

Eco-Theology from a Christian Perspective (A Study of Verses on Environmental Conservation)

Suryani^{1*}, Nur Fitriyana², and Nugroho³

1. Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Fatah Palembang, Jl. Prof. K. H. Zainal Abidin Fikri No.Km.3, RW.05, Pahlawan, Kec. Kemuning, Kota Palembang, Sumatera Selatan 30126

2. Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Fatah Palembang, Jl. Prof. K. H. Zainal Abidin Fikri No.Km.3, RW.05, Pahlawan, Kec. Kemuning, Kota Palembang, Sumatera Selatan 30126

3. Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Fatah Palembang, Jl. Prof. K. H. Zainal Abidin Fikri No.Km.3, RW.05, Pahlawan, Kec. Kemuning, Kota Palembang, Sumatera Selatan 30126

*Corresponding Author: e-mail : suryani07042004@gmail.com

Abstract: This article discusses ecotheology from a Christian perspective by examining Genesis 1:26–28 and Psalm 24 as biblical foundations for human responsibility toward the environment. The purpose of this study is to explore theological insights regarding the cultural mandate and divine ownership in relation to the preservation of creation. Employing a library research method with a qualitative-descriptive approach, this study analyzes biblical texts, theological literature, and previous scholarly works. The findings reveal that humanity is entrusted not as exploitative rulers but as stewards of creation who are accountable to God. The cultural mandate in Genesis 1:26–28 emphasizes human authority over nature, yet this authority is not absolute; it must be exercised responsibly and directed toward sustaining the integrity of creation. Psalm 24 strengthens this understanding by affirming that the earth belongs to the Lord, highlighting divine ownership and reminding humans that their role is to care for what ultimately belongs to God. The integration of these two biblical passages provides a theological framework that balances authority with ecological responsibility, underscoring that ecological ethics are rooted in faith. Furthermore, the study affirms that Christian ecotheology is not merely theoretical but must be translated into practical commitment. The church and believers are called to integrate environmental stewardship into their spirituality, worship, and daily practices as an expression of obedience to God and love for creation. In this way, the preservation of nature becomes not only an ecological necessity but also an essential dimension of Christian faith and discipleship.

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1. Introduction

The issue of environmental degradation is a global challenge that impacts not only the ecological aspects but also the social and spiritual aspects of humanity. Climate change, pollution, and uncontrolled use of natural resources have threatened the balance of creation and the survival of life on Earth (Simangunsong et al. 2024: 1-2).

Global environmental crises such as deforestation, air pollution, and climate change require a theological response that goes beyond mere scientific or political ones. In the context of Christianity in Indonesia, ecotheology has emerged as a significant theological

approach to address these issues comprehensively. Through this perspective, Christians are encouraged to interpret environmental concern as part of their faith and to play an active role in maintaining ecological balance and fighting for social justice (Riska 2024: 100-102).

A field of Christian social ethics called ecotheology examines the relationship between environmental stewardship and Christianity. Through this approach, Christians are invited to understand the meaning of creation and humanity as part of the universe, while also affirming the moral obligation to preserve creation. Ecotheology, also known as "environmental theology," serves as a form of faith reflection in the face of the current ecological crisis. Theology in this context means critically reflecting on faith regarding the state of environmental damage caused by two main factors: natural disasters and human activity. The existence of all living things is often threatened by reckless human behavior, which is also often the main source of environmental damage (Sanjani, S, and M 2023: 461).

In Genesis 1:26, "God said, 'Let us make man in our image, according to our likeness, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.'" This verse contains a theological mandate for Christians, namely a call to care for and maintain God's creation with responsibility and respect. This principle is the foundation for the growth of ecological awareness in the life and practice of the church today.

In this regard, religion is a significant moral and spiritual force shaping people's views of the natural world. Religious teachings contain ethical values that can encourage responsible ecological behavior, including in the Christian tradition, which emphasizes humanity's role as stewards of God's creation. The foundation of understanding environmental theology (ecoteology) is the awareness that ecological problems are not merely worldly issues but also profoundly religious ones, rooted in misinterpretations of life's spiritual values (Pangihutan and Jura 2022: 13).

From a social theological perspective, ecological awareness is not solely an individual responsibility, but rather a collective action involving the entire faith community. Social theology, as an academic discipline that studies the interaction between religious life and social reality, is crucial for promoting an ecological understanding grounded in moral and spiritual principles. The church, as a community of believers, is expected to actively engage in advocacy efforts for environmental preservation based on the principles of humanity and ecological justice. In this context, the church has the potential to become a pioneer of ecological change, particularly through the integration of environmental education grounded in faith values and the spirit of Pancasila, in order to shape a more environmentally friendly mindset among its congregations (Sinaga et al. 2024: 1-2).

In ecotheology, environmental damage is considered a sin against God and His creation. Damage is a betrayal of the mandate of creation (Ngabalin 2020: 119). Ecotheology cannot stand alone; it requires collaboration between theology, environmental ethics, and science to create a new paradigm for sustainable and just natural management. Ecotheology, as an interdisciplinary discourse, combines theology with environmental ethics to counter the anthropocentric paradigm. This approach leads to a just and holistic ecological ethics, responding to criticisms of human exploitation of creation (Sumule 2024: 167). In this regard, ecotheology rejects the human-centered view, which is considered to have contributed to exacerbating the environmental crisis. Instead, it promotes theocentric and ecocentric paradigms, which recognize the intrinsic value of all creation, not limited to human interests alone (Kurniawaty et al. 2024: 1498).

The concept of ecotheology in Christianity emerged as a form of theological reflection on the ecological crisis, basing arguments on biblical texts. Ecotheology examines the relationship between humans and other creatures from a theological perspective, in addition to the relationship between humans and God. Ecotheology emerged as a response to criticism of anthropocentrism, which places humans at the center and ruler of all creation (Sumule 2024: 168).

Previous research has shown that ecotheological awareness is beginning to grow within Christian communities, both in the form of liturgy, doctrine, and concrete actions for environmental preservation. For example, the implementation of ecotheology in the context of church education plays a role in empowering congregations through concrete actions such as reforestation, waste management, and organic farming training as a manifestation of their faith's responsibility for environmental sustainability. The church itself plays a prophetic role

in addressing the environmental crisis and fostering ecological awareness within the faith community (Simanjuntak, Simatupang, and Sagala 2025: 456).

As members of creation, humans are stewards tasked with protecting and preserving nature, not being superior to it. This understanding stems from the creation narrative in Genesis, which states that humans were created to work and tend the garden (Katu 2020: 75). Genesis 1:26–28 contains the theological affirmation that humans are called to be God's representatives on earth, not as absolute rulers, but as stewards with moral responsibility for nature and spiritual values (Sondopen, Anggraini, and Gultom 2023: 115).

Meanwhile, Psalm 24:1 firmly states that "the earth is the Lord's and all that is in it," thus placing humans not as absolute owners, but as stewards mandated by God. Therefore, every action toward nature must be carried out within a framework of responsibility to the Creator, not simply to meet human needs or seek profit. This awareness confirms that the call to faith is fundamentally an ecological mandate, far deeper than mere social obligation (Mangundap 2020: 68).

The integration of the cultural mandate contained in Genesis 1:26–28 and the recognition of divine ownership in Psalm 24:1 presents a balanced theological framework: humans receive power to manage the earth, but this power must be exercised in faithfulness to God as an expression of faith and devotion. This pattern rejects destructive forms of domination and instead prioritizes a holistic stewardship paradigm, namely fair, wise management, and oriented towards the future sustainability of creation.

Thus, ecotheology is not merely a discourse, but a transformative calling for the church and the community of faith. Humans, created in the image and likeness of God, are mandated to rule and care for the earth, as affirmed in Genesis 1:26–28. This mandate is not a license to exploit, but rather a command to maintain the balance of nature. Loving creation, then, is both a form of respect for God's work and a moral responsibility to care for it (Riska 2024: 1071).

By examining Genesis 1:26–28 and Psalm 24, this article seeks to provide a theological understanding of human responsibility towards the environment. The approach employed emphasizes the exegesis of biblical texts to uncover the theological foundations of Christian ecology. The novelty of this research lies in its attempt to explore ecological meaning directly from the biblical text, not merely from the perspective of practical ethics or social movements.

Thus, this article not only presents a new perspective on the development of ecotheological discourse but also seeks to build ecological awareness rooted in faith. Its relevance becomes even more crucial when linked to the Indonesian context, which is facing the major challenge of environmental degradation. This study focuses on two main questions: how is the perspective of ecotheology in Christian teaching based on Old Testament verses regarding environmental preservation? And what is the theological significance of Old Testament verses related to human responsibility towards the environment?

Based on these questions, the purpose of this article is to analyze biblical texts, particularly Genesis 1:26–28 and Psalm 24, in order to uncover a Christian ecotheological understanding of environmental preservation. Furthermore, this article also seeks to explain the theological foundations that affirm humanity's role as stewards of God's creation, so that ecological responsibility can be understood as an integral part of the Christian faith itself.

2. Proposed Method

This research was conducted through a qualitative library research approach, namely reviewing and analyzing data from various written sources such as the Bible, scientific journals, theological books, and official church documents relevant to the issue of environmental conservation from a Christian perspective. By studying the literature, scientists can investigate, analyze, and examine various perspectives and thoughts expressed by academics and theologians regarding the relationship between ecological responsibility and the teachings of creation in theology (Riska 2024: 1062). The research was conducted through several stages, namely: (1) collecting sections on human obligations towards nature from the Old Testament; (2) examining the theological interpretation of these verses based on academic literature; (3) examining the concept of ecotheology in theological documents; and (4) analyzing the relationship between Christian teachings and environmental conservation efforts. The analysis was conducted using a descriptive-qualitative and interpretative approach, in which researchers interpreted sacred texts thematically in the context of

environmental issues. Thus, this research not only explores the normative aspects of the texts, but also their theological implications for the ecological awareness of Christians.

This research is based on ecotheological theory, which emphasizes the relationship between humans and the environment as a manifestation of interconnectedness in God's work of creation. This method adopts anthropocentric Christian theology, which states that it is our duty as humans to responsibly manage and preserve the environment. This view aligns with Agustin Putri's thinking, which states that ecotheology discusses the application of Christian ethics in wise and sustainable environmental management (Delahoya 2025: 25).

3. Results and Discussion

Ecotheological Perspectives in Christian Teachings Based on Bible Verses About Environmental Conservation

The increasingly complex global ecological crisis calls Christians to re-examine sacred texts in the context of environmental preservation. The description of creation in the early part of Genesis, chapters 1 and 2, depicts humanity as the *Imago Dei*, mandated not to oppress the earth but to care for it as a field of service to the Creator. This paradigm strengthens Christian ecotheology as a theological response to the visible destruction of nature in the modern era.

The worsening environmental crisis emphasizes that the earth is not simply a resource, but rather a sacred creation of God. The Genesis narrative of creation positions humans as stewards of the earth, mandated not to exploit but to preserve and maintain the balance of the ecosystem. This view later became the theological foundation for the emergence of Christian ecotheology as a faith-based response to the ongoing environmental degradation (Riska 2024: 1061).

Genesis 1:26–28 is one of the main foundations of ecotheological understanding in the Christian tradition because it contains the cultural mandate given by God to humanity. This mandate is often understood as "dominion" over creation, but in a theological context, this power does not mean oppressing or exploiting nature. Rather, power here is a form of stewardship that reflects God's character as a loving Creator and protector of all creation. Therefore, humanity's responsibility towards the earth is a command inherent in its existence as God's image. This interpretation provides a strong theological basis that preserving the environment is not merely a moral choice, but a religious obligation rooted in a divine calling (Panjaitan 2023: 43-44).

The Psalms are understood as liturgical texts that invite all creation to praise God, while simultaneously emphasizing that humans do not have absolute freedom to treat the earth as they please. Psalm 24 provides an important correction by emphasizing that the earth belongs to God, so every human action must be placed within the framework of responsibility to the Owner. Destroying nature is destroying God's property, while protecting and preserving it is a form of respect for Him. From this, Christian ecotheology emphasizes that divine ownership is the primary basis for human obligations to care for the environment. Humans themselves were created as rational beings, distinct from other creations, while nature is a living space that includes plants, animals, and all the contents of heaven and earth. The relationship between humans and nature is reciprocal, mutually dependent and interdependent, so the psalmist affirms that the entire universe belongs to God: "The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world and those who live in it" (Psalm 24:1) (Resfina 2020: 14).

Psalm 24 is not only understood as a theological text, but also has an important liturgical dimension in the life of faith. The recognition that the earth belongs to God must be reflected in the prayers, worship, and liturgical practices of Christians, for example through prayers of thanksgiving for the harvest or special prayers for environmental sustainability. In this way, the liturgy becomes not only a spiritual space, but also a means of ecological education that fosters the congregation's awareness of their responsibility to the earth. The Church affirms that humans are the image of God, personal beings with a social nature and therefore are required to be aware of their existence before others and nature. Because the entire universe belongs to God (Psalm 24:1), the human responsibility to care for and maintain the living and inanimate objects within it is a broad and arduous task (Sianturi et al. 2024: 289).

Not only is ecological challenges seen as a moral or social issue in the Christian faith, but they are also directly related to the spiritual calling of humanity as God's messengers tasked with fully managing the planet. Knowing that this planet belongs to God brings a new awareness that it is our responsibility as humans to maintain and ensure the sustainability of creation, in addition to using it. This idea is the basis of ecotheological thinking that encourages concrete practices in the form of environmental conservation and restoration as concrete manifestations of stewardship responsibility that originates from divine will (Manongga 2025: 76-77).

A closer look at Genesis 1:26–28 demonstrates that the cultural mandate is not intended to exploit nature destructively. Through a deeper understanding of the text, the church is called to transform from ruler to steward of the earth, practicing ecological stewardship that includes public policy advocacy and resource management based on principles of justice and sustainability. In this regard, the church holds a strategic position in shaping public awareness of the importance of ecological concern. Therefore, ecological theology is not only a faith-based response to the current environmental crisis but also enriches understanding of the cultural mandate regarding stewardship of nature as outlined in Genesis 1:26–28, and encourages the development of concrete solutions to these problems (Prasetyo and Nesimnasi 2025: 8209).

Thus, the Christian ecotheological perspective based on Genesis 1:26–28 and Psalm 24 affirms that humans are called to be stewards of the earth, not arbitrary rulers. Cultural mandate and recognition of divine ownership complement each other to build a strong ecological awareness. In the context of the global environmental crisis, this message becomes relevant to encourage Christians to take an active part in environmental conservation efforts. Ecotheology is no longer merely discourse, but becomes a foundation of faith that leads to concrete actions to protect the earth as God's (Wiratanaya and Kembuan 2023: 102-103). The preservation dimension is also evident in the response to local damage, where church communities collaborate with local residents to carry out environmental restoration such as reforestation, waste management, and advocacy for conservation policies to maintain complex and sustainable natural systems.

Theological Meaning of Old Testament Verses on Human Responsibility to the Environment

Genesis 1:26–28 not only contains a cultural mandate but also contains a theological meaning that reveals human identity as the image of God. As *Imago Dei*, humans are called to reflect God's nature in managing creation, so that ecological responsibility is not merely an addition, but a fundamental part of the essence of humanity. This identity emphasizes that every human action towards the environment must reflect God's love and justice. From the text it is also clear that humans cannot be separated from nature, because nature provides all the necessities of life, and for that reason humans are required to manage and cultivate the universe so that it can continue to provide good results for the continuation of life (Panjaitan 2023: 43).

The understanding of *Imago Dei* emphasizes that humans cannot live their lives separately from other creations, because their identity as God's image demands a connection with nature. In the Old Testament, God is depicted as a Creator who cares for all creatures, including animals and plants, so humans are called to emulate that care. The theological meaning of Genesis 1:26–28 shows that any neglect of nature is tantamount to neglecting humanity's representative mandate as God's representative on earth. Thus, this text can serve as a theological basis for humans' friendly attitude toward the environment, because in their likeness to God, humans recognize their responsibility to maintain the balance between human well-being and the preservation of creation. Humans' role as God's co-workers emphasizes the call to preserve and care for the universe as a manifestation of God's own presence (Putri, Sembodo, and Prabowo 2022: 755-759).

Beyond Genesis 1, Psalm 24 holds crucial theological significance in framing humanity's relationship with nature. When it states that "the earth is the Lord's and all that is in it," humans are positioned not as owners but as managers. This perspective demands humility and responsibility, as humans are only mandated to manage something that does not belong to them. The theological implication of this verse is the growing awareness that environmental preservation is not merely a social obligation but a form of worship to God (Mangundap 2020: 68).

Psalm 24:1–2 also states that the earth belongs to God, so humans are not absolute owners but rather stewards of what the Creator has entrusted to them. This understanding fosters a theology of creation, which considers environmental preservation an essential part of faithful obedience and respect for divine authority over creation. This commitment is reflected in the Bible's emphasis on human responsibility to care for the earth and all its living creatures for the survival of future generations (Psalm 24:1–2) (Wiratanaya and Kembuan 2023: 103).

The perspective that humans were created not merely as users of resources but as stewards of God's creation affirms the intrinsic value of nature and the moral calling to maintain its balance. This view makes environmental preservation a spiritual and theological act, not simply a social obligation. Over time, the condition of the earth and its natural environment is increasingly showing alarming signs of damage. In this situation, ecotheology is expected to bridge the gap between understanding God and the responsibility to care for creation, as explained through the testimony of the Bible (Putri 2020: 164-165).

Ultimately, the theological meaning of Genesis 1:26–28 and Psalm 24 affirms that ecological responsibility is part of worship. Caring for the earth glorifies God, while destroying it dishonors His creation. Within this framework, Christians are called to make ecotheology a tangible lifestyle in their daily lives, from consumption patterns and energy use to involvement in environmental advocacy (Tapingku 2022: 207-208).

Combining the testimony of Genesis 1:26–28 and Psalm 24, it becomes clear that human responsibility for the environment is an integral part of the Christian faith. Ecotheology is not simply a contemporary theological trend, but a calling rooted in the Bible. The church is called to affirm this message so that people can internalize that caring for the earth is a concrete expression of obedience to God, solidarity with others, and love for all creation (Resfina 2020: 13-14).

Research shows that environmental responsibility can be integrated into faith through eco-spirituality education, where interfaith and community dialogue strengthens both ecological and spiritual insights. This implies that environmental preservation is a manifestation of shared faith. Ecotheology has also emerged as a basis for Christian ethics related to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which emphasize ecosystem justice. Drawing on biblical moral values, environmental preservation is outlined as an act of faith that supports both global and local theological visions.

4. Conclusions

A study of Genesis 1:26–28 and Psalm 24 demonstrates that Christian ecotheology affirms that humans are not absolute rulers over nature, but rather stewards mandated to guard, care for, and manage the earth as God's. The cultural mandate in Genesis positions humans as God's representatives responsible for creation, while the recognition of divine ownership in the Psalms affirms that the earth belongs entirely to God. The integration of the two provides a balanced theological framework that rejects the anthropocentric paradigm, while fostering an ecological awareness rooted in faith. Thus, ecotheology is not only a theological discourse, but also a practical calling for the church and Christians to live out ecological responsibility as a form of worship, obedience, and love for the Creator and all of His creation.

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