
Pro Rege

Volume 50 | Number 1

Article 1

September 2021

Christopher Cone and Redacted Dominionism: Review Essay

Chris Gousmett

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/pro_rege



Part of the [Christianity Commons](#), and the [Higher Education Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Gousmett, Chris (2021) "Christopher Cone and Redacted Dominionism: Review Essay," *Pro Rege*: Vol. 50: No. 1, 1 - 15.

Available at: https://digitalcollections.dordt.edu/pro_rege/vol50/iss1/1

This Feature Article is brought to you for free and open access by the University Publications at Dordt Digital Collections. It has been accepted for inclusion in Pro Rege by an authorized administrator of Dordt Digital Collections. For more information, please contact ingrid.mulder@dordt.edu.

Christopher Cone and Redacted Dominionism: Review Essay



by Chris Gousmett

Introduction

The predominance of the idea that Genesis 1:26-28 is the justification for despoiling the earth, as argued by Lynn White and many in his wake, has

Dr. Chris Gousmett is retired Corporate Information Manager for the Hutt City Council, on North Island, New Zealand. He studied Hebrew and Philosophy at the University of Otago, and completed a Master of Philosophical Foundations degree, focusing on philosophical theology, at the Institute for Christian Studies in Toronto. He has a PhD in Patristic theology from the University of Otago, with a thesis on the inter-relationship of philosophical anthropology and the structure of eschatological thought in the Patristic writers. His interests are in Reformational philosophy and theology, the history of thought, including history of science, and political and social theory. He has preached in a number of churches, and some of his sermons are available at <https://hearinganddoing.wordpress.com/>.

meant that Christians have been obliged to respond to that claim. While some may continue to assert that “dominion” means that humans have unhindered use of the resources of the earth, others argue for an approach focused instead on “stewardship,” with an emphasis on responsibility and accountability before God for how these resources are used.

An alternative interpretation, which has sweeping ramifications for how we understand human responsibility for the environment, and other crucial teachings of Scripture, has been proposed by Christopher Cone in an approach he calls “redacted dominionism.”¹ He suggests that the “dominion” and “stewardship” interpretations are still anthropocentric, and thus susceptible to the criticisms offered by White and others.² To avoid these criticisms, he proposes an alternative interpretation of Genesis 1:26-28:

Redacted dominionism understands humanity as initially given dominion over nature by virtue of the *imago Dei*, but human disobedience to God tarnished that image, and human qualification for dominion was lost. Post-fall, the dominion mandate is never repeated, and seems even to be replaced. In consideration of early Genesis and related passages, understood within EC [evangelical community] methodology, redacted dominionism argues for theocentrism, thus grounding a biblical environmental ethic that escapes the indictments of Leopold, McHarg, and White.³

While this approach may well avoid some of the harsher criticisms levelled against Genesis 1:26-28,

it does so at the cost of abandoning core beliefs that are central to a sound and coherent interpretation of Scripture and, I would argue, also vital to a reformational perspective. I wish to explore Cone's suggestions and explain why I believe that they are fundamentally mistaken and that he virtually concedes that White was right all along.

Amending the Christian Worldview

Cone does not suggest that Christians fail to understand the consequences of over-exploiting and degrading the environment; it is all too evident what happens when toxic waste is dumped, carbon emissions escalate, and old-growth forests are clear-felled. Rather, it is his contention that Christians lack any Scriptural mandate for environmental care and thus must seek for a basis for this in some other source to justify their concern (RD, 3).

Cone does suggest that environmentalism has been unsympathetically received by the evangelical community since it demands a reconstruction of Christianity as a different worldview altogether, one in conflict with the authority of Scripture (RD, 3). Cone outlines the views of Aldo Leopold, Ian McHarg, and Lynn White, who each claim in various ways that Christianity is incompatible with a view that values the earth and its creatures in their own right (RD, 3-5).⁴ Cone reports that McHarg alleges that the Judeo-Christian worldview has "traditionally assumed nature to be a mere backdrop for the human play" (RD, 5).⁵ The third author mentioned, Lynn White, needs no additional introduction. Cone holds that "the perception that Christianity is culpable for environmental destruction and has proven useless in countering that destruction has become a cliché in the environmental movement" (RD, 6). This view is based on the claims promoted by White that Christianity holds to ruthlessness towards nature and the mastery of humanity over nature, the only purpose of which is to serve humanity, and until such assumptions are rejected, the ecological crisis will continue to worsen (RD, 8).⁶ Cone claims that White blames the Christian worldview, "shaped by the Judeo-Christian dogma of creation" and its anthropocentrism (RD, 8).⁷

White summarised his critique of Western environmental attitudes in saying that they are pri-

marily "shaped by the Judeo-Christian dogma of creation." Cone lists seven specific claims, implied by White, regarding the implications of Genesis:

1. that God planned all of this explicitly for man's benefit and rule,
2. that no item in the physical creation had any purpose save to serve man's purposes,
3. that Christianity is the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen,
4. that man shares, in great measure, God's transcendence of nature,
5. that it is God's will that man exploit nature for his proper ends, and that Christianity made it possible to exploit nature in a mood of indifference to the feelings of natural objects,
6. that man's effective monopoly on spirit in this world was confirmed by Christianity, and consequently the old pagan inhibitions to the exploitation of nature crumbled, and
7. that man's transcendence of and rightful mastery over nature is a Christian dogma. (RD, 34-35)

Cone holds that White's suggested changes are not compatible with an evangelical view of the inspiration and authority of the Scriptures, and that therefore White's suggestions will not be well received in the evangelical community. As a result, Cone says that any approach which seeks to avoid the issues White identifies must involve a reconsideration of Genesis 1:26-28 that does not lead to a domination of nature and its abuse, which has led to the ecological crisis (RD, 9). In effect, Cone says that any evangelical concern for the environment must avoid each of the criticisms White makes. Unfortunately, Cone is not as critical of White's views as White is of Christianity, and so he assumes that the criticisms are legitimate.⁸

There has been much ink spilled contradicting White, and the general opinion these days seems to be that his criticisms were unfounded—they are attacks on a "straw man" and do not reflect the reality of Christian teaching.⁹ I will not engage with these responses to White.¹⁰ Instead, my focus is on both how Cone has sought to develop a view that evades the criticisms made by White and the implications of Cone's view.

Cone says that any alternative view of environmental care must be grounded in the authority of Scripture if it is to be acceptable to the evangelical community and recognised as a biblical mandate (RD, 11). His project, then, is to come to an understanding of the Scriptures that supports environmental responsibility (if it actually does that—and this is by no means certain in Cone’s view). His project is based on a “literal grammatical-historical hermeneutic” (RD, 12).¹¹ He understands that to mean

...*literal* referencing a propositional, plain-sense approach; *grammatical* emphasizing that the rules of the language employed are to be observed and followed in the interpretation; and *historical* connoting that the plain sense and grammatical aspects are to be understood as they were typically understood in the historical context in which the text in question was penned. (RD, 13)

Cone emphasises that the Scriptures contain “propositional revelation.” He states, “If the Bible is perceived by the EC as propositional revelation, then the resulting hermeneutic methodology is no surprise” (RD, 15). His goal is to discover “whether or not man has dominion over nature and whether or not the world was designed with anthropocentrism as a defining principle, and consequently whether or not such a worldview is antithetical to environmental concerns” (RD, 13).

Is Dominion Biblical?

Cone suggests that the command to “rule and subdue” the creation is clear and means exactly that, and that this meaning is justifiable in terms of his hermeneutical approach. However, he says that this interpretation is not consistent with Scripture, as it “infers a *theological* principle with universal implications: that man’s ontological and functional value is established in Genesis 1:26-28 and is not altered thereafter” (RD, 28, emphasis in the original).

Here, Cone indicates what he sees as the problem: the view that there is no change to the man-

date given in Genesis 1:26-28, which he says is a theological premise not applicable to, for instance, Genesis 9:7. He argues that if we were simply to read the latter passage, “there would be no reason whatsoever to conclude that man was to exercise any sovereignty over nature.” He holds that the mandate of Genesis 1 is being read into Genesis 9 without justification. Thus, the key source texts for this view, understood through his hermeneutical method, fail to support the claims made for human dominion over nature (RD, 28).

Since dominion is un-supportable, Cone queries then whether an alternative approach, that of “stewardship,” provides a more consistent interpretation of Genesis 1:26-28, based on “a perceived stewardship description found in Genesis 2.” But this view fails also, claims Cone, since he says this is a “hermeneutic contradiction” (RD, 30). It is a contradiction, says Cone,

because Genesis 2:15 states that the man was put into the garden of Eden “to cultivate it and keep it,” with no mention of man’s having “dominion” or any mention that these are equivalent (RD, 30, n. 97). Cone claims that this approach is following a “metaphorical interpretation of the rule and subdue mandate,” but that the passages as a whole (Genesis 1, 2 and 9) do not read as metaphors, thus making the reading of selected verses metaphorically problematic. This reading, explains Cone, also fails to take account of the changes in conditions resulting from the Fall, and reads the “dominion” mandate into Genesis 9:7 through imposing its theological premise. Thus, while the “stewardship” approach is the more environmentally friendly interpretation, its acceptance is dependent on “a high degree of inconsistency” in the interpretation of Scripture. Nor does it evade the criticism of environmentalists, since anthropocentrism and human sovereignty over nature remain central to this view (RD, 31).

Cone also rejects Callicott’s suggestion of a “citizenship” interpretation, in which man is designed to be considered co-citizen with all other aspects of

He suggests that the “dominion” and “stewardship” interpretations are still anthropocentric, and thus susceptible to the criticisms offered by White and others.²

nature, and the suggestion that “anthropocentrism itself is man’s original sin and is responsible for the famous Fall” (RD, 31).¹² Callicott’s view spurs Cone to offer one of his core principles, which he sees as the ultimate knockdown argument against the idea of the mandate as a present reality: the **function** of ruling, having dominion, stewardship—in whatever variant presented—is dependent on the **condition** that humankind is created in the image of God. Cone argues, then, that since the condition has changed—the image of God is no longer present in the same way after the Fall—then the function has ceased (RD, 89-90). For Cone, the dominion mandate of Genesis 1:26-28 is, therefore, an antiquarian curiosity of no current significance.

Is Stewardship a Legitimate Interpretation?

Cone claims that seeing the mandate in terms of stewardship is inadequate, as this view does not “suitably account for the *rule* and *dominion* commands of 1:26-28—imperatives that are not altered or redacted in Genesis 2” (RD, 102). He also says that “this interpretation softens the ‘subdue and rule’ imperatives by redefining the terms,” and cites Norbert Lohfink, who suggests that the meaning of *radab* is better rendered as *shepherd* than as *rule* (RD, 85).¹³ Cone then takes the view that

mankind was to have dominion, and was also to steward, but the stewarding was not a qualifier or modifier of dominion, but rather an unrelated function, deriving from a divine intent (2:15) unrelated to the dominion mandate (1:26-28). (RD, 103)

Cone argues that Genesis 2:15 (“Then the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it”)

was merely an application of human ontological superiority over nature. In other words, the text does not seem to represent this activity as the complete fulfilment of the dominion mandate, but instead the cultivation and keeping is simply the outworking of a separate mandate altogether. (RD, 102)

Thus, Cone suggests that the command to work the earth and care for it is not the same mandate as the “dominion” mandate given in Genesis 1:26-

28. But if that were the case (and I do not accept that it is—the command of Genesis 2:15 is simply another way of expressing the “dominion” mandate of Genesis 1:26-28), then it falls foul of Cone’s hermeneutical method. This work-and-care-for-the-creation mandate, too, must be affected by the Fall, and indeed we find a curse on the man’s work so that it will bring forth thorns and thistles as a result of his difficult labour with the ground. But here the curse is explicit, while Cone argues that the continuation of the mandate of Genesis 1 is unwarranted because of silence about it in Genesis 3 and 9.

An Alternative Approach?

Cone then proposes what he calls “redactive dominionism,” which he claims arises from an “attempt at applying a consistent literal grammatical-historical hermeneutic to the entire early Genesis narrative.” He claims that it gives the “*rule* and *subdue* imperative” its most natural sense, takes into account the changes introduced by the Fall, and recognises distinctions between pre-Fall and post-Fall cultural mandates. It also does not depend on metaphorical interpretations in the stewardship and citizenship views, and it avoids the alleged “theological eisegesis” in the straight-out “dominion” interpretation (RD, 32).

Cone claims that this model is “the only one of the four that supports the universal instrumental value of all created things,” which in his view enables “grounding equality of human and non-human beings” and is therefore non-anthropocentric; thus, as such, it is immune to the criticisms of Leopold, McHarg, and White (RD, 32-33). All creatures, then, “share the same kind of value, and simply express that valuation within varying roles (functions) defined by the creator....” This, Cone suggests, “represents the strongest possible biblical environmental ethic” (RD, 33, 114, 124), since he agrees with White “that the anthropocentric model is deficient and must be replaced” (RD, 124).

The avoidance of a “value hierarchy” is central to Cone’s argument, which he asserts is based on the view that “all creatures have equal instrumental value to God” (RD, 71) but have value to God in different kinds of ways appropriate to each creature (RD, 67-68). Cone asserts that Genesis 1 gives no

purpose for God's act of creation and that, therefore, we cannot ascribe any intrinsic value to it, only instrumental value. This point, he claims, is shown by God's destruction of plants, animals, and humans alike in the flood. Cone also states, "Nor did God characterize man as having intrinsic value when He declared that 'the intent of man's heart is evil from his youth'" (8:21) (RD, 116-117). Cone suggests that in Genesis "there is no indication of God's intended purpose for creating man," with God's purposes predominating, and cites Genesis 1:26; 2:5, 15-16, 18-19; 3:14, 17-19; 6:3, 6-7, 13, 22; 8:21-22 (RD, 38 and 39, n. 120).

Further, Isaiah 40 is said to de-emphasize human intrinsic value, so that human value "is in its contribution to the demonstration of God's glory" (RD, 117). Cone's hermeneutic comes to the fore here, since he argues that we cannot assign any intrinsic value to different creatures since the Scriptures provide no explicit evidence on which this value could be based (RD, 120).¹⁴ Thus, anything not explicitly mentioned in Scripture is excluded: the "encyclopaedic" approach to interpretation.¹⁵

The difficulty presented by this view, however, is this: the idea that human and non-human beings are of equal value, and thus there is no "value hierarchy," seems to be a conclusion to be demonstrated, and not a presupposition to be accepted without argument. Why should an "anthropocentric theology," for instance, be discarded if it can actually be demonstrated from Scripture?¹⁶

Here hermeneutics is important—and Cone even says his view avoids "text torturing" to reach a conclusion (RD, 34).¹⁷ But is his conclusion already reached before the argument? Are other hermeneutic approaches able to be dismissed as "text torturing"? Is it correct to argue that "redacted dominionism" is the only approach that avoids these criticisms? Cone says that White "particularly describes

the 'axiom that nature has no reason for existence save to serve man' as distinctively Christian" (RD, 35). Is that correct? Are there any (other) texts which explicitly make this claim? Is it true of the message of the Scriptures as a whole, or is it an interpretation of texts that bear alternative readings? Can White justify this claim exegetically? Is Cone seeking to resolve a non-issue with his alternative model?

Creation in the Image of God

Cone suggests that we can see humanity as part of nature, rather than transcendent over it, by focusing on the fact that "Adam is named after the dirt from which he is made" (RD, 37-38). Cone says that the creation of humankind (male and female) in the image of God confers an "ontological distinction" from the rest of nature, and that man (male and female), "in his initial and perfect state, was evidently expected to rule or have dominion over the earth and all other living things" (RD, 38). Cone suggests that we cannot know exactly

what the image of God means, but practically speaking, it relates "ruling" or "having dominion" directly to being created in the image of God, and "it is apparent that the image and likeness provide the necessary conditions for the ruling" (RD 82; cf. 95). He claims that the close connection between the image of God and the dominion mandate means that if there is a change to "human identity and qualification pertaining to the *imago Dei*," which Cone claims can be seen in Genesis 3, then the dominion mandate is thereby affected (RD, 38, 83, 87).

His approach is based on the claim that the "image of God" is the only textually justified qualification for exercising dominion, so that after the fall, the image of God was tarnished to the extent that it no longer qualified Adam to exercise dominion (RD, 125). Not only that, but human beings

The avoidance of a "value hierarchy" is central to Cone's argument, which he asserts is based on the view that "all creatures have equal instrumental value to God" (RD, 71) but have value to God in different kinds of ways appropriate to each creature (RD, 67-68).

subsequent to Adam and Eve do not seem to bear God's image:

From the first genealogy (Genesis 5:1ff) it is evident that the image has been altered by the fall, as Adam sires a son not in God's image, but in his own. This would be consistent with the exclusion of the dominion imperative in 9:7. (RD, 87-88)

But this view results in a convoluted argument to maintain the condemnation of murder in Genesis 9:6:

The *imago Dei* remains [Genesis 9:6], though it has been augmented by a fallen image [Genesis 5:3]. Thus man bears enough of the *imago Dei* to keep him distinct from the remainder of the natural world, but that image is tarnished sufficiently to keep man from the qualification and ability to govern the world. (RD, 132)

Thus, the fall into sin affected the *imago Dei* sufficiently to remove the qualification for human beings to exercise either (despotic) dominion or stewardship, the latter being incompatible in Cone's view with the "despotic" mandate of Genesis 1 and lacking an explicit textual support for the mandate post-Fall (RD, 133-134).

Referring to Genesis 3-9, Cone says,

These passages present a significant challenge to the dominionist interpretive model, in that they do not seem to allow for any human capability in keeping the dominion mandate. Consequently, man's dominion was a failure resulting in a curse for all creation, and Adam's labors in working with the earth would be, as a result, increasingly difficult. Adam would have a finite lifespan that would further inhibit discovery of and fruitfulness in nature. (RD, 40)

It is indeed extraordinary to read that the curse came on creation as a result of the failure of Adam's dominion. The sin of eating from the forbidden tree was not an exercise of dominion but a violation of God's law. And human beings have been able to exercise dominion in discovery of the creation's possibilities through educating each generation, thus enabling cumulative insight and experience to strengthen their work of stewardship.

The Change Introduced by the Fall

Cone claims that there is an ontological change

in humanity, from being pronounced "very good" in Genesis 1, to the pronouncement of the intents of human hearts as "evil continually" in Genesis 6:9 (RD, 40). Thus, the punishment that was brought on the creation in the flood shows that exploitation of the creation was offence before God. Cone claims that humanity was judged, in part, based on Genesis 6:13, because of a "failure to live in consideration of nature." But there is nothing in that text which says such a thing, and Cone's view implies if not "dominion," then at least "stewardship," or failing that, simple "care" of other creatures. But if there is no mandate for this dominion, stewardship, or care, how did its absence create an offence before God?

Cone concedes,

Of course, certain stewardship ideas do hold true to the text: humanity is to be responsible and to use resources wisely because God provides them; thus the concept of stewardship is not to be dismissed in its entirety. Only insofar as it is considered the enduring primary ontological grounding of human relation to nonhuman nature is stewardship problematic. (RD, 143)

Thus, the ontological nature of the *imago Dei*, assumed to be tarnished to the point of no longer applying, leads to this remarkable conclusion. If the *imago Dei* is not ontological in nature (and it is not, as it refers to our office before God), then his whole argument collapses.

Subsequent to the Fall, what was the purpose of humanity and other living things? This purpose is reduced to proliferation: to filling the earth again. There is no restoration to pre-Fall conditions, but only changes limited to a prohibition of murder and the fear of humanity in animals (RD, 41-42). But surely a prohibition on murder is not new; after all, God wiped out humanity in part, at least, because of its propensity for violence—Genesis 6:13, which Cone cites. True, there is no explicit prohibition of murder in the first few chapters of Genesis, but this prohibition is implied. After all, Cain was told, "Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground" (Genesis 4:10), after being warned that sin was crouching at his door ready to master him (Genesis 4:7). Cain was then marked to warn others not to kill him—another prohibition of murder, to be avenged by God himself (Genesis

4:15), followed by the account of Lamech's violent behaviour, which he justified on the basis of God's words to Cain (Genesis 4:15).

The real change that concerns Cone is this: humanity is no longer qualified or equipped to dominate, or even to steward, the creation. The mandate of Genesis 1:26-28 no longer applies, since Genesis 9:7 "repeats verbatim the mandate of 1:28 in all respects with the exception of the dominion aspect" (RD, 41-42). Cone states that "the *imago Dei* is the only reason given in the Genesis narrative for the dominion mandate" (RD, 96), implying that the change to the *imago Dei* as a result of sin results in the rescinding of the dominion mandate.

But this view can be challenged on Cone's own hermeneutical principles. Can we say that the mandate of Genesis 1:26-28 no longer applies, when there is no explicit **revocation**? There is the command to be fruitful and increase, repeated from Genesis 1, but that is simply to reassure Noah (as is mentioned shortly after) that God would not again destroy all living things with a flood, and so it was not futile to have children. The command to be fruitful and increase is **not** given to the animals in Genesis 9: are we to assume, then, that they will not, could not, should not do so? Is that not required by Cone's hermeneutics?

His approach is also dependent on the view that the image of God is tarnished by sin to the extent that it prevents carrying out the dominion mandate. But this is a theological assumption brought to the text: there is nothing mentioned in Genesis of such a change. It is also dependent on Cone's view that the image of God is ontological (RD, 38, 40, 130, 137) and hence can be subjected to changes in its constitution—damage inflicted by sin. The consequences for Cone's view are profound:

Importantly, the *imago Dei* is the only reason given in the Genesis narrative for the dominion

mandate, thus if there is later adjustment to human identity and qualification pertaining to the *imago Dei* (as there appears to be in Genesis 3), then it would not be surprising that the dominion mandate might be adjusted. (RD, 96)

Cone claims that the mandate was indeed adjusted in such a manner, even though all he can assert is that there "appears to be" such a change. This is an extraordinary claim by Cone, who insists on a strict hermeneutic, which must be based on the text. There is nothing in Genesis 3 indicating that

the *imago Dei* is changed in any way. What could he base this claim on? He bases it on Genesis 5:1:

From the first genealogy (Genesis 5:1ff) it is evident that the image has been altered by the fall, as Adam sires a son not in God's image, but in his own. This would be consistent with the exclusion of the dominion imperative in 9:7. In addition to the tarnishing or alteration of God's image in man, man suffers the noetic effects of sin—newfound deficiencies of the mind. These are understood not only to limit him spiritually, but also

in his interaction with the world around him. Additionally, Genesis 3:17ff indicates that the ground would be increasingly difficult to work with, thus the ease with which mastery might have previously been considered is now gone. Finally, 9:3 indicates that the animals would become primarily difficult to manage, due to their newfound fear of mankind. (RD, 87-88)

Cone interprets Genesis 1:26ff as "a snapshot of what once was and might have remained but for the events of the Fall" (RD, 76). He says that Genesis 1:26 "introduces us to the ontological nature of mankind and to the responsibility that follows" (RD, 77). Cone insists that the terms used should be translated as "dominate." If that is the case, then a "stewardship" interpretation, softer than the "dominion" interpretation, is not supported lexically.

His approach is based on the claim that the "image of God" is the only textually justified qualification for exercising dominion, so that after the fall, the image of God was tarnished to the extent that it no longer qualified Adam to exercise dominion (RD, 125).

Thus, this is a theological interpretation imported into the text, what he refers to as “the theological and ethical motivations of stewardship interpreters” (RD, 98-99).¹⁸

Cone’s insistence on the meaning of *radab* as dominate, rule despotically, which he says no longer applies, does not take into account that a certain amount of force, exertion, and energetic activity may be what is meant. This is not violent or inappropriate but recognises that even in the pre-fall condition, human beings would have to “work” at their stewardly task. It was not a matter of sitting on a throne and issuing commands to the rest of creation: it required “mucking in” and getting hands dirty in real effort-demanding work. It was only after the Fall that this work became difficult (“in the sweat of your brow”) as a result of the curse.

But dominion over the non-human creatures means that they are not of equal value to human beings, and thus an anthropocentric perspective is maintained, thereby falling foul of White’s criticisms:

Of the two, dominionism seems the most consistent with EC hermeneutic methodology applied to Genesis 1, but offers no seemingly viable grounding for environmental ethics, in that it does not consider human and nonhuman beings as having equitable value, and it is subject to accusations like those of White’s (that it promulgates an anthropocentric cosmology)...[.] dominionism does not account for cosmological alterations from the Fall in Genesis 3. It is therefore not justified from the text itself, and it does not demonstrate a high degree of hermeneutic integrity. Dominionism, then, is ruled out here as being incapable of grounding a tenable Biblical environmental ethic. (RD, 108)

It seems, from Cone’s discussion here, that he accepts the validity of White’s criticism of Christianity as “anthropocentric” due to its rejection of the equitable value of both human and non-human creatures. But if we accept that the text is “anthropocentric” (which is a reasonable reading of the text), why should this be considered a negative assessment? Is White’s rejection of anthropocentricity not based on a non-Christian perspective of the creation, and that those who accept the Scriptures as God’s revelation to us are therefore not com-

elled to accept this interpretation? Is acceptance of an anthropocentric interpretation of Scripture therefore not legitimate if that is how the text can and should be read? Cone seeks to avoid White’s criticisms, but that should not be the criterion that determines which readings can and cannot be accepted.¹⁹ White probably also rejects such Christian doctrines as the incarnation and the resurrection. Should we also reject them so as not to be subject to White’s criticisms?

Cone seeks to defend the equality of living things from Genesis 7:15, which “describes all living things as having the breath (spirit) of life. This provides yet another support for at least some kind of equality of all living things” (RD, 131). However, this would apply only to humans and animals. Plants do not have the breath of life, and there is also the non-living creation, which on this basis would be devoid of equality as God’s creation. Cone seeks simply to evade criticisms by White, instead of assessing whether White’s criticisms are legitimate and providing an appropriate response:

Redacted dominionism uniquely offers a theocentric understanding that implies that no part of creation needs to possess intrinsic value, but rather the entirety of creation possesses *instrumental value*, serving God’s purposes, and his alone. Redacted dominionism, then, is a plausible means of answering also White’s claim that nature is intended to serve only man’s purposes. (RD, 146)

We should indeed state the Christian position in such a way as to defeat criticisms by others, but that should not be the sole aim and purpose, and we may just have to accept that some criticisms will be made no matter what we say. The important thing to evaluate is whether the criticism is valid, and if not, there is no need to change our position to suit the preferences of non-Christian thought.

Cone seems to have viewed the stewardship mandate of Genesis 1:28 as related solely to management and care of the earth and its creatures. There is no recognition that it was also a “cultural” mandate that enjoined on humankind the task of opening up and developing the skills and abilities given to human beings. The result of this mandate can be seen in the beginning of various trades and crafts in Genesis 4. Cone ignores this, as it is not

part of “dominion” over the earth. His concern to respond to criticisms of Christianity’s “environmental” task seems to have prevented him from seeing the wider sense of the mandate in Genesis 1:28, and hence he thinks that the intrusion of sin has resulted in that mandate’s being withdrawn. This view leaves him with no basis on which humans can and should engage in cultural development of the creation.

[The command to proliferate]... appears to replace the dominion mandate entirely...[;] *the new cultural mandate for mankind and for all of nature may be understood simply as the proliferation of the species.* (RD, 135)

Since Cone considers that the cultural mandate consists **solely** of reproduction for proliferation, there seems then to be no further purpose for humankind to exercise in the world, save to care for it so that species proliferation can take place. However, not only is the cultural mandate continued after the Fall, but we have God specifically gifting people in order to carry it out (Exodus 31:1-11, Isaiah 28:24-29).

Cone considers and then rejects the idea that individuals have their post-fall condition restored to its “pre-Fall glory” through the grace of God. Cone discards this idea on the basis of his “encyclopaedic” and biblicistic hermeneutic: without an explicit textual basis, it is not possible to defend such claims from Scripture:

While there may be some viability in the statement (the NT *does* claim that the Spirit’s work of regeneration brings renewed spiritual capabilities), there is no textual grounding in any biblical context that the *imago Dei* is affected one way or the other by individual regeneration. In fact, besides simply restating that man was made in the image of God, the Bible is entirely silent on the issue, thus there seems no exegetical warrant to suggest that the consequences of the fall are *entirely* removed at present.²⁰

I would agree with Cone that there is no warrant for saying the image of God is fully restored for the believer. Rather, we are in a process of sanctification (2 Corinthians 4:4-6; Colossians 3:9-10), in which we are being renewed into the image of Christ, who himself perfectly images God (Colossians 1:15). However, Cone overstates his case and denies that the image of God is affected by regeneration. That is precisely what is asserted in 2 Corinthians 4 and Colossians 1 and 3:

Ultimately, the presumption that the dominion

mandate applies to fallen man is exegetically unwarranted (again, within EC hermeneutic framework), and results in a dangerous kind of anthropocentrism—the like of which White and others decry. It seems folly, to this writer, to presume that humanity can redeem creation when humanity is itself in need of redemption. Perhaps it is this kind of arrogance that White and other critics sense when they encounter proponents of the biblical accounts who argue for human dominion. Ironically, in holding to dominion as the present condition,

despotic interpreters find themselves situating humanity in a role that seems reserved for God alone—as master, possessor, and redeemer of creation. (RD, 136-137)

Cone seeks to defend the equality of living things from Genesis 7:15, which “describes all living things as having the breath (spirit) of life. This provides yet another support for at least some kind of equality of all living things” (RD, 131).

This point, then, misconstrues what is argued concerning human stewardship over creation: it does not usurp the place of God, but in fact fulfils the office and task which God himself has allocated to human beings.

There is a caution here, though, for reformational Christians—careless talk about “redeeming” culture or creation warrants criticism. We are not called to “redeem” anything, as Christ is the only redeemer. We are called to work out that redemption, which we have received by grace, in everything that we do so that we see the redeeming work of Christ realized in our midst. Any renewal,

change of direction, positive development, can happen only through the power of the Holy Spirit at work in and through us: we cannot achieve this on our own.

Psalm 8 and the Dominion Mandate

Cone next addresses the claim that Psalm 8 refers to a continuing creation mandate following the fall, that is, as stated by Cone, “it represents the prevailing human condition as understood by the Psalmist” (RD, 138). He claims that the imperfect tense for “rule” [*masbal*] can indicate incomplete or even future action, thus allowing for the view that God will cause humans to have dominion in the future:

This could thus speak of an interrupted process (God created man to have dominion, but it is not presently a completed process), an understanding not inconsistent with the creation account and the change of condition resulting in the modified cultural mandate. This interpretation understands mankind, though referenced in the singular, as collectively one day to have a restored dominion.²¹

Thus, the dominion mandate of Genesis 1 and referenced in Psalm 8 is deferred until what we can only assume to be an eschatological fulfilment, as he concludes from its application in Hebrews 2:8 (RD, 139). This view would be consistent with Cone’s dispensationalist hermeneutic. Cone suggests that if the Psalm is messianic, it tells us nothing about humankind’s current ontological or functional situation. He seeks to evade any suggestion that there is either ontological or functional superiority of humans over the rest of creation, in order to avoid falling under White’s accusation of anthropocentricity. He seeks to argue that functional superiority does not confer ontological superiority, or vice versa: “If Psalm 8 may be understood as *not* referencing collective humanity, then the passage would not be considered to assert a present tense dominion of humanity over nature” (RD, 139-141). Cone concludes, then, that dominion over nature was the original mandate given to Adam and Eve but was lost by the fall and replaced by a mandate simply to proliferate. One wonders what the point of this proliferation is, as all Cone can say is that it reflects the glory of God. While that is

true, there is much more to be said concerning the mandate than that. Even casting this mandate as “stewardship” rather than dominion is unsatisfactory for him, as it diminishes the force of the verbs to rule and subdue in Genesis 1. Cone alleges that both dominion and stewardship approaches fail to account for the post-fall situation (RD, 142).

Cone concludes, then, that there are four exegetical conditions necessary to interpret Genesis 1:26-28 properly:

First, the interpretation should be consistent with the *rule* and *subdue* language of Genesis 1:26-28. Second, the interpretation should not dismiss the metaphysical distinction between human and nonhuman creation. Mankind was described uniquely made in the image of God, the consequences of which condition are diminished to the hurt of textual integrity. Third, the interpretation should account for the drastic post-Fall alteration in the human and nonhuman condition. Failing to acknowledge this central shift in the course of events neglects the source of physical and spiritual death as well as the only biblical explanation for the present condition of humanity in relation to its environs.... Fourth, the interpretation should account for the absence and seeming replacement of the dominion mandate in favor of the more limited in scope reproduction and proliferation mandate. (RD, 143-144)

Cone claims that his approach

...recognizes that even spiritual regeneration does not in the short-term reverse all of the consequences of the fall (in EC understanding, this kind of comprehensive reversal is a still yet future part of God’s redemptive plan for the heavens and the earth and its contents). Finally, it recognizes and accounts for the fundamental distinctions between the original mandate for unfallen humanity and the revision for fallen humanity. (RD, 144)

Thus, the dispensationalist approach, separating the redemptive acts of God into different periods with different requirements, must mean for Cone that anything pre-Fall no longer applies. This approach makes for strange results, and it leaves human beings basically devoid of any purpose except reproduction. The consequences of the Fall

have been disastrous for the creation, with exploitation and environmental degradation everywhere we look. But for Cone, we are not called to do anything about this condition since there is nobody qualified to address the problems.

Still, Cone suggests that we somehow need to find a way to resolve problems but without an explicit mandate to do so:

The consequences about which God had forewarned them came about, and humanity's qualification and ability to govern (among other things) changed completely, leaving creation an utter mess with no qualified or able member remaining who might direct and manage nature appropriately. The entire creation remains in this forlorn condition until its creator resolves the issue—a resolution understood by the EC to be explained and anticipated in other portions of the Bible. Man's present responsibility is to continue fruitful existence, *without hindering the fulfilment of that same responsibility shared by the remainder of nature*, and to look to the creator for guidance and provision in resolving both the spiritual and temporal consequences insofar as they may be resolved. (RD, 145-146, emphasis in the original)

How we are to do this is left unclear, and it would seem that the reason for this lack of clarity is Cone's inability to find an explicit textual basis for action with respect to the environment or for engagement with culture. Presumably because of his dispensationalist hermeneutic, such a basis needs to be found in the portions of Scripture that dispensationalism allocates to the present stage of God's redeeming activity. Genesis 1 is not in that category.

Response to Cone's Position

Throughout, Cone is concerned to evade the criticisms of White and those who take a similar critical approach to Christianity²² and, in particular, its interpretation of Genesis 1:26-28. Cone seeks to avoid anthropocentric views, which are

Cone concludes, then, that dominion over nature was the original mandate given to Adam and Eve but was lost by the fall and replaced by a mandate simply to proliferate.

one of the chief criticisms of White. He rejects the idea that created things have intrinsic value, or any hierarchy of value, seeing them instead as having value only in relation to God the Creator. There are no purposes within creation except those of God, and the task of all creatures, human and non-human, is to give glory to God. The fall into sin meant that humans could no longer exercise any dominion over the creation because of their moral defect, not even by "stewardship" rather than full-fledged rule. As a result, the command of Genesis 1:26-28 was (implicitly) revoked, leaving only the purpose of giving glory to God. The "cultural mandate," therefore, is unsupported by Scripture as a present-day reality. He concludes:

The key environmental ethical consequence of re-dacted dominionism, then, is found in the idea that all created things are accountable to their creator for how they interact with other created things, irrespective of any intrinsic value ranking system, because all created

things possess the same instrumental value (albeit with different functions) to the one who created them. (RD, 147-148)

Cone's views are constricted by several questionable assumptions: the distinction between intrinsic and instrumental value, and the distinction between ontological and functional status. In his seeing the "image of God" in ontological terms, the damage to this image caused by sin thereby prevents the carrying out of the creation mandate, and so it is cancelled and replaced by a "proliferation" mandate, in which the mandate to rule over creation is restored only in the eschaton, although Cone never explores this in any depth, and it is unclear exactly what that might mean when it comes about. His emphasis on ontology also affects how he sees the relationship between human beings and the rest of creation: unless there is an ontological distinction, there can be no human rule over creation. This view results in the option of a functional distinction, in which human beings are equal to the

rest of creation but have a task of ruling over them. But that view, too, is rejected. Finally, Cone concludes that the mandate over creation following the flood is simply to enable animals to proliferate and (re)fill the earth following the flood. In this regard, all that seems to be required for human beings is to step back and cease interfering with animals (and presumably the environment generally so as to preserve their habitats) in such a way that they can get on with reproducing without human involvement.

Critically, Cone interprets the creation mandate of Genesis 1:26-28 as involving “environmental care” and never mentions the possibility that this care includes any “cultural” mandate. This means that the function of human beings between flood and eschaton is basically to support themselves from the fruit of the soil and from animals as food, and reproduce. The rest of human life, culture, civilization, work, entertainment, leisure, etc., has no place in this vision of life. There is even no suggestion of corporate Christian life, aside from the suggestion that Psalm 8 refers to corporate Christian community, but again, this community is deferred until the eschaton. Overall, it leaves the impression of an individualistic, world-flight Christianity that struggles to justify any involvement in stewardship of the earth or any “earthly-oriented” activity whatsoever.

What is the purpose for the creation, in whole or in part? Simply to bring glory to God, or as Cone paraphrases it, to show God’s beauty through the creation. This “beauty” seems to be simply an aesthetic appreciation of how wonderful the creation is, presumably **only** in its created form. This concept owes more to romanticism than to Biblical Christianity. The creation is beautiful, yes indeed, but human beings have the ability to develop, shape, explore, mold, construct things using the materials of the creation (visible and invisible) so that God’s glory and power in the creation is displayed, not simply in what he has himself made but also in the inventiveness, skill, ability, imagination (all granted to humans by God), which are evident in the things that humans have made. The fact that much of what humans have made of the creation-possibilities and creation-materials is simply junk says nothing about God, his creation, or our abilities, but is the result of human sin, which resists

the call of God to work within the norms he has laid down.

The invisibility of a wider “cultural” mandate in Cone’s approach is typical of an evangelicalism that, by and large, has nothing to say to life outside of a narrow focus on faith (understood in a very constricted way) and faith expression (typically through corporate worship). His concern to avoid the criticisms of White similarly constrains his approach: he is intent on avoiding the charge of anthropocentrism, as levelled by White against Western Christianity in particular, as the origin of the environmental crisis. Yes, it is true that humans are in a higher place of responsibility than the rest of creation; yes, it is true that humans are responsible for caring for the rest of creation; and yes, it is true that the focus must be on the glory of God (more broadly understood than the limited concept outlined by Cone). Do these truths—human dominion over creation and the cultural mandate—imply simply anthropocentrism? In a sense, yes, but why should we downplay that place and task of human beings and their distinction from other creatures in order to satisfy someone who has both a strong aversion to Christianity and a limited understanding of it in its broadest sense? White may accuse Christians of being anthropocentric, but if that is how non-Christians interpret the role of humans in God’s creation, we can point out their errors, but we should **not** change our views to satisfy them.

Christians have environmental responsibilities based on a number of reasons, which may or may not be convincing to non-Christians. But the important thing is that Christians should be involved in caring for the planet, regardless of what others may say (including Christians who think we have no such environmental responsibilities for whatever reason). Here is a list of reasons:

1. God created this planet and all that is on it. Due respect to God involves respect for what he has made.
2. The Scriptures, interpreted as I suggest above, describe human beings as having a mandate, stated in Genesis 1:26-28, to care for the earth from the position of rulers or managers—those having authority over the rest of creation, and accountability for their care of the creation.

3. This mandate has never been revoked. The fact that it is not mentioned in Genesis 9:1-7 does not mean it no longer applies: it means that Genesis 9 introduced modifications to other aspects of human life, namely that animal meat is now permitted for food, and that animals will fear human beings. That makes their job of rulers (stewards and managers) harder, but it does not obliterate the “cultural mandate,” which extends wider than care of animals and the environment.
4. The command to “be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth” is specifically given to Noah and his sons (Genesis 9:1, 7), not to the animals, who also received no such command/blessing in Genesis 1—this command/blessing was specifically for the water creatures and birds, not the land animals. The reason for this command’s being given to Noah and his sons is that they have to replace the people who were destroyed in the flood. As there were but eight people rescued in the ark, it was important that they reproduce, have families, and repopulate the part of the earth in which the inhabitants were destroyed.²³ It was not a replacement and a reduction from the mandate in Genesis 1:26-28 given to Adam and Eve.

If we abandon, as Cone does, the idea that humans are responsible for exercising accountable stewardship of the earth, with this responsibility being cancelled as a consequence of the Fall, this abandonment leaves the earth without any stewards to care for it on behalf of God. We do not see any indication that God thereby steps into the gap to manage the earth instead of allocating authority to human beings to do so, and thus there is no steward exercising that role currently.

Abandoning our belief in human responsibility for exercising stewardship creates the difficulty of

understanding why it is that people seem to feel the need to take responsibility for managing farms, forests, marine areas, fresh-water systems, their own gardens and houses, heritage buildings and monuments, and cultural artefacts such as art and music, literature and dance, and so on. What drives them to do this if they are not living out their inherent calling as stewards of the earth? Are they in fact working against God to do so, if God is indeed the only steward of the earth since the task was cancelled for Adam and Eve as a result of their sin? This

Cone’s attempt to
create space for
environmental concern
through his “redacted
dominionism” fails, as
it renders this concern
simply an “option” for
Christians.

position, too, seems unlikely, given the high proportion of improvement that comes about from such human activity. If that improvement is not evidence of the cultural mandate at work, then what is it?

Or is it, as seems to be the case with Cone’s perspective, irrelevant to our Christian discipleship and more broadly, our humanity?

The end result of asserting that the mandate of Genesis 1 ceases to be in effect following the Fall is that there is no “conceptual space” within which we can conceive of such cultural activities as part of our human task and our Christian discipleship. Thus, everything not related to our “spiritual” life in relationship to God is simply ignored, and a powerfully dualistic concept comes to hold sway, in which our earthly lives have no value or purpose with respect to God (except maybe in some limited “ethical” aspects), and the world itself and all it contains is simply irrelevant to us and seemingly to God.

Cone’s attempt to create space for environmental concern through his “redacted dominionism” fails, as it renders this concern simply an “option” for Christians: as such, it is a permissible activity but not a creaturely calling for all human beings, or specifically for Christians who are conscious of their place as stewards. Those who neglect their environmental responsibilities are not sinning; they are just “not interested.” This perspective is in contrast to the perspective I have proposed—that environmental concern, and indeed the cultural

mandate more widely understood, is not simply an “option” for Christians but in fact the core of their task on earth. We were created stewards—not to “be” stewards or to “act” as stewards; we **are** stewards, unavoidably—and everything we do is an expression of stewardship, good or bad. The question for Cone is this: can this reality be explained by “redacted dominionism” if all that humans are called to do in this life is to reproduce? Does the rest of their lives have meaning and significance for God when they are not reproducing or caring for their offspring? What about those who cannot have children for one reason or another—can they be said to be without a “mandate” to do anything? Can there be, in this view, such a thing as overpopulation?

The intellectual and spiritual poverty of dispensational hermeneutics is clearly shown in Cone’s approach, which leaves the Christian community powerless before its accusers (since their accusations are accepted as legitimate *in toto*) and bereft of a clear statement of responsibility for caring for God’s creation. Christianity in this perspective is indeed a world-flight focus on personal salvation to the neglect of all else.²⁴

Endnotes

1. Christopher Cone, *Redacted Dominionism: An Evangelical, Environmentally Sympathetic Reading of the Early Genesis Narrative*. PhD Thesis, University of North Texas, 2011. Published as *Redacted Dominionism: A Biblical Approach to Grounding Environmental Responsibility* (Wipf & Stock, 2012). I am citing the thesis, available online at https://digital.library.unt.edu/ark:/67531/metadc84193/m2/1/high_res_d/dissertation.pdf. Subsequent references to this work are indicated by RD and page number.
2. RD, abstract (not paginated). Cone also discusses the “citizenship” interpretation, which encompasses both humans and animals as joint citizens on this earth. Cone disregards this interpretation, as it ignores Genesis 1:26-28, which he is focused on.
3. RD, abstract (not paginated).
4. The works cited are the following: Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac and Sketches Here and There* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); Ian L. McHarg, “The Place of Nature in the City of Man,” in *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 352: Urban Revival: Goals and Standards (Mar., 1964), 1-12; Lynn Townsend White, Jr., “The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis,” in *Science*, Vol. 155, No. 3767 (March 1967), 1203-1207.
5. Citing McHarg, op. cit., 4.
6. Citing White, op. cit., 1207.
7. Citing White, op. cit., 1206.
8. See for instance his frequent description of the “dominion mandate” as “despotic.”
9. See for instance, *Religion and Ecological Crisis: The “Lynn White Thesis” at Fifty*, edited by Todd LeVasseur and Anna Peterson (London and Routledge: Taylor and Francis Group, 2018); Selwyn Yeoman, *Is anyone in charge here? A Christological Evaluation of the Idea of Human Dominion over Creation* (Eugene, Oregon: Pickwick Publications, 2020).
10. An early response to White can be found in John Passmore, *Man’s Responsibility for Nature: Ecological problems and Western traditions* (London: Duckworth, 1974). It is of interest for a reformational perspective that Passmore argues, while not himself a Christian, that the “despotic” dominion model derives from Stoic philosophy imported into Christian thinking, and not from the Scriptures.
11. Cone works with a dispensationalist hermeneutic. See, for instance, his books *Forged From Reformation: How Dispensational Thought Advances the Reformed Legacy* (Southern California Seminary Press, 2017); *An Introduction to the New Covenant* (Tyndale Seminary Press, 2015); *Dispensationalism Tomorrow and Beyond: A Theological Collection in Honor of Charles Ryrie*, Editor (Tyndale Seminary Press, 2016). For a helpful critique of dispensationalism, see Alistair W Donaldson, *The Last Days of Dispensationalism. A Scholarly Critique of Popular Misconceptions*. (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2011).
12. Citing J. Baird Callicott, *Earth’s Insights: A Multicultural Survey of Ecological Ethics from the Mediterranean Basin to the Australian Outback* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1994), p. 19. Cone also suggests that “the interpretation infers spiritual truths beyond the propositions present in the text” and consequently is not acceptable as an evangelical interpretation. Here we can see how a “propositional” approach constrains his interpretation of Scripture.

13. Cone cites this from John William Rogerson, *Genesis 1-11* (New York, NY: T & T Clark, 2004), p. 19.
14. See RD, p. 135-136, where Cone says that Genesis must be interpreted with a “literalistic hermeneutic.”
15. See Roy Clouser, “Reading Genesis,” *Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith* Vol. 68, No. 4 (2016): 1-25. For a discussion of different models of interpreting the Scriptures, see Keith C Sewell, *The Crisis of Evangelical Christianity: Roots, Consequences and Resolutions*. (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2016), pp. 28-38. Cone appears to follow Sewell’s “regulative” method of Scriptural interpretation, which requires explicit mention for legitimacy.
16. By “Anthropocentric,” I mean that the Scriptures are directed to humankind—the Scriptures are not given to other creatures, and so their focus is on human tasks and responsibilities, including the placement of humans over the rest of creation for the benefit of that creation (Psalm 8). It does not mean that the Scriptures are indifferent to other creatures and their well-being; passages such as Psalm 104 and Proverbs 12:10 testify to the contrary. Passmore (op.cit.) claims that an anthropocentric interpretation of Scripture in the sense meant by Cone arises from the influence of Stoic philosophy.
17. See RD, p. 118, where Cone says that OT and NT teaching is the same: God created everything, he has sovereign rights over that which he has made, and all things exist solely to give glory to God. The latter, he claims, is the “only stated purpose” of God’s creation work, thus again using the “encyclopaedic” approach to hermeneutics.
18. Citing Georges Enderle, “In Search of a Common Ethical Ground: Corporate Environmental Responsibility from the Perspective of Christian Environmental Stewardship,” *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol 16, No. 2 (1997): 177. Unfortunately, Enderle suggests that stewardship means that humankind has to serve the creation—which he suggests is the “real meaning” of the text, implying subservience to it. This goes beyond any textual support.
19. See, for instance, his comment “The strongest Biblical environmental ethic, at least in answering White’s anthropocentric indictment, would provide both a comprehensive and an equitable axiology” (RD, 114). Cone agrees “with White that the anthropocentric model is deficient and must be replaced” (RD, 124).
20. RD, p. 135-136, citing Lewis and Demerest, “The Spirit’s work of regeneration renews the heart (spirit), restoring the use of all one’s debilitated spiritual capabilities. The imago Dei, impaired and enslaved by the Fall, is rejuvenated,” in Gordon R. Lewis and Bruce A. Demerest, *Integrative Theology*, Vol 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 105.
21. RD, p. 138, citing *Brown-Driver-Briggs’ Hebrew and English Lexicon*, 605.
22. Curiously, there seems to be no criticism of Judaism in this regard, even though this is part of the Hebrew Bible. Perhaps Jews are not seen to be as destructive environmentally as Christians? Passmore (op.cit.) argues that the OT does not present a “despotic” dominion model; hence, this does not arise in Jewish exegesis of the Scriptures.
23. I take the flood to be local/regional and not global. Nothing in the text requires a global flood, as it was to punish those who descended from Adam and Eve, who had at that time not migrated far from their place of origin. The great migrations to other parts of the earth described in Genesis 10 are the result of the repopulation of that region, as commanded by God to Noah and his sons, who were told not simply to increase in number but to fill the earth—which they could not do by remaining near where the ark rested at the end of the flood. See Chris Goussmett, “The Confusion of Language in Genesis 11,” *Evangelical Quarterly* Vol. 89, No. 1 (2018): 34-50, where I discuss the dispersal of the descendants of Noah in connection with the events at the Tower of Babel.
24. There is a remarkable similarity between Cone’s dispensationalist hermeneutic and the views held by David van Drunen and other proponents of “two kingdoms” theology. Both positions end up discarding any sense of a cultural mandate, grounded in Genesis 1: 26-28, which applies to Christians today. See Andres Latimir, “Is the Adamic work of Christ shared with the believer? A Critique of van Drunen,” in *Foundations* Vol 70, No. 216 (79-83). The numerous articles on “two kingdoms” theology in *Pro Rege* should also be consulted.