



## Genesis 1.28 'subdue' and 'dominion' - Annotated Bibliography

These sources, relevant to the debate around the potential meanings and implications of the terms *kabash* and *radah* in Genesis 1.26-28, are arranged in broadly chronological order. Where appropriate, quotations or other notes are included to indicate the tone of the interpretation. Many are available through the links to the Common Awards Hub books, via EBSCO or JSTOR on the Hub, or elsewhere online. (Exceptions are highlighted in yellow but may be available through a local University library) **For Hub sources you will need to log into your Moodle and then go to the Hub before using the link.**

## PRE-MODERN

Jewish commentators

Early Church

Later Church

## CONTEMPORARY

## COMMENTARIES

## PRE-MODERN

### Jewish commentators

See Michael Carasik, *The Commentators' Bible: Genesis : The Rubin JPS Miqra'ot Gedolot* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 2018)

e.g. Nahmanides From pp.21-22 '**Master It**. He gave them power and dominion over the earth to do as they wished with the animals And all the other creatures, to build up and to tear down, ... They should "rule . . .the whole earth (v. 26) ... But our Sages distinguish between "mastery" and "rule."

See pp. 21-22 for a range of other commentators on Genesis 1.26, 28

[https://hub.commonawards.org/blocks/configurable\\_reports/viewreport.php?id=36&filter\\_var=1869966](https://hub.commonawards.org/blocks/configurable_reports/viewreport.php?id=36&filter_var=1869966)

\*\*\*\*\*

### Early Church

ORIGEN, BASIL, GREGORY OF NYSSA, & AUGUSTINE 'are united in ... their assertion of human dominion – albeit a flawed dominion ... they claim that God created them as rational beings in his image *in order* that they could exercise dominion over the rest of creation as his regents' (p.151)

Morwenna Ludlow, 'Power and Dominion: Patristic Interpretations of Genesis 1' in David G. Horrell, Cheryl Hunt, Christopher Southgate and Francesca Stavrakopoulou (eds.), *Ecological Hermeneutics: Biblical, Historical, and Theological Perspectives*, 140-53. (London & New York: T&T Clark, 2010).

[https://hub.commonawards.org/blocks/configurable\\_reports/viewreport.php?id=40&filter\\_var=9780567266859](https://hub.commonawards.org/blocks/configurable_reports/viewreport.php?id=40&filter_var=9780567266859)

DIDYMUS THE BLIND Commentary on Genesis. The Fathers of the Church Vo. 132 trans. Robert C. Hill (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America, 2016). See pp. 71-72. [Not available online](#)

CHRYSOSTOM *Homilies on Genesis 10.9* notes 'all created things placed under the control of humans.

AUGUSTINE *Two Books on Genesis Against the Manichees* 1.18.29 speaks of how humans can tame other animals but are not tamed by them.

Both these excerpted in Louth, Andrew & Conti, Marco (eds) *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture. Old Testament 1: Genesis 1-11* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2001) pp.40-41. [Not available online](#)

\*\*\*\*\*

## Later Church

AQUINAS 'all animals are naturally subject to man ... also in the state of innocence man's mastership over plants and inanimate things consisted not in commanding or in changing them, but in making use of them without hindrance'.

St Thomas Aquinas *Summa Theologica* Part 1 QQ. 75-102 Question XCVI 'Of The Mastership Belonging To Man In The State Of Innocence' Article 1 & 2

[https://ccel.org/ccel/aquinas/summa/summa.FP\\_Q96.html](https://ccel.org/ccel/aquinas/summa/summa.FP_Q96.html)

See also Wynn, Mark 'Thomas Aquinas: Reading the Idea of Dominion in the Light of the Doctrine of Creation' in David G. Horrell, Cheryl Hunt, Christopher Southgate and Francesca Stavrakopoulou (eds.), *Ecological Hermeneutics: Biblical, Historical, and Theological Perspectives*, 154-65. (London & New York: T&T Clark, 2010).

[https://hub.commonawards.org/blocks/configurable\\_reports/viewreport.php?id=40&filter\\_var=9780567266859](https://hub.commonawards.org/blocks/configurable_reports/viewreport.php?id=40&filter_var=9780567266859)

See John L. Thompson, Timothy George & Scott M. Manetsch (eds) *Genesis 1 – 11: Reformation Commentary on Scripture. Old Testament, Vol. 1* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2012)

See pp. 57-61 section '**1:28b Dominion over Every Living Thing**'

See also p.46-7 **Wolfgang Musculus**: 'Yet Scripture does not attribute to them [angels] as it does to us, that they were made according to God's image and likeness. Why? Namely,

because they were not constituted lords of earth and of beasts, a dignity God expressly conferred on humankind.' *Commentary on Genesis 1:26-27.*' (p.47)

[https://hub.commonawards.org/blocks/configurable\\_reports/viewreport.php?id=36&filter\\_var=909446](https://hub.commonawards.org/blocks/configurable_reports/viewreport.php?id=36&filter_var=909446)

CALVIN on Gen 1.26 'we infer what was the end for which all things were created; namely, that none of the conveniences and necessities of life might be wanting to men. In the very order of the creation the paternal solicitude of God for man is conspicuous, because he furnished the world with all things needful, and even with an immense profusion of wealth, before he formed man. Thus man was rich before he was born.'

Calvin, John Genesis trans. John King (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1965 [1847]). [Not available online](#)

---

## CONTEMPORARY

BAUCKHAM 'Ruling Fellow-Creatures – Hierarchy Qualified by Community' See pages 16-20; 27-34

Richard Bauckham, *Bible and Ecology: Rediscovering the Community of Creation*, (London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 2010). [Not always available online](#) but whole volume may be available at <https://library.oapen.org/> using search facility.

BEAUCHAMP, LOHFINK & ZENGER pp. 40, 42-48 of:

Rogerson, John W., Moberly, R. W. L. & Johnstone, William *Genesis and Exodus* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001).

[https://hub.commonawards.org/blocks/configurable\\_reports/viewreport.php?id=40&filter\\_var=9780567494733](https://hub.commonawards.org/blocks/configurable_reports/viewreport.php?id=40&filter_var=9780567494733)

See also:

Norbert Lohfink, *Theology of the Pentateuch: Themes of the Priestly Narrative and Deuteronomy*, Translated by Linda M. Maloney, (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1994). See pp. 8-17. [Not available online](#)

See also Hartley, writing on Lohfink, below, under 'Commentaries'.

BRETT pp.26-31 'There is, however, no escaping the overt hierarchy asserted by the text: human beings are called on to rule the earth and to subdue it. ... this is best read as a polemical undermining of a role otherwise associated primarily with kings.' (27, 28)

Brett, Mark G. *Genesis: Procreation and the Politics of Identity* (London & New York: Routledge, 2000)

[https://hub.commonawards.org/blocks/configurable\\_reports/viewreport.php?id=36&filter\\_var=144551](https://hub.commonawards.org/blocks/configurable_reports/viewreport.php?id=36&filter_var=144551)

HABEL 'overtly hierarchical: humans are authorized to rule other creatures and to subdue Earth' (47) See pages 45-48.

Norman C. Habel, 'Geophany: The Earth Story in Genesis 1' in Norman C. Habel and Shirley Wurst (eds.), *The Earth Story in Genesis*. The Earth Bible, 34-48.

(Sheffield/Cleveland, OH: Sheffield Academic Press/ Pilgrim Press, 2000).

[https://hub.commonawards.org/blocks/configurable\\_reports/viewreport.php?id=40&filter\\_var=9780567445377](https://hub.commonawards.org/blocks/configurable_reports/viewreport.php?id=40&filter_var=9780567445377)

HORRELL 'at least open to a reading which supports a sense of humanity's unique value and right to use the planet for its benefit' (35). See pages 23-36

David G. Horrell, *The Bible and the Environment: Towards a Critical Ecological Biblical Theology*, (London/New York: Equinox, 2010). **Not available online**

MIDDLETON 'The use of the verbs *rādā* and *kābaš* suggests that the characteristic human task or role vis-à-vis both the animal kingdom and the earth requires a significant exercise of communal power, and the primacy of *rādā* paints the human vocation with a distinctly royal hue.' (52) See pp.50-55

'Although it is not explicitly stated in Genesis 1, it is reasonable to think that this power is to be exercised responsibly, with God's own exercise of power in creation perhaps as the model' (204).

Middleton, J. Richard Hub: *The Liberating Image: The imago dei in Genesis 1* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Brazos Press, 2005)

[https://hub.commonawards.org/blocks/configurable\\_reports/viewreport.php?id=40&filter\\_var=9781441242785](https://hub.commonawards.org/blocks/configurable_reports/viewreport.php?id=40&filter_var=9781441242785)

ROGERSON 'If there is any way of 'softening' the implication of these verbs [*kabash* and *radah*], it must be by way of interpreting them in the context of the narrative structure of Genesis 1-9' (25). See pages 24-31

J. W. Rogerson, 'The Creation Stories: Their Ecological Potential and Problems' in David G. Horrell, Cheryl Hunt, Christopher Southgate and Francesca

Stavropoulou (eds.), *Ecological Hermeneutics: Biblical, Historical, and Theological Perspectives*, 21-31. (London & New York: T&T Clark, 2010).

[https://hub.commonawards.org/blocks/configurable\\_reports/viewreport.php?id=40&filter\\_var=9780567266859](https://hub.commonawards.org/blocks/configurable_reports/viewreport.php?id=40&filter_var=9780567266859)

TWARDZIŁOWSKI survey of arguments: 'Abstract: In the discussions on the possible religious background of the current ecological crisis, the biblical text of Genesis 1:26–28 is the passage most often quoted by all sides of the debate. While for some it is an incentive to unlimited exploitation, and the resultant degradation of the natural environment, for others it carries a positive ecological message and a call for responsible care of the created world. Due to this ambiguity in interpretations, this article attempts to resolve whether the biblical text itself is problematic, and requires correction, or whether it is ecologically adequate, and it is the interpretations that have been thus far insufficient. Each of the three main currents of the ecological hermeneutics of the Bible (apologetic, radical, and neoorthodox) offers its own specific answer to this question.' (9)

Twardziłowski , Tomasz, 'The Command to Rule over the Creation (Gen 1:26–28) in the Ecological Hermeneutics of the Bible' *Collectanea Theologica* 90 (2020) no. 5, 9-32 <https://bibliotekanauki.pl/articles/2030675.pdf>

WHITE 'Man named all the animals, thus establishing his dominance over them. God planned all of this explicitly for man's benefit and rule: no item in the physical creation had any purpose save to serve man's purposes. And, although man's body is made of clay, he is not simply part of nature: he is made in God's image. ... Christianity made it possible to exploit nature in a mood of indifference to the feelings of natural objects.' (p.1205)

Lynn White, Jr, 'The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis', *Science* 155 (1967): 1203-07.

<https://www.reonline.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/LINK-1A-Historical-Roots-of-Ecological-Crisis.pdf>

\*\*\*\*\*

## COMMENTARIES

BRUEGGEMANN 'The human creature attests to the Godness of God by exercising *freedom with* and *authority over* all the other creatures entrusted to its care. The image of God in the human person is a mandate of power and responsibility. But it is power exercised as God exercises power. The image images the creative use of power which invites, evokes, and permits. There is nothing here of coercive or tyrannical power, either for God or for humankind. The power-laden image is further attested in the words "subdue . . . and have dominion" (v.28).' (p.32, *emphasis* original)

'The "dominion" here mandated is with reference to the animals. The dominance is that of a shepherd who cares for, tends, and feeds the animals. Or, if transferred to the political arena, the image is that of a shepherd king (cf. Ezek. 34). Thus the task of "dominion" does not have to do with exploitation and abuse. It has to do with securing the well-being of every other creature and bringing the promise of each to full fruition. (In contrast, Ezek. 34:1-6

offers a caricature of the human shepherd who has mis-used the imperative of the creator.)’ (p.32)

Brueggemann, Walter *Genesis: Interpretation Commentary* (Atlanta, GA: John Knox, 1982)

[https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=HYG1vImpvIEC&pg=PA23&source=gbs\\_toc\\_r&cad=3#v=onepage&q&f=false](https://books.google.co.uk/books?id=HYG1vImpvIEC&pg=PA23&source=gbs_toc_r&cad=3#v=onepage&q&f=false)

HARTLEY “Rule” (*radah*) means that humans are to promote the well-being of the animals and protect them from danger just as a monarch fosters the welfare of the citizens. “Subdue” (*kibbesh*) is even stronger than “rule”; it means “conquer, subjugate.” B. Lohfink demonstrates that this word should be translated with as little drama as possible; he suggests “take possession of” (*The Theology of the Pentateuch* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 1994], pp. 10–11). Although these commands empower humans to be masters of the animal kingdom and by extension the earth, they do not give them the right to abuse or to kill animals wantonly. Nor do they ordain humans to rule imprudently by abusing the earth so that nature no longer supports the various species. Such an abuse of authority would be a distortion of God’s purpose, which includes working for the benefit of those under human authority. That God made animals and humans on the same day, and the fact that they belong to the same classification of living creatures, attest to their closeness. Consequently, in promoting the welfare of animals, humans advance their own well-being.

In addition, God gave humans access to **every seed-bearing plant . . . and every tree that has fruit**, and God assigned to all the animals **every green plant for food**. This beneficial word on behalf of the animals, given in the context of God’s blessing humans, confirms that God entrusted the care of the animals to humans.’ (p.39, emphases original).

Hartley, John E. *Genesis: Understanding the Bible Commentary Series* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2000)

[https://hub.commonawards.org/blocks/configurable\\_reports/viewreport.php?id=40&filter\\_var=9781441238368](https://hub.commonawards.org/blocks/configurable_reports/viewreport.php?id=40&filter_var=9781441238368)

WESTERMANN ‘only among living beings is a hierarchy of order established; ... humans are entrusted with dominion over animals’ (158)

Subdue ‘means “to tread the wine press” in Joel 4:13’ (158)

*Elsewhere in OT and contemporary documents, it is language of the royal court, applied to the king but here it applies to the human person. Cross-reference to Genesis 1.16, where the sun and moon rule over the day and night respectively:*

‘among living beings, humans rule over the animals without condition. It is quite possible that we have here an echo of the belief that the animal was the human’s deadly enemy in the early stages of the human race, and that consequently the person’s dominating role in relation to the animals is saying something that concerns our very existence. Dominion over the animals certainly does not mean their exploitation by humans.’ (159)

Westermann, Claus *Genesis 1-11: A Continental Commentary* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1994 [1974]).

Not available online