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## “Living Creatures of Every Kind:” An Ecofeminist Reading of Genesis 1-3

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“Living Creatures of Every Kind:” An Ecofeminist Reading of Genesis 1-3

by

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of the requirements for the degree of  
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## **ABSTRACT**

This work will examine the Genesis creation narratives through an ecofeminist critical lens to illuminate the ambivalence regarding both the ecological and feminist concerns pertinent to ecofeminist criticism. While ecology and feminism are major issues in today's social and political climates, ecofeminism and its presence in biblical scholarship is not as prevalent as one might think. When it is discussed, authors come to varying conclusions on the Bible's stance about either nature or gender, and discussions that consciously espouse ecofeminist methodology are so far insufficient. This work utilizes the documentary hypothesis in order to examine the parallel narratives of creation in Genesis 1-3 from an ecofeminist perspective. This way, the text is treated as two independent works in order to juxtapose ambivalent ecofeminist themes within the text. Ultimately, this analysis proves the ambivalence of these narrative themes within the scope of Genesis 1-3 and confirms that no clear biblical stance can be established using these scriptures alone.

## CHAPTER ONE:

### INTRODUCTION

Feminism and ecology are as relevant as ever. With the approach of the impending ecological crisis and the recent resurgence of feminist agendas, these two issues are not only pertinent but incredibly important. Major ecological disasters and greater food shortages were recently predicted to occur as early 2040 as a result of human interference with the environment, and women's issues appear just as bleak.<sup>1</sup> Women's rights are being revoked through subtle but insidious moves, such as allowing the Violence Against Women Act to expire and the reinstatement of the Global Gag Rule.<sup>2</sup> While the two issues of ecology and feminism appear to be separate, scholarship attempts to combine these two crises under the term ecofeminism. Ecofeminist discourse cites women's issues as ecological issues, arguing that the two are intimately interdependent.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Coral Davenport, "Major Climate Report Describes a Strong Risk of Crisis as Early as 2040," *The New York Times*, October 08, 2018, accessed March 06, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/07/climate/ipcc-climate-report-2040.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Jenny Gathright, "Violence Against Women Act Expires Because Of Government Shutdown," NPR, December 24, 2018, accessed March 06, 2019, <https://www.npr.org/2018/12/24/679838115/violence-against-women-act-expires-because-of-government-shutdown>; Chelsea Kiene, "RELEASE: Global Gag Rule Would Mean More Maternal Deaths, Unintended Pregnancies, and Higher Rates of Unsafe Abortion," Center for American Progress, January 23, 2017, accessed March 04, 2019, <https://www.americanprogress.org/press/release/2017/01/23/296969/release-global-gag-rule-would-mean-more-maternal-deaths-unintended-pregnancies-and-higher-rates-of-unsafe-abortion/>.

<sup>3</sup> Françoise d'Eaubonne, *Le Féminisme ou la Mort*, (Paris: P. Horay, 1974), 87; See also: "WomenWatch: Women, Gender Equality and Climate Change," United Nations, accessed March 04, 2019, [http://www.un.org/womenwatch/feature/climate\\_change/](http://www.un.org/womenwatch/feature/climate_change/).

While scientists and politicians often focus on the physical implications of each of these issues, common discourse surrounding these issues utilize biblical imagery and theological presuppositions in order to bolster their points, with opponents using the same material to support opposing views. Some of the early feminist and ecological critics use the creation narratives in Genesis to establish the source of their claims.<sup>4</sup> However scholars' use of the creation narratives in ecological and feminist discourse is varied, and can be used to establish either side of the debate. Therefore, it is important to examine what the Bible, and Genesis' creation narratives have to say about these issues. The problem is, these arguments regarding gender and/or nature conflict with themselves and one another because different authors that belong to different time periods composed Genesis. This work will examine the Genesis creation narratives through an ecofeminist critical lens to illuminate the ambivalence present regarding both the ecological and feminist concerns pertinent to ecofeminist criticism.

Before turning to the body of the paper, it is first necessary to outline the key terms, interpretive strategies, and critical methodologies that are used. Ecofeminism will be defined, followed by the subsequent categories of ecological and feminist biblical criticism, as well as new historicism and source criticism as tools that will be looked at through the lens of ecofeminist criticism. After defining essential terms and methodologies, the text will examine the two creations present in Genesis 1-3 as they align with the concepts of ecofeminism and the contrasting positions the two narratives take on these issues.

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<sup>4</sup> Jr. Lynn White, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis," *Science* 155, no. 3767 (1967): 1203-7, [http://www.earth.illinois.edu/students/courses/readings/Readings\\_session\\_8.pdf](http://www.earth.illinois.edu/students/courses/readings/Readings_session_8.pdf); Pamela Cochran, "We're on Our Way, Lord!," in *Evangelical Feminism: A History* (New York: NYU Press, 2005), 23.

## CHAPTER TWO: TERMS AND METHODS

### Ecofeminism

The term ecofeminism was first coined in the 1970s by French author, Françoise d'Eaubonne.<sup>5</sup> D'Eaubonne ties ecological issues to reproductive issues, claiming that the patriarchal drive to exploit women's reproductive power has led to overpopulation.<sup>6</sup> In turn, overpopulation has led to mass production in order to meet the needs of the many people that now exist, and in order to meet those needs the earth itself has been pillaged of its natural resources to the point of humanity's own self-destruction.<sup>7</sup> Not only does ecofeminism make these connections, but it also integrates many other forms of oppression and works to overcome them.

Ecofeminism asserts that "important connections exist between the treatment of women, people of color, and the underclass on one hand and the treatment of nonhuman nature on the other."<sup>8</sup> Addressing both androcentrism and anthropocentrism as parallel systems of oppression, ecofeminist philosophy works to determine "solutions to the problems of environmental

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<sup>5</sup> Françoise d'Eaubonne, *Le Féminisme ou la Mort*, (Paris: P. Horay, 1974), 87.

<sup>6</sup> Françoise d'Eaubonne, *Le Féminisme ou la Mort*, (Paris: P. Horay, 1974), 87.

<sup>7</sup> Trish Glazebrook, "Karen Warren's Ecofeminism," *Ethics & the Environment* 7, no. 2 (2002): 12, <https://doi.org/10.1353/een.2002.0015>.

<sup>8</sup> Karen J. Warren, "Taking Empirical Data Seriously: An Ecofeminist Philosophical Perspective," *Ecofeminism: Women, Culture, Nature* ed. Karen J. Warren (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 3.

destruction and the unjustified subordination of women and other subdominant groups.”<sup>9</sup> These issues need to be addressed as cultural ideologies and as “social structures.”<sup>10</sup> Being intersectional, ecofeminism draws its arguments from a multiplicity of arenas. Liberation theory, animal rights, and anthropology all have their place in ecofeminism, however ecofeminism most obviously borrows from the both ecological and feminist theories and agendas.

While ecofeminism draws on both ecology and feminism for its tenets, it sees each independently as “grossly inadequate.”<sup>11</sup> The connections between feminist and ecological issues are simply too significant to sever one from the other. Each must incorporate the other to highlight the connections between the oppressions of women and nature. Ecofeminism expounds upon the doctrine of feminism by asserting that the examination of and liberation from oppression should not solely focus on humanity and human issues but all other forms of life and nature as well.<sup>12</sup> Ecofeminism also adds to ecology by acknowledging that the oppressions of nature often coincide with other oppressive anthropocentric agendas.

Further, not only do women share in their oppressions with nature, but they also share in their successes. According to ecofeminism, women will never truly be successfully liberated unless “an equal attempt to liberate nature” is made and vice versa.<sup>13</sup> The interconnection of all

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<sup>9</sup> Karen J. Warren, “Taking Empirical Data Seriously: An Ecofeminist Philosophical Perspective,” *Ecofeminism: Women, Culture, Nature*” *Ecofeminism: Women, Culture, Nature*, ed. Karren J. Warren (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 3.

<sup>10</sup> Rosemary Radford Ruether, “Introduction,” *Gaia & God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing*, (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1992), 2.

<sup>11</sup> Warren, “Taking Empirical Data Seriously,” 3.

<sup>12</sup> Val Plumwood, “Androcentrism and Anthropocentrism: Parallels and Politics,” *Ecofeminism: Women, Culture, Nature*” *Ecofeminism: Women, Culture, Nature*, ed. Karren J. Warren (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997), 327.

<sup>13</sup> Greta Gaard, “Living Interconnections with Animals and Nature,” *Ecofeminism*, ed. Greta Gaard (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), 1.



of life is integral to ecofeminism.<sup>14</sup> There is no creature that is orphaned from the workings of the rest of the world. Not only does each have their own inherent value, but they also each have their own unique impact on the global ecosystem.

### **Ecological Biblical Interpretation**

Naturally, an ecofeminist biblical interpretation combines both ecological and feminist interpretive methods. In order to conduct an ecofeminist reading of the Genesis creation narratives, the different types of biblical interpretations that constitute ecofeminism must be examined. Ecofeminist biblical criticism is not a prevalent subject of interest, and there is no authoritative text. To compensate, both ecological and feminist biblical criticisms will be discussed in brief in hopes of constructing a method of ecofeminist biblical analysis. While feminist biblical interpretive methods abound, ecological readings are particularly elusive. Prior to *The Earth Bible Project* no true ecological hermeneutic had been developed for biblical scholarship.<sup>15</sup>

The obstacle for some time in developing a system for reading the Bible ecologically was that many scholars believed that the central message of the Bible was anthropocentric. The central concern of biblical authors was not nature, but the selection and salvation of humanity. One of the first works to relate the biblical devaluation of nature to humanity's treatment of nature and the subsequent ecological crisis was Lynn White Jr. and his, "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis." Lynn White Jr.'s article comes to the same conclusion as biblical

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<sup>14</sup> Greta Gaard, "Living Interconnections with Animals and Nature," *Ecofeminism*, ed. Greta Gaard (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1993), 1.

<sup>15</sup> Norman C. Habel, "The Earth Bible Project," SBL Forum Archive 2.7, 2004, accessed February 02, 2019, <https://www.sbl-site.org/publications/article.aspx?ArticleId=291>.

scholarship separately from biblical scholars that have also been discussing the issue for years.<sup>16</sup> Reading the Bible from an ecological perspective, however has remained marginal, with the most comprehensive project being the Earth Bible Project.

The *Earth Bible* was the first series to undertake “a serious attempt to interpret the biblical tradition from an ecological perspective.”<sup>17</sup> Therefore, the project attempts to remedy this by being the first to set forth six principles in order to guide an ecological biblical interpretation.<sup>18</sup> Each of their principles allows for scholars to come to the texts with several values in mind.

The first principle is that Earth, and all living and nonliving parts of it, are intrinsically valuable.<sup>19</sup> Though it is tempting to assign worth based on utility or the creative handiwork of God, these are not a basis for the significance of Earth’s components.<sup>20</sup> Not only is each constituent part valuable, but it also has a vital place in the larger ecosystem.

The second principle acknowledges the interdependence of all living things.<sup>21</sup> In order to survive there is a variety of symbiotic relationships that take place, and nothing in the global ecosystem is independent, but the earth consists of a “complex web of interrelationships.”<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Theodore Hiebert, “The ‘Problem’ of Nature in the Bible,” in *The Yahwist’s Landscape: Nature and Religion in Early Israel* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 14.

<sup>17</sup> Norman C. Habel, “The Earth Bible Project,” SBL Forum Archive 2.7, 2004, accessed February 02, 2019, <https://www.sbl-site.org/publications/article.aspx?ArticleId=291>.

<sup>18</sup> “Guiding Ecojustice Principles,” in *Readings from the Perspective of Earth*, ed. Norman C. Habel, vol. 1, *The Earth Bible* (Cleveland, OH: Pilgrim Press, 2000), 42.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 44.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

Determining whether or not humanity and the rest of animals share a bond akin to kinship is particularly important to the second principle.<sup>23</sup>

The third principle treats Earth as a living entity that speaks out against its own injustices and rejoices in its triumphs.<sup>24</sup> Like any other living organism, the earth regulates itself through its own specialized systems of homeostasis. The earth speaks in its own language, and texts that comment on the voice of creation must be taken seriously instead of being dismissed as purely poetic.<sup>25</sup> Additionally, any time the earth is spoken to, or acted upon, it must be treated as its own character, rather than an inanimate object.

The fourth principle is that every part of the universe serves a definitive purpose.<sup>26</sup> This principle recognizes the importance and complexity of the Earth ecosystem, and the interdependence of each of its components.<sup>27</sup> It also furthers the idea that God created the universe with a divine plan in mind, with intent behind everything brought into being.

The fifth principle of ecological hermeneutics is that humanity takes on the role of a mutual custodian of the earth.<sup>28</sup> People are encouraged to partner with the earth, rather than rule

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 44-46.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 46.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 47.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 48.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 49.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 50.

over it.<sup>29</sup> By working alongside the ecosystem's natural functions, people can promote balance on the earth.<sup>30</sup>

The sixth and final principle is that the earth and its elements are the victims of humanity, however they “actively resist in the struggle for justice.”<sup>31</sup> When Earth is anthropomorphized it cannot simply be dismissed as a poetic device. Instead, it is necessary to take these ideas seriously, and consider the earth as its own character.

Though this model provides a template for ecological readings, it is not comprehensive enough for the purposes of this undertaking, nor is it entirely objective in its approach. There is still room for study that “explicitly links the plight of oppressed peoples of the Earth with the plight of Earth.”<sup>32</sup> Despite the team's admission that “social justice and ecojustice are connected,” it does not thoroughly explore the two.<sup>33</sup> In order to construct an ecofeminist reading, a feminist perspective must be added.

Ironically enough, the ecological reading is adapted from feminist biblical interpretive methods. The initial examination of the biblical text is to be approached with suspicion, after the feminist model proposed by Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza.<sup>34</sup> Knowing the context and authors of the Bible is essential to conducting this type of reading. Since humans compose these texts, it is

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<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 52.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 38-39.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 39.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 39, see also, Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *But She Said: Feminist Practices of Biblical Interpretation* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1992).

not unreasonable to suspect that they also have an anthropocentric focus.<sup>35</sup> Taking into consideration that these texts are also written by men, it is also rather likely that these texts are also androcentric and patriarchal as well.<sup>36</sup>

### **Feminist Biblical Interpretation**

Feminist biblical interpretation abounds, despite its late start. The absence of women in biblical scholarship was, perhaps, a “taken-for-granted fact” at its inception, in accordance with the lack of women preaching and taking classes at the time.<sup>37</sup> Female scholars, however, have been present almost from the beginning, but toiled on topics that were important to male scholars. Female academic presence does not ensure scholarship is done “in the interest and from the perspective of women” or other marginal groups.<sup>38</sup> Feminist biblical scholarship works to remedy this, unearthing marginalized figures and topics that are significant to and for women.

Once feminism entered the scholastic arena feminist scholars endeavored to pursue topics that were pertinent to their lives and experience, to uncover herstory in a sea of his. For the most part these topics were outside of traditional biblical scholarship and therefore earned them little recognition.<sup>39</sup> Feminist biblical scholarship largely borrows tools from other forms of scholarship, simply adding a gendered focus.

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Dorothy C. Bass, “Women’s Studies and Biblical Studies: An Historical Perspective,” *JSOT* 22 (1982): 6.

<sup>38</sup> Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, “The Ethics of Biblical Interpretation: Decentering Biblical Scholarship,” *JBL* 107, 1 (1988): 6.

<sup>39</sup> Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, “The Ethics of Biblical Interpretation: Decentering Biblical Scholarship,” *JBL* 107, 1 (1988): 8.

Feminist biblical interpretation is based on several principles. Initially, the patriarchal nature and context of the biblical text must be taken seriously.<sup>40</sup> These scriptures cannot be read as universal truths, but instead must be read against their “patriarchal rhetoric and their traditional interpretations ... with suspicion and resistance.”<sup>41</sup> Many theoretical approaches are combined in this pursuit because the Bible has cultural significance today, not only in its own time.<sup>42</sup>

Similarly to ecological biblical scholarship, feminist biblical scholarship states that the presuppositions of the text’s original authors must be taken into account. In order to find those authors and their biases, other methods must be added to this critical framework. Ecological and feminist scholarship is more than just a hermeneutic of suspicion. It also utilizes established scholastic methods to discuss its findings. This work will draw on the principles of new historicism and the documentary hypothesis as a basis for analyzing Genesis 1-3.

## **New Historicism**

This ecofeminist reading draws upon the principles of New Historicism. The method, made popular by Stephen Greenblatt, establishes that literature is not detachable from history, and that the two are “mutually imbricated.”<sup>43</sup> The scholar should seek to understand the historical and cultural context of a text. However, historical and cultural contexts are not

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<sup>40</sup> Maretha M. Jacobs, “Feminist Scholarship, Biblical Scholarship and the Bible,” *New Testament Society of Southern Africa* 35, 1 (2001): 85.

<sup>41</sup> Maretha M. Jacobs, “Feminist Scholarship, Biblical Scholarship and the Bible,” *New Testament Society of Southern Africa* 35, 1 (2001): 85.

<sup>42</sup> Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza and Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, “Toward a Feminist Critical Hermeneutics,” in *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (New York: Crossroad, 1994), 4.

<sup>43</sup> Stephen Greenblatt, “Introduction: Greenblatt and New Historicism,” in *The Greenblatt Reader*, ed. Michael Payne (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 3.

enough.<sup>44</sup> Texts themselves are constantly being rediscovered as they continue to be read in later time periods.<sup>45</sup>

New Historicism, in some respects, is thought of as a collection of cultural studies.<sup>46</sup> New Historicism, however, differs from cultural studies in that its focus is textual, and that these texts tend to be older and removed from today's cultural contexts.<sup>47</sup> This makes the Genesis text a perfect candidate for examination via New Historicism. Under this new method, a "basic working knowledge of the historical context of older works" is no longer sufficient for understanding a text.<sup>48</sup> Instead, New Historicism revolutionizes critical theory because it treats history as "dynamic" and humanity's understanding of history as "subject to constant revision."<sup>49</sup> History itself becomes a text.

Texts themselves also participate in revising history. Over time each text comes to be understood differently, whether through the development of new philosophical or social ideals and contexts, creating new textual understandings.<sup>50</sup> The discovery of new documents and archeological evidence also changes the understanding of the text's historical context.<sup>51</sup> Of course, as new historical insights are discovered, they also reflect back upon the texts as well,

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<sup>44</sup> James S. Brown and Scott D. Yarbrough, *A Practical Introduction to Literary Study* (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson, 2005), 234.

<sup>45</sup> Brown and Yarbrough, *A Practical Introduction*, 238.

<sup>46</sup> Brown and Yarbrough, *A Practical Introduction*, 234.

<sup>47</sup> Brown and Yarbrough, *A Practical Introduction*, 234.

<sup>48</sup> Brown and Yarbrough, *A Practical Introduction*, 234.

<sup>49</sup> Brown and Yarbrough, *A Practical Introduction*, 209.

<sup>50</sup> Brown and Yarbrough, *A Practical Introduction*, 209-210.

<sup>51</sup> Brown and Yarbrough, *A Practical Introduction*, 209-210.

generating an unending cycle of revisions. This theory highlights the futility at ever reaching a “universal, knowable version of history to apply to the text,” or a “single definitive reading of a literary text” that will properly illuminate history.<sup>52</sup> There is no “authoritative exegesis,” nor should there be, for it would bring a swift end to any textual analyses in academia.<sup>53</sup> Texts instead are a part of a culture’s history, and its endurance through the ages calls for rereading and reinterpretations in each new age.

Similar to New Historicism, which does not claim to produce an accepted reading or history, an ecofeminist reading is just one of these lenses through which the understanding of a text, its place in history, and history itself are altered. New Historicism’s application to feminism already has precedent in feminist works.

It has been argued that feminism and New Historicism work hand in hand.<sup>54</sup> “Like other ideological forms, discourses on gender are constantly produced, reproduced, and transformed.”<sup>55</sup> Similarly, constructions of gender in a text are often implicated in parallel power structures.<sup>56</sup> Considering ecological biblical scholarship’s outgrowth from feminist analyses, it also aligns well with the principles of New Historicism. Additionally, although developed as a literary method, New Historicism coheres well with textual studies of religion.

Religious Studies engages in New Historicism by trying to understand the Torah through its own compositional context via the documentary hypothesis, and part of the reason why

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<sup>52</sup> Brown and Yarbrough, *A Practical Introduction*, 210, 234-235.

<sup>53</sup> Brown and Yarbrough, *A Practical Introduction*, 210.

<sup>54</sup> Sara Lennox, “Feminism and New Historicism,” *Monatshefte* 84, no. 2 (1992): 159, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/30161348>.

<sup>55</sup> Sara Lennox, “Feminism and New Historicism,” *Monatshefte* 84, no. 2 (1992): 162, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/30161348>.

<sup>56</sup> Lennox, “Feminism and New Historicism,” 162.



arguments today suffer from apparently conflicting textual information is because readers either do not know or do not understand its multiple authorship. The creation narrative in Genesis alone is not just one story, but two, allowing for the text of Genesis to contradict itself because of its different authors and their own ambivalence toward ecological and feminist issues.

One reason two diametrically opposed arguments can and have both been convincingly made in regard to either gender equality or ecological conservation is because the book of Genesis, and the creation account itself, is really the product of multiple authors and editors.<sup>57</sup> The texts dealt with here (Genesis 1.1-3.24) are the product of only two author sets. This theory, referred to as the documentary hypothesis, identifies two accounts of creation via source criticism.

### **The Documentary Hypothesis**

The documentary hypothesis is a theory that attempts to categorize the authors of the Torah. Moses is traditionally believed to have written the Torah, although there is no authorship claim within the text.<sup>58</sup> In an attempt to explain inconsistencies and contradictions within the text that indicated the Torah was the product of more than one author, Julius Wellhausen combined the work of many scholars to construct the documentary hypothesis.<sup>59</sup> This hypothesis claims that there are “four separate, internally consistent documents” that comprise the Torah.<sup>60</sup> Two of

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<sup>57</sup> Barry Stephenson, “Who Wrote Genesis? On the Psychology of Hermeneutics,” *Jung Journal* 11, no. 1 (2017): 24, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19342039.2017.1263101>.

<sup>58</sup> Richard Elliott Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?* (New York: Summit Books, 1987), 17.

<sup>59</sup> Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?*, 17, 26.

<sup>60</sup> Friedman, *Who Wrote the Bible?*, 60.

these documents (called P and J) are responsible for the two different creation narratives in the biblical text.

The first account ranges from Genesis 1.1 through 2.3 and is called the Priestly Text (P). The Priestly text mainly deals with the concerns of the priesthood and is the later of the two sources, being composed in either the fifth or sixth century BCE, or shortly after two earlier sources (known as the J and E texts) were combined.<sup>61</sup> Frank Moore Cross's influential *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic* argued that the P text was purely editorial and nonexistent independent of the Jahwist and Elohist texts extant prior.<sup>62</sup> Therefore this text can be viewed as a commentary on the creation narrative that follows it. Should a reading of the subsequent J text be insufficient, the P text is there to correct it. The Priestly creation itself is concise and highly structured, and serves two purposes. P's creation functions to prove that all of creation is dependent on God, and to describe the established order of creation.<sup>63</sup> It is important to note, that the objectives of the Priestly text "are not really about religion or God at all; they merely encode social, political, and economic claims of specific groups of people."<sup>64</sup> Therefore, a reading of any portion of the P text for its social function is perfectly in line with its authorship. The text is readable for its content regarding the status of woman and nature in respect to God and man. Additionally, in order to satisfy the needs of an ecofeminist reading, the hierarchy of nature in regard to humanity will also be examined. While considered the same narrative by the majority

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<sup>61</sup> Richard Elliott Friedman, *The Bible with Sources Revealed: A New View into the Five Books of Moses* (New York: Harper One, 2003), 4.

<sup>62</sup> Frank Moore Cross, *Canaanite Myth and Hebrew Epic: Essays in the History of the Religion of Israel* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997), 1-6.

<sup>63</sup> Phyllis A. Bird, "Male and Female He Created Them': Gen 1:27b in the Context of the Priestly Account of Creation," *The Harvard Theological Review* 74, no. 2 (1981): 136, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1509444>.

<sup>64</sup> Benjamin D. Sommer, *Revelation and Authority: Sinai in Jewish Scripture and Tradition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 18.

of biblical readers, the second creation account in Genesis is the product of its own time, authorship, and objectives.

The second creation narrative spans Genesis 2.4 to 3.24 and is known as the Yahwist Text (J).<sup>65</sup> The J text is labeled as such because of its references to God's proper name and was composed somewhere between the ninth and seventh centuries BCE.<sup>66</sup> One of J's central concerns is the law as "a crucial aspect of Israel's relationship with God."<sup>67</sup> Israelite law often has particular proscriptions dependent on the gender of the individual, and therefore gendered discussion is an appropriate critical lens. Furthermore, Israelite laws also deal with food preparation and consumption as well as proper agricultural practice, validating the need for an examination of nonhuman creation and its role in the Genesis J text as well. Because different authors, focused on different goals from different time periods wrote the P and J texts, they ultimately carry different ideological values of both women and nature accordingly.

The conflicting narrations and authorial objectives can be seen in the two texts' "widely diverging theological concerns, political views, and artistic sensibilities," and is only partially explained by their span of "over several hundred years."<sup>68</sup> Therefore, while both the P and J texts appear to tell the same narrative, they are written with very different purposes in mind. While the former is concerned with the organization and function of the universe in support of the cosmic purpose of the Sabbath, the latter is more so concerned with the institution of marriage, the reason for death, the evolution of patriarchy, and the advent of plough agriculture. Furthermore, because of P's later composition, it is theorized that P is a conscious commentary on J. The

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<sup>65</sup> Friedman, *The Bible with Sources Revealed*, 3.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Sommer, *Revelation and Authority*, 63.

<sup>68</sup> Stephenson, "Who Wrote Genesis?," 24.

common reception of Genesis as one unified text is reductive, and causes interpretational issues in regard to the relationships central to ecofeminist philosophy.

### **CHAPTER 3:**

#### **AN ECOFEMINIST ANALYSIS OF GENESIS 1-3**

The importance of the Genesis creation narrative's contents is not incidental. Creation myths are indicative of the values and cultures of their communities.<sup>69</sup> Within, hierarchies are established and "the overall human place and role" of humanity is established.<sup>70</sup> They address important meaning-making issues, and institute a population's identity, revealing a culture's "essential elements."<sup>71</sup> Therefore, if deeply embedded androcentric and anthropocentric ideals are endemic to western culture, then it is necessary to examine the culture's creation narratives as a potential source. Because the two themes are interrelated, it is also imperative that ecofeminism is used to address them. Furthermore, Genesis has much to offer thematically in terms of male/female relations, and the relationship between creation and humanity.

#### **Ecofeminist Readings of Genesis**

Despite the seemingly essential nature of an ecofeminist reading of Genesis' creations to ecofeminist dialogue, it has not garnered as much attention as one might think. Mmapula Diana Kebaneilwe's "The Good Creation: An Ecowomanist Reading of Genesis 1-2" attempts to

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<sup>69</sup> David A. Leeming, *Creation Myths of the World: An Encyclopedia*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 2 vol. Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2010, xix.

<sup>70</sup> Leeming, *Creation Myths of the World*, xx.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, xix.

combine the threads of ecowomanism (a consciously intersectional brand of ecofeminism) by emphasizing the idea of a unity in good creation as established by God.<sup>72</sup> However, there is much more content from both feminist and ecological perspectives to these myths than God's decree of goodness. Furthermore, the method does not take into account the text's historical production (eg. the documentary hypothesis) and only concerns itself with thematic material as if Genesis 1-3 were a unified text. Not to mention Kebaneilwe's evasion of the problematic feminist and environmental material in Genesis 3.

Another brief discussion is humored by Brigitte Kahl, who endeavors to reinterpret biblical narrative in a way that is absent from hierarchical, patriarchal domination by reading Genesis 2-4 from earth's perspective.<sup>73</sup> While Khal's approach deals with only one authorial group and provides more depth, by conducting a reading from an ecological perspective she ignores the original intent of the writers, which was not to provide a commentary on the earth. While Khal does use the text as her primary source, the reappropriation of the text as an ecological conservational tool seems to border on eisegesis.

Though these two are certainly not all that consists of ecofeminist biblical readings, these two appear most thorough and representative of the literature. Apart from a few short publications, the material is primarily separated across the wide array of feminist or ecological biblical readings. The ecofeminist perspective is indispensable, however because it provides a perspective that is unattainable through other critical methods.

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<sup>72</sup> Mmapula Diana Kebaneilwe, "The Good Creation: An Ecowomanist Reading of Genesis 1-2," *Old Testament Essays*, 28, no. 3 (2015): 694, <http://dx.doi.org/10.17159/2312-3621/2015/v28n3a8>.

<sup>73</sup> Brigitte Kahl, "Fratricide and Ecocide; Rereading Genesis 2-4," in *Earth Habitat: Eco-injustice and the Church's Response*, ed. Dieter T. Hessel and Larry L. Rasmussen, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 54.

The Bible has generated much contention over the oppressions of woman and nature, the two main components of ecofeminist philosophy. While some argue that the Bible and particularly Genesis are the origin of ecological oppression (such as Lynn White) or the oppression of women (like Mary Daly), others are less inclined to believe so.<sup>74</sup> The biblical text engages with both of these issues through its portrayal of the relationships between gendered humanity and God, as well as gendered humanity to nature. Some scholars, such as Rosemary Radford Ruether contest that the Bible sets up oppressive, hierarchal relationships between men and women as well as humanity and nature, while others such as Phyllis A. Bird assert that equality is the proper textual message. Instead, I propose that the creation narratives in Genesis are ambivalent about both of these relationships, creating irreconcilable impulses about the proper reception of the texts. Part of the reason why the relationships in creation are debated is because of the biblical text's contradictory nature.

The two ecofeminist issues that have been repeatedly contended are the gendered human relationship and its relation to God as well as the gendered human relationship with nature, and will be discussed in regard to the P and J creation narratives. The following two sections will separately examine the relationship of gendered humanity and God as well as gendered humanity in relation to nature, juxtaposing the different social and ecological messages across sources. Through this analysis, the ambivalence of the texts' attitude toward ecofeminist concerns will be revealed, indicating that the creation accounts are insufficient for resolving ecological or feminist arguments.

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<sup>74</sup> White, "Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis;" Mary F. Daly, *The Church and the Second Sex* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1985).

## **The Gendered Relationship Between God and Humanity**

The relationship between humanity and God in the Genesis creations varies depending on the text. Both J and P detail the creation of man and woman, however their presentational approaches differ depending on their primary objectives. The purpose of the text determines the male-female relationship, and their purpose according to God. While very few verses characterize the P text, its use (in the P text and the rest of the Bible for that matter) of masculine pronouns for God have been used to legitimate the patriarchy. However this assertion is not without dissention. Other arguments capitalize on the order in which God created man and woman in order to validate subsequent male-female relations. Meanwhile, the J text provides more detail regarding man and woman. Woman's purpose and function as a helper is later utilized to define the female role for all women in patriarchal society. Furthermore, the relationship that man and woman have individually toward God in the J text is also very telling. Concerning gendered humanity and their relation to God, the P text advocates an egalitarian relationship, while the J text does not.

### **The Image of God**

While the Priestly account of creation does not explicitly mandate a gendered hierarchy within the text, there is reason to believe that the text is not as egalitarian as it seems. God created both man and woman "in the image of God," however some scholarship contends that they are not necessarily equal sharers of the image as it appears in Genesis 1:27.

Within the Priestly creation narrative, the subtext suggests that God was, in fact, male. Primarily referred to by masculine pronouns, God is colloquially referred to as male. Despite feminist scholars' desire to utilize Genesis 1:27 as a corrective text that can redeem the position



of women and establish equality, Rosemary Radford Ruether suggests that there is more to the construction of gender identity in relation to God in the text than explicitly stated.<sup>75</sup> Ruether purports that the male pronouns used to define God are sufficient in establishing the patriarchal system in antiquity.<sup>76</sup> While humanity is made in the “image of God,” who is referred to as male, it appears as though the male counterpart of humanity would partake more intimately in the likeness of God.<sup>77</sup> As the true representation of God, man therefore becomes the representative of God on earth. Though humanity is theoretically equal in the P Text, amongst themselves man and woman do not share equitably in the image of God and God’s pronouns.<sup>78</sup> Man, through this subtle pronoun association, shares more authentically in God’s authority and dominion on earth more so than woman.<sup>79</sup>

Other scholars, such as Gail Ramshaw, contend with this idea, arguing that God has no gender despite the use of masculine singular pronouns.<sup>80</sup> Though readers do sometimes equate the pronoun with “male sexuality ... or divine androcentrism,” the Hebrew language genders many things without necessarily commenting on its biological sex.<sup>81</sup> Ruether’s argument is problematic because it severs individual words from their larger grammatical placement. Not only so, but it also disregards other contextually significant ideas, such as the purpose or themes

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<sup>75</sup> Bird, 133.

<sup>76</sup> Rosemary Radford Ruether, “Creation,” *Gaia & God: An Ecofeminist Theology of Earth Healing*, 21.

<sup>77</sup> Gen. 1:26-7 (New Revised Standard Version).

<sup>78</sup> Gen. 1:28.

<sup>79</sup> Ruether, “Creation,” 21.

<sup>80</sup> Gail Ramshaw, “Pronouns and the Christian God,” *God Beyond Gender*, 23-4.

<sup>81</sup> Ramshaw, “Pronouns,” 25.

of a text as a whole. Grammatical gender is not enough on which to base the gender of God, a concept which theologians such as Gregory of Nazianzus and Aquinas have argued since the early days of Christianity.<sup>82</sup> All nouns in biblical Hebrew are gendered and do not necessarily correlate to the biological sex of the subject.<sup>83</sup> Furthermore, Ruther's assumption does not entertain the idea that the image of God may be metaphorical rather than literal. The text itself cannot be examined by words removed from their original language and context, but as they are within a larger body of thematic literary material, and as defined. Since God does not relate to male or female with a biological sex, other textual clues need to be examined in order to establish Genesis' gender roles.

### **The Order of Creation**

Man and woman have two different creations in the P and J texts, each with their own implications of social hierarchy. While the P text implies equality, the J text delineates a one-way subservient relationship wherein woman is subject to man. These divergent views indicate biblical writers' ambivalence toward gender roles, inhibiting the ability for Genesis to make a definitive statement about gender.

The P text advocates equality in the simultaneous creation of man and woman. In the P text the ideation of humanity is constructed with plurality in mind.<sup>84</sup> They are created "male and female" concurrently and intentionally as part of one plan.<sup>85</sup> Considering the brevity of the P

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<sup>82</sup> Gregory of Nazianzus, "The Fifth Theological Oration: On the Spirit," in *A Select Library of Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, ed. Philip Schaff and Henry Wace, 2d series (New York: Christian Literature Company, 1894), 5:520; Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, 1a.13.11; Ramshaw, "Pronouns," 24.

<sup>83</sup> Ramshaw, "Pronouns," 23.

<sup>84</sup> Gen. 1:26.

<sup>85</sup> Gen. 1:27

text, it is remarkable the amount of time the authors spend clarifying the meaning of the term humankind, *adam*, in Genesis 1:27.<sup>86</sup> If the term could have initially been mistaken to mean man alone, the next line corrects it, humanity does not refer to one gender, but is a bisexual duality.<sup>87</sup> The significance of this binary is further illuminated in the following section, regarding the purpose of humanity.

The J text establishes patriarchal social structure by creating man first, and only later creating woman after man (and even after the animals) as a last resort to cure man's solitude.<sup>88</sup> When God creates the world, man is a necessary consequence of the intended design, while woman is an incidental creation added to the world not as a result of God's plan, but in response to the needs of man. Because creations of man and woman are interrelated with their God-given purposes, it is necessary to elaborate upon this discussion in the following section.

### **The Gendered Purpose of Humanity**

The ambivalence of the Genesis creation narratives towards the purposes of humanity, whether androgynous or gendered, serves to further obfuscate the proper reception of the texts from a gender perspective. Man and woman have no distinct or separate purpose in P, in fact, their purpose is entirely reliant on one another, impossible to complete without their counterpart. Meanwhile, the J text clearly delineates the distinct purposes for man and woman, and justifies their creation via the separate functions they serve.

The P text deals with the purpose and function of humanity as a single entity. Their job, like their creation, is shared equitably, with no value judgment or delineation between purposes

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<sup>86</sup> Bird, 136.

<sup>87</sup> Ibid.

<sup>88</sup> Gen. 2:18.

or objectives. God created both man and woman “in the image of God,” and both are given the divine injunction to “Be fruitful and multiply,” to “subdue” the earth and establish “dominion ... over every living thing that moves upon the earth.”<sup>89</sup> To come together in sexual union for the purposes of reproduction is an act that only men and women can perform together. Their shared work reinforces the notion of a type of diarchy, where both partake in reproduction with neither partner assuming greater significance or import. Furthermore, the injunction to exercise dominion is also distributed equally across gender lines, neither party rules in a way where one party is prioritized. This egalitarian view of the P text contrasts sharply with the divisions seen in J.

Man was created in the J text for the purpose of tilling the earth. In order to produce vegetation the earth was in need of tilling to distribute water, as rain was not yet established.<sup>90</sup> Thus, man is created to fulfill the task.<sup>91</sup> In line with his assignment, man is put in a garden, where his work can best be done.<sup>92</sup> Animals are also placed in the garden so that man can name them, not unlike the function of God in the P text.<sup>93</sup> Both a gardener and informal taxonomist, man works in the garden with no real obstacle or struggle. Both man’s purpose and his environment are in alignment with one another, however he was a solitary creature.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Gen. 1:27.

<sup>90</sup> Gen. 2:5.

<sup>91</sup> Gen. 2:5-7.

<sup>92</sup> Gen. 2:8.

<sup>93</sup> Gen. 2:19.

<sup>94</sup> Gen. 2:18.

Woman's created identity in the J text is as a secondary "partner," whose purpose is to help man.<sup>95</sup> God cites man's solitude as the reason for her creation, but not before trying to remedy man's loneliness with animals.<sup>96</sup> As a second choice, or perhaps a last resort woman is made and brought to man, just as was done with the animals.<sup>97</sup> Once given man's seal of approval God's creation can cease.<sup>98</sup> Woman has no independent purpose of her own, as man does to till the field. She exists solely for the needs of man alone as his "helper."<sup>99</sup> After the fall God explicitly establishes the patriarchy, stating that man "shall rule over" woman.<sup>100</sup> This clear hierarchical delineation contrasts sharply with the depiction of man and woman in the Priestly narrative.

In both the P and J texts, man and woman are not without purpose, however whether or not those purposes are gendered is dependent on the text being used. The ambivalence with which the redactors of the text have treated the purposes of humanity suggests that there is no clear consensus on whether men and women share a role. This ambiguity is sustained through God's interactions with man and woman over the courses of the P and J texts. Though all contained under the umbrella of God's creation, God has a very different relationship with man, woman, and the animals.

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<sup>95</sup> Gen. 2:18.

<sup>96</sup> Gen. 2:18-19.

<sup>97</sup> Gen. 2:22, 2:19.

<sup>98</sup> Gen. 2:23.

<sup>99</sup> Gen. 2:18.

<sup>100</sup> Gen. 3:16.

## God's Human Relationships

While the J and P texts disagree over the image of God, the significance of the order of creation, and the purpose of men and women, they continue to differ over the intimate relationship between God and humanity. While the P texts treats man and woman equally with respect to their relationship with God, the J text creates divisions, favoring man over woman. Each will be examined here.

The relationship between God and humanity in the P text, like much of the rest of the P text, is brief. Initially after creating man and woman God blesses them equally.<sup>101</sup> God also equitably bestows upon humanity the duty to have “dominion” and “multiply.”<sup>102</sup> Furthermore, there is no distinction between man and woman’s diet.<sup>103</sup> Though God does not have a detailed and intimate relationship with humanity in the Priestly account of creation, it is egalitarian. In contrast, in the J text God interacts with man and woman more vividly, but also inequitably.

The J text presents the relationship between God and man as more intimate than the one God has with woman. Man is different from all of creation in that he houses “the breath of life.”<sup>104</sup> A part of God is literally within him, and God caters to man accordingly. Man is given a prescribed diet so that he may avoid death, as does God.<sup>105</sup> When man is lonely, God works to

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<sup>101</sup> Gen. 1:28.

<sup>102</sup> Gen. 1:26, 28.

<sup>103</sup> Gen. 1:29.

<sup>104</sup> Gen. 2:7.

<sup>105</sup> Gen. 2:16.

solve his problem and makes the animals for him.<sup>106</sup> When the animals are insufficient, God makes woman for him.<sup>107</sup> In the evening when God walks in the garden, God calls out for man specifically, longing for his companionship.<sup>108</sup> Even when man eats of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, God punishes man indirectly, not by cursing man, but by cursing the ground.<sup>109</sup> God clearly cares for man and actively seeks out a relationship with him, while God does not hold woman in the same esteem.

While God's relationship with man is intentional and intimate, the relationship between God and woman is incidental and strained. Woman is not in the initial plan of God's creation. All creation culminates in man, but shortly after God discovers that man is alone.<sup>110</sup> In a rush to provide him with a "helper as his partner" God creates the animals, but when they are not the companions man needs, woman is created.<sup>111</sup> As God's second choice for man's helper woman is not commented upon or sought out by God again until man brings her up in conversation with God.<sup>112</sup> God's only speech toward her is either accusatory, or in doling out unwarranted punishment.<sup>113</sup> Furthermore, woman is the only one whose repercussions after the fall are not qualified. Both man and the serpent are provided with reasons for their punishments while

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<sup>106</sup> Gen. 2:18-19.

<sup>107</sup> Gen. 2:20-23.

<sup>108</sup> Gen. 3:9.

<sup>109</sup> Gen. 3:18.

<sup>110</sup> Gen. 2:18.

<sup>111</sup> Gen. 2:20-23.

<sup>112</sup> Gen. 3:12.

<sup>113</sup> Gen. 3:13, 15-16.

woman is left without. Unworthy of an explanation for her suffering, woman stands apart from both man and nature in this regard.

As shown, the P and J texts establish opposing positions on gender roles. While the P text adheres to the message of male/female equality, the J text justifies patriarchy through its gendered creations, life purposes, and relationships with God. The opposing viewpoints of the P and J texts on these issues highlight the ambivalence that biblical authors and redactors felt toward the issues of patriarchy. While the texts' gender roles can be understood separately they are unable to be reconciled within the biblical text itself. Similar issues plague the discussions of nonhuman creation in the P and J creation narratives. While opinions on men and women at least remained consistent to each source, the treatment of nature is even less coherent.

### **The Gendered Relationship Between Humanity and Nature**

The relationship between humanity and nature, like the previously examined relationship between humanity and God, also varies depending on the source text. Concerning the gendered relationship between humanity and nature, the P text establishes humankind's dominion over animals, while the J text initially subjects animals only to man, while later making them the enemies of woman and all humanity as well. Man, in the J text, even becomes the scapegoat for God cursing the earth. Each text provides its own conception of the relationship between humanity and nature. While the P text is generic, the J text is gendered, seeing the interactions between humanity and nonhuman nature as two distinct relationships. First this relationship will be examined in the P text, followed by the male and female iterations in the J text.



## Humanity and Nature

Genesis 1 describes the relationship between humanity and nature in anthropocentric terms. God makes humanity, deciding to “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 wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing.”<sup>114</sup> Despite this dominion, humanity and animals are not completely severed from one another.

Both humanity and animals have a few things in common. Nothing is without purpose in the Priestly account of creation. According to the authors nonliving things serve primarily as time markers, such as the light and the darkness, and the “lights in the dome of the sky.”<sup>115</sup> These continue to exist without the need of replacement, remaining throughout the ages. On the other hand, for all the living things on the earth, their purpose is reproduction. For man and animals, they share not only the sixth day of creation, as well as their purpose (to multiply).<sup>116</sup> This shared purpose brings humanity and animals together, so that each of their lives are treated with respect.

Furthermore, although dominion is established, humanity’s dominion only extends so far. Animals are not designated as food, rather plant life is the exclusive human diet.<sup>117</sup> Therefore, it appears as though the animals are supposed to be ruled over, however dominion does not extend to consumption. Interestingly enough, humankind is also not given dominion over the earth;

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<sup>114</sup> Gen. 1:26.

<sup>115</sup> Gen. 1:5, 14.

<sup>116</sup> Ryan Patrick McLaughlin, “A Meatless Dominion: Genesis 1 and the Ideal of Vegetarianism,” *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 47, no. 3 (2017): 145, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146107917715587>; Bird, “‘Male and Female He Created Them’: Gen 1 : 27b in the Context of the Priestly Account of Creation;” Gen. 1:24-31; Gen. 1:22, 28.

<sup>117</sup> Gen. 1:29.

instead human authority is only to be exercised over the animals.<sup>118</sup> Though plant life is to be consumed, humanity is not its ruler. What this authority is supposed to look like, however, is unclear within the P text alone. The J text provides more details about what the relationships that both man and woman have with the earth.

### **Man and Nature**

Within the J text, the treatment of nature is delineated along gender lines. Man in the J text is brought into existence is because the earth's soil is in need of tilling.<sup>119</sup> His function is to serve the earth, creating the conditions necessary to create life and sustain his own.<sup>120</sup> Man is alone; the animals are created in order to help as partners.<sup>121</sup> Animals' purpose is to help man, endeavoring in the same work alongside him. They are created for him, but not necessarily beneath him. Man exercises a limited amount of authority over the animals, designating them with names when they are presented to him.<sup>122</sup> Similar to the P text, man also is given plants as food, but not animals.<sup>123</sup> Instead, they share in a sort of business partnership, but man and the animals are not close. They are not the sufficient companionship that man needs, compelling God to create woman to remedy his solitude. While the relationship between man and nature

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<sup>118</sup> Gen. 1:26.

<sup>119</sup> Gen. 2:5, 2:15.

<sup>120</sup> Athalya Brenner, ed. *Genesis: A Feminist Companion to the Bible*, (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998), 40.

<sup>121</sup> Gen. 2:18.

<sup>122</sup> Gen. 2:19-20.

<sup>123</sup> Gen. 2:16-17.

seems formal with a limited amount of power exercised over nonhuman life, woman's relationship with fauna is characterized more intimately than that of man's.

### **Woman and Nature**

The J text presents the relationship between woman and nature as familiar. Woman and animals within J share a common ground. Both were created to be helpers and partners for men with no independent purpose of their own, and the animals are subject to man through man's naming process, just like woman.<sup>124</sup> They share a bond in that their existence is for man's pleasure, and this intimacy allows for dialogue amongst them. When the serpent approaches woman, she is not shocked or concerned that it speaks.<sup>125</sup> They share in the same language, debating technical issues in God's decree together, and solving problems together.<sup>126</sup>

Furthermore, although the serpent is "crafty," it does not deceive woman.<sup>127</sup> Eating from the tree does not kill her (at least not immediately), and it actually does open her eyes and give her the knowledge of good and evil.<sup>128</sup> Man does not engage in this discussion or debate with the serpent, and does not relate to the animals as woman can. Therefore the J text establishes that woman has a closer relationship with non-human creation than man. This all changes, however after the fall.

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<sup>124</sup> Gen. 2: 2: 18-20, 23.

<sup>125</sup> Gen. 3:1-2.

<sup>126</sup> Gen. 3:1-5.

<sup>127</sup> Gen. 3:1.

<sup>128</sup> Gen. 3:4.

## Humanity's Post Fall Relationship with Nature

After the man and woman eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil God alters the relationships that man and woman have with the rest of creation. Woman is the first to abandon nature. Once God confronts man and woman, woman is the first to use nature as a scapegoat.<sup>129</sup> Without even giving the serpent the opportunity to speak for itself, God curses it, putting “enmity” between it and the woman.<sup>130</sup> The once close relationship they had is effectively ended, and even her children become its enemies.<sup>131</sup> Man, the favorite child, is promoted to patriarchal rule and reassigned his original task of plowing, albeit with more difficulties.<sup>132</sup> Instead of delivering a true punishment to man, God instead curses the ground. While man is rewarded and woman oppressed, the two curses delivered by God are directed toward nonhuman nature, despite the fact that they were not the offending party.<sup>133</sup> The J text idealizes animals as helpers, however actively oppresses nature through the fall, constructing a narrative that is ultimately at odds with itself.

While the typical image of anthropocentrism in Genesis comes from Lynn White Jr.’s influential article, “The Historic Roots of our Ecologic Crisis,” this conclusion is founded upon his conflation of the two biblical accounts.<sup>134</sup> Instead, the message that the Bible provides is rather unclear, differing depending on the text. While the P text establishes dominion, it also

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<sup>129</sup> Gen. 3:13.

<sup>130</sup> Gen. 3:14-5.

<sup>131</sup> Gen. 3:15.

<sup>132</sup> Gen. 3:16-17.

<sup>133</sup> Gen. 3:14, 3:17.

<sup>134</sup> McLaughlin, “A Meatless Dominion,” 146; Lynn White Jr., “The Historic Roots of our Ecologic Crisis,” *Science* 155, no. 3767 (1967): 1205.

provides no clear image of what dominion is supposed to look like. The J text has no presence of dominion, inventing animals as helpers and partners rather than subservient beings, but also curses both the land and animals as a result of the fall. Animals are not to be killed or exploited for human consumption according to both the P and J texts, but this is as far as the similarities go. The two text's conflicting ideas about nature create confusion in regard to the treatment of nature, obfuscating the Bible's true message about the creation's intent for its place in the world, for those who wish to find a kind of dogmatic comment.

## **Conclusions**

Ultimately, the P and J texts treat both gender and nature differently, showing ambivalence towards these issues. Each was the product of an androcentric and anthropocentric worldview, however only the J text is concerned with establishing this. While the P text could be seen as corrective due to its later dating, thus accounting for the narrative divisions, its treatments of gender and nature are not detailed enough to establish a definitive reading or comment much upon the status of woman and nature.

The differing myths establish no unified stance on either issue. Woman and man share in the image of God, function, and dominion in the P text, while the J text compartmentalizes these relationships and ideas in order to establish hierarchical modes of oppression. Although all in existence falls under the category of creation, humankind in the J text has a distinctly different purpose and function from the rest of creation. Woman and nature here are grouped together to help man, and no dominion is established, although enmity is in place after the fall. These narratives therefore, are insufficient for codifying a united message about ecology and women due to the ambivalence of the Genesis 1-3 text. These differences are sufficient however, for

showing that neither anthropocentrism or androcentrism cannot be justified through the Genesis creation narratives. It also indicates opportunities for examining further intertextual conversations.

## CHAPTER 4:

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