

through the agency of human readers – that the biblical texts can contribute something to contemporary ecotheology.

This focus on human agency and responsibility dovetails with the Bible's own anthropocentrism. Several essays here engage explicitly with the benefits and limitations of this anthropocentrism, while others emphasize the biblical portrayal of humanity as a part of an interrelated cosmos, in which the human and non-human, the divine and non-divine, the material and non-material, are bound up together as a dynamic whole. But while this emphasis can go some way to reframe the human-centredness of the biblical literature, our contributors would likely agree that it is unable to liberate the non-human world from its reliance upon representation by humans – both within and beyond the Bible. After all, human concerns set the agenda for both biblical writing and interpretation, as much as they set the agenda for both environmental damage and protection. Any depictions of the 'environment', or of 'nature', and any construals of human responsibilities towards it, are of course human constructions, voiced by humans.

Chapter 1

THE CREATION STORIES: THEIR ECOLOGICAL POTENTIAL AND PROBLEMS

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For most of the history of western civilization the Old Testament creation stories, especially those in Genesis 1, have been viewed with great respect because of the belief that they give an accurate account of how God created the universe. That belief was gradually abandoned by biblical scholars in the nineteenth century, but it enjoys currency today in the challenge to Darwin's theory of natural selection that is mounted by advocates of various types of 'creationism'. That debate is no part of the present chapter (see the illuminating account of the origins of 'creationism' in McCalla 2006). The concern here is rather with the debate that has raged around Genesis 1 in recent discussions about the ecological crisis faced by the world today.

Rightly or wrongly, an article published by Lynn White in 1967 has been taken as the starting point for a modern debate that has held Christianity in general and the biblical creation narratives in particular to be responsible for the current ecological crisis (White 1967). Writing as a professor of medieval history and a churchman, White stressed the need for greater knowledge of the history of technological change, and he sketched some key moments, as he saw them. He made a distinction between the Latin West, the site of the most significant developments, and the rest of the then-civilized world. Crucial to the march of technological progress, in White's view, was a belief in perpetual progress, derived from Judeo-Christian theology. This was further exacerbated by what White saw as an essentially anthropocentric view of the world that was contained in the biblical creation stories, and which taught that the universe was created solely for the benefit of humanity. If it was the case that modern science and technology were a realization of the Christian view of humanity's God-given mastery over the natural world, then Christianity, and by implication the biblical creation stories, bore a huge burden of guilt for the present ecological crisis.

White's charge – that a Christian anthropocentric view of the natural world was in some way responsible for the ecological crisis – was taken up by others (see the brief survey in Santmire 1985: 1–7) and linked specifically by Paul Santmire to the work of two prominent Old Testament scholars, G. E. Wright and Gerhard von Rad (Santmire 1985: 187–92). Both were accused of downgrading the natural world by their emphasis on history, and the assertion that God had revealed himself to Israel through historical processes and traditions rather than through nature.

The discussion was not confined to North America. In 1972 the German writer on ecology Carl Amery published a book which held Judaism and Christianity to be responsible for the view that there could and should be unlimited and continuous economic and technological growth (Amery 1972). This produced a response from the Old Testament scholar Norbert Lohfink (1977: 156–71). Lohfink felt it necessary to deal with the interpretation of one particular verse in Genesis 1, a verse which seemed to 'justify' the criticism being made against Judaism and Christianity:

Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth. (Gen. 1.28)

Lohfink dealt first with the charge that the creation of humans in the divine image (Gen. 1.27) forged a gulf between humanity and the rest of the natural order. In fact, the passage had to be understood in the context of creation stories found among Israel's neighbours in the ancient world, in which human beings were created by the gods in order to do the hard and menial tasks that the gods did not wish to undertake themselves. The passage about the divine image in humanity was meant to bestow a dignity upon human beings, something lacking in the worldviews of Israel's neighbours. It had nothing to do with creating a gulf between humanity and the rest of nature.

Secondly, Lohfink distinguished between command and blessing in relation to the words about being fruitful and multiplying. He noted that they were preceded immediately by the phrase 'And God blessed them and said . . .'. There was therefore not a command to the whole of humanity for all time to continue to multiply. God's blessing was designed to enable the human species to become viable and was considered to have been fulfilled in Exod. 1.7, which describes the Israelites in Egypt as having been fruitful and having multiplied. Lohfink turned his attention next to the two Hebrew verbs *kabash* and *radab* in Gen. 1.28, verbs normally rendered as 'subdue' and 'have dominion'. The basic sense of *kabash*, he argued, was to put the foot on something, in the sense of claiming ownership. In Gen. 1.28, therefore, the translation 'subdue it [the earth]' gave a false impression. It had to do with taking possession of the earth, as in Josh. 18.1 where 'the land lay subdued before them' meant 'the land lay under their feet', i.e. they had taken possession of it. The verb *radab* had a semantic field that included accompanying, shepherding, leading, commanding. It belonged to the cluster of ideas common in the ancient world where the notions of ruler and shepherd were linked together. 'Have dominion', therefore, implied tender, sympathetic rule. Whether Lohfink made a convincing case for his understanding of *kabash* and *radab* is something that must be considered later.

One of Lohfink's most interesting arguments and one that, again, will be considered more fully later, was that those who took Gen. 1.28 to be a command to humanity to multiply for all future generations overlooked the fact that Gen. 1.29

presupposed the existence of a world in which humans would be vegetarians:

Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed which is upon the face of the earth and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food.

Would those who made such play out of Gen. 1.28 also argue that in all future generations, humans everywhere should be vegetarians? Dismissing the idea as absurd, Lohfink went on to point out the important contrast between Gen. 1.30 with its vegetarianism, and Gen. 9.3, which gave permission to human beings to eat (kosher) meat, and which, in verse 2, described an enmity between humans and the other living creatures. This latter state of affairs corresponded to the world of human affairs, which meant that Gen. 1.28–30 was prophetic in envisaging a world in which humans and animals lived in mutual harmony. This fact was of fundamental importance for any understanding of Genesis 1.

What has been written so far can be taken as an introduction to the chapter. In what follows there will be four sections, dealing with the history of the modern idea of the subordination of nature to human interest, the interpretation of Genesis 1 in the context of the narrative structure of Genesis 1–9, a view of the current ecological crisis and a return to Genesis 1 in the light of this.

I

Any reconstruction of the history of ideas is bound to be subjective, and this will be true of what is said here. Also, the questions of influence, and how far alleged influences can be said to bear burdens of guilt for subsequent developments, are very slippery indeed. This section will confine itself to some observations drawn from Charles Taylor's *Sources of the Self*, published in 1989. Taylor's stated aim was to describe the phenomena of modernity, especially modern identity, stressing and exploring the significant differences between the moral world of 'moderns' and that of previous civilizations (Taylor 1989: x, 3, 11). A long section is devoted to Descartes and to how, in Taylor's view, Descartes transformed a tradition of introspection that went back through Augustine to Plato (139–58). Prior to Descartes, introspection ('inwardness' as Taylor calls it) had among other things viewed the natural world as an arena in which signs of God's presence and work could be discerned. The change brought about by Descartes was to use the faculty of reason that was disclosed by introspection as the main or even sole arbiter in determining what was true. This 'disengaged reason' as Taylor calls it (disengaged from the outside world) led to a radically different understanding of the world of nature. It was no longer something to be contemplated; it was objectified. It was to be understood mechanistically; it became 'disenchanted'. Here was that 'instrumental reason' which would underlie the advances in technology that would ultimately bring the world to an ecological crisis. As Taylor remarks in a later section

We who think, and see, have a glimpse of how deep the roots are of our fragile consciousness, and how mysterious and strange its emergence is. This spiritual attitude is in exact contradiction to the Cartesian. There the dominant idea is of the purity of thinking being, of its utter heterogeneity from blind physical nature, and of its transcendently higher status. (347)

To what extent can Christianity and Genesis 1 be blamed for this transformation of the understanding of nature and all that flowed from it via Locke, the Deists and others? Taylor acknowledges that it was within Christian culture that these developments took place; that behind the Cartesian turn stood Augustinian inwardness. 'The disengaged subject stands in a place already hollowed out for God; he takes a stance to the world which befits an image of the Deity' (315). Yet what arises within Christian culture is transformed by what Taylor calls a mutation 'which will carry it outside Christian faith altogether' (315). But of course, this 'secularizing', rationalizing trajectory was not the only one to stem from Descartes, and Taylor devotes space to what he calls the 'Expressionist Turn', something exemplified in Herder, the German Romantics, and Wordsworth, to name but a few. Nature ceases to be merely a machine that can be observed, mastered and exploited for human ends. It becomes an enigma that can only begin to be understood if one participates in it. It is necessary for new forms to be created in poetry and art in order to bring to expression what arises from an engagement with nature in all its manifestations (see Taylor 1989: 379–81). What this brief reference to Taylor's wide-ranging and profound book indicates is that reconstructions of the history of ideas in relation to the alleged responsibility of Christianity for the ecological crisis cannot afford to be simplistic and one-dimensional if they are to be convincing, and to make a contribution to the ecological debate.

II

The fact that Gen. 1.29 appears to command human beings to use a vegetarian diet, while the permission to eat meat is given only after the flood, at 9.3, is no new discovery. The Babylonian Talmud records a discussion of the matter among Rabbis of the third century CE (*Sanh.* 59b). One of the points of discussion was whether the eating of fish was allowed before the flood, the point being that at Gen. 9.3 there is a specific warning that meat with blood in it is not to be eaten. If it was the case that fish had no blood, were humans allowed meat as food before the flood? Protestant commentators from the Reformation onwards were uncertain as to how to interpret the verse. Because it was stated that Abel brought the firstlings of his flock as an offering to God (Gen. 4.4) it was assumed that before the flood the earliest humans killed animals in order to sacrifice them, and that they may also have eaten part of what was sacrificed. The Puritan commentator Matthew Poole was representative of opinion with the words, 'It is neither affirmed nor denied that flesh was granted to the first men for food, and therefore we may safely be ignorant of it. It is sufficient

for us that it was expressly allowed, Gen. ix. 3' (Poole 1962 [1685]: 5). Scholars in the nineteenth century took a more robust view of the matter. Adam Clarke had no doubt that the first humans were vegetarians (Clarke 1825: *ad loc.*) and added the significant point 'it may be inferred from this passage, that no animal whatever was originally designed to prey on others'. A detailed discussion along similar lines was offered by Franz Delitzsch (1853: 113–15). The question of whether the animals were herbivores before the flood was rarely dealt with; the whole discussion was sometimes affected by the fact that there is no explicit reference to animals being allowed to eat meat in Genesis 9. Of course, this discussion was effected by the belief, that prevailed in the nineteenth and earlier centuries, that Genesis 1 was an authoritative account of how God had actually created the universe. Once this belief was abandoned it was possible to draw other conclusions, conclusions that arguably made it more likely that the original intentions of the biblical writer(s) were being understood.

Before this step is considered, however, a slight digression is necessary. The original charge of White was that the anthropocentric view of the creation narrative in Genesis 1 had led via Christianity to the modern view that humanity had the right to exploit the natural world for its own benefits. Lohfink sought to rebut that charge (in its German form) by arguing that Genesis 1 enjoined a pastoral, supportive role for the human created order, not a domineering, exploitative role. His defence raises two questions: did he succeed in rescuing Genesis 1 from the charges brought against it, and, second, if he did, did this decide the matter? It has to be allowed as a possibility that even if the writer(s) of Genesis 1 intended it to be read in the way that Lohfink suggested, the passage may still have been misunderstood by later interpreters, and this misunderstanding may have been responsible for the development of the alleged Christian anthropocentric view of things.

In answer to this first question, the view taken here is that Lohfink's discussion of the verbs *kabash* and *radab* is not convincing. Without going into a detailed examination of the fourteen occurrences of *kabash* and the twenty-four occurrences of *radab* in the Bible in Hebrew, there are no indisputable instances of the verbs being used in the way claimed by Lohfink.¹ If *kabash* indeed had a basic meaning of 'placing the foot upon', this is almost always in a hostile manner. Usage in the Bible leads inevitably to the 'basic meaning' of *kabash* being 'to subdue, to subjugate'. Similarly, the usage of *radab* points inevitably to the senses 'have dominion', 'rule', 'dominate' (see Brown *et al.* 1953: 921–22). If there is any way of 'softening' the implication of these verbs, it must be by way of interpreting them in the context of the narrative structure of Genesis 1–9, as will be argued shortly. With regard to the second question, it has already been argued in the previous section that the history of the roots of the ecological crisis is complex and many-faceted. Even if the crisis has its origins in Christian culture, there have been 'mutations' which have taken theory and practice into areas that cannot justifiably be called Christian.

1 For an exhaustive discussion of *radab* and *kabash* see Neumann-Gorsolke 2004: 204–29 and 274–300, respectively.

It is time to return to Gen. 1.29-30 and their implications in the light of the narrative structure of Genesis 1-9. If, as pointed out above, the vegetarian implications of Gen. 1.29 have long been noted and discussed, it is only comparatively recently that scholars have taken seriously the implication of Gen. 1.30 that the animals as well as the humans were not permitted to eat meat.² One of the most subtle and persuasive discussions of this subject is by Pierre Beauchamp (1987). For him, the verses concerning the animals (the non-human living creatures) are crucial because they help to define what it means to be human. In Gen. 9.2 it is stated that 'the fear of you and the dread of you shall be upon every beast of the earth . . .'. This is the prelude to humanity being granted permission to eat meat in the following verse. The issue is thus not merely one of what it is permitted to eat; it is about relationships between human and non-human living creatures. The fact that, after the flood, this relationship is one of fear and mutual enmity indicates that prior to the flood, the relationship was one of mutual harmony. The vegetarian regime in Gen. 1.29-30 is a way of describing a world that is in harmony with itself, a world without 'nature red in tooth and claw'. This is of importance for the understanding of the verbs *kabash* and *radab* because whatever they may mean in other contexts, in Genesis 1 they occur in the context of a non-violent world. Any coercive sense that they possess has to be understood in a non-violent way. Beauchamp writes of Genesis 1:

It is able to believe that a mastery over the earth is possible without exercising a mastery over the other beings, who are intermediate beings between the master and the earth . . . The Bible does not think of peace between human beings without peace between humans and animals.³ (1987: 170, 180; my translation)

In this connection it is noteworthy that in the visions of a renewed created order in Isa. 11.1-9 and 65.17-25 the vegetarian order returns, in the sense that animals that are normally carnivores or predators are depicted as lying down together, while the lion will eat straw like the ox. The child will not be attacked by the snake (Isa. 11.7-8; 65.25). These things exemplify the promise 'they shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain' (Isa. 11.9; 65.25).

What is clear from these observations is that whatever else Genesis 1 may describe, it is not the world of our experience. That world, in which there is enmity between a meat-eating humanity and the animals, and among the animals themselves, comes into existence only after the flood. Gen. 9.1-7 is meant to be read over against Gen. 1.27-30. The latter is a prophetic text, describing an ideal that is not realized in the world of actual human experience. A reading of the opening chapter of Genesis in this way was impossible as long as it was believed that Genesis 1 was an account

of how God brought the universe into being. This is no doubt one reason why commentators such as Poole preferred to be agnostic about whether Gen. 1.29 prescribed vegetarian fare for human beings. The abandonment of the belief that Genesis 1 is an accurate account of the creation of the universe has made possible a reading that is closer to the intention of the biblical writer(s). No doubt he or they also believed that Genesis 1 described how God created the universe; but the chapter was not intended to be natural science. It was myth in the sense of being a narrative set in beginning time whose purpose was to describe how and why things experienced by humanity came to be as they were. The narrative structure of Genesis 1-9 made it clear that the world of human experience was not as God intended it to be. That was the world of Genesis 1, a world that had been so corrupted by human wickedness that God had had to destroy it by means of a flood, after which a compromise world was set up, one which allowed for the fact that it contained, in the human species, an animal that was determined to exploit and dominate other living creatures. These other animals were now allowed to defend themselves on the basis of the fear that existed between them and human beings. Genesis 1 read in the context of Genesis 9 is not a mandate for the human exploitation of the world; it is a critique of the actual state of human behaviour. This does not mean, however, that it cannot be used in modern discussions about the ecological crisis, as will be shown in the concluding sections.

III

In his *Ökologie, Naturschutz, Umweltschutz*, the German environmental scientist Ragner Kinzelbach outlines two main approaches to thinking about, and seeking to deal with, the current environmental crisis (Kinzelbach 1995). What is common to them is their analysis of the causes of the crisis, namely, over-population and over-production, and the consequent divergence of the human economic system from the ecosystems of the natural world so that the ecosystems are under threat from the economic systems. The first strategy for dealing with the problem he describes as *die ökologische Versöhnungsstrategie*, the strategy of reconciling the economic systems with the ecosystems. This involves the following goals, and means to their attainment. First, the protection of nature and its environments, including the protection of land, air and water and the animal and plant worlds, against the harmful effects of human use of these things (111). Secondly, a restriction on or reduction of population growth and a reversal of the cycles of economic over-production. Needless to say, this latter goal has consequences for the lifestyles especially of those who live in the affluent parts of the world (139-44). Third, a drastic recasting of financial systems so that it becomes clear who, and what practices, are responsible for environmental degradation, so that those responsible can be penalized financially.

On the matter of protecting the natural world Kinzelbach points out that this amounts to an intervention on the part of the human species. During the history of the world many species have become extinct either because of regional or global

² For a contrary view and wide-ranging discussion see Neumann-Gorsolke, 2004: 233-70.

³ 'elle a pu faire croire qu'un maître de la terre était possible sans que fût exercée une maîtrise sur d'autres êtres, intermédiaires entre le maître et la terre . . . La Bible ne pense pas la paix entre les hommes sans la paix de l'homme avec l'animal.'

changes of temperature, etc., or because they have been unable to protect themselves against other species. The modern protection of species implies a recreation of the natural world in the image of those doing the protecting; and it can be added that it, say, aboriginal peoples were doing the recreating of nature in their image, it might work out differently from the results produced by modern Western environmentalists. Put another way, protection of nature is essentially protection of humanity (Kinzelbach 1995: 116), which does not invalidate it, but raises the question of the nature of the human species that is protecting itself via the protection of nature.

This assertion of the subjective element in nature preservation leads Kinzelbach to make observations about two assumptions which are often part of the 'reconciliation with nature' strategy. The first is that nature has intrinsic value; the second is that it maintains a kind of equilibrium that human economic activity has disturbed, and which human action must try to restore. Both assumptions are questionable, according to Kinzelbach. The first is based upon a sentimental view of nature which ignores its violent manifestations such as earthquakes, floods and outbreaks of deadly diseases. The second view, that concerning equilibrium, is too simplistic and needs to be replaced by a dynamic model in which the system is constantly changing by means of diversification and adaptation, something that has been going on for the entire history of the world. Kinzelbach makes a nice German distinction between *Da-Sein* and *So-Sein*, between what is actually in existence (*Da-Sein*) and what people would ideally like to exist or to remain in existence (*So-Sein*) (1995: 136–37). The strategy of 'reconciliation with nature' will be flawed if nature is seen as a benign system in harmony with itself. It must rather be seen as an ongoing and dynamic process, not a condition.

These observations lead to a second strategy outlined by Kinzelbach, and the one he prefers, *die ökologische Entwicklungsstrategie*, the ecological development strategy. What this boils down to is that humanity can only save itself and the world that it inhabits, first, by emancipating itself from nature, and secondly, by steering nature in a direction determined by human values. This, however, raises the question of the nature of humanity and its values, and calls, in the view of Kinzelbach, for a new conception of the nature of humanity and the structure of its society in the world of the future (1995: 166).

IV

Kinzelbach's alternative strategy, that the solution to the ecological crisis is for humanity to save itself from the world by emancipating itself from nature and by steering it in a direction determined by human nature, suggests a way of returning to Genesis 1 and the verbs *kabash* and *radah*. The element of coercion implied by the Hebrew verbs cannot be denied but, as argued above, that element of coercion appears in a different light when read in the context of the vegetarian, conflict-free world implied in Genesis 1. Kinzelbach's preferred option would be disastrous if

the human values that steered the natural world were those of a humanity driven by greed and exploitation, a humanity that continued to fell rainforests, pollute the atmosphere and was indifferent to thousands of deaths each day in road accidents. This, of course, is not what is intended. As Kinzelbach says at the end of his book, the overcoming of the ecological crisis requires a new conception of the nature of humanity and of the structure of the world community of the future' (Kinzelbach 1995: 166, my translation).⁴ This is arguably what Genesis 1, seen as a prophetic text, is about. Read against Gen. 9.1–4 it is a critique of the world that humanity's wickedness has brought about. It is a challenge to create a human society that will be capable of living in a world that is the kind of world that God intends.

One of the ways in which this is to be done in the Old Testament is by 'imposing' gracious behaviour on the natural world behaviour, drawn from the experience of the people of God as the recipients of divine graciousness. A *locus classicus* is Exod. 23.9–12 which reads as follows in my translation:

A stranger you shall not treat harshly. You know what it is like to be a stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. Six years you may sow your land and harvest its produce, but in the seventh you shall let it lie fallow and leave it unattended. The poor of your people shall eat from it, and what remains may be eaten by the wild animals. You shall do the same to your vineyard and to your olive orchard. For six days you may do your work, but on the seventh day you shall desist, so that your ox and your ass may have rest and your slave and the stranger resting with you may refresh themselves.

The passage begins with a command that the Israelites must deal graciously with strangers, that is, Israelites or non-Israelites who are estranged from their families and taking refuge with those who are not their kin. The command is grounded in the fact that the Israelites were themselves estranged in Egypt. Also implied is the fact of their having been freed from Egyptian enslavement by the gracious act of God. Both their sympathy born of suffering and their gratitude for deliverance must be translated into generosity towards others. But not just towards others. This generosity must also be extended to the natural order.

The origins of the sabbatical year for agriculture have been sought in ancient tabu practices that set a boundary against the extent to which humans could use nature for their own purposes (Albertz 1998: 394). The addition of vineyards and oliveyards, and the injunction to allow the poor and wild beasts to eat the produce from the sabbatical year would therefore be later developments, as would the linking of these practices with the exodus story. But the end result is a theologizing which is impressive and calls for attention.

Because of the lack of fertilizers in ancient Israel, fields were fallowed every other year, which means that the sabbatical year was not an agricultural necessity made into

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⁴ 'zur Behebung der ökologischen Krise bedarf es eines neuen Entwurfes vom Bild des Menschen und von der Struktur der Weltgesellschaft der Zukunft.'

a theological virtue. No doubt it helped fields to recover their growing potential, but this was not the primary purpose. The primary purpose was to establish and preserve a triple relationship between God, the users of the land and the land itself, where the limits set upon the use of the land also contributed to human self-understanding by setting limits to human ambition. This is indicated by the later addition of vineyards and olive orchards to the text, things that do not need to be fallowed every seven years to assist their growing potential. These items are most likely to have been added to the text in the post-exilic period when land use in Judah seems to have switched from the growing of barley (its main cereal crop) to the production of oil and wine. The continuation of the passage to embrace the weekly sabbath moves in the same direction, that of imposing upon the use of domesticated animals – a practice derived from compassion and graciousness. The first stated beneficiaries of the sabbath rule in Exod. 23.12 are the ox and the ass.

There are, of course, other well-known passages in which compassion for aspects of the natural order are enjoined. Deut. 20.19–20 forbids the felling of fruit trees that belong to a city that is besieged in warfare. Trees which do not yield fruit may be used to build siege works, but trees are not otherwise to be felled. As the most recent research indicates, this injunction was not simply an expression of solidarity with the world of nature; it was also a way of expressing outrage at the military practices of the neo-Assyrian empire, which showed no mercy either to human foes or the world of nature. Eckhart Otto in his recent *Krieg und Frieden in der Hebräischen Bibel und in Alten Orient* not only quotes from Assyrian texts which boast about the wholesale destruction of fruit trees, and indeed of anything that produced food for human consumption; he also reproduces a scene from an Assyrian relief which shows Assyrian soldiers felling the fruit trees outside a besieged city (Otto 1999: 99–100). However, the Hebrew legislation is not simply an outraged human reaction against brutal practices; it is driven by the divine command for compassion rooted in God's act of compassion in freeing his people from slavery; and the same motive is behind the injunction in Deuteronomy 22 which commands compassionate treatment for straying and lost animals, animals that have fallen down in some way, mother birds with their young and asses that must not be made to plough with the much stronger oxen.

These passages are arguably the best commentary on the verbs *kabash* and *radah* in Genesis 1. The passages do not describe a humanity exploiting the natural world and its non-human creatures but rather a humanity exercising a gracious role in an otherwise cruel world, inspired by narratives and cultural memories about God's compassionate action in freeing a people from slavery. Taken together with Genesis 1 they offer a challenge to modern practice. Most of us do not possess slaves, or fields, or vineyards or domesticated animals that plough and carry heavy loads; but we are challenged to ask what narratives and values we need to bring to bear if we are to save the world by the way we treat and shape it. We cannot avoid the question 'what does it mean to be human?' if we agree with Kinzelbach that we need a new conception of the nature of humanity and the structure of the world community. The

ecological crisis is as much a theological matter as a scientific one, which brings us back, although in a different way, to Lynn White's claim to see a connection between the Genesis view of humanity's place in the world and the present ecological crisis.

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