal products – wine, oil, לחם (food) – through labour (v15). The poetry is likely informed by Genesis 1-9 for its further details of provision for all creatures. God gives drinks to the wild beasts (v11), irrigates mountains and trees (vv13, 16), causes grass for cattle (v14), provides wine, oil and food for humans (v15), supplies prey for lions (v21), as well as food for all creatures (v27). In addition, God’s open hand (v28) and his renewing of the face of earth (v30) are images of provision. The life-giving provision is an act of creation, in the sense that each new birth contributes to the renewal of the earth (Miller 2000:94).

Thereafter, the creative act moves to the provision of proper times for different creatures to work for their basic survival. The sun and the moon are not only created for themselves, but also for serving a regular schedule that provides time for the beasts to hunt (at night) and for people to perform their labours during the day (vv19-23). Therefore, in their function of ruling times (cf. Gn 1:14), the planets also command living beings (Beauchamp 1969:132). By contrast, the wicked – the object of the psalmist’s scorn – do not conform to this order. By cursing the wicked, the psalmist transfers the chaos mythically attributed to Leviathan to wicked humans (Brown 2010:145). Therefore, the poetry forcefully convicts the רשע (wicked) and חטא (criminal) who are depicted as a danger for the earth (v35a). Brueggemann (1997:156) thinks that חטא refers to:

Those who refuse to receive life in creation on terms of generous extravagance, no doubt in order to practise a hoarding autonomy in denial that creation is indeed governed and held by its Creator. Creation has within it the sovereign seriousness of God, who will not tolerate the violation of the terms of creation, which are terms of gift, dependence and extravagance.

Therefore, in verse 24, the poetry exalts the manifold ecosystems made by YHWH. After the earth, now the poetry turns to the sea and its host: numerous רמש (v25b; cf. Gn 1:21), marine beasts (v25) and Leviathan (v.26). Like תהום, Leviathan was seen in the Semitic world as the monster of the deep, a creature whose defeat is considered as

vital for God and the cosmos order (Brown 2010:149). However, Psalm 104:26a (as in Genesis 1:21) tamed the chaos monster: instead of being God's enemy and cosmic threat, Leviathan is seen as an integral part of the joyful creation and depends upon God's provision (vv26b-27). The cosmic threat is not Leviathan, but the wicked (v35). Humans are also present in the sea by means of transport: ships (v26a). Like the land, the sea is available for both human beings and animals, as Brown declared (2010:147):

The earth is created to accommodate myriad creatures great and small, people included. The earth is host and home to all living kind, and as such it is a source of joy. The earth provides wine to 'cheer the human heart, oil to make the face shine' (v.15a). The sea, home to innumerable marine creatures, is a playfield for both God and Leviathan (vv. 25, 26b). In short, creation is cast in the *imago habitationis*, and joyfully so.

We should therefore conclude that Psalm 104 depicts earth as the realm where animals and humans have the essentials for their survival. This hymn parallels in some aspects the Priestly creation account and Job 38-41. It praises God as the creator and sustainer of the cosmos and its inhabitants. It is a kind of human delight and feeling of pleasure in God's creative work: 'the earth is full of your creatures' (Ps 104:24c). The hymn also praises God's provision for all living beings: there is water for wild animals (v11), grass for cattle, prey for lion and plants, wine and oil for humans (v14).

The threat to earth is not Leviathan, but the wicked (v35). In the psalmist's mind, the wicked refuse to play a positive role within creation and choose instead to fight against God and the created order, and then become sources of chaos (Brown 2010:150). The action of human beings is also noted: next to the trees planted by God (v16a), it is implied that humans made the ships (v26). The most important feature is that the verb *ברא* is only utilised for living creatures. The expression: 'May YHWH rejoice in his work' (v31b) can be paralleled with Genesis 1:31 relating to Sabbath. The psalmist – like Job – could not write the word Sabbath due to its sapiential and universal perspective concerning the entire humanity (Beauchamp 1969:139). The hymn concludes then in the same way as the Priestly creation account.

4.4 Job's reflection on the natural world (Job 38-41)

Creation is presented in the book of Job through two discourses: Job's speeches and God's speeches. Job 38-41 are mainly God's responses to Job's views of God's creation as a violent and careless manipulation of things and living beings (9:5-13; 10:8-13; 12:13-25). While Bildad sees order and majesty in God's work (25:1-6; 26:5-24) and Elihu recognises the absolute awe of nature (36:2-4), Job has wished creation away and invited chaos as a solution to his sufferings. One will see that the first speech of Job is the cursing of the day of his creation (3:3).

While Psalm 104 implores the removal of the wicked and Genesis 6-9 describes the deletion of the corrupted world and the renewal of cosmos, for Job the earth remains under the power of the wicked (9:16-24). In this sense, Job mocks God's violent attack towards cosmos parts – fierce moving of mountains, shaking in anger earth and earth's pillars (vv5-6), luminaries (v7), sea and skies (vv8-9) – and maintains that God's power is arbitrarily utilised at the cost of innocent people like him (12:2-3; 13:1-2). For Job, the created world is unjust since it does not reward righteous humans, but favoured wicked people (Clifford 1994:189).

In Job 38-41, God handles these complaints through two speeches: 38:1-40:5 and 40:6-41:26, both challenging Job through ironic or sarcastic rhetorical questions. The first addresses God's cosmic scheme (38:1), while the second deals with God's justice (40:8). God's question 'Where were you when I laid the foundation of the Earth?' (38:4), aims at putting Job in his creaturely place in relation to the creator (God) and other earth members. God's speech is a kind of creation account – starting differently from Genesis 1 – that moves from creation in the beginning to the ordering of the cosmos (Bauckham 2010:39). The vision of the cosmos is far larger even than that of Genesis 1.

The entire speech depicts God as the architect of the Earth (38:4-7), the oceans (38:8-11) and the dawn (38:12-15). Prior to Job's (human) existence, God is depicted as the maker of the huge edifice of the world, confining watery chaos opposing an ordered cosmos and regulating the dawn. In establishing earth, Yahweh shut in the sea (yam) when it burst forth from the womb, and he is the one who continues to uphold the total cosmic order (Ludwig 1973:351). Thereafter, the speech presents God as the

master of the underworld (38:16-18), the one who sets light from darkness (38:19-21) and controls adverse and positive weathers (38:22-30, 34-38), as well as stars (38:31-33). The positive role of weather causes rain even to places where no human lives (v26): 'God brings rain not only on the just and unjust, but on the desert as well as the sown land' (Tucker 1997:14). This precision is an introductory link to God's care and provision for animals, which will be the major subject of Job 38:39-39:30.

All the wild animals in Job 38:39-39:30 are separate from Job's agricultural endeavours. In general, the ten wild animals in this passage are described not as threats to humans (very few are), but that they are totally independent of humans, both for their home and life. Unlike domestic animals, wild animals neither serve human beings nor are provided for by them. For Habel (2001:179-89), God's response to Job subverts and undermines the Genesis mandate of dominion over the animal realm (Gn 1:28). The speech reduces human power to animals that belong to human homeland. It has the value of asserting that Job (humans) is not the centre nor climax of animals, but that wild animals depend directly on God's provision. The Lord delights in their independence from humans, cares for them, and invites Job to join in celebrating their presence in the world (Tucker 1997:14).

In this sense, Job's assumption that human beings are the centre of the cosmos is defied in the whole scheme of Job 38-39. God has designed and continues to maintain an ordered cosmos within which the various creatures had been allotted their places (Bauckham 2010:44). Job (humans) is described as having a limited position in the universe scheme of things, a less limited place than many other creatures. Humans are disillusioned from an anthropocentric vision of the world to a broader perception of the complexity of the cosmos. Against Job's accusation of God's hunting him like a lion (10:16), God is portrayed as the one who hunts for lion (38:39-40). Even the ostrich – image of stupidity – is so by design (38:39-40). The idea is that 'God creates for God, not for human beings, and need not answer the single-minded Job who assumes he is the centre of the universe' (Clifford 1994:194). The aim of this speech is to remind Job that much of the cosmos is beyond his understanding: the sun, the stars, the weather or the wild animals. In other words, 'humanity does not understand all things, nor manage them, but God does' (Tucker 1997:15).

In the second speech (40:6-41:26), God's address profiles two great animals that were mythically regarded as dangerous: Behemoth (40:15-24) and Leviathan (40:25-41:26). Modern interpreters render these wild animals respectively as hippopotamus and crocodile (Bauckham 2010:54). However, in 1 Enoch 60:7-9, Leviathan and Behemoth are respectively creatures of the depths of the deeps (Yam) and the massive desert, the milieu of god Môt, one of Baal rivals (Clifford 1994:195). In Ugarit, Leviathan is a mythological beast allied with Yam (sea), while Behemoth resides in desert. Unlike Genesis 1 and Psalm 104, in Job 40, Leviathan is an agent of chaos.

Thus, Behemoth is the land monster, while Leviathan is the primal sea monster. Whatever they are, these beasts symbolised threat to both humans and cosmic order in Semitic thought. Therefore, if Job intends to order the universe more justly than God, these are the creatures that he will face. They are forces of chaos and destruction in the created world. Nothing is said about whether God intends to defeat or subjugate them, or had abolished them, but they are integral acts/parts of God's creation (40:19; 41:26). Job's arrogance is challenged by demonstrating to him that he cannot control these beasts. On this issue Habel (1985:574) declared:

If Yahweh's Lordship involves controlling the forces of chaos and evil in the world, both of which he admits are present, Job needs to recognise he is part of that world. He can either be like Leviathan and stir chaos or be like God and seek to control it.

In short, the world depicted in Job 38-41— extending the Priestly thought — shows that the created universe is full of a diversity of creatures that are beyond human control. Human rule over animals in Genesis 1:26-28 is restricted to domestic fauna. The earth is presented as also hosting wild beasts living independently from humans. The stars and sea creatures also function without human interference. Briefly, the earth hosts myriad life-forms, all unmanageable by humans, but all sustained by God (Brown 2010:129). As in Genesis 1-9, Job 38-41 views the world with monsters (cf. Gn 1:21), scavengers and predators (Gn 6-9), but all belong to the delightful world of God. In this passage, God celebrates each creature for itself and independently from others (Clifford 1994: 197). Job is not an isolated creation (nor its centre), but rather a fellow creature with others.

4.5 The cosmos as arena of wisdom (Proverbs 8: 22-31)

The creation motif is found mainly in two passages of the book of Proverbs: 3:19-20 and 8:22-31. The first text affirms that earth and skies were created by חכמה (wisdom) and תבונה¹⁰⁷, and that it is within wisdom that the תהום were divided. In the second text, wisdom is personified and given a long speech: closely connected with YHWH before and during the creative ordering of the cosmos. I will concentrate on the second text since it develops much of the cosmogony of the first. Its structure presents wisdom in the remote past, her role during God's creation acts to ensure a safe universe for creatures, and her interaction with humans (Yee 1982:61). The structural outline of this proverb is chiasitic:¹⁰⁸

- A: vv22-23 Wisdom, as first act of creation
- B : vv24-26 Negative state of creation
- B': vv27-29 Positive presentation of creation
- A': vv30-31 Wisdom celebration

In this chiasitic structure, wisdom is presented as the first act of creation. Before the creation phase, wisdom is a passive agent (vv22-23). Being brought into being, it played an active role – with YHWH – in turning creation from a negative state (vv24-26) to its positive state (vv27-29). As the Egyptian *ma'at*,¹⁰⁹ wisdom's antiquity before creation bestows on her the highest power and authority by which creation was made and is maintained. In verses 30-31, wisdom is celebrated as God's creative law that gave enduring structure to the cosmos. Like the Egyptian *ma'at*, the חכמה (wisdom) enables humans/rulers to issue laws that give enduring structure to society (Waltke 2004:407). This recalls the motif of the cosmic temple of Genesis 1 and Near Eastern cosmogonies: 'the house ... is the universe that man constructs for himself by imitating the paradigmatic creation of the gods, the cosmogony' (Eliade 1959:56-57).

¹⁰⁷ According to the *E-sword Bible online*, the word תבונה can be translated also as wisdom or intelligence, see www.e-sword.net/proverbs/ (Accessed 23 May 2012).

¹⁰⁸ This structure is an adaptation of the work of Waltke, B K 2004. *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15*. Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 404.

¹⁰⁹ In the Egyptian Coffin Texts, *Atum* announced that his daughter *Tefnut*, the sister of *Schu*, is *ma'at*. He said that in the primeval time, when as yet nothing existed (cf. Pr 8:24-26), only *Ma'at* and *Schu* were with him (Waltke 2004:407).

Creation was made through wisdom, the ראשית (beginning) of God's acts (v22). Wisdom pre-existed the primeval depth (תהום) and its remnants (מים and ים) (vv24-29).

In verses 27-30, the metaphors of God creating the universe are those of building and construction. As in Genesis 1, God commanded the waters (v29), established and fixed the skies (v28), carved the foundation of the earth (v30), assigned limits to the sea and contained the earth and skies. The strophe contains thematic progression from God's building of upper cosmos (skies, clouds) to God's ordering of lower domains of the universe (carving the foundation of the earth, sea limits, containing the springs of the deep). God limited (not defeated) primal deep since the watery chaos was regarded as a continual threat to the created order. In Proverbs 8, as in Genesis 1:2, it is from these chaotic oceans that the creator secures the safety of the universe (Yee 1992:93).

The last strophe (v31) reveals the nurturing role of God ensuring safety of the universe for wisdom and creation order against the chaotic oceans. The expression שעשעים (delight, v30) recalls God's re-creation activity for the good of the universe. Creation is the divine fixed order in the cosmos for the purposeful existence of humans and other living creatures. Like Genesis 1, Proverbs 8 depicts the cosmos as an edifice that God designed to be a secure place, a world separated from chaos by decree (wisdom) (Brown 2010:165). The literary context of Proverb 8 as a whole shows that wisdom is meant to maintain the created order in the sense that creation is 'not a once-for-all event but a process taking place continually' (Hermisson 1978:46-7). In this sense, the created order is an arena of wisdom that enables life for both humans and other beings.

At the first act of creation, wisdom is the means by which God founded the cosmos. Through wisdom, God established the cosmic entities on which creation order stands (Pr 3:20). By wisdom, God created and re-creates so that the cosmos reveals a rational order, despite its rich complexities (Brown 2010:168). In this sense, the created order is organised on the same principles that prevent society collapsing into anarchy. Like Genesis 1, 'the earthly order emulates the heavenly, and like the heavenly, it is guaranteed by the deity' (Keel 1978:96). As Sabbath concludes the Priestly creation account, Proverbs 8 finds its climax in the phenomenon of joy and delight (Brown 1996:38). Unlike Egyptian *Schu*, wisdom is not a deity, but God's

decree by which creation was made and order is maintained in the society. It is that 'wisdom' that keeps the very life of the universe (8:35-36).

5. Summary and conclusion

This chapter not only tried to understand Genesis 1:1-2:4a in its socio-historical context, but also within its original literary context (the Priestly writer) as well as in its relation to other biblical texts in which the creation motif is embedded. As a result, we acknowledged that Genesis 1 textually and thematically adopted cosmogonic motifs of the ancient Near East while offering a unique perspective on the created order. Like its ancient parallels, the Priestly creation account adopted the motif of watery chaos or luminaries, but carefully depersonalised and emptied them of the deity status attributed to them. For Genesis 1, these are an integral part of the created order. In accordance with its peers, Genesis 1 regards the act of separation/differentiation as the means by which order is established in the universe that is a kind of cosmic dwelling of God. Humans are, in his sight, not the slaves of gods, but God's partner (*imago dei*) and king over the world of animals and earth, with restraints to this kingship (Gn 1:29). This ideal is contextually rooted in the exilic or postexilic times.

In its original context, we realised that Genesis 1 serves as a model by which the world of the Priestly writer is evaluated. The Priestly world of Genesis 6-9 as well as Exodus 25-40 presuppose or are even built on the cosmogonic motifs of the Priestly creation. While the Priestly flood account assumes the primeval waters of Genesis 1:2, the renewal of blessing in Genesis 9:1-17 recalls Genesis 1:28-29. Although animals are added to human provision, their blood (life) is not allowed for consumption. The sanctuary building narrative (Ex 25-40) is said to be a human continuation of God's creation of six days in Genesis 1. This assumption is based on textual and thematic similarities between these two texts (Gn 1 & Ex 25-40). In the three texts (Gn 1; Gn 6-9; Ex 25-40), the motif of command-execution is obvious.

Finally, other biblical creation texts in the Bible helped to acknowledge the way natural order was viewed in other biblical traditions. The Yahwist and Ecclesiastes present humans and animals as products of ארמה (the arable land). Psalm 104 seems to be a parallel of Genesis 1, but it is a call to all creatures to praise God for his

continuing work in the created order. Proverbs 8 later identified God's mighty words of Genesis 1 with *חכמה* that is meant as wisdom or decree by which the created order was established. Job 38-41 is a challenge to human beings in the sense that the world contains diverse features that are beyond human understanding. God is the owner of the universe, and humans as well as animals are parts of the diversity of the ordered cosmos. Job is therefore put in the situation of contemplation of the beauty of the universe.

The following chapter will therefore be an attempt to carefully analyse Genesis 1:1-2:4a, and try to see to what extent the text embeds elements of anthropocentrism and at the same time offers ecological wisdom. A structural analysis informed with ecological insights as well as elements of historical literary criticism will be employed to accomplish this exegetical task.

CHAPTER FIVE: LITERARY ANALYSIS OF THE PRIESTLY CREATION ACCOUNT

1. Introduction

This chapter is a literary analysis of Genesis 1:1-2:4a focusing on its structure as a whole as well as some sub-thematic structures that will be evaluated in relation to the whole design of the text. Attention will mainly be given to ecological functions of the Hebrew key words and motifs throughout the text. We consider that, ‘the Hebrew language does not transport ideas as a medium, but the language itself is an expression of the thought patterns of Israel without which full appreciation is impossible’ (Nel 2005:9-10). Before any investigation, let us determine the literary integrity of the text.

2. Genesis 1:1-2:4a: literary considerations

Before outlining the structure and framework of Genesis 1:1-2:4a, we need to be aware of the significance of literary forms or genre recognition and the literary issues of the passage. By recognising the genre that is used in the text, the reader will enter into the way of thinking of the account in order to avoid thoughts that are external to the language and purpose of the text. The literary matters will also enable us to assess the literary integrity of the text, the basis for our ecological investigation.

2.1 Genesis 1:1-2:4a as a ‘mythopoeic’ genre

The Priestly creation account belongs to the first eleven chapters of Genesis that are regarded as supra-historic describing the earlier origins of the universe, thoughts, people and cultural systems. The most dominant literary form encompassed in Genesis 1-11 is ‘myth’, namely the ‘origin myths’ and ‘catastrophe myths’ (Habel 2011:29). A cosmogonic-mythopoeic text such as Genesis 1 offers not individual inventions, but a reflexion conveying traditional thoughts about the organisation of the cosmos.

The Oxford English Dictionary¹¹⁰ defines ‘myth’ as a purely fictitious narrative that involves supernatural beings or forces, which provides an explanation, aetiology, or justification for the early origin of the cosmos, society, religious or ritual belief or natural phenomenon. In this sense, modern parlance often links myths with falsehood and untrue fairy-tales as opposed to logical reason. This negative meaning is due to the influence of the Enlightenment shift to reason as the basis for science, and then placed myth in the sphere of the irrational (Beaude 2005:1089).

It is not fair to define myth or ‘mythopoeic’ in terms of true or untrue criteria. In Greek, the word *mythos* simply means a narrative or story without any connotation of truth or falsehood (Ogden 1983:389). It is a traditional account about the events in which the god or gods are the primary actors. In religious or biblical contexts, myth is only a story or an account in which supernatural entities determine, shape, or affect in some way the created order and humanity’s actions (Wiebe 1999:67). Mostly, myth contains a structure of meaning about ‘serious’ subjects or reflections on crucial problems of life or societal concerns (Van Seters 2011b:370).¹¹¹

It is in this sense that Gous and Van Heerden (2006:178) maintained that the P creation account is not mainly concerned with how the world came into being, but the ‘creation of meaning after a major disaster [the exile]’. It is more an account that calls forth its reader for hope and positive actions rather than simply a report of the past. It aims at rescuing the faith of people in crisis by means of cosmic order that resulted from chaos. The aim of a myth is not merely the ‘fact’ told, but the actions to be performed by the addressee. Thus, Ricoeur (1967:5) defined myth or mythopoeic as:

A traditional narration which relates to events that happened at the beginning of time and which has the purpose of providing grounds for the ritual actions of men (sic) today, and ... establishing all the forms of actions and thought by which man (sic) understands himself in the world.

Although this statement is defined from a human-centred perspective, it has relativity with the ANE vision. According to Barr (1959:2), the term myth should be read as the

¹¹⁰ Oxford English Dictionary Online June 2012. Myth noun. Available online from: <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/124670?rskey=m9SrtA&result=6> (Accessed 31 August 2012).

¹¹¹ This article is the collected essay of the earlier article of the same author: Van Seters, J 1989. The Creation of Man and the Creation of the King. ZAW 101, 333-42.

‘sort of thing we find in Ugarit, or in the *Enuma elish*, or in other expressions of culture which in fact impinged upon Israel with some directness’. These extra-biblical myths convey relativeness between gods and humans, gods and nature, nature and humans, and the primordial chaotic and the ordered actual world. They tell how, ‘through the deeds of supernatural beings, a reality came into existence, be it the whole reality, the Cosmos, or only a fragment of reality – an island, a species of plant, a particular kind of human behaviour, an institution’ (Eliade 1963:5).

As mythopoeic, Genesis 1:1-2:4a proclaims ‘mythemes’ (truth) that are designed to be ritually performed for the maintenance and well-being of the world order. Like the *Enuma elish* epic, Genesis 1:1-2:4a worked as a cultic-ritual recitation that recurs every seventh day celebrating God for the ordering of the cosmos. Thus, during the second temple times, the Priestly courses (משמרות) and the אנשי מעמד (men at function) who met at the יום כפרים (day of atonement) regularly reciting portions of Genesis 1:1-2:4a, namely Genesis 2:1, the completion of the sky, earth and their host (Weinfeld 1981:510). In this regard, the refrains וירא אלהים כי טוב (and God saw that it was good) and ויהי ערב ויהי בקר (and there was evening and there was morning) are not only poetic aesthetics of the P creation text, but also relate to liturgical enactment of the poem.

Like its ANE analogues, Genesis 1 proclaims an ultimate reality on the origin of the universe while urging for the maintenance of the established order in both nature and society (Evers 1995:1). As mythopoeic genre, the Priestly creation account is both a poetic locus and a heuristic literary system founding the ‘life-style’ in the present, rather than being concerned with questions like ‘Did it really happen?’ In this sense, myths are normative sacred stories set at the beginning of time and narrate how the natural world and its social systems came into being (Gorospe 2008:595).

In other words, Genesis 1:1-2:4a is neither a ‘history-like’ (i.e. a simple reportage of history facts), nor a fictional story having no contact with history, but a ‘poetic depiction’ of a reality: the ordering of the cosmos by God. As a myth, the P creation account conveys things that happened in the timelessness context, things that are true always and everywhere and therefore can explain the Now (Lohfink 1994:162). In short, the literary genre (mythopoeic) of Genesis 1:1-2:4a can be defined as:

A form of poetry which transcends poetry in that it proclaims a truth; a form of reasoning which transcends reasoning in that it wants to bring about the truth it proclaims; a form of action, of ritual behaviour, which does not find its fulfilment in act but must proclaim and elaborate a poetic form of truth (Frankfort 1949:16).

As ‘origin myth,’ the P creation account assumes a vital lack in the primal world prevailing before the known and ordered universe of people telling the myth (Gn 1:2). For instance, the limits, time and space of the primal cosmos do not correspond to those of the known universe. In this sense, the events described in Genesis 1:3-2:4a purport the ordering of the chaotic situation (Gn 1:1-2) in a series of happenings that led to distinct domains of the cosmos or the community known by those telling the myth (Habel 2011:29). Through a mythopoeic genre and a binary scheme, the Priestly creation account carefully shows how the world is turned from a chaotic and infertile situation to an ordered, illuminated and fertile universe. This is probably a response to the exilic crisis that God can transform chaos into order.

Therefore, the analysis of Genesis 1:1-2:4a will not be a narrative reading, but a structuralist study of the mythopoeic¹¹² genre/form of the text. Given that a myth is a system of interlinked relations, careful attention will be paid to nuances of meaning of key-terms, word-plays and intertextual links of ‘mythemes’ or ‘phonemes’. It has been sustained that in a mythopoeic genre/form, the meaning derives from the relationships established between the basic units of the text/myth (Jacobson 1981:9). Mostly, these basic units are offered in a binary scheme of parallels. In this sense, the whole plan of Genesis 1:1-2:4a depicts the primordial world contrasting the ordered cosmos, while its sub-structures establish the created order into complementary pairs of panels.

¹¹² The Priestly creation account has more in common with poetry languages of Psalms 74:12-17; 89:5-12; Job 26:7-13 and Isaiah 51:9-11, in which God is depicted as putting the watery chaos under control, and then establishing world order. The sea monsters Leviathan and Rahab are not seen as independent deities, but are employed in a poetic symbol as a natural force of chaos that threatens God’s creation and purpose.

2.2 The question of two traditions in Genesis 1:1-2:4a

In his prominent study *Schöpfung und Chaos in Urzeit und Endzeit* (1895),¹¹³ Gunkel revealed that the Priestly creation account depends on a *Volage*, an ancient Babylonian mythical tradition of battle between the creator god and the opposing cosmic powers. For him, Genesis 1 blended two traditions with different visions on the principle of the cosmic origin. While, the first tradition regards the רוח אלהים (wind of God) as the principle of the cosmic origin, the second thinks it is the ויאמר אלהים (and God said, or God's speeches in the text) (Gunkel 2006:11). In his argument, this scholar thinks that the seven days pattern was added later to the text. For him, the revision was so thoroughly made that is hard to recover the content and wording of the original traditions. This thesis was ratified and refined by Morgenstern (1919:170) arguing that:

... the present form of the narrative is the result of the literary fusion of two originally independent and even contradictory versions of the creation story. The one told that God created the universe and all its contents by his word alone, while the other told that God actually worked and made the various creatures, heavenly bodies, monsters, fish, fowl, animals, and man (sic), by his very hands, as it were ...

Schmidt¹¹⁴ and Westermann¹¹⁵ adopted this thesis and tried to recover the prehistory of Genesis 1:1-2:4a. They argued that the present state of the Priestly creation account is a blending of two accounts, a deed-account (*Tatbericht*) and a word-account (*Wortbericht*), and that the latter is a reinterpretation of the first. These authors sustain that the wording and the structure of 'creation by word' (*Wortbericht*) was imposed on the older 'creation by deed' (*Tatbericht*) in order to emphasise creation by fiat. The point is that the expressions יהי ויהי and ויעש אלהים/ויברא אלהים endorse two distinct modes of creation (Hurtzli 2010:3; Lambert 1924:3-12).

My intention is not to deny the presence of two diverse traditions in the Priestly creation account, but to ask whether the final product of the text may provide evidence of the indissoluble unity of form and traditions. Without denying the existence of

¹¹³ This study makes use of the English translation (2006) of Gunkel's original publication, namely Gunkel, H 2006. *Creation and Chaos in the Primeval Era and the Eschaton: a Religion-Historical Study of Genesis 1 and Revelation 12*. Trans. by Whitney, K W. Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, U K: Eerdmans.

¹¹⁴ Schmidt, W H 1964. *Die Schöpfungsgeschichte der Priesterchrift: Zur Überlieferungsgeschichte von Genesis 1:2-2:4a*. Neukirchener Vlyun: Neukirchener. (WMANT, 17/2), 160-63.

¹¹⁵ Westermann, C 1984. *Genesis 1-11: A Commentary*. London: SPCK.

various traditions within the text, this study however will focus on the present state of the P creation account. We agree with Anderson (1994:45) that the Priestly writer, while drawing on traditional motifs, has totally reworked the material by presenting them into a new literary unity that harmonises the form with the content. In this sense, the Priestly creation can, thus, be viewed as an original work by itself, an architecture, a conception, an innovation, a creation and a sovereign poetry that boldly puts forth its vision of the origins (De Pury 2009:102).

In Genesis 1, the creator's word had never meant to bring into being what was about to be created, but to establish order. The creator's commands had the function of stating the structures that were to be set up (days 1-3), to designate the inhabitants that were to occupy the different ordered spaces (days 4-6) and to define their function within the world-to-be (Steck 1975:32-39). The divine word assigns both the basic cosmos structures (vv5, 8, 10) and blesses the manifold ecosystem species (vv22-28). The various *וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים* establish a literary unity of the Priestly creation account, and design a plan whose result is sealed by six *טוֹב* (good) mentions¹¹⁶ and the high note *טוֹב מְאֹד* (very good) on the sixth day (v31). This reinforces the literary unity between 'word' and 'deed' in the sense that God is the one stating the order and realises it himself or via intermediaries (earth or waters).

Therefore, the formula *וַיְהִי כֵן* (and it was so) is only an adequate correspondence between an order and its execution, which is typical to the Priestly source. In Genesis 1, as in other Priestly texts (Gn 6; Ex 25-40), the four clauses – order/*וַיְהִי כֵן* /execution/appreciation – form a coherent unity.¹¹⁷ In Genesis 1, the created order takes place not by 'word-events, but by word-fulfilment events' (Anderson 1994:45). Ironically, Hurtzli (2010:7-8) who holds to the hypothesis of two traditions in Genesis 1, admits that when read separately, the deed-account is incomplete whereas the word-account contains all eight creative works.

Therefore, the literary shape of the text, not its prehistory, will gain our attention since it throws light on various ecological matters, such as the depictions of God as

¹¹⁶ For the six God's appreciations of his work as 'good', see Genesis 1:4.10.12.18.21.25

¹¹⁷ A detailed inventory of the formula command-execution-appreciation in Genesis 1:1-2:4a can be found in the book of Beauchamp, P 1969. *Creation et Separation: Etude Exégétique du Premier Chapitre de le Genèse*. Delachaux et Niestlé: Desclée de Brouwer, 21-25.

commander and creator, the rise of created order and principles for its maintenance. It is observable that on its internal literary shape, the Priestly creation account is a unified and symmetrical whole, whose meaning is disclosed in the inner structure of the mythopoem as well as in its internal command-execution patterns (Anderson 1994:55). In other words, with its repeated connections between command/word and execution – typical of P writings – it is possible to read Genesis 1:1-2:4a not as an end product of a tradition-historical process, but as an accurate masterly poetic/hymnal account and literary invention where form and content are indivisibly united.

In this sense, the following paragraphs intend to approach the final product of the text, whose internal characteristics can objectively disclose the literary structure of the Priestly creation. The target is to study the text according to its internal stylistic and verbal rapport. Before this task, we should first identify the literary framework of the text. The question of delimiting the Priestly creation account is then the subject of the next sub section.

2.3 Delimitation of the Priestly creation account¹¹⁸

In several monographs, the creation account is presented in the framework of Genesis 1:1-2:3 (Brown 1991:166; Carr 1996; McBride 2000:5). They based their opinion on Schimdt (1964:91) who found that Genesis 2:4a was not an integral part of the Priestly source (Pg), but rather a ‘final hand’ editorial note closing Genesis 1:1-2:3. Other scholars regard the whole verse (Gn 2:4) as a literary bridge between Genesis 1:1-2:3 and Genesis 2-3. In his close reading of occurrences of the word תולדות (generations) in Genesis 1-11, Stordalen (1992:173-4) argued that the word ביום (Gn 2:4b) is a mere extension of תולדות (Gn 2:4a) which is itself a redactional formula always introducing materials paralleling and yet not conforming to the preceding text. In this regard, Anderson confirms that the proper end of the Priestly creation account is not Genesis 2:4a, but Genesis 2:3, an *inclusio* that relates with Genesis 1:1 (1994:54).

The problem with this last observation is to know why the formula only appears in the Priestly context. Obviously, whatever can be said about the word, תולדות is more

¹¹⁸ The full debate about the ending of the Priestly creation account is offered by Stordalen, T 1992. Genesis 2:4: Restudying a Locus Classicus. ZAW 104, 163-77. This author surveys all the positions taken from the earlier biblical critical scholarship until now.

utilised in the Priestly document than any other material of the Bible. On the textual basis, it is also not evident that the word **ביום** (Gn 2:4b) could be a mere extension of the word **תלדות** in Genesis 2:4a since here (Gn 2:4b) as well as in its other occurrences, **ביום** (in the day) appears as a complete temporal clause (Jl 3:2; Ruth 1:1; Es 1:1). Furthermore, nowhere is the syntax **תלדות** followed by **ביום** attested. Wherever they occur, both words are usually sufficient formulas by themselves (for **תלדות** see Gn 5:1; 25:19).

Therefore, I agree with the traditional framework of the Priestly creation account, which is Genesis 1:1-2:4a. Among several arguments that can indeed support the ending of the text in Genesis 2:4a, let us mention the temporal notice **ביום** in Genesis 2:4b, which actually functions as a literary introduction to the next episode (Van Wolde 1998:22-23, see note 2). Obviously, there is at least a gap between the two halves of Genesis 2:4 that should be seen as belonging to distinct redaction layers.

It is also evident that the *niphal* infinitive **בהבראם** (with suffix **־ם**) of the verb **ברא** (Gn 1:1) appears in Genesis 2:4a to announce the completion of the creation activity. This verbal occurrence is not accidental because it does not appear in the next creation story, the Yahwist account (2:4b-3:24) using rather the root **עשה** (2:4b,18), **יצר** (2:19) or **בנה** (2:22) relating much to a depiction of the creator as a potter. In the previous chapter of this research, I showed that the verb **ברא** is only used in both the Priestly source and the material relating to the exilic context (Second Isaiah, Deuteronomist writings), and as such, the Yahwist is excluded.

Finally, the identical writing of the creation objects in both the opening text (Gen 1:1) and in the closing text (Gn 2:4a) – **השמים והארץ** – (with definite articles and in same order), are features that are not respected Genesis 2:4b. The most important literary aspect is the identity of the creator. While Genesis 1:2-2:4a presents the creator under the name **אלהים**, from Genesis 2:4b the creator is named **יהוה אלהים**. With these literary aspects and others that a close reading can find, this study will consider Genesis 1:1-2:4a as the literary framework for the Priestly creation account.

3. Translation of Genesis 1:1-2:4a

The translation below is based on the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV). The few changes suggested by me (presented in italics or explained in footnotes) mostly concern elements of the Hebrew text that have implications for an ecological reading of this passage. In most traditional and modern translations, these elements of the text have often been overlooked or dismissed.

1 In the Beginning *in which* God¹¹⁹ *separated*¹²⁰ the sky¹²¹ and the earth, 2the earth was a formless void, and darkness covered the face of the deep, while a wind from God swept over the face of the waters. 3Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light. 4And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness. 5God called the light Day, and the darkness he called Night. And there was evening and there was morning, the first day.

6 And God said, ‘Let there be a dome in the midst of the waters *so that*¹²² *it may* separate the waters from the waters’.¹²³ 7So God made the dome and separated the waters that were under the dome from the waters that were above the dome. And

¹¹⁹ The LXX reads ἐν ἀρχῇ ἐποίησεν ὁ θεὸς τὸν οὐρανὸν καὶ τὴν γῆν ‘In the Beginning God made the sky and the earth.’ By trying to render the Hebrew בראשית from a so-called etymological basis (ראשית from ראש), the first verse of the LXX lacks a temporal implication and functions as a summary statement to the creation account. The word ἀρχῇ denotes the absolute time when the cosmos was completed (John 1:1). Contrary to the LXX, in the MT, Genesis 1:1-2 do not depict a creative event, but the pre-creative state prior to the six days of creation work (Brown 1991:49).

¹²⁰ This study translates ברא as ‘to separate’ in accordance with Van Wolde (2009:20) that God created new order by separating the fused elements of the primeval cosmos. In this sense, Genesis 1:1-2:4a is not about bringing into existence, but about the setting up of order in the cosmos in contrast to the situation of תהו ובהו (Gn 1:2). Logically, if the verb ברא would mean ‘to create’ in the opening verse of the account, then the making of the sky and the earth in Genesis 1:9-10 would imply that either the narrator recounts the event twice, or God had made these entities twice. Genesis 1 is about the setting up of limits in a limitless and unformed world. However, elsewhere we shall be using the traditional words, such as ‘creation’ or ‘the created order’ to refer to units or the whole order of the account.

¹²¹ To avoid the influence of Greek philosophy, I prefer the word sky instead of heaven used by the NRSV. Unlike other ANE myths that deified the two blocs (sky and earth) or Ezekiel 1:1 where the word שמים refers to a divine sphere, in Genesis these entities are simply part of the created order. That is why Genesis 1:6 paired שמים with רקיע to mean the surface upon the earth, the sky, air or firmament (Hill 1997:160). Further comments will be made later in the structural analysis of the passage.

¹²² I prefer to use ‘so that’ here to express the Jussive form ויהי that refers to a purpose of רקיע creation. This translation is made in accordance with the syntax of verses 14-15 for which the *weqatal* form for the verb בדרל (separate) is employed in the divine command for a purposeful meaning.

¹²³ The Greek version LXX proposes to insert here the formula ויהי כן in accordance with the syntaxes of Genesis 1:9, 11, 15, 24 and 30. The MT’s reading is the shortest and probably the original text.

it was so.¹²⁴ 8God called the dome Sky. And there was evening and there was morning, the second day.

9 And God said, ‘Let the waters under the sky *gather themselves*¹²⁵ into one place¹²⁶ so that¹²⁷ the dry land can appear’. And it was so.¹²⁸ 10God called the dry land Earth, and the waters that were gathered together¹²⁹ he called Sea. And God saw that it was good.

11Then God said, ‘Let the earth put forth vegetation:¹³⁰ plants¹³¹ yielding seed, and fruit-trees bearing fruit each according to its kind¹³² whose seed is inside it upon the earth’. And it was so. 12The earth brought forth vegetation: plants yielding seed of every kind, and trees of every kind bearing fruit with the seed in it. And God saw that it was good. 13And there was evening and there was morning, the third day.

14 And God said, ‘Let there be lights in the dome of the sky to separate the day from the night; and let them be for signs and for seasons and for days and years,

¹²⁴ In the same ideal, LXX proposes to delete the formula ויהי יום and replaces it by the appreciation formula וירא יריבם כיהיבם to end Genesis 1:7 in harmony with verses 4, 10, 12 of MT. Likewise, LXX adds an appreciation formula in Genesis 1:8 (the end of the second day) and a fulfilment formula in Genesis 1:20.

¹²⁵ Most English translations have rendered this verb (קָבַץ) in the passive voice, whereas it is clearly in the Niphal form in the MT. The same verb appears only twice in the TaNak (Gn 1:9 & Jr 3:17) and in both cases it is made in the Niphal form. As in Jeremiah 3:17 that supposes the active gathering of nations, Genesis 1:9 relies also on the active gathering of the waters themselves responding to God’s command. Further notices will be made in the exegetical analysis of the text later.

¹²⁶ Two LXX minors 72 and 129 read εἰς τὰς συναγωγὰς αὐτῶν (into their places), which is a clear correction of the LXX minuscule 56 (dependent on MT lesson). The objective is to explain the short *lectio* of MT.

¹²⁷ The form וַתִּקְבַּץ is not a Niphal form as it is usually interpreted in various commentaries, but the *wayyiqtol* form (imperfect) of the verb קָבַץ constructed with a conjunctive *waw*. This enhances the purposeful force of the command (Brown 1991:114). The similar syntax can be found in Judges 9:7; 2 Sm 19:38 or Jr 40:15. The idea is that, as in Genesis 1:14, the second half of the verse continues the jussive purpose of the first verb.

¹²⁸ LXX adds here καὶ συγχέθη τὸ ὕδωρ followed by a long execution result: ‘and it came about as follows: the water under the skies was gathered into their collections, and the dry land appeared.’ Only one minuscule 75 lacks this fulfilment in accordance with the MT. These variants are due to the LXX tendency of harmonisation throughout Genesis 1:1-2:4a.

¹²⁹ The LXX word συστήματα for the gathering of waters below raises more ecological insights than the MT lesson קרא ימים למקוה המים קרא ימים. The meaning for συστήματα (systems) refers to a complex of various interconnected parts or members of an organisation. In Greek writings, the word is used in various contexts, from politics, social, cosmological and metric systems (Brown 1991:57). In Genesis 1, the word is used to express the organised lower waters, ready to produce life.

¹³⁰ The Hebrew word לְשָׂה includes all plants in their initial growth (Westermann 1984:124).

¹³¹ The word עֵץ refers to all kinds of flora-diversity: the crops that provide food for both humans (Gn 1:11-12; 9:3; Ps 104:14) and animals (cf. Dt 11:15; Jr 12:4; Ps 104:14). Further analysis on biodiversity will be done later.

¹³² Dillmann (1897:171) saw in the word לְמִינֵהוּ the ideal of kinship or species or resemblances. However, in the context of the text, the word would refer not only to the similarities, but also to the ideal of differentiation and diversification among species (see also Gn 1:21, 24, 25). In other texts (Lv 11:14, 22; Dt 14:13-15), the word is used to differentiate the clean and unclean animals according to their species. Therefore, the word לְמִינֵהוּ refers to the exhibition of the diversity of species both in the flora and fauna realms of Genesis 1.

15and let them be lights in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth'. And it was so. 16God made the two great lights – the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night – and the stars. 17God set them in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, 18to rule over the day and over the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. And God saw that it was good. 19And there was evening and there was morning, the fourth day.

20 And God said, 'Let the waters produce¹³³ swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the dome of the sky'¹³⁴. 21So God *separated*¹³⁵ the great sea monsters *from* every living creature that moves, of which the waters swarm¹³⁶, according to their kinds, and every winged bird of every kind. And God saw that it was good. 22God blessed them, saying, 'Be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth'. 23And there was evening and there was morning, the fifth day.

24 And God said, 'Let the earth bring forth living creatures of every kind: cattle¹³⁷ and creeping things¹³⁸ and wild animals of the earth¹³⁹ of every kind.' And it was so. 25God made the wild animals of the earth of every kind, and the cattle of

¹³³ The LXX has the verb ἐξαγαγέτω (to bring into existence) both for ישרץ (Gen 1:20) and יצא (Gn 1:24). The *gal* imperfect form ישרץ should be translated as 'causing to swarm'. The Hebrew verb always appears with living beings as its subjects: humans (See Gn 9:7); various animals (Lv 11:29) and sea creatures (Ezek 47:9). In relation to Genesis 9:7, the root meaning of this verb in Genesis 1:20 refers to 'increase in number' or to 'multiply numerously.' As in Genesis 1:14, this verse inaugurates the biodiversity in the aquatic fauna's world.

¹³⁴The LXX reads: ἐξαγαγέτω τὰ ὕδατα ἐρπετὰ ψυχῶν καὶ πετεινὰ πετόμενα ἐπὶ τῆς κατὰ τὸ στερέωμα τοῦ οὐρανοῦ καὶ ἐγένετο οὕτως (Let the waters bring forth swarms of living creatures and the birds that fly above the earth across the dome of the sky). By this syntax, the LXX assumes that the waters produced both the marine life and the birds. This reading is not evident in the MT for which air animals are only ordered to fly over the earth. Both the birds and the תנינים are not clearly described as generated from waters.

¹³⁵ We have maintained Van Wolde's thesis that ברא means to separate. Let us say creation by separation of sea animals. Further annotation will be done in the analysis section of the verse.

¹³⁶ Given the object of the verb ישרץ in verse 20, the תנינים should be seen as separate categories of sea creatures, not created in swarms. Obviously, the antecedent to the relative pronoun אשר is the כל־יִבְרָאֵה הַיָּמָּה הַרְמֵשֶׁת (all living beings that swarm) but not the תנינים since the latter are not included in the objects of the verb ישרץ in Genesis 1:20. The תנינים are separate sea faunas not created in swarms. In the second chapter of this study, we showed that these great sea animals were seen in ANE mythology as living in תהום inspiring fear and dread to humans (see Job 39). Later we shall explain the verb ברא in this verse as only an act of separation of sea-animals from the תנינים although both belong to the marine natural order.

¹³⁷ The word בְּהֵמָה refers here to domestic animals in contrast to wild animals (חַיַּת הַשָּׂדֶה, [Gn 3:14]; or חַיַּת הָאָרֶץ [Gn 7:14. Ps 50:10]). Other occurrences refer the word to all animals other than humans (Ex 8:13.14; 9:9).

¹³⁸ Here the word רמש includes all low-lying, moving creatures from insects to reptiles. In Genesis 9:3 the word refers to all animals while in Psalm 104:25 it meant sea animals. In Hosea 2:20 and Ezekiel 38:20, the word is used separately from winged creatures, cattle and wild animals.

¹³⁹ Literally, the Hebrew words חַיַּת הָאָרֶץ read 'animals of the land.' The Hebrew word חַיַּת הָאָרֶץ usually refers to wild and untamed animals denoting dangerous and carnivorous animals (see Job 5:22; Gn 9:2, 10; Ps 79:2; 1Sm 17:46; Ezk 29:5; 32:4; 34:28). Clearly, these animals do not expressly appear under human dominion (Gn 1:28).

every kind, and everything that creeps upon the ground of every kind. And God saw that it was good.

26 Then God said, ‘Let us make humankind in our image, according to 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,¹⁴⁰ and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth’. 27 So God *separated*¹⁴¹ humankind, which is his image, from himself; He separated his image from himself; and he *separated* male from female.¹⁴² 28 God blessed them, and God said to them,¹⁴³ ‘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,¹⁴⁴ and over every living thing that moves upon the earth’.

¹⁴⁰ The *Peshitta* includes the תַּיִת (wild animals) under human rule, while the MT preferred omitting them, both in the command and in the fulfilment. The short MT reading is preferable since it is clear that the *Peshitta*, which is dependent to the MT, aims at harmonising with the fauna list of Genesis 1:24-25. The *Peshitta* assumed that the original text read after וּבְכָל־הָאָרֶץ, ‘all the animals of the earth’ (meaning wild animals, as opposed to domestic animals). This is unlikely since the outlook of the P source shows that the wild animals were included under human dominion only in Genesis 9:2-5 when meat-eating is granted. It is therefore possible that in Genesis 1 as in Job 40, the תַּיִת are untamed animals and independent from humans. Furthermore, the MT syntax of Genesis 1:28, ‘וּבְכָל־תַּיִת הָרִמְשָׁת עַל־הָאָרֶץ’, clearly does not include תַּיִת in the fulfilment of the command. One would say that תַּיִת (beast) is indirectly included in the wording ‘all living beings that move on earth.’ In contrast to other uses of the word רִמַשׁ (Gn 9:3), Genesis 1:24-25 uses the word רִמַשׁ only for low-lying creatures as opposed to other fauna species. The same ideal applies in verse 30 providing food for three fauna species: כָּל־תַּיִת הָאָרֶץ (referring to the נֶקֶשׂ תַּיִת in Genesis 1:21, 24), כָּל־עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם (air fauna) and כָּל־רִמָּשׁ (creeping animals). Obviously, the תַּיִת and תַּיִת are not objects of human rule and live independently from them. I admit with Cassuto (1961:57) that the *Peshitta* insertion of תַּיִת is a destruction not only of the style of the text but also of P’s view of the history of human-animals’ relationship. Further observations will be given later.

¹⁴¹ The translation of this verse is dependent on the analysis of Van Wolde (2009:17-9). As noticed, the verb בָּרָא is meant as the action of separation. The previous instances of בָּרָא in Genesis 1:1–2:4a (1:1, 21; 2:3, 4a) occurred in the context of two or three equally originally direct objects marked by אֵת. In Genesis 1:27ab, however, the verb בָּרָא takes the initial situation of the human inclusion in the realm named ‘God’ as its starting point and proceeds from this point onwards in that the human being is located relative to God’s image (Van Wolde 2009:17). The idea is also found in the ANE stories in which humans are made ‘from’ the blood of the defeated gods. Humans are not set as deities, but moved or taken from a deity substance/realm. The preposition בְּ before the word צֶלֶם אֱלֹהִים (v27b) is a locative preposition specifying a movement from a point to another, and the differentiated entities are both similar to and different. The subsequent distinction of the human race into male and female beings (v27c) includes the same notional perspective of separation and differentiation. The female is both similar and different from the male being.

¹⁴² The translation of verse 27 is wholly dependent on the argument made by Van Wolde (2009:17).

¹⁴³ Instead of וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם אֱלֹהִים (God spoke to them), LXX proposes the impersonal form לְאִמֹר maybe avoiding the repetition. However, for the Hebrew text, humans are the only creatures that God spoke with as I and you. Other creatures are either commanded to participate in creation (earth & waters) or impersonally blessed by Elohim. It is in this sense that our study assumes some footprints of anthropocentrism of verses 26-28 but that can be transcended by an entire literary analysis of Genesis 1:1-2:4a.

¹⁴⁴ *Peshitta* inserts וּבְכָל־הָאָרֶץ in the fulfilment of the command. This insertion is valid since this animal species is cited by name in the statement of verse 26 of the MT. Given that the verse 28 is a logical fulfilment of verses 26-27, it seems that the MT unintentionally omitted this fauna species.

29 God said, ‘See, I hereby give¹⁴⁵ you every plant yielding seed that is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food. 30 And to every beast of the earth and to every bird of the air, and to everything that creeps on the earth, everything that has the breath of life, I have given every green plant for food’. And it was so. 31 God saw everything that he had made, and indeed, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.

2 1 Thus, the sky and the earth and their host were completed. 2 And on the seventh day¹⁴⁶ God had completed the work that he had done, and rested on the seventh day from all the work which he had done. 3 So God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it, because on it God rested from all the work that he had done¹⁴⁷ during creation.

4a These are the begettings of the sky and the earth when they were created.¹⁴⁸

4. Structural outline of Genesis 1:1-2:4a

From the earliest critical scholarship, scholars have been impressed by the literary structure of Genesis 1:1-2:4a. The text is deemed to be ‘the most densely structured text of the biblical corpus, characterised by an intricate array of correspondences and variations’ (Brown 1999:36). The account is poetically structured and built upon eight creative acts displayed in seven panels corresponding to six days of God’s active work and the climax seventh day, the divine rest (Sabbath). The whole design is made upon the command-execution motif that makes it more a scheme rather than a fulsome account (McBride 2000:6).

¹⁴⁵ The perfect form *נָתַתִּי* stating the food for living creatures should be translated in the present as a performative perfect in the sense of durability (Beauchamp 1969:26). In this sense, *נָתַתִּי* also implies a command. This reading is alluded to in Genesis 9:3.

¹⁴⁶ While Genesis 2:1-2a in the LXX offers a concluding statement with regard to the completion of the created order prior to the seventh day section (Gn 2:2b-3), the MT includes Genesis 2:1-2a into the last section (Gn 2:1-4a). For the MT, the created order is not completed on the sixth day (see Gn 2:2 in LXX), but on the seventh (see Gn 2:2a in the MT). This difference has significant ecological implications. While the LXX ideology conceives humans as the climax of the created order (last sixth day’s creature), the MT inscribes the summit of the created order in the context of Sabbath, the rest of God and his work (the land, sky, sea, fauna, flora, planets, humans).

¹⁴⁷ Except the word *ἐγένετο* for the Hebrew word *בְּבְרָאם* (2:4), the LXX uses the same word *ἐποίησεν* for both *עָשָׂה* and *בָּרָא* (1:26-27). This syntax belongs to the LXX ideal of harmonisation of the MT. The word *בָּרָא* refers here to all the work of separating out elements of the cosmos resulting in the aesthetic order.

¹⁴⁸ In more ecological dynamic terms, one could only translate *בְּבְרָאם* as ‘after they were ordered or separated’.

As we noticed earlier, the account is argued to be patterned on the tabernacle or the temple building motif. In this sense, Barker (2010:34) believes that to understand what Genesis 1:1-2:4a says about creation and relationships within it, it is important to know the structure and purpose of the temple. The ‘separating out’ and differentiation features of the text are typical of the language of the priestly activities in the temple. While God separates (בדל) entities of the cosmos, the Priest separated (בדל) clean from unclean (see Lv 10:10; 20:25). Picturing the threefold structure of many temples in the ANE, Genesis 1:1-2:4a bears the same pattern both chronologically and thematically.

By virtue of their kinship, the first six days of creation establish the architectural spatial limits, while the seventh day unfolds the most holy space, and thereby makes the P creation account the model of a temple – an *imago tempili* (Brown 2010:40). While the first three days involve the habitat, the latter three deal with the installation of the inhabitants: the lights in the sky (4th day), the sea and air animals (5th day) and the land animals and humans (6th day).

As in the context of temple building, the clause ויאמר אלהים usually introduces a word-command appealing for an execution, result, fulfilment or an approval formula (Beauchamp 1969:29). However, the commands are executed by different subjects in the text. The separation process involves not only God, but also the intermediaries – water, earth or sea (days 3 & 5) and even the lights separating the day from the night (Gn 1:14). The result of the text is a sevenfold structure of a fully interconnected and ordered creation that can be set out as in the following figure:¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁹ This figure is adapted from the model presented in Brown, W P 1999. *The Ethos of the cosmos: the Genesis of Moral Imagination in the Bible*. Grand Rapids, Michigan/Cambridge, U K: Eerdmans, p.38.

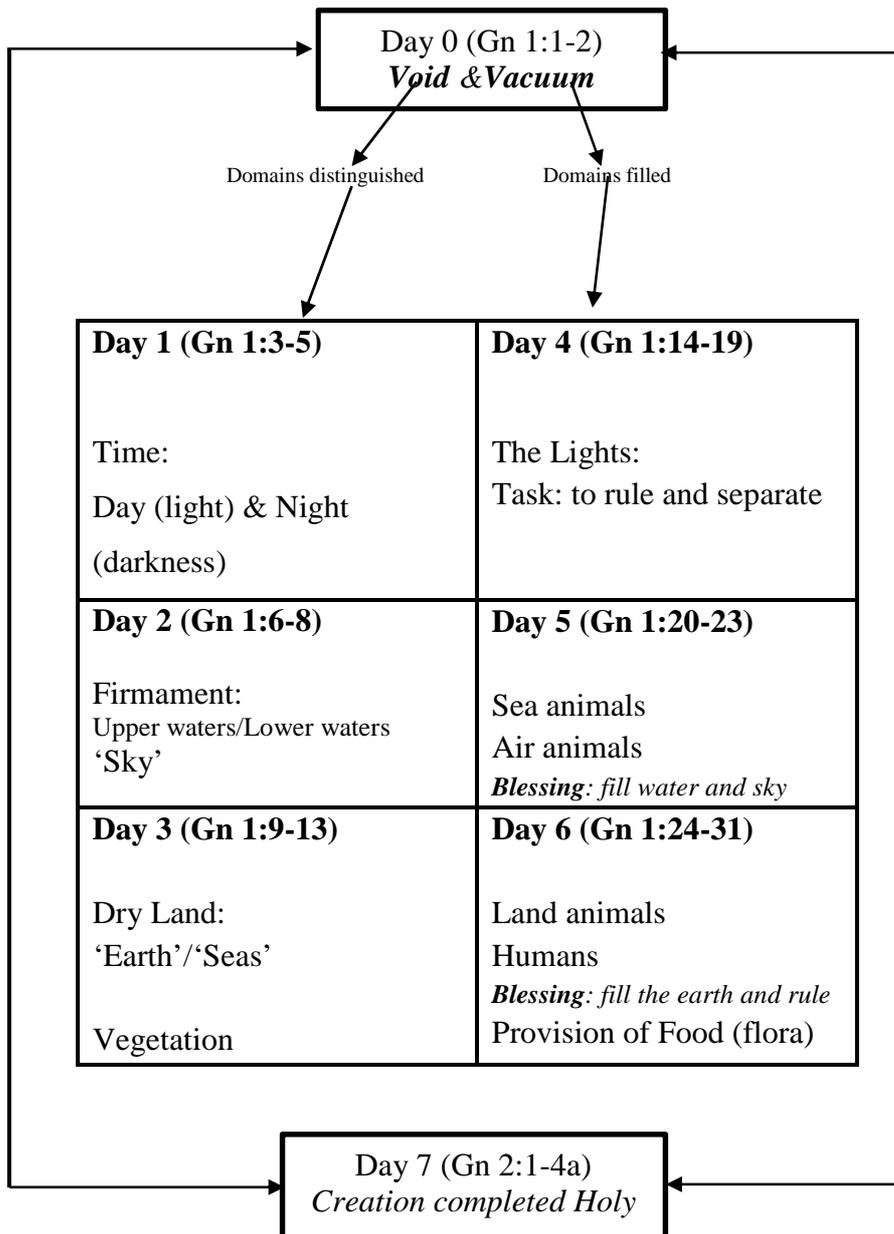


Figure I: Thematic structure of the text

4.1 The binary scheme and movement sky – water – earth

It is with aesthetics and harmony that the six days line up with one another, while day 0 (pre-creation) opposes the seventh day. In their chronological ordering, the first six days present a symmetric and binary design that matches the cosmic domains to their appropriate inhabitants – called *צבא* in Genesis 2:1. The six days are set in two triads comprising complementary pairs of days. Each triad of three days contains four creative acts, two being on the climax day in each case. In both triads, the literary movement finds its climax on earth. In other words, there is in the two triads of the account a twofold trend from the sky-water to the earth in which the latter is the focal

point of each apex day – the third and the sixth (Anderson 1994:49). Let us see how this double movement occurs in the text.

4.1.1 *The first triad of creation days (Gn 1:3-13)*

After the primeval chaos depicted with watery depth and uncreated darkness, the creator God caused אור (light) to be separated from the חשך (darkness) so that the temporal counting would be possible. The goal of the first day (vv3-5) is not the creation of light as a physical reality – which is the act of the fourth day – but rather the setting of time expressed in the cycle of day and night – the basic rhythm that the edifice needs for its building and completion (Beauchamp 1969:189). Thus, the first day pairs with the fourth day where the time is linked to the משל (to rule) role of the lights. In the second day, the mythopoem turns to the ordering of the second aspect of the primeval chaos: תהום. The creative act consists of separating the upper waters from the lower waters by a solid domain (רקיע), synonym to שמים (Gn 1:6-8). This division not only enables the rise of the היבשה (the dry land or the earth), but also provides places for the forthcoming living beings (sea faunas, flying creatures, land animals and human beings).

Appearing on the third day, the vegetation changes the barren situation of earth (vv11-12). From now, the earth is no longer void (תהו ובהו), but rather a fertile land, a land bearing flora (Gn 1:9-13) which will be the unique source of food for all animals and humans (vv29-30). The mythopoem emphasises the greening and fecundity of the new realm (אֶרֶץ) in the paronomasia תִּדְשֵׂא הָאֶרֶץ דְּשֵׂא (let the earth put forth vegetation) and the maternal verb וַתוֹצֵא הָאֶרֶץ (let the earth bring forth) (Anderson 1994:51). Thus, on the third day, do the lower waters withdraw from the whole surface to one place resulting in the rise of the dry land, but also the latter is covered with vegetation – two creative acts. In this regard, only on the third day, Elohim stated twice the appreciation formula כִּי־טוֹב (Gn 1:10,12).

In short, the first triad (Gn 1:3-13) aims at giving form to creation through the founding of discrete domains, including time and flora. The cosmic building applies the ‘top down’ movement descending ‘from the supernal realm of light and darkness, to the celestial hemisphere, and then to the foundational region where seascape and

landscape are ordered topographically' (McBride 2000:13). Therefore, the first triad establishes structures that will be filled/fulfilled or occupied by various forms of life in the following triad of days.

4.1.2 *The second triad of creation days (Gn 1:14-31)*

The second triad (days 4-6) plays the role of filling the created realms with their respective dwellers from the sky, waters and the earth. In the fourth day, Elohim made and fixed the luminaries (מְאֹרֹת) in the firmament (בְּרָקִיעַ) to serve as temporal signs by ruling (לְמַשֵּׁל) the day and the night and to separate (לְהַבְדִּיל) the light from darkness (cf. Gn 1:3). While the רָקִיעַ made possible the emergence of the dry land, the מְאֹרֹת give light and regulate season, days and years on earth (Gn 1:14-19). In the fifth day, the seas (הַמַּיִם) are ordered to produce sea animals (including the הַתַּיְוָנִים), and birds to fly in the air, while the earth brings forth land animals on the sixth day (vv20-24). From this time, the created objects (seas and earth) become subjects, actively participating in the rise of the well-ordered world (Ollenburger 2009:145).

On the sixth day, the movement ends again on earth. In response to God's order, the earth generates (תּוֹצֵא הָאָרֶץ) living beings (נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה), which are land animals (vv24-25). The eighth creative act is humanity made in the *imago dei* and given dominion over animals and earth. The language here, as with the luminaries (Gn 1:16), is a royal and a limited power.¹⁵⁰ In other words, there is no need for rulers (humans and lights) to defeat their subjects since their rule relates to what God has already accomplished: not a charge to conquer and exploit, but to maintain the order (Ollenburger 2009:147).

Unlike the Yahwist text, humans are of totally different origin from animals. However, their affinity to the animal world is shown in the fact that both are created on the sixth day, share the same habitat, and both are given flora for food (Anderson 1994:52). Instead of stating twice the clause כִּי־טוֹב (it was good) as for the third day (with two creative acts), the sixth day experiences the concluding appreciation of the whole: not merely כִּי־טוֹב (it was good) but טוֹב מְאֹד – excellently good.

¹⁵⁰ This issue will be discussed later in the following point: exegetic consideration of the text.

4.1.3 The neat inclusions (Gn 1:1-2 & Gn 2:1-4a)

The two literary borders of the mythopoem, Genesis 1:1-2 (day 0) and Genesis 2:1-4a (day 7), function respectively as challenges and goal of the creation activity. In other words, contrasting the pre-creation state (day 0), the epilogue (day 7) opens with a famous speech that ‘the sky and the earth and their host were completed’ (2:1). This statement is a summary notification of the six days’ work of ordering the cosmos that is valued טוב מאד (Gn 1:31) in contrast to the void state (Gn 1:2). Furthermore, the timeless character of the initial verses subtly connects it to the ultimate day of Sabbath, lacking also the common temporal refrain וַיְהִי־עֶרֶב וַיְהִי־בֹקֶר (and there was evening and there was morning). The world that starts as תהו ובהו, formless and unproductive (day 0), finishes by day 7 as creation potent with life, very good (Brown 1999:39).

This day of divine rest is a climax of the preceding works because it marks God’s dwelling within the cosmic realm, set apart from creation yet not against it (Brown 2010:39). While the ‘day 0’ refers to the vacuum and formlessness of creation, and the six days form a thematic symmetry, the asymmetric ‘day 7’ seals the state of creation filled, formed and completed (2:2). In this sense, Genesis 1:1 announces the main subject of the coming events, while the last verse (2:4a) summarises these events as ‘begettings’ (Van Wolde 1998:23). The created order is then completed and ready to be a dwelling place where the created objects become subjects in its maintenance.

4.2 Synthesis

While the first triad ends with the earth bearing vegetation (Gn 1:13), the second closes with the provision of flora as food for all living beings (Gn 1:29-30), as well as God’s appreciation of creation as ‘very good’ (Gn 1:31). In both peaks, God and the earth/universe are the main characters. In the whole chapter, ‘God interacts with and responds to the world and its creatures – especially, but not only, with its people’ (Ollenburger 2009:144). As I will show later, Genesis 1:1-2:4a as a whole does not focus on humans and their dominion over the earth, but on the universe as a whole and its maintenance. In short, the Priestly scheme depicts the ‘systematic differentiation of the cosmos that allows for and sustains the plethora of life’ (Brown 2010:38).

I should re-affirm that the Priestly account of creation is more linked to the sanctuary-building motif than the kingship image of any species over others. In a series of rhetorical questions, Van Heerden (2012:8) assumes that the harsh verbs of dominion (כבש and רדה) reflect the experiences of a traumatised people by foreign rulers who fiercely subdue and dominate the exiles. He therefore maintains that the intention of the P creation account is to democratise this power by putting it into the hands of the whole humanity (אדם – male & female) consisting of the priesthood of all (Van Heerden 2012:8). This assumption is cogent with the fact that after the exile, the Jewish people consider themselves not as a political entity, but a community of priests.

Genesis 1 bears the same ideal. Although creation is declared טוב־מאד on the sixth day, the Masoretic Text (MT) maintains that the work of creation was not completed until the creator God rested from all work on the seventh day (see BHS, Gn 2:2). In this sense, the Priestly creation ‘configures a macrocosmic temple of God in temporal as well as spatial terms’ (McBride 2000:12). Further ecological and exegetical issues of the text will be analysed in the following section.

5. Further ecological and exegetical insights of the text

5.1 The textual meaning of Genesis 1:1-2

There is a great number of works¹⁵¹ produced about the meaning of the first line of Genesis 1. The debate concerns the syntactical relation of Genesis 1:1 to Genesis 1:2, and the structural link between Genesis 1:1-2 to the rest of the Priestly creation account. The issue is whether בראשית presents a temporal absolute or relative clause. The debate is deeply dependent not only on the textual variance of the LXX from the MT, but mostly on the way they perceive God’s relation to the cosmos – *creatio ex nihilo* or creation by ordering. To respond to this issue, let us examine Genesis 1:1-3.

¹⁵¹ The most recent publications are the following: Van Wolde, E 2009. Why the verb בָּרָא does not mean to create in Genesis 1:1-2:4a? *JSOT* 34/1, 3-23; Holmstedt, R D 2008. The Restrictive Syntax of Genesis 1:1. *VT* 58, 56-67; Berry, D M 2003. Understanding the Beginning of Genesis: Just How Many Beginnings Were There? *JBQ* 31/2, 90-94; Lim, J T K 2002b. Explication of an exegetical Enigma in Genesis 1:1-3. *AJT* 16/2, 301-314; Sjöberg, Å W 2002. In the Beginning, in Abusch, T (ed), *Riches Hidden in Secret Places: Ancient Near Eastern Studies in Memory of Thorkild Jacobsen*, 229-247. Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns.

5.1.1 Lexical meaning of *בְּרֵאשִׁית* (Gn 1:1)

Earlier debates focus on the fact that the original text was not vocalised, which makes it probable that the word could be *בְּרֵאשִׁית בְּרָא אֱלֹהִים* (in the beginning, God created...) instead of the Masoretic translation *בְּרֵאשִׁית*. In this sense, the word is provided with a definite article that makes it a determinative noun in the sense of the absolute temporal heading of God's creation (Lim 2002b:305-6). Genesis 1:1 is then translated as an independent clause resuming the work of the six days of creation. This is the view of the majority of current translations dependent on the LXX reading from which derives the notion of *creation ex-nihilo* – that God created the universe out of nothing.¹⁵² Various scholars have shown that the doctrine of *creation ex nihilo* was held in the Jewish circles until 200 CE with the influence of Gnosticism, Stoicism and middle Platonists (see Winston 1986:88-91).

However, the literary examination of the word *רֵאשִׁית* in the Old Testament (OT) reveals that often this word occurs in a relative construct.¹⁵³ Elsewhere the word *רֵאשִׁית* refers to what Humbert calls, '*La première et la meilleure part de quelque chose, c'est-à-dire, le plus souvent, les prémices, la notion de valeur se joignant alors à celle de priorité*'¹⁵⁴ (1958c:195). From the fifty occurrences of the word *רֵאשִׁית* in the OT, its absolute construct arises six times.¹⁵⁵ The word has a temporal sense in twelve¹⁵⁶ texts of which only in Isaiah 46:10 the word *רֵאשִׁית* is in absolute syntax. Even in this verse of Isaiah, the word *מְרֵאשִׁית*¹⁵⁷ points to a relative sense albeit it is grammatically written in the absolute state.

¹⁵² See the translation of KJV, NIV, RSV, NIRV, etc.

¹⁵³ For occurrences of this word in the Old Testament, see Humbert (1958c:193-5).

¹⁵⁴ Translation: The first and the best part of something, more often, the first-fruit, that is the notion of value and priority. The sense of priority is also attested in other biblical cosmological texts (Pr 8:22; Job 40:19). For the Priestly writer, the beginning of everything, including the Priestly calendar is inaugurated in the first action of God 'the separation of the sky and the universe followed by their filling'. In this sense, Genesis 1:1-2:4a not only has the pre-eminent place in the Priestly chronological time, but mostly the dignity of being the first-fruit of God's works (Beauchamp 1969:152, note 4).

¹⁵⁵ Lv 2:12; Dt 33:21 (?); Is 46:10; Ps 105:36; Neh 12:44; Gn 1:1 (?).

¹⁵⁶ Gn 1:1; Dt 11:12; Is 46:10; Jr 26:1; 27:1; 28:1; 49:34; Pr 17:14; Job 8:7; 40:19; 42:12; Ec 7:8.

¹⁵⁷ The LXX (Is 46:10) rendered *מְרֵאשִׁית אֶתְרֵית וּמִקֶּדֶם אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִבְעֶשׂוּ* by *ἀγγέλιον πρότερον τα ἔσχατα*. In this sense, *מְרֵאשִׁית* is read adverbially as 'prior to' something, but not the absolute sense 'in the beginning of.' It is also clear that in the MT there is an evidential relation between *מְרֵאשִׁית* and *אֶתְרֵית* in the sense of *terminus ad quo* and *terminus ad quem* of a time (Humbert 1958c:195). For the pair *מְרֵאשִׁית* and *אֶתְרֵית*, see also Job 8:7; 42:12 & Ec 7:8.

Convincingly, Holmstedt¹⁵⁸ has thus argued that Genesis 1:1 is an unmarked, restrictive clause in which ראשית must be translated in construct with the next phrase containing a finite verb. The idea is that the first verse is not an independent clause, but naturally connected to the action depicted in the following verses. In comparison with ANE myths, Genesis 1 sustains that order is made not from ex-nihilo, but from a chaotic and unformed world toward an ordered cosmos. Although there are remaining critics of the similarities between Genesis 1:1-3 and Genesis 2:4b-7, it is clear that the relative construction of the Yahwist story – which is the earlier text – had probably influenced the Priestly syntax in Genesis 1:1-3. Brown (1991:133) makes it clear that these texts resemble each other because in both passages:

The dependent clauses introduce Elohim; the parenthetical clauses describe the natural condition (the difference being that 1:2 makes a positive statement, whereas 2:5-6 is expressed negatively); and the main clause describes divine action.

Therefore, Genesis 1:1 as a whole serves ‘only one grammatical function: it is a stage-setting prepositional phrase, providing a temporal frame of reference only for what follows ... that is “the event provided in the matrix clause (either Gn 1:2 or Gn 1:3)”’ (Holmstedt 2008:65). In this sense, the rendition ‘In the beginning in which God separated/created the sky and the earth’¹⁵⁹ implies that the account is not about ‘God creating everything, but about stages of separating, ordering and activating domains of the cosmos’ (Habel 2011:28). Thus, the action starting in the first verse points only forward and assumes that the following verses will explain further the way this action really occurs. That is why, from the second verse, the account depicts the situation of earth before the act of separation in the sense that:

First, the sentence started in v1 is not yet concluded, but is continued in the next verse (s). Second, v1 does not mark the absolute beginning in time (*actio prima*), but the beginning of one specific action, namely, the divine action of ברא (Van Wolde 2009:8).

¹⁵⁸ For the argumentation of this statement, see Holmstedt, R D 2008. The Restrictive Syntax of Genesis 1:1. *VT* 58, 56-67, see pages 59-65.

¹⁵⁹ Holmstedt is critical of this translation because, in his view, the phrase starting with ‘in the beginning’ cannot easily express a restrictive clause. In his translation, ‘in the initial period that/in which God,’ he supposes that ראשית implies multiple stages to God’s creative work (2008:57). This interpretation is hardly represented in biblical scholarship.

The beginning of this action is introduced by בראשית while the action itself is narrated as a process involving God and parts of the cosmos toward its conclusion.¹⁶⁰ It is not a temporal process made in the past, but an atemporal structure of a process that continues through the activities of the lights, waters, earth, animals and humans (Van Wolde 2009:8).¹⁶¹ Genesis 1:1 announces in advance the main subjects of the text: the ordering of the cosmos expressed in the verb ברא. In this sense, the action that started in Genesis 1:1 is not yet finished to mark the absolute beginning in time, but continues in the following verses to describe the concrete way in which this ברא action has occurred and what it implies now. The meaning of the verb ברא is therefore a key issue in order to understand the purpose of the whole passage.

5.1.2 *The verb ברא as act of separating out (Gn 1:1)*¹⁶²

The close reading of Genesis 1:1-2:4a reveals that the verb ברא does not refer to the action of bringing into existence, which is instead stated either by God's command 'followed by a direct discourse with a jussive verb form or by God's action expressed by the verb עשה'¹⁶³ (Van Wolde 2009:6). That is why the verb ברא is not used for the making of the light (Gn 1:3-4), the sky (Gn 1:6-7), the dry land and its flora (Gn 1:9-12) or the lights (Gn 1:14-18). In the whole structure, only the verb עשה depicts God as exclusive subject-agent and its objects are direct products of God's action – there is no other subject engaged in the creation process of land animals, for instance (see עשה in Genesis 1:25).

In this sense, Genesis 1:1 is not followed by the first act of the ordering project, but by the description of the earth condition before the act of ברא, a situation of chaos of תהו ובהו on ארץ. If Genesis 1 was the account of material origin of the universe, the account of Genesis 1:2 would be useless and the first verse would start with something like 'when no material existed' (Walton 2008:58). This idea fits with the ANE myths

¹⁶⁰ Unlike the Yahwist story, the making of the cosmos (earth and sky) is an event that is beyond the temporal configuration. The Priestly writer imagines not mainly the creation of the universe, but the inherent principles at the heart of the permanent maintenance of its order – that is itself its existence.

¹⁶¹ The use of the verb ברא in the closing unit (Gn 2:3) implies that the divine action continues (Habel 2011:41).

¹⁶² For further analysis of the Hebrew verb ברא, see the article of Van Wolde, E 2009. Why the Verb ברא Does not Mean to create. *JSOT* 34/1, 3-23.

¹⁶³ The implication of the verb עשה is that God alone is the subject agent while other entities are direct object of his action. No other entities are involved in the creation project – neither as instrument, as material, adviser, or helper.

where the first line of a cosmogony expresses not a bringing into existence, but the ‘separation’ of the sky from the earth.¹⁶⁴ Therefore, the sevenfold occurrence of the verb ברא¹⁶⁵ in Genesis 1:1-2:4a lead to the same pattern of separation that produces limits and order. In short, ‘this myth is not about God creating everything, but about stages of separating, ordering and activating domains of the cosmos’ (Habel 2011:28).

For instance, the phrase וַיִּבְרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הַתַּיִמִּים הַגְּדֹלִים וְאֶת כָּל־נֶפֶשׁ הַחַיָּה הַיָּמָיִת would likely mean ‘then God set apart the sea-monsters from all sea living things’ (Gn 1:21). One will notice that the תַּיִמִּים are not included in the command of Genesis 1:20 relating to the animals that will be brought in the swarms. The execution of the command (Gn 1:2) presents the תַּיִמִּים as a separate kind from other sea animals, and as such they are not offered the fecundity blessing (Gn 1:22). In this sense, it is probable that the action of ברא (Gn 1:21) implies here providing the תַּיִמִּים their place in the water below the earth disk, תהום, the ‘sea-born’ animals in the waters on earth, while the birds receive their place in the sky (Van Wolde 2009:13). Other examples will be studied in the related points where the verb occurs.

In addition to the linguistic utterances supporting the sense ‘to separate’ to the verb ברא, the noun ‘creator’ is often expressed with the participles of other roots like קנה, עשה or יצר. This is tested by Miller’s analysis of the inscription אל קנה ארץ found in Jerusalem in the seventh century BCE. Clearly the fragment relates to Genesis 14:19 with its description of El Elyon as the creator of the world (אל עליון קנה שמים וארץ) (Miller 1980:45). We should therefore conclude that, if the verb ברא could mean other things in other texts (like Deutero-Isaiah¹⁶⁶), in Genesis 1 this verb does not mean to create but to separate structures of the universe for their proper function. As Walton observed, the usages of the verb suggest that ברא concerns the ‘creative act of assigning roles within a functional ontology – that *bara*’ means to bring something into existence functionally, not materially (Walton 2008:58). In short, the usages of the verb ברא in Genesis 1:1-2:4a sum up the Priestly creation ‘activities’ as actions of ordering the cosmos, presenting:

¹⁶⁴ For reference see the fourth chapter of this study, or the elaborate presentation of the Babylonian, Sumerian and Akkadian cosmogonies in Horowitz, W 1998. *Mesopotamian Cosmic Geography*. Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns. (MC 8), see pages 135-42.

¹⁶⁵ Genesis 1:1, 21, 27abc; Genesis 2:3 & 2:4a.

¹⁶⁶ Isaiah 45:18a presents YHWH as the creator of the sky with the verb ברא הארץ: בורא השמים הוא האלהים יצר הארץ ברא.

God as the subject of action, two or more direct objects and temporal process in which God moves the objects along a path, at the beginning of which they are not distinguished and proximate, and at the end of which they are spatially distant and kept separate [– ready to play an active role in the ordered cosmos] (Van Wolde 2009:19).

Therefore, the ordered cosmos is the fruit of the ברא-ing activity of Elohim who commands, acts and involves the created objects in the ordering process. For instance, rather than simply speaking animals into being, God ascribed this role to the earth and the sea (Gn 1:20-25). In this sense, the objects of God's separation activity are turned into subjects-agents, actively partaking in the rise and maintenance of a well-ordered cosmos (Ollenburger 2009:144). In short, the roles, dominion and activities assigned to particular domains of the universe belong to the definition of the verb ברא, the action that maintains the universe to function. Through ברא action, the cosmos is offered structure and established in interconnected relationships between the created objects of the cosmos.

In sum, the different happenings in the text, including the dominion motifs (for both humans and the lights), all belong to the overarching project of a differentiated cosmos expressed in the instances of the verb ברא in both textual inclusions (Gn 1:1 & 2:4a). These two introductory texts contain the three main subjects of the account: the aspect of time (בראשית and תולדות), the creating activity (ברא and בהבראם), and the objects to be ordered (את-השמים ואת-הארץ) (Van Wolde 1998:23). In this regard, while the first verse presents the undistinguished and undifferentiated state of the universe prior to the activities of ברא, the last verse sums up the successful ordering of the cosmos resulting from the ברא action. The following paragraphs will focus on how this ברא really occurred.

5.1.3 Primeval stage of the universe (Gn 1:2)

5.1.3.1 The lexical meaning of תהו ובהו on ארץ (Gn 1:2a)

The initial situation on earth is characterised by emptiness expressed in the terms תהו ובהו. These words often occur in a cosmological context – that is, they are always put in relation to physical parts of the cosmos. The word תהו appears twenty times in the MT with the meaning of desert or desert-like place, emptiness or chaos, while the three

occurrences of **בהו** – always in relation to **תהו** – emphasise the chaotic condition of **ארץ** that lacks form and life (Van Wolde 1998:24). Arising after the relative clause (Gn 1:1), the poetic expression **תהו ובהו** does not mean ‘nothing’ but that:

The unformed material from which the earth was to be fashioned was at the beginning of its creation in a state of **תהו ובהו**, to wit, water above and solid matter above and solid matter beneath, and the whole a chaotic mass, without order or life (Cassuto 1961:23).

That is why, more often, the word **תהו** occurs in relation to **ארץ** to mean a waste (Dt 32:10; Jr 4:23; Is 45:18, 19; Job 6:18; 12:24; Ps 104:40) or simply the ruins of a city (Is 24:10; 34:11). The general meaning of **תהו** refers to the situation of earth in which life is impossible (Is 45:18)¹⁶⁷ or to the conditions that prevent the habitat: the absence of paths (Job 6:18; 12:24), the desert in contrast to the Promised land (Dt 32:10) or the ordered cosmos starting in Genesis 1:3. In this sense, the word **חשך** is often linked to **תהו** in order to emphasise the uninhabitable condition of the cosmos (Gn 1:2; Job 12:24; Jr 4:23) or the ruins of a city (Is 45:7). In Genesis 1:2, the situation of **ארץ** is then not only the picture of no life, but also of no conditions for life. By its nature of **תהו ובהו**, the pre-creation state is uninhabitable, while its contrast of formfulness (Gn 1:3-31) is requisite for proper forms of life (Brown 1999:39).

The word **תהו ובהו** is then more about the negation of architectonic structure that holds cosmic parts in harmony. It is a situation of **ארץ** where all the material for its ordering was in an undifferentiated, unorganised, confused and lifeless agglomeration (Cassuto 1961:23). As noted by De Pury, ‘creation means setting up of limits, both in time and space: infinity is chaos, structure is cosmos’ (2004:66). In this sense, the contrast of **תהו ובהו** is the rise of the ordered **ארץ** equipped with seasons/time due to the **משל** role of the planets, a place ready for life and a fertile realm producing food for both humans and animals.

Therefore, **תהו ובהו** means not only the sterility of earth resulting in hunger and thirst, but the absence of what enables life in the cosmos: structures (Beauchamp 1969:163). For the P creation account, the meaning of **תהו ובהו** is characterised by the amalgam of three features in the primeval world: **תהום**, **רעה** and **חשך**.

¹⁶⁷ Isaiah 45:18c states: **לא־תהו בראה לשבת יצרה** [he created it (earth) not for vain; he formed it to be inhabited].

5.1.3.2 The meaning of תהום in relation to חשך (v2b)

The repetition of עֲלֵ-פְנֵי in Genesis 1:2 grammatically synonymises מַיִם (Gn 1:2b) with תהום (Gn 1:2c). The word תהום refers here to the unnamed mass of waters prevailing prior to the making of רָקַע dividing waters above from waters below. In this sense, Ezekiel 26:19 supplements the word with the expression of vastness (תְּהוֹם הַמַּיִם הַרְבִּיבִים). Linguistically, the word תהום corresponds to the Arabic word *Tihāmat* denoting the low-lying Arabic littoral, and the *Akkadian* Tiamat,¹⁶⁸ the primal goddess of the deep. In the Pentateuch,¹⁶⁹ תהום is depersonalised and refers only to the natural world-ocean, a mere physical concept (Cassuto 1961:24). In Genesis 1:2, תהום is the natural element (waters), ready to receive any form that Elohim would command. In other words:

תהום constitutes ... primal stuff ... as yet undistinguished that eventually, and necessarily, split to form the celestial and terrestrial worlds (Garr 2003:194).

In Genesis 1:2 the word חשך (darkness) coupled with the word תהום contributes to darken the image of the earth before the created order. In its syntagmatic position in the text, the word תהום contrasts with the illuminated condition of the earth varying with the rhythm of seasons marked by the lights' activity, human dominion and culminating in the Sabbath (Beauchamp 1969:163).

However, unlike some verses¹⁷⁰ in Job where חשך and תהום are consubstantially linked, these entities are presented as separate aspects of the chaotic state of the world. They do not form a single bloc, but the first is described as covering the second. In advance, this disunity implies that the situation reigning on ארץ will be easily and soon ordered. This explains why the transition between the formless and the structured universe occurs in Genesis 1 without conflict. This contrasts with the Babylonian epic

¹⁶⁸ While Tiamat is destroyed in the *Enuma elish*, the biblical תהום is instead transformed by God proceeding step-by-step to construct the 'Ordered world' (Garr 2003:194). Furthermore, the Priestly deep is not a deity but a real part of the unformed state of the earth, the primeval waters. Compared to Tiamat, it has not been conquered but ordered and demythologised. תהום is not the rival of Elohim as Tiamat in relation to Marduk. In this sense, Elohim is not involved in a battle or violence against תהום.

¹⁶⁹ The prophetic texts depict תהום in the same way as the Akkadian thought. The Deep is a creature rebelling against God and was subdued by the Divine mighty (Is 51:9-10)

¹⁷⁰ In the book of Job חשך consubstantially belongs to תהום (void), שְׁאוֹל (under-world) and צִלְמֹת (death-shadow, Job 12:22; 26:6-10), and is a theophanic element (26:13). צִלְמֹת refers to the domain of Abbadon and death (Job 28:14, 22; Ps 88:11-13). In Genesis 1:2b, the חשך are merely comic aspects contrasting the light with which they will pair (Beauchamp 1969:169).

Enuma elish where the new order is brought about by the victory of the young god Marduk over the old gods and monsters of the sea, Tiamat.

5.1.3.3 The meaning of רוח אלהים in relation to תהום (v2c)

The debate of רוח as wind or spirit still divides scholars. It is clear that the word does not mean here the breath of life (Is 42:3; Gn 6:3), or the prophetic Spirit of God (Nm 24:2; 2 Ki 2:16; Ezk 11:24; 2 Ch 15:1). It is not even the Spirit which gives the practice of the Torah – the true life or the presence of God (Ezk 36:27; 37:14; 39:29). The cosmological context would refer to a physical aspect of the primal world. One should recognise that elsewhere, the Priestly material uses the word רוח in the sense of wind in relation to the waters¹⁷¹ (Gn 8:11; Ex 14:21).

The word רוח אלהים does not then refer to what KJV and RSV have meant by spirit, an immaterial reality in contrast to nature/matter. In Genesis 1:2, the word רוח refers precisely to the cosmic atmospheric winds and variations, which the NRSV and JPSV rendered as wind instead of spirit. The text emphasises the physical and natural aspect of the word. In its vertically structural position in the text, רוח originated from God, connected with God's being, character and activity to produce atmospheric effects on the primeval waters (Hiebert 2008:13).

In this sense, various scholars read the noun אלהים as playing an intensifying role as in the expression 'fire of God' in Job 1:16 (see also Is 59:19) (Albertz 1997:1204). This does not abolish the religious connotation of the noun אלהים. The genitive association of רוח to אלהים would then mean the presence of אלהים within the waste cosmos by the intermediary of the natural world. The natural element wind (רוח) is blowing across the face of the תהום before the imminent ordering of the formless universe. The רוח is then a cosmic instrument that in the text is attributed to God in a genitive syntax (Habel 2011:29).

It is the same רוח that acted and produced effects upon the sea in Exodus 15:8-10. However, in Genesis 1:1, the word רוח אלהים has no further function in the account

¹⁷¹ In order to cause the waters to subside and thereby reversing the effects of the flood, Elohim sent a strong רוח to sweep (ויעבר) over הארץ. Here again, the רוח is sent by God, but it is distinct from him since it is merely a cosmic element. The only significance is that it is caused by God. Unlike Exodus 14:21, the רוח in Genesis 1:2c is not a violent storm or God's presence in the primeval world as suggested by Brown (1991:155), but simply an element of the unformed world before the act of separation. It is what Hiebert (2008:10) associates with the atmosphere or the natural air.

except that it belongs to the primordial condition of the cosmos. The verb מְרַחֶפֶת (Gn 1:2c) is linked in the text to the sense in Deuteronomy 32:11 indicating the action of ‘flying over.’ Genesis 1:2c puts emphasis on the movement and its framework rather than on the action of רוּחַ. In other words, the role of רוּחַ does not consist of menacing the waters, but flying over them (Beauchamp 1969:179). It hovers over the dark waters like a mother eagle hovers over her nestlings (Dt 32:11). It is simply a cosmic realm called ‘air’ flying over the surface of אֲרֶץ in Genesis 1:2c, possibly the realm that will be inhabited by the flying beings. The text is a scene of intimacy rather than enmity where רוּחַ and other elements form integral parts of the תוֹהוּ וָבוֹהוּ state of the universe prior to the ordering actions (Habel 2011:29).

In short, an inventory of Genesis 1:2 depicts the initial situation of earth prior to the ordering process. In this primeval condition, the אֲרֶץ is a formless realm engulfed in darkness and waters hovered over by the רוּחַ אֱלֹהִים. Until now, there is no action taken to transform the situation; it is a condition of an undifferentiated world waiting for its ordering. In contrast to Van Wolde (1998:25), it is not a state of ‘nothing’ or ‘not yet’, but a confused world containing all the potential for its building. The scene imagery suggests ‘an embryonic figure without the form and fertility later associated with that land mass called אֲרֶץ ... the primal world before separation’ (Habel 2011:30). The next verses focus on the way this separation occurs and the principles that were set up to maintain the ordered cosmos deemed טוֹב מְאֹד (Gn 1:31).

5.1.4 Separation process of the universe’s domains (vv3-31)

From Genesis 1:3 forward, the ordering of the sky and the earth as well as their filling starts and develops until it is concluded and summarised in Genesis 2:4a. The Hebrew syntax always starts with a series of *wayyiqtol* form וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים and combines with the fulfilment clause וַיְהִי־כֵן before ending with the appreciation formula כִּי־טוֹב. Elohim is the main figure in the account, but he also involved the created parts in the ordering process, either by commanding them (earth, waters) to generate new forms of life (flora & fauna) or by allocating roles within the cosmos (dominion of the lights and humans). The aim is towards the permanent maintenance of the created order.

5.1.4.1 Separation of light from darkness – setting of time (vv3-5)

Until the creation of light, the earth was covered by the uncreated darkness. God caused אור not to eradicate חשך, but to alternate with it. In this regard, God separated one from another so that their rotations cause Day and Night – light is יום and darkness is לילה. God's intention is not therefore the creation of the light, but the setting of time – the rhythm of day and night – that the creation needs for its structure and completion. The Priestly writer sacralises the division of time – including the Sabbath and other festivals – by conferring on it the status of the first cosmic act resulting in the separating of the light from the darkness (vv3-5 refer to v18).

The proper light as creation object will be the main focus of the fourth day. For that reason, Genesis 1:3-5 give no more details about the light and darkness, but focus on their separation (ויבדל) and identification as a mere time framework (Day and Night). This separation implies that the primal world was a chaotic mixture of day and night making up the situation of earth תהו בהו. That is why God does not abolish darkness, but allows its alternation with light as two sides of time. Therefore, since the first day ends with God naming light Day, and darkness Night, it is likely that:

The text (Gn 1:3-5) is not talking about the light and darkness brought into being as material beings ... but that they are established as periods. The introduction of light [אור] was the means of creating day and night. It is the period of light that is called day, and the period of darkness that is called night ... For the sake of consistency, we must therefore also conclude that the initial statement on day 1 in verse 3 should be read, 'Let there be a period of light.' Consequently, we can see that Genesis [1] reports that on day 1 God created time – the primary function of our cosmos that frames our existence in every way (Walton 2008:59)

The alternation of אור (light) and חשך (darkness), and thereby יום (day) from לילה (night) is the first act of God's¹⁷² word promoting diversity in the various scenes of the account. By this act, the elementary condition of life is launched, the framework of time. Whatever can be said, here the focus is not on the rise of light as an irreducible reality, but first and foremost the advent of Time, with its regular rhythm of day and night (Beauchamp 1969:189). In the book of Amos 4:13, the initial act of God in the

¹⁷² Isaiah 45:7 depicts God as the creator/seperator of light from darkness.

cosmos is also related to time: ‘he who makes dawn/day (שחר) into darkness/night (עֵיפָה)’.¹⁷³ Likewise, the focus of Genesis 1:3-5 is not merely אור and חשך but day (יום) and night (לילה), and thereby the rotation of ערב (evening) and בקר (morning) refrains as a timely framework for the ‘created order’ (Skinner 1930:20). After the temporal ordering, אלהים proceeds then to the spatial organisation of the cosmos.

5.1.4.2 Setting up of the spatial framework (days 2 & 3, vv6-10)

In the second day, God commands and God makes the רקיע (solid expanse) in the midst of waters to separate (להבדל) the waters from waters (מים למים). Genesis 1:6-8 seem to combine two ANE traditions about the sky material: in one tradition the sky is made of stone whereas in another the sky is formed by waters (Horowitz 1998:262). While the root רקיע is testified as a solid material in other biblical texts (Ex 34:3; Is 42:5; 44:24; Ps 136:6; Ezk 1:22-26), in Genesis 1 it is also related to מים, the second aspect of the primal world requiring order after the חשך. Van Wolde (1998:24) convincingly noted that when the concept רקיע is used as synonym of the plural word שמים (Gn 1:8), it shares obvious textual form with the word מים – waters.

In her analysis, Van Wolde thinks that the letter -ש of the word שמים (sky) might have been used as an abridged form of the relative pronoun אשר (that), and thereby the word שמים would mean ‘that relates to מים’ (1998:24). This would explain why the function of שמים (sky) aims only at separating the מים above from the מים below, since prior to this שמים, there was only a vertical and unspecified mass of water called תהום characterised by utter darkness, חשך. In this sense, Beauchamp (1969:199) argues that the centre of the second day is not merely the making of the sky as an ‘object’ but as a means of separation between two realms of waters. While ארץ is the synonym of היבשה resulting from the horizontal ordering of the waters, the שמים is another word for רקיע – two traditions combined for sensing the substance of the sky (the sky relates to waters and stones).

This is confirmed by the phrase ‘God made the firmament, and God separated upper waters from lower waters’ (Gn 1:8). The sky realm is not said to be separated, but made (עשה) to perform a separation role upon the principle material of the chaotic

¹⁷³ See the translation of the New American Standard Bible (NAS).

world (מים). From Genesis 1:9, the lower waters will then receive further ordering to prepare the way for the appearance of ארץ, the lower solid realm (Habel 2011:31). It is therefore likely that the actions inscribed in Genesis 1:6-10 imply a spatial movement and an act of separation transforming the initial diffuse unity into a final existence of four spatial realms – sky, earth, upper waters and lower waters (Van Wolde 2009:10).

Therefore, the command of Genesis 1:9a is expressed in the *Niphal* form יָקַו of the verb קוה suggesting not a passive – as interpreted in most English translations – but an active reciprocal action. The syntax implied in this verse is similar to Genesis 49:1: וַיִּקְרָא יַעֲקֹב אֶל־בָּנָיו וַיֹּאמֶר הֲאִסְפוּ וְאִגְיְדָה (Then Jacob called his sons and said, gather yourselves together that I may tell ...). Likewise, the מים are not depicted as passive objects in the Priestly text, but agents actively participating in the creation of marine life as ארץ did for flora and land animals (Gn 1:11-12; 20-24).

The fact that the MT lacks the execution report¹⁷⁴ after וַיִּהְיֶיכֶן denotes that it was not God who made the collection of waters (as for the רָקַע, Gn 1:7), but the מים actively responded to God's command and formed what the LXX calls τὰ συστήματα (v10) – a well-organised and ordered system. In this sense, the LXX adds the execution-report in the active voice: και συνήχθη το ὕδωρ for the gathering of waters into one collection (v9c). Thereafter, this ordering of the lower waters resulted in the emergence of the dry land (נִבְשָׂה) later identified with ארץ (Gn 1:9b-10).

This act has full ecological insight: the מים gather in 'one' place – in contrast to the 'entire' surface previously occupied – to allow the appearance of ארץ with its potential of producing biodiversity. While the συστήματα of waters are named sea (נַמִּים), the נִבְשָׂה (dry land) is called ארץ. From now, the universe has its tripartite form: the sky, earth and sea although the text deems that the earth's form is not finalised until ארץ bears flora. In this regard, the first triplet of the Priestly creation account ends with earth bearing 'green form' that will serve later as food for animals and humans (Gn 1:29). Given the importance of this point, this study has offered a specific emphasis on the ecological insights of the active roles of ארץ and ימים before continuing with the analysis of other creation days.

¹⁷⁴ Knowing this difficulty, the LXX adds a long fulfilment report. See the footnote on the verse in the translation section of this study.

5.1.5 *The active ecological roles of ארץ and מים*

I have decided to analyse the roles of these entities together since they are co-related. One will notice that this decision does not literally follow the textual order since it has been much discussed in previous sections. While the active role of ארץ appears both in the third day (for flora) and sixth (for land animals), the role of מים appears in the third (allowing the rise of ארץ) and fifth days (for the marine life). A few comments will be made on the difficult reading of the rise of birds from the air.

5.1.5.1 *The rhetoric of the divine commands*¹⁷⁵

The active involvement of ארץ and מים in the creation order is mainly assumed in the rhetoric within which God commands the waters and the earth. These entities are not commanded as inert objects, but subjects with the potential of responding as active agents. In this sense, the command *תְּדַשָּׂא הָאָרֶץ דְּשָׂא* finds its active voice response *וַתּוֹצֵא דְשָׂא הָאָרֶץ דְּשָׂא* (Gn 1:11-12). It is likely that the *בְּרָא* action of God in Genesis 1:21 consists not of creating, but of separating the *תַּנִּינִים* (great beasts) from the *נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה* (ordinary animal beings). The reason is that the former fauna species (*תַּנִּינִים*) are lacking in God's command to waters: *וַיִּשְׂרְצוּ הַמַּיִם שָׂרָץ נֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה* (v20). Rhetorically, the commands display a verbal precision in which the ארץ and מים are invited to perform the specific role of producing new things (Brown 1991:194).

Therefore, these Priestly verses recognise the creative powers inherent in ארץ and מים. The divine speech only consists of summoning them to exercise these powers to generate life on earth. For this reason, the direct source of vegetation is not merely the command of אלהים, but ארץ and מים cooperating with God in producing flora and fauna on the cosmos (Habel 2011:33). The verbal skills of the divine commands consist of underlining the active roles of the earth and the waters and integrating them into the divine ordering plan of creation (Brown 1991:197). Once separated or ordered by the third day, the text assumes that both entities gained a kind of activation ability of their inner potential to bring forth life.

¹⁷⁵ For this title, this study is indebted to Brown (1991:196).

5.1.5.2 The active cosmic roles of ארץ (days 3 & 6)

The active cosmic involvement of ארץ in the ordering process of the universe is found in Genesis 1:11-13, 24-25 and 29-30. Despite the use of different syntaxes and verbs in the fulfilment of the commands (Gn 1:12, 25), both flora (דָּשָׁא) (v11) and land animals (נִפְשׁוֹת הַיָּבֵשׁ) (v24) are termed products of ארץ. The *Hiphil* forms תִּדְשֵׂא (put forth) and וַתּוֹצֵא are interchangeably used to mean that the earth produces what is requested to cover its surface – plants of many sorts (vv11-12). Likewise, ארץ is invited to bring forth נִפְשׁוֹת הַיָּבֵשׁ לְמִינֵיהֶן (many kinds of land animals), including the creeping things and the wild beasts (vv 24-25). In Genesis 1:29-30 ארץ is responsible for providing food to air and land animals as well as human beings.

In Genesis 1:11-13, God invites ארץ to produce דָּשָׁא. Given the syntax of the text, the word would possibly mean the entire flora kingdom. Yet, in other passages, the word refers to animal feedstuff, especially the wild fauna (Job 6:5; Jr 14:5; Jl 2:22) or only the green herbs appearing after the harvest of חֲצִיר (Pr 27:25). This meaning is evident in the syntaxes of the Septuagint reading of דָּשָׁא as *βοτάνην* and *herbam* in the Vulgate. However, the *paronomasia*¹⁷⁶ תִּדְשֵׂא דָּשָׁא [literally: let the (earth) vegetate vegetation, v11] basically widens the noun's semantic so that the repeated word (דָּשָׁא) would include all plants in their initial growth (Westermann 1984:124).

Therefore, Genesis 1:11-12 conceive two species within the דָּשָׁא kingdom: plants (עֵשֶׂב) and trees (עֵץ) bearing seed/fruits according to their species (לְמִינֵיהֶן). This reading is attested in Genesis 1:29-30 where the two flora species are viewed as the absolute source of food for human and animal beings. Thus, the flora species are generated with fecundity potential similar to the one allotted to humans and fauna species. The phrase עֵשֶׂב מְזַרְעֵ עֵרֶב (plants yielding seed, v11), for instance, highlights the fact that the plant species are generated with the capacity of reproducing themselves after their kind (לְמִינֵיהֶן) by means of עֵרֶב – seed (Cassuto 1961:41). One could say that ארץ provides the flora realm with the fertility potential similar to the one that God offered to the fauna and human beings (Gn 1:22, 25, 28). The flora yield 'seed according to their own

¹⁷⁶ The word עוף does not refer to birds only, but to all flying creatures. Like the sea-born creatures, the flying beings fly in all directions – an action expressed in the *Polel* יְעוֹפֵף (fly about), not the *Qal* form יָעוּף (fly).

kind,' much as animals and humans bring forth progeny according to their own species (Ramey 1997:5). אֲרָץ is then an active agent in the creation process.

5.1.5.3 The active cosmic roles of מַיִם (days 2 & 5)

The cosmic role of the מַיִם is found in its withdrawal from the whole surface to allow the rise of earth – יַבֿשָׁה (vv9-10), and its production of sea animals (vv20-22). While the first act consists of giving the place for another cosmic realm, the second conveys a reproductive role. Unlike other biblical literatures¹⁷⁷ that regard 'waters' negatively, in Genesis 1 they are, alongside earth, God's subordinate agents to generate order in the universe. The roles of waters can be illustrated as follows:

Table II: Illustration of the active roles of waters

The third day	The fifth day
Gn 1:9a ←→ Command: waters	Gn 1:20 ←→ Command: waters
Gn 1:9b ←→ Execution: waters	Gn 1:21 ←→ Execution: God and waters
Gn 1:10 ←→ Result: earth and seas	Gn 1:21 ←→ Result: תַּיִנִּים & sea fauna (אֲרָץ)

The careful analysis of the creative acts relating to waters division (days two and three) shows that God's appreciation appears only after the horizontal separation of waters resulting in the rise of the dry land (earth) and the *στουσεματα* of waters (sea) (Gn 1:10). Immediately, these entities are enlisted by the creator as separate agents to generate life in response to God's commands. Therefore, Genesis 1:20-23 depict the reproductive roles of the waters bringing forth all the marine יַבֿשָׁה הַיָּם. It is not evident that also the תַּיִנִּים emerged from the sea since they are narrated as a distinct fauna kind – missing both in the command (v20) and in the fertility blessing that was given to the יַבֿשָׁה הַיָּם (v22).

However, unlike the ANE myths, the מַיִם are not forces of chaos imprisoning deities (cf. chapter four), but mere parts of the natural creation – they are God's agents

¹⁷⁷ In Habakkuk 3:8-15, connect the מַיִם רַבִּים with the military campaign context in which YHWH defeated waters after a terrible battle.

(Habel 2011:34). In Hebrew, the stem שרץ is basically used for tiny or small animals, and refers to swift movement of many creatures jostling one another as they move in all possible ways (Cassuto 1961:48). Thus, Genesis 1:21 clearly separates the ‘small’ faunas relating to the verb שרץ from התנינם הגדלים (the great beasts) The reproductive paronomasia¹⁷⁸ syntax: ישרצו המים שרץ (let the waters swarm) clearly lacks this fauna (התנינם) category (Gn 1:20a).

The rise of the winged creatures (birds) is ambiguous in the MT. The Septuagint assumes that birds were caused by the seas alongside sea fauna. As shown in the translation section, the form יעופף must be regarded as a *jussive* whose subject is the word עוף – an unusual syntax not indicating the specific derivation of the winged beings, be it watery, divine or impersonal (Brown 1991:198). In this regard, the text uses the *paronomasia* syntax in the same way as for ארץ and מים: עוף יעופף מים (and let the flying beings fly) (Gn 1:20b). This supports the thesis that the stem ברא refers to the act of separating the great sea beasts (תנינם) from the ‘sea-born’ fauna, and the flying beings (Gn 1:21).

In short, the earth and the waters are regarded as distinct agents partnering with God to generate life in the universe. In response to God’s command, the waters gather into one place to allow the rise of earth (Gn 1:9), and the latter produces vegetation (Gn 1:12). Yet, in their generation of animals, God is also involved since the verb ברא (Gn 1:21) and עשה (1:25) are entirely reserved to the action of the creator. The action of God does not exclude the partnership of these entities that were always commanded to produce life in paronomasia syntaxes. This construction values and confirms that ארץ and מים are the most active subordinate agents involved in the process of the universe order (Brown 1991:194). After this separate excursus about the active roles of ארץ and מים, let us return to the analysis of other crucial days.

5.1.6 *The eco-chiasm structure of the fourth day (vv14-19)*

5.1.6.1 Introduction

The fourth day account concerns the luminaries and their active cosmic roles regarding earth and its living beings. Until the third day, the creation of order focuses on fixing

¹⁷⁸ Other grammarians use the words ‘*Figura Etymologica*’ as synonym of *Paronomasia* (Brown 1991:115).

structures that are intended to be filled by their specific inhabitants in the coming triad of days. By the fourth day, God made the planets whose roles will shape and affect life in the world of living beings in terms of light and seasons (time). The rule of the lights forms a parallel with the rule of humans by the sixth day. The fourth day is made with eco-chiasmic patterns introduced by several *Qal* forms וְהָיוּ and the prepositions ל indicating respectively the result and purpose of the creation of the lights. The whole structure of this day consists of exposing functions that are linked to the making of the lights (מְאֹרֹת) as follows:¹⁷⁹

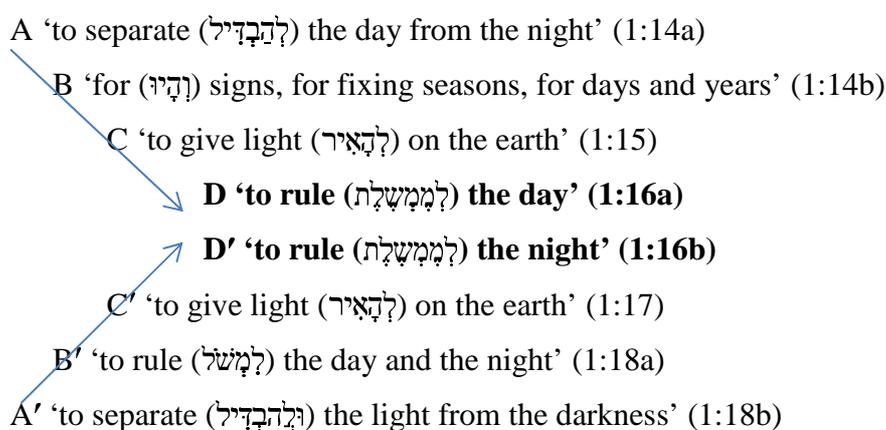


Figure II: The eco-chiasmic structure of the fourth day

5.1.6.2 Comment on the מְשַׁל task of the מְאֹרֹת

The execution of God's command in Genesis 1:14-15 is recorded in reverse order in Genesis 1:16-18. The מְשַׁל task of the מְאֹרֹת occupies the centre of the structure (DD') whereas the two panels (ABC & C'B'A') express the goal expected from this function. While the first section (ABC) announces the purpose of the making of the lights, the second panel (C'B'A') states its execution in a permanent way – the actions of setting the planets are expressed in the consecutive *Qal* imperfect (וַיִּהְיוּ and וַיַּעֲשׂוּ). From this day, 'creation turns out to be not only a generation of life, but also an assignment of functions by which the created phenomena are related to each other' (Van Wolde 1998:26).

¹⁷⁹ This chiasmic structure is adapted from the model presented by Ramey, W D 1997. The Literary Analysis of Genesis 1:1-2:3. Available online from: http://www.inthebeginning.org/chiasmus/xfiles/xgen1_1-2_3.pdf (Accessed 24 June 2012).

The ruling function is termed in the dominion verb *משל*. God has commanded the planets (*מְאֹרֹת*) to rule over (*משל*) the day and the night. The BDB lexicon explains that *משל* usually occurs with humans¹⁸⁰ as subjects relating either to the power of man over woman, slave over property, woman over people or kings over his subjects/slaves (Brown *et al.* 1968: 605). In this sense, the verb *משל* is used for man's rule over woman after they had been ousted from Eden (Gn 3:16). The TDOT renders the word *משל* as the synonym of *מלך* with the difference that *משל* focuses less on the ruler/person and more on the rule/function (Gross 1998:69). In Genesis 24:2, the word bears the sense of being responsible for something.

This is actually the sense recorded in Genesis 1:14-18. Obviously, these verses speak much about the function of the rulers of the day and the night (DD') rather than about their form. Similarly, in Micah 5:1-2, the choice of *משל* instead of *מלך* would indicate that the Messiah's rule is not the mere extension of the Jewish kingship but a new investiture in which a qualitative different dominion is realised (Gross 1998:70). It is, therefore, not without purpose that the word *משל* occurs here in the context of the all-embracing order of the whole created world. Genesis 1:14-18 depicts the function of the planets as time-teller, the first created thing (time) enabling life on earth (see my footnote on Gn 1:3). It is not their personality with which the text is concerned, but the expectation from their ruling/separating activity.

The threefold function expected from the lights consists of separating or ruling day and night, being signs for seasons and time, and giving light on earth. Separating or ruling the day and the night refers to the first created thing – time. The planets do not cause the time, but serve the role of separation of day from night, and thereby mark the rotation of these two periods of time (Cassuto 1961:44). In exercising this role, they simultaneously rule the alternation of daytime and night-time,¹⁸¹ and then become signs for days, years and seasons, including the Sabbath. In short, the planets enable

¹⁸⁰ In a few texts, the word is used with God as subject: Jdg 8:23; Is 40:10; 63:19; 1 Chr 19:12.

¹⁸¹ The expression *להאיר* (shine) refers to the action of *משל* (ruling). It has reduced the function of *משל* in turning the reader's attention to the physical, useful and natural function of the luminaries. By this grammatical syntax, the text needs to equalise the planets with the rest of the created things in contrast to the ANE cosmogonies that regarded them as deities (Gn 1:14-18). The same ideal applies for the sea monsters which are not named Leviathan, but only *תנינים* (great beasts) and inserted into the world of God's creation (Gn 1:21) (Beauchamp 1969:101-2).

the forming of the calendar, since marking signs refers to the calculating of times and festivals (Moberly 2009: 46).

By regulating day and night, the lights also regulate and even command the life of living beings on ארץ. Beauchamp (1969:104) comments that the structure of the P creation account shows that the *mytheme* of the luminaries' dominion constitutes the indispensable counterpart to the dominion of humans. While humans are set as masters of earth and fauna, they are at the same time dependent on the משל task of the מארת as much as other beings. In more structuralist words, the מארת form a binary parallel with humans in terms of ruling functions. I will comment further on this ideal in the following section, the account of the sixth day.

5.1.7 Ecological ambivalence of day 6 (vv24-31)

The main issue of this day relates to the creation of humans in Genesis 1:26-28. In its immediate setting, the footprints of anthropocentrism dominate this literary unit. However, the creation motif of this day involves also land animals and the vegetarian command for both animals and humans. In this sense, the troublesome passage will be analysed both separately (to exhibit its human-centrism) and in the wide literary locus of the account (to mollify its greyness). This hermeneutical stance pays proper respect to the self-account of the unit (words and syntax) before mollifying its report in relation to the overall creation account.

5.1.7.1 The eco-chiasmic structure of the sixth day (Gn 1:24-30)

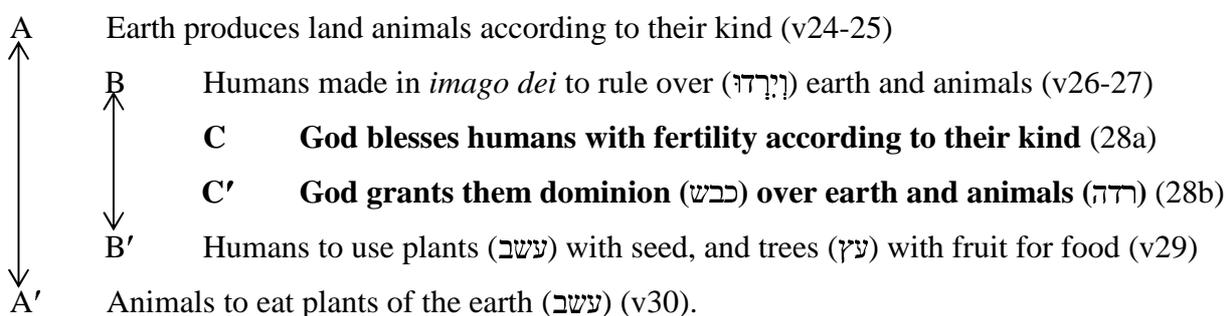


Figure III: The eco-chiasmic structure of the sixth day

5.1.7.2 Comments on the structure

The sixth day is structured upon the generation of land fauna by earth, and God's making of humans in *imago dei*. The fertility blessing and human dominion mandate occupy the centre of the day. It is clear that land animals are not offered the blessing of fertility, but both ארץ and fauna are under the power of humans, even though both Adam and animals depend upon ארץ for their provision. These issues make the sixth day very ambivalent and call for a careful ecological reading of the text. Before this exegetical task, let us analyse the troublesome issues concerning human creation in Genesis 1:26-28.

5.1.7.3 The otherness of human beings

The otherness of humans is stated within three matters: not only are they made *imago dei*, but also given dominion over animals (רדה), and the subdual (כבש) of earth. The following paragraphs focus on the main issues of Genesis 1:26-28 before offering a broad analysis of the unit in reference to the structure of the sixth day and the whole Priestly creation account.

5.1.7.3.1 *The divine council*

The text clearly narrates the otherness of human beings. They are not generated from ארץ, but *imago dei* beings whose making is a matter of divine council. The literary question concerns the plurals נעשה. I will not concentrate on this issue since my target is not merely a literary analysis of the verses, but exhibiting the otherness of humans in relation to other creatures in the text. However, a number of remarks on this plural should be raised to achieve this aim. Kee (2007:260) comments that the cohortative נעשה is likely a remnant of the divine council view in which 'the high god is at the centre of the council, surrounded by its members.'¹⁸² As previously noted, the assembly of gods is where the creation of universe and humans are decided in ANE

¹⁸² This statement is supported by Isaiah 6; Job 1-2; Psalm 82; Zechariah 3, Daniel 7:9-14, and especially the text of 1 Kings 22:19-23 in which the prophet Micaiah states: 'I saw YHWH sitting upon his throne, with all the heavenly host standing in attendance to the right and to the left of him.' In Job 1-2 there is a gathering of YHWH and Satan, where the latter is allowed to trouble Job by destroying his wealth including his children. Psalm 82 is a poem in which gods are evaluated for their responsibility for social justice. Here YHWH is praised as the ruler of the earth. In the vision of Zechariah 3, Satan, who accused Joshua, is rebuked and the guilt is taken away from Joshua. Isaiah 6 and Daniel 7 are the well-known visions clearly depicting the heavenly gathering.

cosmogonies. The divine court suggests that the event will be achieved cooperatively by the council members (Van Seters 1989:341).

It is within the divine council that important decisions were decreed, such as the allocation of portions of the universe to the gods or the building of a temple or a city. In this regard, the assembly of gods was a vital decision-making body responsible for juridical decrees (kingship) directed both to divine beings or human beings. Therefore, Garr (2003:86) explains that *נעשה* introduces a relevant event in which *אלהים* and his addressee will be equally involved. Elohim did not consult the court for formality; he needs their approval. For this reason, *אלהים* inserts an inclusion clause to his speech explaining the rationale and limits of human creation (v26b).

By this, God needs the approval, involvement, cooperation and participation of gods in his proposal of making humans (Garr 2003:88). Although the addressee's answer is not stated, the successful acting in Genesis 1:27 assumes that the council agreed on the matter. However, the proposal is executed by an agent, *אלהים*, acting on the council's behalf – 'on behalf of himself; and on behalf of his addressee in v26a, whoever that may be' (Garr 2003:86).

The question is why only the creation of humans is a matter of divine council since everywhere else in the text God speaks with uniform singularity. Von Rad explains that 'the extraordinary plural ('Let us') is to prevent one from referring God's image too directly to God the Lord. God includes himself among the heavenly beings of his court and thereby conceals himself in the majority' (1961:57). Given the status of human creation, angels or the divine court appear in several texts only when the divine and human worlds meet (Job 1; Is 6). In Genesis 1:26, human creation is a self-evident presence of the divine in the natural order.

However, one should not limit his thought on viewing the divine council as only aiming at uplifting the human position in the world. Its positive side is that it also defined norms limiting their involvement in the world for the sake of the already created order (Gn 1:29-30). The vegetarian motif in these verses limits the violence contained in the verbs *רדה* and *כבש*. The violence embedded in these verbs is sufficient to infer why human creation is a matter of divine consultation. It is possible that P regards humans as both potential promise and threat in the natural order, mainly in the

execution of their dominion. We should therefore turn to the other troublesome issue: the *imago dei*.

5.1.7.3.2 *The imago dei* (צלם and דמת) issues¹⁸³ (vv26-27)

The Hebrew phrase נַעֲשֶׂה אָדָם בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כְּדְמוּתֵנוּ depicts God's proposal for creating the human race. The appeal sets the norms of what humans will be like (בְּצַלְמֵנוּ כְּדְמוּתֵנוּ) and the rationale for their creation (to rule over animals and earth). In Genesis 1:26c, the words בְּצַלְמֵנוּ and כְּדְמוּתֵנוּ affirm the exclusive relatedness of humans to God (gods). While the first word צלם gives the idea of copy or representation, the second, דמת (likeness), is a genealogical feature connecting humans to the divine kind (Van Wolde 2009:19). Though different in meaning, the two words imply an absolute closeness of humans to the divinity. The Priestly occurrence of these words in Genesis 5:3 confirms that:

... the description of humans as in God's צלם and דמות in the same terms used to describe Seth's connection to Adam is an attempt to draw a parallel between the father–son relationship of 5:3, between Adam and Seth, and the divine–human relationship of 1:26–27 and 5:1 (Crouch 2010:10).

However, a grammatical syntax of the preceding prepositions¹⁸⁴ ב and כ to the words reveals instructive insights. According to Garr (2003:98), כ before the word דמת (כ-דמתנו) expresses similarity or approximation between otherwise 'dissimilar' and non-identical entities – it marks similarity and distinction between the likened entities. Besides, the syntax of ב (ב-צלמנו) invokes the idea of moving within a specific realm implying restricted location (Van Wolde 2009:15). This means that the relationship of humans to God is defined both in terms of approximate and distal (כ), and proximate

¹⁸³ There are a great number of texts about the interpretation of צלם and דמת from the time of Philo until now, and this study is not interested in exploring them in detail. Interpretations include the location of *imago dei* in one part of the humankind (mind, soul, spirit), physical implication of the words, or the capacity to rule over the earth and animals. Others have only associated the *imago dei* with the human privilege of a specific relationship with the creator whom they represent on earth in the ways ANE kings were viewed as צלם and דמת or son of their local deities. This study however will be mostly interested in the literary analysis of צלם and דמת as they appear in the text and other biblical literature. For the history of interpretations of this issue, see Westermann, C 1984. *Genesis 1-11: A Commentary*. London: SPCK, 147-155; Towner, W S 2005. Clones of God: Genesis 1:26-28 and the image of God in the Hebrew Bible. *Interpretation* (October), 341-56; and mostly, Crouch, C L 2010. Genesis 1:26-7 As a Statement of Humanity's Divine Parentage. *JTS* 61/1, 1-15, see pages 2-9.

¹⁸⁴ For more detail about the syntax of these two particles, see Garr (2003:165-170). The author carefully shows that both Genesis 1:26 and 5:3 adopt the same grammatical pattern of the two prepositions in which the first (ב) marks the locative-proximate relation, while the second (כ) endorse the similarity and distal rapport. Elsewhere, the mark of intimacy (בצלמנו) precedes the non-conferential mark (כדמותנו). The same syntax can be found in Genesis 5:3; Numbers 29:18; Deuteronomy 28:62; Judges 20:30; Psalm 102:4.

and intimate (ב), without being identical to God. The idea is that human beings share something with the divine beings or God, and yet God located them distant from him on earth to rule and share ארץ with other created species (Van Wolde 2009:17).

Harland (1996:185) concludes that ב should be read as a *beth essentiae*: ‘instead of being made ‘according to’ the image of God (i.e. the image being the standard of measurement ... i.e. *beth* as the origin of the mould ...), [humans] are created ‘to be’ the image of God.’ This intimate *beth essentiae* implies that humanity is made to ‘imitate’ God¹⁸⁵ or the divine beings in the ways expressed by likeness (דמות) and image (דמת). In this sense, Van Wolde (2009:17) interprets the threefold occurrences of ברא in Genesis 1:27 in terms of three processes of separation – dual mentioned separation of humans from the divine realm and one separation of humans into male and female – that ensure the human existence on earth among other species. Yet, this does not abolish the uniqueness of human beings in relation to the earth community.

However, it teaches that humans are not identical with God even if they are termed *imago dei*. As counterpart to the exilic or postexilic setting, the *imago dei* view of the P writer would neither mean an object of worship nor a potential replacement of God (Crouch 2010:4). Humankind is thus to be equated to a statue which a king erects in a conquered land to symbolise his real – not physical– presence there. Van Wolde (2009:17) makes it clear that God separated (ברא) humans in/from the divine realm and located them in a spatially distinct place, ארץ. Still, this aspect makes humans totally distinct from other species of the Priestly creation account. Humankind is the only being with whom God interacts (ויאמר להם אלהים), whereas he blessed animals by using the impersonal form (לאמר v22).

The question is whether this particularity of the human species can be interpreted only as a mark of anthropocentrism. Indeed, the divine court and the *imago dei* status provide humans with a special position in the universe. The words צלם and דמת both contain various degrees of referential similitude, implying that human beings are made *theomorphic* (Garr 2003:166). The text provides humans with special distinctiveness,

¹⁸⁵ As Adam is the father of Seth, so too God is the parent for humanity (Crouch 2010:11). For this author, the *imago dei* implies a relationship of parentage between God and humanity. He supports his argument on the quotation of Parpola (1993:181) of the letter of the Assyrian Esarhaddon declaring: ‘the father of the king, my lord, was the very image (*Šalmu*) of *Bel*, and the King, my lord, is likewise the very image (*Šalmu*) of *Bel*.’

yet more than the differentiation of the sky from earth, waters from earth, or fauna from flora. However, all belong to the **צבאם** (Gn 2:1) of the created order and serve the purpose of the cosmic *imprimatur*: **טוב מאד** (Gn 1:31).

It should be noted that Genesis 1:1-2:4a does not equalise its characters (**צבאם**), but presents each creature in its uniqueness before connecting it to the whole. As we shall see later, Genesis 2:1 qualifies the created objects as **צבאם** comparing the P creation to the army system (**צבא**). This explains why the hierarchical arrangement of higher and lower positions is inherently linked to the text. Each single creature has its intrinsic value – claimed **כי־טוב** – and its place, before **אלהים** connects it to the whole system. Some creatures are under the rule of others – whether genuine or harsh power – but still at the service of the **צבא** organisation. This ideal calls forth for analysing of the verbs **רדה** and **כבש** expressing the human rule upon animals and earth within the whole system.

5.1.7.3.3 The verbs **רדה and **כבש** in Genesis 1:28**

The Hebrew verbs **רדה** ‘to rule over’ and its parallel **כבש** ‘to subdue’ are the main concerns of this study. Both words denote the meaning of trampling, enslavement, and harsh rule by the powerful over the weak (for example, **רדה** in Ezekiel 34:4; **כבש** in Jeremiah 34:11, 16; Zechariah 9:15). In Psalm 110:2, the sending (**שלח**) of the king from Zion is associated with the command that the king will start his **רדה** activity in the midst of his enemies and defeat them. The similar idea is expressed in Psalm 72:8 where the king’s **רדה** activity results in his foes’ bowing down before him and licking the dust (v9). It is clear that the expected effects of **רדה** are highly destructive for those affected by such dominion. That is why in Lamentations 1:13, YHWH sent fire from above to **רדה** the city, chastising, punishing, devastating it as if the city were an enemy.

The TDOT explains that the root **רדה** refers to all kinds of supremacy and is often used in association with violence and the motif of anger over foreign or hostile nations (Dt 20:20; 1 Ki 5:30; 9:23) (Zobel 2004:331). It is in this sense that the Israelites cried that God had abandoned them to their foes’ **רדה** (Neh 9:28). Similarly, the root **כבש** is often associated with oppressive and harsh actions, such as subduing slaves (Jr 34:11), conquering the land (Jos 18:1), or raping of women (Es 7:9; Neh 5:5). The TDOT

comments that the verb **כבש** always occurs in the context of oppressive dominion and its connotation implies suppressing the weak, such as:

... in military hostilities, when whole territories and their populations are subdued, in the conquest of established kingdoms, but also in individual cases, when someone is enslaved, or in the sexual realm when a woman or girl is importuned and assaulted. The verb [כבש] always presupposes a stronger party as subject and a weaker party as object (Wagner 1995:56).

Therefore, both verbs naturally convey a violent implication towards the objects of the dominion. Both Hebrew words refer to a dominion against the will of the subordinates, including the use of force. In the immediate context of Genesis 1:26-28, humans are offered a forceful power over earth and animal kingdom: ‘a hierarchy there is, and it must be respected’ (Towner 2005:348). This is reiterated in Psalm 8 where everything on earth is put under the human feet, including terrestrial, aviary and sea fauna (vv6-9).

However, instead of the verbs **רדה** and **כבש**, the Psalmist uses the root **משל** (v6) as if inviting the reader to interpret the human rule (Gn 1:28) in reference to the dominion (**משל**) of the lights (Gn 1:16). This semantic alteration implies that the Psalmist was aware of the basic violence enclosed in **רדה** and **כבש** whereas the implied goal of the text would be a dominion in the service of the created order. The Psalmist assumption for reading the dominion mandate of Genesis 1:28 (**רדה** and **כבש**) in light of Genesis 1:16 (**משל**) is an exegetical feature of high relevance for this study. Let us then turn to the assessment of human dominion in the whole P structure.

5.1.8 Assessing **רדה and **כבש** in the structure of Genesis 1**

We saw that Genesis 1:1-2:4a is a structure made upon seven days in which there are two sections both culminating towards earth. In the whole structure, two panels are juxtaposed in terms of dominion motifs: the lights (4th day) and humans (6th day). While the first half of the text (Gn 1:3-19) concludes with the investment of the lights to rule time and light on earth (Gn 1:18), the second half (Gn 1:20-31) moves towards the creation of humans made in order to rule over animals and to subdue the earth (Gn 1:28).

According to Beauchamp (1969:45), this binary scheme shows that the inanimate created order culminates in the ruling of the stars, and the world of living beings is ruled by humans, but the whole order reaches its ultimate pinnacle not in humans, but in the Sabbath (Gn 2:1-4a). The lights inhabit the sky and humans reside on the earth, and both are expected to sustain order in their respective places. In this sense, the text presents them as a pair in terms of ruling function. While the שני המארת (two lights – הגדל and הקטן) are responsible for ensuring/ruling order in the sky, humans (male and female, זכר ונקבה) have power over earth (Gn 1:18 and 27) (Van Heerden 2012:8).

This assumption implies that the transferral of dominion both to the lights and to humans – the two rulers in the text – would refer to the same purpose: maintaining the created order. Humans are intended to exercise their dominion over animals and earth in the same way as the lights perform their ruling role in relation to the light, times and seasons, and thereby serving life on earth. Van Wolde (1998:28) says it neatly:

This dominion is both relative (as we can infer from the restricted human dominion over birds and fishes, over lions and microbes) and relational, because it is based on interdependency. As sovereigns of the earth and the animals, people are at the same time dependent on the sun, the air, the waters and the planets of the earth. Dominion and dependency go hand in hand and are actually part of all existent phenomena. A network of created phenomena is therefore built up by these relationships and ... one cannot just read one aspect of the complete network and neglect the other parts.

This statement argues for reading Genesis 1:26-28 within the Priestly creation account. Therefore, the MT does not literary deem the work of the sixth day כִּי־טוֹב (good), but included it in the final appraisal טוֹב מְאֹד (very good) for the whole work of six days (v31). The same syntax occurs in the process of division of waters that is not claimed טוֹב until the dry land (יַבֶּשֶׁת) appears, that is called אֶרֶץ, paired with the sky (שָׁמַיִם) (vv6-11). This should teach us that the text is not solely about the creation of humans, nor about the creation of earth, nor even about any other being. The P creation account is about ‘the universe [אֶרֶץ and שָׁמַיִם] itself in which all elements [צְבָאִים] are interrelated’ (Van Wolde 1998:28). It is a marvellous order of creation in which every single being plays a role in a harmonious whole.

Therefore, though having ‘naturally violent’ power over fauna and earth, humans are commanded to behave without hostility, violence, abuse or antagonism against the

animal realm (Gn 1:29). By divine decree, both animals and human beings will share the earth floral resources: for animals green plants, for humans seed-bearing plants and fruit trees (vv29-30). The unqualified power of humans over animals and earth is then circumscribed within the vegetarian limit that prevents it from violence. This implies that animals and humans will not compete for food to survive. As noted by Dillmann (1897:87), the P creation institutes ecological balance within the hierarchical world of creatures:

The Creator did not desire war and the thirst for food, but peace among His creatures... By the use of the phrase וַיְהִי־כֵן in ver.30, [P] gives it distinctly to be understood that he actually assumed the maintenance of this peace of God as existing during the earliest age. Accordingly, ver.29f. were intended in special to give to mankind [sic] the divine and fundamental law with respect to the life of the creatures, and therewith, at the same time, a characterisation of their original condition.

Furthermore, although sharing something of deity, God's image beings differ from God since their spatial dwelling is on earth with other species (Van Wolde 2009:18). Both human beings and animals depend on אֲרֶזֶק for their life, and all are dependent on the מַשַׁל task of the planets upon which is linked the Sabbath, the festival that allows the rejuvenation of the created order. The description of humans as rulers of the earth and other living beings is then limited by several boundaries to prevent it from pride and violence against God and the created order. Beauchamp (1969:45) puts it clearly in arguing that:

La conscience des privilèges de l'homme n'a entraîné l'auteur à aucun excès: image de Dieu, il domine les animaux mais partage quelque chose de leur condition; soumettant la terre, il laisse à Dieu le pouvoir sur la mer et il est soumis au rythme des astres. Dans ce petit nombre de mots, passe une expérience et une tradition qui contient la grandeur de l'homme dans les limites exactes. La cosmologie de l'auteur n'est pas vraiment anthropocentriste...¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁶ **This is my translation from the original French statement:**

'The awareness of privileges due to humans is not presented without restraints. As *Imago dei*, humans dominate animals, but share something of their condition [sharing the earth habitat and food]. Subduing the land, humans do not control the sea itself (which is under God's power), and they are subject to the rhythm of the stars. There are in these few words, an experience and a tradition that conceive human authority in the exact boundaries. The cosmology of the author is not really anthropocentric...'

Genesis 1:1-2:4a is therefore not an account of human dominion over any other species, but the panorama of the world as it stands in its vital existence and internal relationship between its distinct units. The text establishes the principles and limits in which the existence of the universe can be preserved. Although hierarchical, the text offers to every being a place, task and limit to maintain in relation to the created order. The implied assumption is that humans hold an ‘own place’ within the universe just as the lights have their own places in the sky and the fish have their own position in the sea (Van Wolde 1998:28). Genesis 1:1-2:4a is a world pointing forward to the appraisal טוב־מאד and the cyclical rejuvenation every seventh day.

5.1.9 Cosmic structure of the seventh day (Gn 2:1-4a)

These verses focus on the creation completion and God’s rest. The lack of the refrain ערב בקר for this day is probably not a scribal error, but implies that this day is set apart from the preceding six days to celebrate the diversities and community of the P creation account. Thus, the Sabbath day stands for the summit of the entire structure of the text, as it shares something of God’s holiness and through it, creation ‘becomes constructed in the *imago templi*, in the model of a temple’ (Brown 2010:40). The chiasmic structure of this day can be presented as follows:

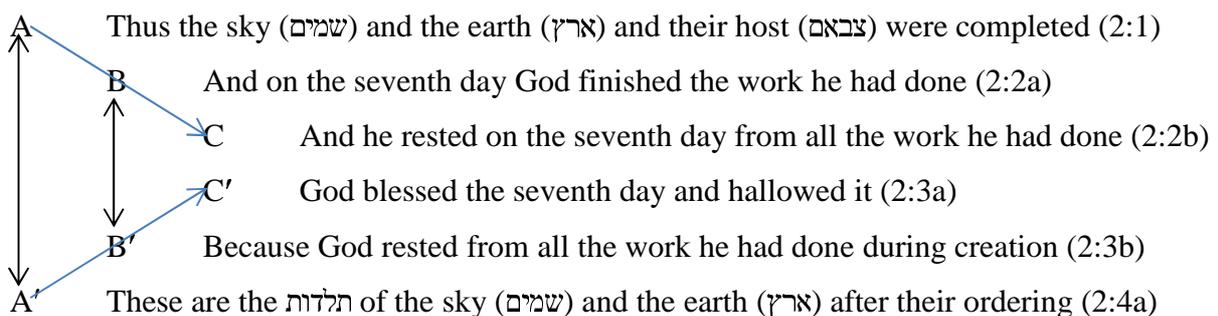


Figure IV: The chiasmic structure of the seventh day

5.1.9.1 Comment on the uniqueness of this day

The structure of Genesis 2:1-4a starts by stating that the process of ordering of the universe (שמים and ארץ) and its filling was completed not on the sixth day – in contrast to the LXX – but on the seventh day. In this sense, the ‘seventh day is thus part of creation structure, yet is distinct within it’ (Wallace 2000:50). The process is now

complete and Elohim can rest with the creation. The parallel AA' not only refers to the end of the ordering process, but also confirms that the focus of the P creation account is not anthropocentric, but cosmic, embracing the ordering and filling of the שמים and ארץ with their hosts (צבאם) as well as the divine rest (שבת) (Habel 2011:42). The following points focus on the ecological meaning of these latter Hebrew words in P creation account.

5.1.9.2 The word כל-צבאם and the cosmic structure (Gn 2:1)

The word is used for a well-ordered army arranged in cohort for a battle (Jos 5:14-15). It refers also to the astral bodies (Is 40:26), the host of the cosmos (Neh 9:6) or angels (Ps 148:2; 103:21). In military occurrence, the verbal root צבא refers to 'going to war' (Nm 31:7, 42; Is 29:7; 31:4; Zch 14:12) in the *Qal* form, and 'recruit for war' in the Hiphil form (Jr 52:25; 2 Ki 25:19) (Van der Woude 1997:1041). It is doubtful that the word צבא has, in Genesis 2:1, the warlike sense viewing the cosmos playing an offensive or defensive function. What is preserved of the idea of army (צבא) is only the obedience of each cosmic unit to the orders of God and the rigorous allocation of functions within the ordered universe (Beauchamp 1969:243).

Therefore, the word is here emptied of any association with the war language. In Genesis 1:1-2:4a, God brought the 'hosts' from a chaotic state to a well-ordered and differentiated cosmos, and allots each creature a place and specific task. The clause of Genesis 2:1: השמים והארץ וכל-צבאם conveys the idea that the order and differentiation of the cosmos is successfully fulfilled. In Akkadian, the equivalent of צבא refers only to the crowd, whereas in the Bible it is not a mere multitude, but a well-ordered and hierarchical system (army)¹⁸⁷ made up of distinct members (Ringgren 1997:211). This idea has served the Priestly writer to express the cosmic members in terms of צבא.

In the book of 2 Maccabees 8:21, צבא is a well-ordained structure of several units acting tactically and separately, but for the same purpose. This idea occurs in the word מחנות (Gn 32:8-9) referring to the division of Jacob's people into camps for a tactical rescue purpose against any adverse attack. For these texts, צבא is a mechanism whose

¹⁸⁷ The Septuagint translates Proverbs 30:27 as στρατεύει ... εὐτάκτως (well-organised ... it campaigns). In fact, the swarm of locusts is one of the main symbols of the army. In this sense, the LXX interpreted the verse from a military perspective.

complex movement conveys acting not in bloc, but in distinct and interlinked units. The opposite of this order is chaos since in a conquered army (צבא), its elements are intermingled and confused: they disperse in the greatest disorder (2 Macc 10:32). The situation is even worse: its members fight one another:¹⁸⁸

I will stir up Egyptians against Egyptians,
and they will fight, one against the other,
neighbour against neighbour,
city against city, kingdom against kingdom; (Isaiah 19:2).

The P creation account is then an active system, with actions made by appropriate members for its survival. Genesis 1:1-2:4a describes a universe made by distinct units tending toward the same purpose טוב־מאד, and the whole is structured on several words of God (ויאמר אלהים). It is the word of Elohim that makes possible the structure of the cosmos, but not an inner principle of unity (Beauchamp 1969:270). One will realise that all members of the cosmos (flora, fauna, humans ...) are all named צבא acting in differentiated small units, but serving the same purpose. With this word צבא at the end of the account, the Priestly layer emphasises the ideal of internal and ordered units relating to each other, responding to an order and serving the same purpose (טוב מאד) and climaxing in the seventh day for their rejuvenation (the Sabbath).

5.1.9.3 The cosmic significance of Sabbath

Although the word Sabbath is not expressly engraved in the text, it is implied in the verb שבת (Gn 2:3) and the ceasing of the work on the seventh day (ביום השביעי). The basic meaning of שבת is 'to cease.' It does not mean an 'end' in the chronological sense, but in the sense of completion or fulfilment inferring that what was projected or expected has been secured (Browning 2010:30). In this sense, the basic meaning of the word שבת is 'holiday', the day of celebration after active work.¹⁸⁹ This complies with

¹⁸⁸ In this sense, the harsh verbs for human power are mollified in being placed in the context of the צבאם (the host) of the ordered cosmos since the members of the same army/system cannot fight against their peers unless they are vanquished, or are in a situation of תהו ובהו (chaos), the primeval stage of the cosmos (Gn 1:2).

¹⁸⁹ Convincingly, Albertz (1994:407) argues that in the pre-exilic times, Sabbath was the cultic new moon festival celebrated by the priests (1 Ki 4:23; Is 1:13; Am 8:5), while amongst the people there was probably a custom of interrupting agricultural work every seven days. This agricultural rest probably had something to do with an old taboo conveying not exploiting animals until their last breath. Judaism (the Priestly writer and the

the scholarly debate on the origin of Sabbath. Probably Sabbath finds its source in the rhythms and cycles of the moon upon which the fertility or ארץ abundance were deemed to depend (Albertz 1994:408).

The Priestly writer possibly replaced this honouring of nature with the praise of אלהים who is its maker. That is why 2 Chronicles 36:20-21 will interpret the duration of the Babylonian exile as a time of Sabbath (rest) for the land of Canaan. The desolation of the land is indicated to be the Sabbath keeping, in order to complete the symbolic period of seventy years (Jonker 2007:704). The end of these seventy years, according to the Chronicler, coincides with the establishment of the Persian kingdom (v20). The exile is then meant not only as the Sabbath (rest) for the land of Canaan, but also of its people in which they have experienced rejuvenation for a new beginning.

It is with this perspective that the crowning of the created order (Gn 2:1-4a), the infinitive construct niph'al בְּהַכְרִיזָם (2:4a), clearly points back to the opening verse of the account (Gn 1:1). We explained that the presence of the verb ברא in this closing verse implies a new beginning for the ordered cosmos. The inclusion not only evaluates the activities of the ordering process expressed by the verb ברא on the various stages of the account, but also suggests the completeness of the created order (Van Wolde 2009:19). It is therefore the summary statement for the whole work of the ordering process.

In concluding the P creation poem, Genesis 2:1-4a becomes the basic norm or 'window' through which creation is to be understood (Browning 2010:17). The syntax ויכל אלהים מכל־מלאכתו (God finished all his work, Gn 2:2a) is also used for the completion of the tabernacle¹⁹⁰ – ויכל משה את־המלאכה (Moses finished the work, Ex 40:33) conveying the adequate result of the building task. In other words, the motif of Sabbath at the climax of the P creation account taught its readers that:

Deuteronomist) possibly combined these two institutions during the exile. The festival took only a while in the exilic time before being universally practised. The festival which was once limited to the official temple cult during the new moon festival, is now universalised and institutionalised so that families everywhere could participate in it to celebrate not the mystical cycles, but the creator God. For further details about the Sabbath, see Albertz, R 1994. *A History of the Israelite religion in the Old Testament period: From the exile to the Maccabees*. Vol.2. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 408-415.

¹⁹⁰ Probably, the same ideal is duplicated by Jesus-Christ at the cross when he said: 'It is finished' (Jn 19:30). It is possible that the Gospel writer would like to establish a connection between the incarnation and the creative activity of God: 'He was in the beginning with God all things came into being through him' (Jn 1:3).

It is through the cult that we [Priestly readers] are enabled to cope with evil, for it is the cult that builds and maintains order, transforms chaos into creation, ennobles humanity, and realises the kingship of the God who has ordained the cult and commanded that it be guarded and practised. It is through obedience to the directives of the divine master that his good world comes into existence (Levenson 1994:127).

That is why the Sabbath motif (CC') holds the centre of the chiasmic structure of the seventh day. By blessing and hallowing (setting apart) it, God invested the seventh day with a power similar to the fecundity power given to living beings (Habel 2011:41). This is implied in the word תלדות (from the verb ילד, Gn 2:4a,) that is usually used for the procreation of human life (Gn 5:1-2a).¹⁹¹ We can surely conclude that by the seventh day, אלהים deemed the created order ready for producing and sustaining order.

The Sabbath is not only the cessation of work, but also an opportunity for the created structures and its host (צבא), including flora, fauna and humans, to rejuvenate and restore life. By including the earth, flora and fauna in the perspective of Sabbath, the P creation account rejects all utilitarian views that would consider these entities as mere objects. The world has been brought forth by the Creator in the act of creation, and returns to him in the act of worship on Sabbath (Barton 1996:124). In this sense, the P writer will later insert that every seventh year all agricultural activity should stop in order to enable the land to observe the Sabbath for YHWH (Lv 25:1-7).

6. Conclusion

The foregoing analysis was an attempt to scrutinise the Priestly creation account as a whole design in order to have its full ecological insights. We saw that the P creation account depicts a process that involves different elements of the universe, a kind of programme where non-living and living beings take part. The Creator first established 'time' before proceeding to the frameworks of the cosmos (sky, sea, earth) and their specific inhabitants. Most significant is that, once created or separated, the different entities of the cosmos are allotted specific functions for the maintenance of the created order. The comparison with Exodus 25-40 (tabernacle building) showed that the P's

¹⁹¹ According to Van Wolde (2009:19), the noun תלדות encompasses three notions: someone who 'begets' or is the agent subject of the activity of bringing forth; the activity of bringing forth itself; and the phenomena that are brought forth.

cosmogony is a joint project carefully involving distinct actors: God, the structures and its host.

Therefore, the whole P creation account is characterised by differentiation and is a complex network built upon the principles of the uniqueness and interdependence of the created beings. The analysis showed that each unit of the text should be read not only separate from, but in relationship with other scenes of the text. In this sense, the human rule finds its real meaning in relation to the ruling task of the lights, with which they form a binary scheme. However, this does not suppress the distinctiveness of each being. Genesis 1:1-2:4a displays distinct realms of the cosmos and allots them certain roles within the unfolding structures characterising the Priestly view of the world. The next chapter will elaborate on the findings and implications of this analysis.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSIONS: FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

1. Introduction

This chapter provides the logical outcomes of our investigations. It will consist of assessing the hypothesis of this study, the findings and the implications of the study for the way forward. This will also include the matters of understanding Genesis 1:1-2:4a in relation to the current ecological crisis.

2. Returning to the working hypothesis of this study

To close our ecological reading of Genesis 1:1-2:4a we need to revisit the working hypothesis, which states that the footprints of anthropocentrism are clearly visible in Genesis 1:26-28, the creation of humans. The same hypothesis also assumed that an ecological reading of Genesis 1:1-2:4a involving a careful literary analysis of the passage as a whole would bring valuable ecological wisdom into view. This study was an attempt to investigate this twofold hypothesis.

To test this working hypothesis, this study involved a careful examination of the historical context of the text and carefully paid respect to the expressions, themes and the free-account of the text itself. Read from this perspective, Genesis 1 criticises our world and challenges us with its outstanding cosmic, social and theological horizon (Anderson 1994:134). Yet, the study uses the interconnectedness of the members of the earth community as doctrinal construct, but we never confuse it with the text itself, depicting humans as both different (as *imago dei*) and linked to ecosystems (depending on the web life of the P creation account).

To adopt this reading stance, we have firstly explored, within chapters two and three, the strength and weakness of prevailing ecological readings of biblical texts, and Genesis 1:1-2:4a in particular. From the apologetic stance (readings of recovery) to the resistance and revisionist modes, we found that only revisionist scholars paid attention to the text itself. We therefore adopted some of their assumptions to analyse our text.

We neither defended the text (readings of recovery), nor resisted its problematic issues of anthropocentrism (readings of resistance), but recognised the otherness of the text and evaluated it for its own context. This reading stance has thus aided to confirm the working hypotheses of this study in terms of the findings as set out in the following sections.

3. Ecological insights of Genesis 1:1-2:4a as a whole design

3.1.1 *Genesis 1 as response to a worldwide crisis*

The intention of Genesis 1 is the restoration not only of humans, but also of the land of תהו ובהו. In the crisis context where the exiles lost their land, king and temple, Genesis 1 is an attempt at ‘restoring the lives of a shattered community *in terms of the story of their world*’ (Van Heerden 2012:9). Genesis 1 offers a hopeful network of the world that is turned from chaos to a self-sustaining order made with the former elements of the exile (humans and other earth members). In a land of תהו ובהו or chaos, God’s creative power is evinced not by hint, but by inviting and cooperating with the cosmic elements, both created and pre-existent (Brown 1999:127). The P creation account is a project of restoration built upon the ideal of interlinked objects in a complex network of dynamics. In this ordered world, ‘human beings do not make the systems and the rules; they discover them, and have to work within them’ (Barker 2007:6).

For instance, heard in the exilic time, the word *imago dei* would mean for victim people (גולה) to recover their dignity and royal-priestly responsibility as God’s agents in the world (Brown 2010:48). In this sense, Genesis 1 offers an edifying vision for people who are committed to restore their land (ארץ) from ruins. For Van Heerden, the P creation account confirms the uniqueness of humans, but this text can be viewed as doing justice to Earth if it is interpreted as a whole design and ‘harmonic’ system from the perspective of the victim (2005:391). In this sense, the appeal of isolating biblical texts from their context (see the Earth Bible Project) would lead to subjective results. Genesis 1:1-2:4a teaches that the cosmic order is a home for both humans and other members of the E.C.

Genesis 1 widens the world vision of the exiles for which the cosmos is both home and temple. Genesis 1:1-2:4a does not only appeal to the exiles to reconsider their understanding of worship or temple and kingship, but also their understanding of habitat (Van Heerden 2012:9). Humans are viewed as citizens not of a particular land, but of a magnificent cosmic network upon which their 'stories' are indelibly linked to the existence of other beings. Thus, Genesis 1 calls forth each cosmic sector to find its place to prosper autonomously in the network, but also to act for the well-being of the whole system. Genesis 1 is a hope stimulus for the disaster and landless victims as well as other beings that are included in the Sabbath of God.

3.1.2 Genesis 1 portraying creation as a network of relationships

All reviewed ancient cosmogonies were at least implicitly systems of interlinked rapports between the ordered entities. Both ancient cosmogonies and Genesis 1 agreed that this system resulted from the act of separation of various domains. In the ANE, the world was viewed as having three storeys: skies (the top), the earth (middle) and the world under the earth. These storeys were separated from each other by fences that kept the waters in the skies and the waters under earth from flooding the dry land (Van Dyk 2001:52).

Our analysis observed that all cosmogonies viewed the world as a system made from the pre-creative and unformed material of the primal conditions of the cosmos. The disorder was suppressed by the flowing words of gods making plans, taming the primal sea and making humans as slaves of gods for the maintenance of the created order. However, none of the elements is suppressed, but adjusted to its limit to prevent the created order from a crisis, another *תורהו ובהו*. In Genesis 1, for instance:

Order is created out of chaos, but chaos is not eliminated; it is only pushed back or given bounds, as indicated by the placing of a firmament in the midst of the waters to separate the (lower) waters from the (upper) waters (Gen 1:6-7). Chaos remains at the edge of creation, as a threatening possibility (Anderson 1994:139).

Likewise, we interpreted the actions of Elohim as acts of separation and ordering. In accordance with Van Wolde (2009:13), we read the verb *ברא* not *to create*, but *to*

separate various parts of the cosmos. For this reason, each act of separation resulted not in duplication of the previous realm, but in the creation of a totally different new thing. This diversity teaches that the world of Genesis 1:1-2:4a is meant to function in interdependent relations. In other words, ‘creation is a process by which the cosmos is differentiated into interdependent relational entities which themselves provide the basis for further differentiation and interdependence’ (Elnes 1994:146).

In contrast to ancient cosmogonies, Genesis 1 is not oriented towards the care and the feeding of Elohim, but rather it stands out in its complexity and coherence of the created order. The Priestly creation account is made for the safety of the creatures. The cosmos of Genesis 1 is a ‘system’, a highly interrelate ‘network’ in which the components are arranged hierarchically and assigned value for their own and for the interest of the whole (Clifford 1994:143). The dualistic idea between humans and non-human beings is totally absent from the text viewed as a whole system. The separation acts within the text aim not at setting some beings against others, but enabling interconnections between various parts of the cosmos, as asserted by Elnes (1994:146):

In Genesis 1, God creates an ecosystem and empowers it to function in a relatively autonomous manner within an inherently social system of interdependent relationships. Its functioning depends fundamentally on the interaction of mutually dependent, differentiated entities relating to each other in ways that promote life.

The seven-day chain actions depict these interconnections: days 1-3 correspond to days 4-6, while day 0 and day 7 bear timelessness fonts. All lives are correlated in the sense that one conditions another: the water allowed, for instance, the emergence of earth, but both earth and waters helped in producing living beings – plants and animals – that are related to each other. For this reason, Brown maintains that P’s creation is a system of self-sustaining order and interdependence of living beings and creative qualities assigned to the earth and the waters (1991:392). It is a world of separation and integration of the created object in a life-sustaining system of interdependencies, since for the Priestly cosmogonic vision:

Separation without integration breeds contempt and fear, as well as generates a hierarchy of violence; differentiation engenders integrity, an immanence that is both apart from and involved in the wholeness of creation. Creation without differentiation is either chaos or nothing at all. Uniformity is tantamount to the unformed (Brown 1999:16).

All dominion motifs throughout the account are to be understood in this context of differentiation that brought into being the Priestly cosmos. Furthermore, while humans rule over (הָרָר, Gn 1:27) the host of three domains (sea, skies and earth) they are at the same time dependent on the ruling mandate of the sun and moon that govern (מָשַׁל) day, night and seasons on earth (Clifford 1994:144). Whether or not the verb כָּבַשׁ has a forceful potential of human dominion over earth, the context of Genesis 1 urges us to read it in reference to differentiation, empowerment and fertility that is typical of most ANE cosmogonies, including Genesis 1.

3.1.3 Structures and functions in the cosmos

The complete picture of the text is neither solely about the creation of humans, nor about the creation of any other being. It is mainly concerned with ‘structures-making’ and the allocation of roles that ensure the maintenance of the created order. In this structured cosmos, ‘God assumes the role as the main subject, the earth and the waters are depicted as agents and occasionally subjects in the creation process, and the remaining objects of creation are commanded to be agents in the maintenance of order, all within a rigorously consistent structure’ (Brown 1991:371). We detected that the waters and earth are not depicted as created, but named and enlisted to be active agents in the creation process of flora and fauna, and be the home for their products.

The text is indeed about the separation and allocation of tasks and functions to the non-living and living beings for the well-being of the created network project. That is why we agreed with Van Wolde that the main Hebrew verb of Genesis 1 – בָּרָא – means ‘to separate’ various parts of the unformed world in order to ensure a system of singularities and interdependence (2009:13). Walton adds that the uses of בָּרָא concern the ‘creative act of assigning roles within a functional ontology – bringing something into being functionally, not materially (2008:58). By this, the text needs to highlight

not the creation of a specific object, but the institution of the structures or functions that make the P creation account a ‘creating realm’.

3.1.4 Diversity and interdependence in the cosmos

The analysis showed that there is no ‘unique centre’ in Genesis 1. The created order is made to function in such a way that the basic differences of the created beings cause them, in relationship with each other, to move towards the purpose of the adverb טוב מאד (very good, Gn 1:31). Thus, only the frameworks (sky, earth, sea) are expressly named. The living beings do not receive specific names, but they are named by their species: vegetation (דשא), sea and land animals (נפש־חיה), air animals (עוף), sea monsters (תנינם), luminaries (מארות), and even אדם is a collective noun not designated a personal name. The hosts are also indicated by their ‘multiplicity and kind’ through the word species (זרע). The Priestly account carefully separated and differentiated its creatures for the purpose of order.

For example, animals differ from each other and are separated from one another so that they live, not in תהו ובהו of Genesis 1:2, but in their God-given own spatial domains (sea, land, air). They also differ from the plants and the human beings, but at the same time they depend on the plants for food and are subjected to human power. The plants on earth differ from one another as to their seed-bearing features and their ability to bring forth distinct species, but they are under human rule (Van Wolde 2009:17).

Moreover, all living beings are implicitly dependent on the lights, which through their משל function makes life possible on earth, and enables the recognition of seasons and festivals, including the Sabbath – the concluding purpose of the Priestly creation account. The Creator is proud of his work (Gn 1:31), and he rested because, ‘out of the pre-existing anarchy, God creates structures’ (Gillman 1998:172).

Although humans share something of deity – as created in God’s image – they are dependent on the plants that provide their food and are also different from God since their dwelling is on earth with other beings (Van Wolde 2009:18). Therefore, the expression ‘image of God’ for human beings did not bring the writer to exceed in the statement of privileges that would be assumed. It seems that the expression does not

play a particular role (apart from God's relatedness) in the text, because the domination mandate is also assigned to other rulers who are not said to be *imago dei*. The commission to rule is not considered as belonging to the definition of God's image (Von Rad 1972:59). Humans are both like animals, fish and birds – since all are living creatures and blessed to be prolific – and different from them because only humans are made *imago dei*. Their differences, however, are not meant as sources of conflict and violence (Gn 1:29-30).

It is obvious that the Priestly creation account indeed conveys a hierarchy, but a constructive hierarchy of inherent differences and dependencies that embody and enable life in the cosmos. Both the acts of separation/differentiation and the structural symmetry of the account imply that everything in creation is linked to something else (Van Heerden 2012:8). The literary framework of Genesis 1:1-2:4a clearly underlines its intent of setting up order: this created order resulted in the exposition of 'structure and variety, a cosmic temple, a creation deemed extremely good in Genesis 1:31' (Brown 2010:46). Each individual created being holds its distinctive role, limit and interest to display within the instituted order to maintain the life of the system.

3.1.5 The dominion motif and the overall design of Genesis 1:1-2:4a

We found that the dominion binary scheme 'lights-humans' implies that any stated power within Genesis 1 is intended in relation to the created order. Whether they have to rule, humans and other invested rulers are intended to maintain this created order on which they depend. Their dominion will certainly consist for the benefit of the whole. Although human rule is described in potentially violent verbs, we saw that the Psalmist had already understood it in the sense of a *מַשֵּׁל* task (Ps 8). For this hymn of praise, human dominion (*רָדָה* and *כִּבֵּשׁ*) implies not destruction, but serving the created order in the way the *מְאָרֵת* does (Gn 1:16-18). This non-oppressive hierarchical view is seen and inaugurated in the fact that God creates without violence, and even he partnered with earth in producing flora and fauna.

In this case, human dominion is far from the modern idea of conquest, but rather a dominion 'filled with the collaborative, life-sustaining practices set by the creator God' (Brown 2010:47). Like the ruling result expected from other rulers (the lights),

human rule implies the maintenance of the created order, which is necessary for the life of both the earth and its members. Bauckham put it clearly that the earth that is to *כבש*, is the same that is to be filled by humans and provides food for them (2010:17). As for animals, we saw that human dominion excludes their consumption.

Besides, our translation of the MT showed that human dominion does not even include the great beasts of the fifth day. The book of Job 38-40 clearly shows how humans (in the person of Job) stand in a contemplative condition vis-à-vis the Leviathan and other wild animals that are uniquely dependent on God's power. This is to say that humans are not the prerequisite in God's creation. The 'natural and cultural environments have histories that stretch out before humans emerged and they have a future that will continue beyond the disappearance of the human species' (Van Heerden 2012:6).

Therefore, even after the human race had been instituted as 'sovereign' of the realm of living beings, humans are not the rulers over the whole of creation. The sun and the moon, for instance, exercise their own rule upon which depend the earth, animals and humans. In Genesis 1, nothing – the lights, humans, faunas – is depicted with an unlimited and absolute power. We saw even that for the generation of flora and fauna, Elohim partnered with earth and waters. Furthermore, Genesis 1:29-30 prevents any use of forceful power in a hierarchical setting where violence is potential in the verbs (*רדה* and *כבש*) expressing human dominion over earth and animals.

3.1.6 Creation towards the horizon of Sabbath

We saw that the Sabbath is among the old ritual practices that received new sense or interpretation in the exilic period, as a distinctive feature for Israel's election among the nations. It is not by chance that the Priestly writer located this cultic custom within the framework of the cosmic order. In this sense, the rite is not limited only to the exodus, but conveys the ideal of wholeness. It implies willingness to live in conformity with a certain ideal of wholeness and integrity which is rooted in the cosmic order itself, and whose active observance is the distinctive mark of Israel in the exilic crowd of people and thoughts (Nihan 2007:339).

The Sabbath honours the diversity and wholeness of the created order described as a cosmic temple. For Barker (2007:7), ‘to pollute the creation with human sin was as wicked as polluting the temple itself’. Human life is part of the created order in which it needs renewal alongside other created beings. For the Priestly creation account, the observance of the Sabbath, knowing when to stop and what was good, was the original goal of creation (Barker 2007:9). It is through the lens of Sabbath that we understand humans as fully part of the world inasmuch as their dominion and interests are found and serve the **טוב־מאד** of the whole created order (Browning 2010:67).

The Sabbath is then not only the ending of God’s active work of the six previous days, but also an opportunity for the created structures to rejuvenate. The principle of ‘rest’ implies limits, limits which allow space for renewal (Browning 2010:68). We saw that the presence of the verb **ברא** in Genesis 2:4a implies that the created order is provided with the creating capacity. The Sabbath is the lens through which the creator deemed the creation completed, and it is through it that every aspect of the universe should be evaluated.

4. Implications of the study for the way forward

4.1 Genesis 1:1-2:4a and the current ecological crisis

For today’s readers, Genesis 1:1-2:4a conveys that humans are not the creator, they are not absolute rulers. It is only by becoming aware of their limits that humans can take the true measure of their powers, competencies and responsibilities. As we said before, Genesis 1 expresses the challenge for the cosmic structures and its host to ensure the maintenance of the created order. With this utopia in mind, modern humans would finally mobilise their interest, energy, intuition and creativity to work for the continued well-being of the created order upon which they depend for their life and survival (De Pury 2004:73). The great motivation for their actions is that not only do they act for their benefit, but specifically for the interest of all.

Our perspective on the account found that Genesis 1:1-2:4a is not solely about the use of the earth, such as land abuses, landscaping or agricultural misuses. Nothing

of the sort is present in the author's mind, even if such threats were not totally absent in the period of the composition of the account. These kinds of frustrations belong to the modern world, but not to the world of the text. Rather, the Priestly creation account should be regarded as a way of thinking about the setting up of the cosmos' structures and the measures taken to 'make it work' (De Pury 2004:73). The Priestly creation text is an attempt to make sense to people's crisis state by placing it in a larger context of what occurred prior to their time, and what hopefully may come after (Van Heerden 2012:6). As such, Genesis 1 is a significant stimulus for addressing the current cosmic crisis.

The Priestly vision of the cosmos would inspire modern readers to re-consider their true place in the cosmos in relation to the Earth community. In fact, the main task of the Priestly creation account consists of envisioning a harmonious world in which various types of human and non-living beings live together in distinct temporal and spatial domains without conflict. We agree with the revisionist readings that Genesis 1 is in contrast to Genesis 9, the world of violence and conflict similar to current cosmic dysfunctions. The real message of the text consists of assessing the task and place of every created entity and being, in the maintenance of the created order.

The Priestly creation account conveys the principle of interdependence and relatedness. Indeed, there is the idea of subjugation of some species to others, but this should be read in relation to the ideal of the whole account. The P cosmogony is a world of internal solidarity and interdependence between God and the created order as well as internal dependence between the created beings. The P's utopia optimises a world of harmonious balance though its differentiated hierarchy is potentially violent (Brown 1991:425). Genesis 1:1-2:4a establishes limits that prevent all powers from violence for the benefit of the whole. Modern readers should look inwards if they really acknowledge these limits that would prevent destruction in the universe.

4.2 Remaining questions for further research

It should be noted that this study does not pretend to have completely handled all the issues related to the ecological interpretations of the Bible and Genesis 1:1-2:4a in particular. Rather, it should be clear that our investigations raised a number of issues

that require further examination. Future studies could consider these as they continue the quest for greening the readings of Biblical texts. Following are questions that need further study in future investigation.

First, when Van Dyk (2009:201) ended his survey on the challenges posed by ecotheology, he identified various questions that would interest future investigations. One of them is the question ‘to what extent can anthropocentrism be avoided in the ecological debates without violating the anthropocentric view of the Bible?’ Our study acknowledged the anthropocentric view of Genesis 1:26-28 while searching for its possible ecological insights for today’s readers. The same approach could be applied to other biblical texts.

Related to this, future scholars might extend the theme of the relationships between humans and animals in other biblical texts. Van Dyk’s proposition would be applied to the P and J flood stories (Gn 6-9) as well as the sacrificial rites in Leviticus 1-16 and animals’ responsibility in Exodus 21:28-29. In this sense, the modern search for animal rights would be requisitioned and re-evaluated afresh.

Secondly, we noted that the exilic disaster was a challenging moment in the social as well as in the ecological view of Israel and the Priestly creation account. Connected to this, future scholars could investigate the question of how societal problems such as poverty, political conflicts, and human rights abuses impact on ecological matters in Africa. An investigation could be made of several disasters in the Old Testament and their related implications on the natural world.

Finally, future studies could focus on a comparison of ANE cosmogonies with African creation stories and their relevance for ecological wisdom. Among issues that would interest the reader, the significance for the worldwide challenges of water could be investigated by focusing on the theme of water in the Old Testament together with the African cosmogonic epics and proverbs.

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