
STEWARDS AND NOT OWNERS: HUMAN RESPONSIBILITY TO CARE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT IN GENESIS 1:28-31

Francis Ashedu Onwordi

Seminary of All Saints,
Uhiele-Ekpoma, Edo State, Nigeria
ownochii@yahoo.com

Abstract: *This paper addressed the problem of environmental distortion caused by the misunderstanding of God's blessings to humans in Genesis 1:28-31. It argued that the account in Genesis 1:28-31 did not mandate irresponsible and unsustainable use of the environment and its resources but places the burden of responsible utilization of the earth and its resources. The method adopted in this research were the historical-critical, theological and analytical methods. It discovered that the misunderstanding of Genesis 1:28-31 is partly responsible for the inappropriate utilization of the environment and its resources. It discovered that the inappropriate actions of humans were endangering the existence of humans and other living organisms. Genesis 1:28-31 required humans to avoid selfish and commercial ideologies in relating with the earth. Other factors required included: Respect, preservation of the earth's integrity and adopting implementable policies. It recommended adequate ecological education of citizens and a committed action to ecological policies.*

Keywords: *Environment, Sustainability, Steward, Resources, Humans, Dominate, Responsible*

Introduction

The earth is faced with numerous environmental issues and this crisis is majorly caused by human activities which greatly alter the stable nature of the environment and consequently disrupting the entire ecosystem and threatening the survival of humans and other species. At the center of environmental crisis is the question: What should be the limit to humans' exploitation of the earth and its resources in relation to maintaining and the preservation of the earth's integrity? In answering this question, one is faced with the reality of mankind's numerous needs which continue to necessitate the need to exploit the earth and its resources extensively and thereby causing harm, disruption and ultimately depletion of the earth's resources.

In the first biblical account of creation (Gen 1:1-31), the created world and everything in it was found to be good. God in specific terms put humans at the center of the created world and gave dominion and authority to subdue the earth (Gen 1:26-31). Thus, on the sixth day of creation, God gave humans the mandate to take charge of the created order. Taking charge must be understood to mean that humans will make use of the earth and its rich resources for their survival. This mandate meant that humans will master the earth, control the resources of the earth and further the course of humanity from interacting with the created order. As is evident in the second biblical account of creation, the pride of place given to mankind is seen in the action of manipulating and tilling of the soil and in the naming of the wild animals, livestock and birds of the sky (Gen 2:15-20). Therefore, there is no doubt about the dominance of humans when it comes to the created world and the use of its resources. However, the question once again that stands out is: to what extent should humans use the earth and its resources for their survival? This paper therefore studies the narrative in Genesis 1:28-31 with the view of providing better understanding of the narrative and relating it to responsible use and care for the environment.

Statement of the Problem

This paper addresses the problem of the misunderstanding of the divine command to have dominion and subdue the earth (Gen 1:28-31) by humans and how this misunderstanding has reinforced actions that have brought harm and disruption to the earth and its resources. On the face value, the verbs 'to dominate' and 'to subdue' suggest aggressive and violent actions which ultimately lead to control. However, this limited understanding has led to aggressive and extensive use of the earth and its resources and this has caused the disruption of the earth. It should be said that naturally humans are meant to use the earth for their survival but this right must always be seen from the perspective of humans being stewards. Humans are to exploit the earth and its resources responsibly, making humans accountable to God in terms of how they relate with the earth and its resources. Humans therefore are not owners but caretakers who are not to see the earth and its resources as mere instruments for their pleasure and satisfaction.

This paper aims at proffering better understanding of the mandate to dominate and subdue the earth in Genesis 1:28-31. It argues that the mandate to dominate and subdue the earth put enormous responsibility on humans to care responsibly for the environment, avoiding all actions that harm the earth while depleting its resources. It argues that exploiting the earth and its resources to the point of utter destruction of the earth's integrity contradicts the real essence of the dominion given to humans.

Literary Consideration of Genesis 1:28-31

Delimitation of Genesis 1:28-31

Genesis 1:28-31 is part of the first creation account (Genesis 1:1-31) which is within a larger block of narratives that deals with primeval history (cf. Gen 1:1-11:32). Therefore, as a literary unit, Genesis 1:28-31 captures the divine activities of God on the sixth day of creation when God created humans (*ādām*). Essentially, it explains the first covenant between God and humanity's first parents Adam and Eve, clearly stating humanity's responsibilities and tasks in relation to the use and care of the created order. The opening words 'And God bless them' (cf. Gen 1:28a) introduces the Edenic covenant and the last actions of God in the first creation account which climaxed with the phrase 'And it was so' (cf. Gen 1:30). The verbs used in this unit (cf. Gen 1:28-31), mark it as independent from the preceding unit (cf. Gen 1:26-27) which focused on the creation of humans (*ādām*). Thus, verbs such as: bless, fill, multiply, subdue, rule or dominate define it as a unit. In terms of themes, it can also be studied as an independent unit. It contains themes such as: blessing and fruitfulness (cf. Gen 1:28), stewardship and dominion with accountability (cf. Gen 1:28), provision and sustainability (cf. Gen 1:29-30), and wholeness and peace (cf. Gen 1:31).

Setting, Form and Structure of Genesis 1:28-31

Genesis 1:28-31 significantly belongs to the larger block of narrative that is considered to be pre-historical or primeval history (cf. Gen 1:1-11:32). It focuses mainly on the establishment of humanity's role in terms of responsible use and care for the created order. The larger block (cf. Gen 1:1-11:32) called primeval history has to do with aetiology and it basically helps to explain the overwhelming control, power and privilege that humans have over the rest of creation. The book of Genesis presents two different creation accounts. The first (cf. Gen 1:1-31) is the priestly account which provides specific time frame for the created world and the second is the Yawist account which is more anthropological in nature, presenting the creation of man first, the world and then woman (Kizhakeyil, 2009). Consequently, Genesis 1:28-31 as theologized myth (aetiology) presents the continuation and completion of God's creation on the sixth day where humanity was given control, authority and dominance over the created order.

With respect to the form of Genesis 1:28-31, it is a theologized myth and as Ralph (2003) argued, a myth is a literary device deployed for the explanation of events or reality that transcends human understanding. As a myth, it is essentially historical

because it presents the story of how humanity gained prominence over created order. As it is the case in every theologized myth, Genesis 1:28-31 contains truth that aids religious believe and enhances the general understanding of God's relationship with humans and human relation with the world. In terms of structure, Genesis 1:28-31 is carefully woven to bring out clearly the authority God gave to humans over the created order through Adam and Eve and the responsibilities that go along with such an authority or dominance. Consequently, Genesis 1:28-31 is divided into three parts and these are:

- i. The blessing (cf. Gen 1:28a)
- ii. The call to dominates and subdue (cf. Gen1:28b)
- iii. The final instruction (cf. 1:29-31)

An Analysis of Genesis 1:28-31

i. The Blessing (Gen 1:28a)

Genesis 1:28a, begins with the Edenic covenant essentially states the conditional covenant between God and humanity represented by Adam and Eve stating their responsibilities with the created order (Fruchtenbaum, 2008). The clause "God bless them and said to them" takes the reader back to the preceding verses (Gen 1:26-27) which dealt with the creation of the human person who is a manifestation of God's image. Allen and Oswalt (2008) argue that "being the image of God means that humans share, although imperfectly, in the nature of God—that is, they were given the communicable attributes of intelligence, knowledge, spiritual understanding, creativity, wisdom, love, compassion, holiness, justice, and the like" (p. 39). The human person has the ability to commune with God and with one another. The verb *bārak* which is in the piel form implies to bestow power or to declare someone endowed. Therefore, the phrase 'God bless them' speaks to the fact that God endowed humans with ability and technical know-how in relation to the discharge of their responsibilities. That humanity is the image of God should be understood from the perspective of functionality and here, the human person as God's representation in the world has the responsibility to rule, to lead, stewardship and exercise authority over the created order.

ii. The Call to Dominates and Subdue (Gen1:28b)

What follows after the opening clause (Gen 1:28a) is a listing of the first three provisions of the Edenic covenant which states the responsibilities of the human person in relation to responsible stewardship (Fruchtenbaum, 2008). The verse says: *pərū ūrəbū* (be fruitful and multiply), *ūmil'ū 'eṭ ḥāāreṣ wəḵiḇšuhā* (fill the earth and subdue it). Also, the human person was given the responsibility and capacity to have

dominion (*ūṛəḏū*) over the created order. Indeed, the blessing that deposited this capacity on the human person is proper only to God whose image is alive in the human person, giving humanity dominion over the earth (Allen and Oswalt, 2008). The first provision borders around populating the world and this clearly suggests sexual intercourse which in itself is the only way commanded for human reproduction (Fruchtenbaum, 2008). The second provision focuses on authority given to humanity over material world. The material world here would include all forms of resources (solid and mineral) and other natural gifts of the created earth. Added to this authority is the word 'subdue' and here, the authority for humanity to responsibly use the resources of the material world for the attainment of a fulfilled life (Fruchtenbaum, 2008). The word subdue in this verse translates to taking control or taking charge. That is, it is a divine charge for humans to become masters over the earth (Reyburn and Fry, 1997).

The word dominion characterized the third provision and the dominion is over all other living creatures living in the waters, the air and dry ground. Interestingly again, dominion here speaks to authority that must be exercised responsibly by humans. It should be said that the verbs subdue and dominion are both used as "parallel expressions with reference to the plants and animals that God has put on the earth. This is not a command to go to war, but for the first people and their offspring to "take control, be in charge, have direction over." (Reyburn and Fry, 1997).

iii. The Final Instruction (1:29-31)

The fourth provision is found in Genesis 1:29-31 and here, humans were given permission to eat any and all plants of the earth (Gingrich, 1998). Clearly this shows the privilege that God gave to humans and this was intrinsically tied to responsible behaviour. Verse 29 gives humans the permission to eat plants and fruits while verse 30 shows that animals could only eat plants (Wenham, 2002). Curiously, one may conclude that the last provision appears to speak about vegetarianism and scholars have debated the full import of this over the years. However, Wenham (2002) argues that the account in Genesis chapter one does not out rightly forbid the consumption of meat as it may be that eating of meat was envisaged from the moment of the fall. Certainly, the blessing (cf. Gen 1:28b) gave humans the authority to rule over animals. When one considers the fact that after Adam and Eve sinned, God made a garment of skin to cover them (cf. Gen 3:21), Abel reared and sacrificed sheep (cf. Gen 4:2-4), Noah distinguished between clean and unclean animals (cf. Gen 7:2), the opinion that Genesis chapter one did not forbid eating of meat but envisaged it from the time of the fall sounds correct. Therefore, the directive that everything that lives and moves will be food for human (cf. Gen 9:3) given after the flood might not be an actual

inauguration of the act of eating meant (Gingrich, 1998) but a ratification or confirmation of the post-fall custom of meat- eating (Wenham, 2002).

Theological Precedents for Human Relationship with the Created Order

From the above exegetical consideration certain theological themes emerge and these provide precedents that should guide humans' activities and use of the created order. Some of these models include:

1. Stewardship and Dominion with Accountability

In Genesis 1:28-31, stewardship and dominion as blessings given to humans are a direct product of humans being the image of God (cf. Gen 1:26). However, these blessings have been misunderstood and misinterpreted leading to abuse and selfish exploitation of the earth (Kizhakkeyil, 2009). Interestingly, the verbs '*radah*' (dominion) and '*kabash*' (subdue) are the two commanding verbs that convey the idea of stewardship and dominion with accountability. The verb *radah* (dominion) in Hebrew simply means an act of governing and managing with responsibility and care (Horrel, 2010) and *Kabash* which though might suggest subjugation must be understood within the context of the phrase 'the image of God'. Thus, subjugation connotes the use of the created order with wisdom, respect and responsibility (Horrel, 2010). The human person being the image of God in relating with the created order functions by dominating or ruling the exact way God rules and dominates in wisdom, order, justice, humility and responsibility (Peggy and Joni, 2026). Stewardship and dominion as blessing in Genesis 1:28-31 are guided and limited by the nature of the one in whose image humans are created (Peggy and Joni, 2026). Through stewardship and dominion, God has given humans the "special task of leading, guiding and tending the created world" (Kizhakkeyil, 2009 p.89).

2. Provision and Sustainability

The narrative in Genesis 1:28-31 suggests the capacity of humans to be co-creators of creation, functioning not as destroyers but supporters of it. Also, through the use of the gifts of intelligence and technical know-how, the created order is to be sustained and improved upon. Therefore, humans as the image of God (cf. Gen 1:26-27), have the capacity to function not just as users of the resources of the earth but significant contributors to the management and protection of the earth's resources in such manner that these are not exploited for selfish reasons but completely support the divine plan of God for human welfare. The blessings '*radah*' (dominion) and '*kabash*' (subdue) significantly speak to the fact that humans are responsible caretakers of the earth's resources who while utilizing the earth's resources for human development and growth, maintains the created order and further improves it. The

concluding verse of the first creation account says: "God saw all that he had made, and it was very good" (Gen. 1:31a) and this goodness associated with creation is to be preserved and improved by humans in their exploitation of the richness of the earth's resources.

Conceptualizing Environment and Factors Responsible for Environmental Degradation

Environment refers to the surrounding in which all living organism which include humans, animals and plants exist (Plutus Education, n.d.). The term environment covers human activities such as man-made structures (buildings, construction of roads, development of cities), exploitation and exploration of the earth's resources (Plutus Education, n.d.). The environment is a combination of biotic (living) and abiotic (non-living/chemical) components; with animals, plants and other organisms making up the biotic component of the environment and air, sunlight, water, minerals, etc. making up the abiotic component of the environment (Plutus Education, n.d.). Generally, these two major components of the environment provide the basis for life to survive on earth. In these components, the basic necessities of life which include but not limited to: Oxygen or air, water, food, raw materials or resources are made available. Therefore, a better understanding of the environment and its different dimensions surely increases the capacity and technical know-how for the human person to effectively relate with the environment in such a way that it is not exploited negatively but sustained and preserved. Insan and Anisur (2024) argue that "the environment encompasses everything around us, vital for sustaining life on Earth. The environment encompasses all factors surrounding a living organism, both natural and man-made... it includes physical aspects such as land, air, and water, along with social, economic, and political dimensions" (p.1)

Factors Responsible for Environment Degradation

The main issue at stake in the discussion of environmental degradation is the question of how does the human person exploit the earth's resources in such a way that the environment is degraded or destroyed instead of preserving and effectively managing it? Environmental degradation therefore speaks to the necessity for a responsible use of the earth resources as against irresponsible use. According to Kumari (2024), environmental degradation refers to "the deterioration of the natural environment due to human activities such as pollution, deforestation, over-exploitation of resources, and climate change. This phenomenon poses significant challenges to biodiversity, ecological balance, and human well-being" (p. 80). Its impact is dire as it affects the ecosystem, human health and sustainable development

(Insan and Anisur, 2024). Human and natural activities contribute to the degradation of the environment and these factors include:

1. Poverty

Poverty is a major cause of environmental degradation and what is interesting here is that poverty is both a cause and an effect of environmental degradation. As population grows and the percentage of the poor grows as well, there is the natural tendency to exploit the limited natural resources available to them. Poverty limits the choice of the poor in the society in terms of access to alternative resources. The poor compete among themselves for the utilization of the limited available resources in view of meeting their basic needs and the consequence of this is the aggressive exploitation of such limited resources to the point damaging the environment. In clear terms, “poverty exacerbated by population growth, leads to increased demand for resources, further straining the environment” (Insan & Anisur, 2024 p. 2).

2. Urbanization/Industrialization

Urbanization and industrialization are two factors that go hand in hand and they directly concern the development of humans in relation to urban expansion and scientific developments. Urbanization implies the movement of people from rural areas to cities and the direct implication of this is that resources are strained. An increased population affects energy, housing, transportation, water, etc. (Insan & Anisur 2024). These resources suddenly become scarce and continuous demand of these leads to the damage of the environment. Industrialization opens the door to industrial exploitation of the environment and as Insan and Anisur (2024) argue, “industries emit pollutants like greenhouse gases, toxic chemicals, and heavy metals, contaminating air, water, and soil. Urbanization linked to industrial growth worsens the strain on resources and infrastructure, causing poor air quality and inadequate waste management in cities in cities” (p. 2).

3. Deforestation/Loss of Biodiversity

This is usually caused by agricultural needs and expansion leading to the felling and logging of trees and destruction of the forest. This is heightened to a greater extent by rapid urbanization and the dire consequence is that biodiversity is affected and the balance in the ecosystem is badly distorted (Neelam, 2024). It should be said that deforestation is so devastating that it causes soil erosion and degradation. It escalates the problems associated with global warming as that deforestation destroys the forest which plays the vital role of “sequestering carbon dioxide, a major greenhouse gas contributing to climate change” (Neelam, 2024 p. 80). Thus, deforestation allows for the release of carbon hitherto stored inside the forest to be released back into the

atmosphere and contributing to the hazard of global warming which is devastating the world as can be seen in the following:

- i. Extreme weather and rising temperature (heat waves, droughts and wildfires).
- ii. Melting of the arctic ice and rising sea level (ice loss and flooding.)
- iii. Coral bleaching and habitat loss for animals.
- iv. Food shortage, human displacement (Famine)

Articulating the effects of deforestation and the loss of biodiversity, Pope Francis (2015) wrote:

The earth's resources are also being plundered because of short-sighted approaches to the economy, commerce and production. The loss of forests and woodlands entails the loss of species which may constitute extremely important resources in the future, not only for food but also for curing disease and other uses. Different species contain genes which could be key resources in years ahead for meeting human needs and regulating environmental problems (no.32)

4. Pollution

Pollution as a factor that distorts the balance of the environment is central to industrialization. As humans industrialize, industrial activities directly or indirectly begin to pollute the environment thereby destroying the hitherto serenity and freshness that existed. About this, Nelem (2024) argued that "Pollution, resulting from industrial activities, transportation, and agricultural practices, poses significant threats to environmental and human health. Pollutants such as greenhouse gases, toxic chemicals, and waste materials contaminate air, water, and soil, leading to a myriad of adverse effects." (p. 80). It becomes clear that the effect of pollution cuts across all the spheres of the environment. Through pollution, the air is contaminated and can lead to respiratory and cardiovascular diseases (Nelem, 2024). In particular, Ogijo in Sagamu Local Government Area of Ogun State in Nigeria suffers from severe lead pollution from the recycling of used lead. Other areas like Ewekoro and Ibese and Agbara industrial estate suffer from air polluted with cement dust and carbon dioxide/nitrogen gas in the air respectively.

Furthermore, water is polluted as a result of oil exploration in the Niger Delta area and this has greatly affected the aquatic ecosystem and fishing which is the major sources of livelihood of the inhabitants of this area. Ground water is not left behind and, in some areas, it is difficult to get healthy and clean water for drinking. The "unsustainable extraction of minerals, water, and fossil fuels for industrial and domestic purposes lead to the depletion of natural resources, disrupting ecosystems,

and contributing to habitat destruction and species extinction” (Nelem, 2024 p.81). This is the story in Niger Delta Region and elsewhere in the country where solid and mineral resources are exploited. Apart from explorative activities, certain agricultural practices which include the use of chemicals like pesticides, herbicides, fertilizers, etc. go a long way to negatively affect the health of the soil, contaminating the soil and affecting yield and even human health. Pope Francis (2015), captured the harm of pollution on human environments in the following words:

Account must also be taken of the pollution produced by residue, including dangerous waste present in different areas. Each year hundreds of millions of tons of waste are generated, much of it non-biodegradable, highly toxic and radioactive, from homes and businesses, from construction and demolition sites, from clinical, electronic and industrial sources. The earth, our home, is beginning to look more and more like an immense pile of filth. In many parts of the planet, the elderly lament that once beautiful landscapes are now covered with rubbish (no. 21).

The environment as ordered by God was serene, peaceful and meant to serve the purpose of humans. Humans also have the responsibility to manage and preserve the environment for it to continue to serve its purpose. It is however, unfortunate that human activities and actions have not completely preserved the integrity of the environment and the consequence is a troubled, distorted environment.

Genesis 1:28-31: Human Responsibilities Towards the Environment

An appreciation of Genesis 1:28-31 reveals the fact that humans have unquestionable responsibilities in terms of taking care of the environment. Stewardship is a central obligation that must be carried out with diligence. The obligation to care and manage the environment are both religious and moral obligation on the human person and fundamental to human existence. The points below capture some of the responsibilities of the human person towards the stewardship of the environment.

1. Ecological Responsibilities

The word ecology is derived from the Greek words ‘*oikos*’ (home) and ‘*logos*’ (study). Ecology (*oikos* plus *logos*) means the study of organisms in their natural home interacting with their surroundings. Ecology includes the ecosystem which is made up of biotic (living species) and non-biotic (non-living things) components of the environment. The interactions of these living species among themselves and exchange of energy among the non-living things bring stability to the environment. The human

person has a responsibility to ensure the stability of the ecosystem and desist from any actions that are capable of destabilizing the order in the ecosystem. Human responsibility towards ecological order guarantees the “safeguard of biodiversity, ensuring the survival of diverse plant and animal species, which in turn supports human life through services like pollination, clean water, and air purification” (Institute of Policy Studies 9). The ecological responsibility of the human person ensures that the climate is regulated avoiding or reducing the problem associated with global warming. Ecological responsibility places the burden of resources sustainability which will include policies that will mitigate and drive actions that will discourage overexploitation, pollution, depletion of resources (Institute of Policy Studies 9). Human responsibility for the environment in terms of sustainable ecology is vital as it will greatly impact on the future generation, making the earth habitable and economically viable.

2. Social Responsibility

One very critical aspect of human responsibility in terms of care for the environment is the social dimension and how it greatly impacts on lives of the human persons who have been given the blessing to dominate and subdue the earth. Environmental crisis usually brings strain on the poor and less privilege of the society and this makes it urgent and necessary for humans to tackle issues of environmental degradation. Therefore, the account in Genesis 1:28-31 raises the question of justice for the poor who are always victims of the dire consequences of environmental degradation and irresponsible use of the earth’s resources. The Niger Delta region of Nigeria provides a better example to the above fact as many communities in this region are replete with poor Nigerians who have lost their sources of livelihood as a result of excessive exploitation of the earth’s resources. Pope Francis (2015) expressed this sentiment in the following words:

... For example, the depletion of fishing reserves especially hurts small fishing communities without the means to replace those resources; water pollution particularly affects the poor who cannot buy bottled water; and rises in the sea level mainly affect impoverished coastal populations who have nowhere else to go. The impact of present imbalances is also seen in the premature death of many of the poor, in conflicts sparked by the shortage of resources, and in any number of other problems which are insufficiently represented on global agendas (no. 48).

Social responsibility as it concerns care for the environment must include concerted effort by the government to care for the needs of the poor of the society that are massively affected by the government’s efforts at industrialization and exploitation

of resources. The government and policy makers must provide alternatives in terms of places of habitation for citizens who have been displaced on account of exploration and exploitation of their environment. Jobs for those whose sources of livelihood have been lost, medical care and health facilities to provide medical assistance and support, etc. In all, the human person must ensure that a balance is maintained between the explorative use of the resources of the society and distorting the ecosystem in such a way that life becomes unlivable and denigrating.

Care for the Environment: Lesson from Genesis 1:28-31

This paper now considers some lessons that can be gleaned from Genesis 1:28-31 in relation to the desired care for the environment. The narrative in Genesis 1:28-31 thus teaches the following:

1. Intrinsic Dignity in the Created Order

The earth and by extension the environment have inherent dignity and this dignity is bestowed on it by God. As captured in the two creation accounts, the earth (world), the environment and its resources came to be as a result of God's will and power and a manifestation of God's glory. This glory represents the dignity that the earth necessarily possesses. Therefore, the earth, human environment, its resources from creation is meant to be respected by humans who themselves are part of the created order having same dignity and respect. Interestingly, the dignity bestowed to the environment at creation means that the earth, human environment and the earth's resources have intrinsic value and this value must not be compromised. The point is clear and it is that humans are created by God with dignity, given the earth, the environment and its resources which have dignity to be used for their survival. However, the utilization must be responsible, it must be defined by respect.

The problem associated with the inability to respect the earth, human environment and responsibly use the resources therein together with the instrumental value attached to the environment is associated with anthropocentrism. In other words, the mandate to dominate and subdue have developed the culture where humans are the ultimate and absolute being who is at the center of creation, manipulating creation and doing with it whatever best serves the selfish interests of humans. About this, Pope Francis (2015) argued that: "Modern anthropocentrism has paradoxically ended up prizing technical thought over reality... The intrinsic dignity of the world is thus compromised. When human beings fail to find their true place in this world, they misunderstand themselves and end up acting against themselves..." (no. 115). Humans must therefore acknowledge that the environment is given to them

to manage, to preserve, to use responsibly for their survival and participate in sustaining the environment for future generation.

2. Consumerism and Self-Interest

The term consumerism in relation to care for the environment is associated with the culture and ideology of having a business and commercialized mentality in terms of relating with the environment. While it is not wrong to have a business orientation in dealing with the environment, the narrative in Genesis 1:28-31 does not envisage that the environment and its resources will be utterly subjected to the principles of commerce to the point of harming and even destroying it. It cannot be over-emphasized that Genesis 1:28-31 calls humans to be stewards over the created order and consumerist culture and ideology will always make it difficult for humans to effectively carry out their roles as stewards. The fact that humans are created in God's image (Gen 1:26-27) points to the truth that humans have a function to perform as it concerns the environment and this function is significantly and primarily directed at the selfless efforts that must be carried out in other for the environment to be preserved and managed.

The narrative therefore brings to the fore the need to balance economic demands that will necessitate consumerist behaviours and the all- important responsibility of effectively sustaining the environment. It advocates for a proper moderation or well thought out industrialization plan that will not endanger the environment but enhance its sustenance. The environment can be exploited for economic reasons (agriculture, mining, oil exploration, deforestation on account of construction of roads, rail tracks, new cities, bridges, etc.) but this actions which are in themselves beneficial to humans must not lead to the destruction of the environment and depletion of resources.

3. Policy Driven Relationship

One interesting points that the narrative in Genesis 1:28-31 brings to the fore is the need for humans to work out implementable policies that will guide and guard all forms of utilization of the environment and its resources. Thus, the call to dominate and subdue the earth (Gen 1:28-31) presupposes that the political authority and all those in the corridor of power must be intentional in actions of caring, managing and sustaining the environment as its delegated stewards. There must therefore be discussions and dialogue on national, regional and international levels on what policies and strategies must be judicious followed by all in other to guarantee responsible utilization and exploitation of the human environment. The above point is captured thus:

Worldwide, the ecological movement has made significant advances, thanks also to the efforts of many organizations of civil society. It is impossible here to mention them all, or to review the history of their contributions. But thanks to their efforts, environmental questions have increasingly found a place on public agendas and encouraged more far-sighted approaches. This notwithstanding, recent World Summits on the environment have not lived up to expectations because, due to lack of political will, they were unable to reach truly meaningful and effective global agreements on the environment (Francis, 2015 no.166).

Efforts at ensuring that global consensus on how care for the environment should proceed must continue and no matter the challenges posed, Genesis 1:28-31 demands a collective effort for environmental sustainability.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This paper critically studied Genesis 1:28-31 with the view of proffering better understanding of the mandate to dominate and subdue the earth. Generally, the text emphasized the dignity of created order (humans and the world) and how humans have been appointed stewards who are to responsibly utilize the created order for their survival. Thus, humans' care for the environment is not optional but obligatory. By way of recommendation, this paper recommends that government at all levels must provide adequate ecological and environmental education at all levels, emphasizing the importance of care for the environment. In other words, the awareness must be created in the minds and heads of school children, market men and women and all stakeholders in the business of sustaining the environments and its resources. In achieving this, schools, market places become avenues where environmental awareness campaigns can be held. Also, radio and television programs on the need to protect and maintain behaviours that sustain the environment will greatly help. Also, policies targeted at providing framework for care for the environment must be followed to the letter. In other words, governments should not be too quick to abandon policies targeted at enhancing environmental sustainability. Thus, implementable policies must be worked out and followed through.

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