Article

Pro-Dominion Attitudes toward Nature in Western Culture: First Cracks in the Narrative

Bina Nir

Department of Communication, The Max Stern Yezreel Valley College, Yezreel Valley 1930600, Israel;
binan@yvc.ac.il

Received: 25 May 2020; Accepted: 19 June 2020; Published: 1 July 2020

Abstract: Our civilization's interference in nature is the source of numerous ecological problems. This study will employ a genealogical methodology to examine the "man's dominion over nature" approach, which is deeply rooted in Western culture. The underlying aim of genealogical research is to understand contemporary reality by means of the reinterpretation of the past. Through this new interpretation, we will reveal the deep religious and cultural foundations, grounded in Judeo-Christian monotheism, of the pro-dominion attitude to nature. This article's genealogical-exegetical analysis of central religious texts aims to contribute to our cultural understanding of the present. Deeply rooted constructs, originating in religious life, tend to remain in the culture even after its secularization. Following our examining the roots of the concept and the mental constructs that it created, we will turn to consider the first cracks in this ancient narrative. A close consideration of the development of these cracks has the potential to spur profound cultural change.

Keywords: Bible; religious sources; dominion attitudes toward nature; western culture; genealogy

1. Introduction

As this article is being prepared, much of the world's population is under lockdown owing to the spread of the Covid-19 virus, a development which has accorded a degree of urgency to the public and scientific discussion about the significance of humanity's impact on nature. Kate Jones, chair of Ecology and Biodiversity at University College London, asserted ([Jones et al. 2008](#)) that our civilization's interference with nature, while clearly the source of many ecological problems, is also a central factor in the increasing number of emerging infectious diseases originating in wildlife. She predicted that a continued rise in the emergence of diseases originating in wildlife would constitute a significant threat to global health, noting the roles of the destruction of natural habitats, hunting, and raising animals in unsanitary conditions as contributing factors.

Many cultures regard nature and wildlife as being subordinate to humanity. However, this is not universally the case throughout human history. Although the current epidemic outbreak did not originate in the West, in this article, I will look at the influence of the Judeo-Christian tradition, as reflected in the biblical text, on Western culture's attitude toward nature. [White \(1967\)](#) was one of the first scholars to study the relationship between religious values and environmental attitudes. White maintained that by promoting an orientation of 'dominance-over-nature', Judeo-Christian traditions contributed to a culture of ecological crisis. In his view, commitment to the 'dominion' belief leads to lower levels of environmental concern and even to environmentally destructive behavior. Since White first published his article, scholars have examined the relationship between religion and environmental attitudes in the Judeo-Christian West, and discovered that the relationship is more complicated than White's thesis assumed ([Kanagy and Nelson 1995](#)), with no direct correlation between Christian religious devotion and pro-dominion attitudes toward nature ([Hayes and Marangudakis 2001](#)).

Scholars agree that Judeo-Christianity has significantly influenced people's attitudes toward nature. This article seeks to take these insights a step further, suggesting that the Judeo-Christian tradition remains present in the overarching structure of the culture at large, affecting people regardless of religious orientation or inclination. In fact, humanity's alienation from nature constitutes a consistent marker of Western civilization across time, manifesting first as religious beliefs and later evolving into secular mores—and in this way remaining a structural underpinning of Western culture across time, even as religious belief evolved beyond recognition. That is, the structural underpinnings of alienation from nature have persisted in Western culture, even after undergoing secularization that has emptied them of religious significance. This is consistent with Jung (1987) assertion that when world views are deeply embedded in religious experience, they have a particular propensity to be preserved in secular experience. The religious underpinnings are, in fact, evident in culture, discourse, and even in scientific research. Stephen Hawking conceded that the Big Bang theory bears a striking resemblance to the biblical creation story, pointing, perhaps, to the unconscious influence of the Bible in the theory's attempt to explain the origins of the universe (Boslough 1992).

In this paper, I will use the genealogical method to examine the deep cultural and religious roots of the Western conception of the human dominion over nature, examining Judeo-Christian monotheism across three relevant axes. The first lies in the separation between divinity and nature, the second in the separation between human beings and nature, and the third, in the positioning of human beings atop the hierarchy of creation. Each of these was revolutionary in the context of ancient Near Eastern religion, which assumed the gods' subservience to nature and to fate. This revolution in religious consciousness, while having since undergone countless transformations, continues to be present in Western culture, and has had far-reaching implications that remain evident to this day. After examining the roots of the dominion narrative and the inner structural changes it caused in the collective cultural consciousness of the West via the canonical biblical text, the epilogue will look at the first visible rifts in this long-standing attitude.

Examining the genealogy of a subject involves telling a story about its past, its origins, its evolution up to the present moment (Rusinek 2004, p. 410). The purpose of genealogical research is to point out processes that have distorted human productions or created ideals in the process of moving away from actual, physical life. Humanity lives in a self-created prison of metaphors, without any memory of having once created this prison with their own hands (Eilon 2005, p. 36).

The genealogical researcher strives to understand current reality through a reinterpretation of the past. In adopting the genealogical method, we instinctively turn to the ideas of Nietzsche and Foucault. Nietzsche is thought to be the father of genealogy as a method of criticism, while Foucault elaborated upon Nietzsche's ideas and applied them to a wide range of subjects. As a genealogist, Nietzsche took it upon himself to write the history of the formation of the psychological and sociological structures of his research subject (Deleuze 2006, p. 2). Foucault, on the other hand, proposes to reconstruct the genealogy of order, up until the moment of this order's emergence in society (Arbel 2006, pp. 16, 140).

A genealogical-interpretative analysis of mythological texts does not aim to be objective or definitive; rather it attempts to contribute to our cultural understanding of the present moment. Ancient cultures grappled with questions about nature, the universe, and existence, questions that drove them to invent cosmologies (Graves 1975, p. 5) that would then serve as the basis for their religious beliefs (Naydler 1996). These cosmologies influenced the development of all human thought and continue to influence it to this day.

Scholars have offered different parameters by which to define and delineate the singular features of Western culture, but they are unanimous in pointing to particular institutions, beliefs, and customs (Nir 2016). Deutsch (1981) presents eight central features of Western civilization, including the legacy of the classical world, Catholicism, and Protestantism. Historically, Western Christianity, first Catholic and later Protestant, is the most salient feature of Western civilization.

Religion is a hallmark of culture. Systems of thought and cultural values are reflected in the religious doctrines of a given culture. The culture and Christian religion of the West are based on the

Jewish scriptures, which were spread across the Roman Empire. Christianity has based itself on the canonical Bible along with additional Jewish texts. Those were cut off from the Jewish canon by rabbinic Judaism over 1500 years ago, and have remained doubtful ever since (Malkin 2003, p. 44). The Bible is perceived by both religions as a sacred text, absolute truth, and a product of divine revelation. The Lutheran Reformation further strengthened the importance of the scriptures, while the Catholic Church augmented the authority of the scriptures with that of tradition. Luther, however, denied this traditional authority with the argument of sola scriptura; that the Bible should be read not because it is open to individual interpretation, but because it is the most coherent book. The Reformation has thus placed the Jewish scriptures at the heart of European identity (HaCohen 2006, p. 23). Thus, I will examine the roots of the pro-dominion attitude toward nature in the biblical text, through a consideration of comparisons with the classical tradition.

2. The Separation between Divinity and Nature

The conception of the world as created by a creator who determines the design of all things according to his will is agreed upon by the three monotheistic religions and is rooted in the Bible. The God of the Bible is described as an independent entity, an entity separate from both nature and humanity. ‘The fundamental idea of the Israelite faith was bound from the beginning to a total split between God and the world . . . God and the world are two beings’ (Kaufmann 1971, p. 245). According to Kaufmann, the God of Israel is not enslaved to nature or to matter; he is the creator of nature by the power of His sovereign will. God does not battle fate or time, because he is ‘calling the generations from the beginning’ (Isaiah 41:4). This is fundamentally different from gods who are bound by the laws and orders of nature, who are born and give birth to every living creature, and who can be defeated and expelled (Gelander 2009, p. 86). According to the biblical belief system, the power of God transcends every phenomenon of nature, and thus, it is crucial that he knows God’s will rather than be familiar with the order of nature itself. The idea of a Greek kosmos, i.e., an entirety of all things, which is complete in itself, is foreign to biblical thought. Biblical thought succeeded in overpowering the tendency of antiquity to endow nature with mysterious power; nature is not an object of worship (Heschel 1976). The Bible recognizes the existence of a natural order upon which he can rely; however, this order is embedded in nature by the will of God and he is eternally dependent on it.

The biblical way of thinking has from the beginning separated material being and its orders from the supreme, abstract and timeless entity, even if the latter resides in material reality (Barzel 2004, p. 9). In other words, the innovation of biblical faith is this separation of God from nature. This was, in fact, a complete revolution in the religious world of the ancient Near East, where, for example, the gods of Babylon are subordinate to nature and to fate (Muffs 2006, pp. 28–43). Nature and its immanent laws are no longer the supreme concern. Nature is intended for use and pleasure; it is no longer an objective in and of itself, but it is also not a burden or an obstacle on the path to the highest perfection. In the Bible, God’s personification is so powerful that it appears to rule nature and, thus, nature transforms from primordial reality into a product of divine will. In biblical cosmology, an omnipotent infinite God creates things ex nihilo. God reveals himself to Israel as a god who rules nature and works wonders. The Bible does not tell us about God’s life and history; he is not ruled by fate (Kaufmann 1971, p. 245). Rather, the world of nature and its phenomena are made by His will.

The clearest manifestation of God as an entity wholly separate from nature is in the story of creation, in Genesis. In this story, God clearly existed before the world, and He created man and the entire world according to His will. The act of creating the universe seems an absolute miracle, a magnificent manifestation of God’s rule over the world. God is the master of creation and not its subordinate.

The stages of creation begin with the expression ‘and God said’ (Genesis 1:3). Creation is accomplished through God’s speech: ‘The world was created with ten utterances’ (M. Avot 5:1), as also described by Augustine: ‘But how do you make them? The way, God, in which you made heaven and earth . . . you spoke and they were made, and by your word you made them’ ((Augustine 1991, 11:

v (7), 259)). According to Greek thought, the world was not created by an external force. Gods did not create the world, but rather were created themselves during its evolution, and they are also subject to the rules governing the world. The Greeks did not view the creation of the world as creation *ex nihilo*, but as an assembling of the original given material. The gods of Olympus, the epitome of nature and its power, are beings born and giving birth, eternally creating and destroying. Since these gods are a model of the world itself, their constant rebirth is an expression of the world's perpetual regeneration (Zielinski 1975, pp. 28–103). Gods do not have the power to change the laws of the universe, since they themselves are subject to these laws.¹ These limitations of the Greek gods' powers are expressed in the ideas of necessity (*ananke*) and destiny (*moira*), both of which supersede the gods themselves (Finkelberg 1990, pp. 51–59).

The debate over the question of God's independence and separation from nature extends throughout written history, as reflected in the question of whether the universe had a beginning, and, if so, how it began. There are two schools of thought regarding this question. The first, which includes Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, claims that the universe was created *ex nihilo* and that humankind emerged thereafter. The *ex nihilo* story of creation is based upon the idea of God's separation from nature. 'However, no physical entity existed before heaven and earth ... Unless it was created by you, it could not exist' ((Augustine 1991, 11: v (8), 260)). The second is reflected in Aristotle and Plato's perceptions of God, according to which God is the designer and the architect of the universe, but not its creator. Matter is understood to be eternal, not created. '... and its Constructor good, it is plain that he fixed his gaze on the Eternal ... He ... took over all that was visible, seeing that it was not in a state of rest but in a state of discordant and disorderly motion, He brought it into order out of disorder' (Plato 1925, pp. 29–30). 'Therefore, because of this reasoning, He fashioned it to be One single Whole ... He wrought it into a round, in the shape of a sphere' (Plato 1925, ll. 33a). 'For whereas the pattern is existent through all eternity, the copy [=Heaven], on the other hand, is through all time' (Plato 1925, ll. 38b,c).

In the ancient polytheist Greek religion then, nature, gods, and human beings belong to a single system, governed by the same laws, as described by Heraclitus: '<The ordered?> world, the same for all, no god or man-made, but it always was, is, and will be, an ever living fire, being kindled in measures and being put out in measures' (Heraclitus of Ephesus 1987, p. 30). Notwithstanding this fundamental cultural difference, Roman and Hellenistic philosophers searched cosmologies of other cultures for that which is common to all men, as reflected in their myths, legends, and folklore. Greek philosophers sought the basic points of agreement between Moses and Plato (Dihle 1982, p. 5). Philo of Alexandria, for example, tried to prove that Moses and Plato teach the same 'truth'. 'Philo was the first who tried to reduce the narratives and laws and exhortations of Scripture to a coherent and closely knit system of thought and thereby produced what may be called scriptural philosophy in contradistinction to pagan Greek philosophy' (Wolfson 1960, p. 101).

Philo argues in his essay 'On the Creation' that the world comes into being; God creates out of goodness, as a super-architect, and imposes order onto shapeless material. 'For the substance was of itself destitute of arrangement, of quality, of animation, of distinctive character, and full of all disorder and confusion' (Philo of Alexandria 1971, p. 5). 'For before the world time had no existence, but was created simultaneously with it' (Philo of Alexandria 1971, p. 6). In 'The life of Moses', however, Philo describes creation as a unique miracle, 'looking at the things which are really great and deserving of serious attention, namely, the creation of heaven ... animals and plants ... ever-flowing rivers and winter mountain torrents ... and an infinite number of other beautiful objects' (Philo of Alexandria 1971, p. 227). The Roman philosopher Lucretius also rejects the idea of creation *ex nihilo* unique to the Bible: 'Therefore, when we have seen that nothing can be created out of nothing' (Carus 1924,

¹ In the Mesopotamian world, even though the gods number in the thousands, nature is not chaotic. It has a dependable rhythm and order. The gods have arranged the universe into a cosmic kingdom where each of its powers has its own dedicated role (Wright 1968, pp. 18–19).

pp. 150–4); ‘nothing can be brought to being out of nothing, inasmuch as it needs a seed for things, from which each may be produced’ (Carus 924, pp. 205–7).

In the second half of the second century, the Greek philosopher Galen first pointed out the difference between the biblical and the Greek cultures, arguing that the basic distinction between these two cultures is a result of different cosmologies. Galen argued that the principle of God’s ‘free will’ could only develop in biblical cosmology, where God’s will can impose order on chaotic material (Dihle 1982). God’s will fashions a different future, one where he has the ability to create, to change, to renew, to transform, to not repeat, and a chance to improve. Galen adds that the lack of free will in classical Greek culture is also a result of its cosmology (Dihle 1982, p. 1). Greek theology and cosmology are based on the premise that everything which happens in the universe follows the logic given to human beings, in order for him to be able to understand his place in the world and to act accordingly. In this eternal deterministic world, free will does not exist. The world is ruled by fate and necessity. Free will is a product of the Bible. ‘Creation results from the power and the pleasure or will of Yahveh, and from nothing else’ (Dihle 1982, p. 4). The Bible, which assumes *ex nihilo* creation, also assumes the existence of free will. ‘There is no boundary to his will and his rule . . . Not the abstraction but the utter supremacy of god’s will—this is the basic idea of the fate of the Israeli unity’ (Kaufmann 1971, p. 244). God creates the world out of free will.

In the biblical story of creation, God is presented as transcending the laws of nature; he is omnipotent and does not depend on celestial bodies to illuminate the world. The act of creation is described not only as an act of God’s free will, but also as an absolute miracle. Miracles interrupt the natural order of creation, proving God’s free will and absolute control over all creation. Thus, God halts the movement of celestial bodies in order to glorify Israel’s victory over the Amorites: ‘. . . and he said in the sight of Israel, Sun, stand thou still upon Gibeon; and thou, Moon, in the valley of Ajalon’ (Joshua 10:12), or in order to give a sign to king Hezekiah: ‘Behold, I will bring again the shadow of the degrees . . . in the sun dial . . . ten degrees backward’ (Isaiah 38:8). God also has the power to set boundaries for the sea: ‘. . . have placed the sand for the bound of the sea by a perpetual decree, that it cannot pass it’ (Jeremiah 5:22), ‘When he gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment’ (Proverbs 8:29). This separation is also evident from nature’s behavior towards God: ‘The sea saw it, and fled: Jordan was driven back. The mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like lambs . . . at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob’ (Psalms 114:3–7).

3. Humanity’s Separation from Nature

The relationship between God and human beings in the Bible is constructed as stable and sealed through law and oath (Muffs 2006, pp. 34–43). This all-encompassing relationship is personal and includes a signed contract with every individual—a far reaching anthropomorphism.

Humanity’s separation from nature is a consequence of God’s separation from nature. According to the interpretive approach we have adopted, God is a projection of human desires. According to the Bible, God and man are similar: ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness’ (Genesis 1:26). Human beings are thus obliged to imitate the qualities unique to God. The individual is not God, although he or she aspires to adopt his attributes. The biblical person, similar to the biblical God, is endowed with free will; a free will which exists in the context of production, creation, and the ability to influence the future (Fromm 1966, pp. 62–63). Free will develops when a benevolent entity exists and watches over human actions (Schechter 2007, p. 7).

Similar to God, human beings are separate from nature. They are superior in the hierarchy of all creatures, and participates in creating natural reality. ‘Israelite’ faith transferred the worldwide godly drama from the domain of nature and its powers to the domain of the human will. God’s will rules all things, but with one “reduction”: man’s will, who was given free choice’ (Kaufmann 1971, p. 472). Paganism, in contrast, perceived existence in its entirety as a material reality of which humanity is but a part; a reality which is certain, albeit unachievable. The innovation of the Bible is in determining human beings’ ability to participate in the creation of natural reality; to determine conditions and

givens, as well as to intervene in the course of nature. The Bible commands us to interfere with processes, to initiate changes, and to be responsible for them. Nature becomes the target, the object of human will. The individual, who fashions his own world in a similar way to God, similarly needs free will.

Western culture, rooted in the Judeo-Christian tradition, sanctifies the belief that the world was created for the benefit of humankind. Humanity's separation from nature is referred to as 'Jewish egotism' by Feuerbach. He argues that the theory of creation adopted by Christianity and rooted in the Bible, has as its basic premise egotism (Feuerbach 1957, pp. 34–35). Only where the individual separates him or herself from nature is there room to wonder about the origin of the universe. According to Feuerbach, the separation entails the diminishment of nature to an object of the individual will. The Hebrews, he claims, combined faith, control over nature, and gorging: 'At even ye shall eat flesh, and in the morning ye shall be filled with bread; and ye shall know that I am the Lord your God' (Exodus 16:12).

Although the Israelite credo holds the concept of revelation rooted in a distant source, it leaves the individual with a choice and an obligation to complete the acts of Genesis. In the story of creation, human beings receive permission to conquer and rule: '... and God said unto them, be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth' (Genesis 1:28), and in Psalms '... Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet: All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field' (Psalms 8:6–7). Human beings are different from other creatures, and, like God, are envisioned as a being external to nature, imposing their own will and rules upon it (Lurie 2007, p. 45).

The separation of humanity from nature is not unique to the story of creation, but is interwoven throughout the Bible. Thus, in the story of Cain and Abel: 'If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him' (Genesis 4:7). This verse suggests that the desire for evil exists in human nature—'unto thee shall be his desire'—however, humanity is given a free choice, the ability to overcome his nature—'thou shalt rule over him'. The ability to overcome natural urges, moreover, signifies humanity's separation from nature. Cain exerts his free will and chooses wrongdoing. In the biblical context, Cain cannot claim, like the Homeric heroes, that since he is controlled by external forces, he cannot be held accountable for his actions. Although in the conclusion of the story of Cain and Abel we find the notion of 'damned for all times', the story in fact reaffirms the precedence of agriculture. Although God accepts Abel's sacrifice, Abel is murdered and Cain is the one who survives. This signifies that God has, in fact, accepted the idea of humanity's intervention in the course of nature. It is evident in the biblical story that history is shaped by Cain, by the man who interferes with nature and shapes it to fulfill his needs. Tubal, one of Cain's descendants, is the father of technological civilization, 'an instructor of every artificer in brass and iron' (Genesis 4:22).

Humanity's intervention in nature is found also in the story of Eden: The first man was brought to Eden in order to make a life for himself, a life in which he will have to work the land and to transform it beyond its raw initial conditions of creation: 'And the Lord God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it' (Genesis 2:15).

Just as the separation of God from nature was foreign to Greek philosophy, so was the separation of humanity from nature. Humanity, according to the Greek view, is merely a small cog within the overall system. His position is inferior in a world which was not devised by a creator, a world in which even gods are limited in their abilities and are subject to rules. Since the human being is not the lord of creation, ancient Greeks feared transgressing the boundaries of human nature and diverging from their predestined path. Nature, gods, and humanity are part of a single system, governed by the same laws (Finkelberg 1990, p. 57). This understanding finds expression in Homer, who compares men to leaves in the forest: 'As is the race of leaves, even such is the race of men. Some leaves the wind sheds upon the ground' (Homer 1870, pp. 6–147). Similarly, Aristotle, who views humans as

rational beings, and as such, a marvel of nature, still understands the individual as part of it. Human behavior imitates nature; the individual learns from nature: 'These occurrences are all natural ... The arts either, on the basis of Nature, carry things further than Nature can, or they imitate Nature' (Aristotle 1929–1934, II:viii). Lucretius also does not see the world as created intentionally for the benefit of humanity. On the contrary, humanity's development entails adaptation to the environment. 'The nature of the world is by no means made by divine grace for us' (Carus 1924, p. 180).

Humanity's free will and separation from nature as expressed in the Bible are also manifested by the act of praying. Prayer allows the individual to thank God for past munificence and make requests for the future (Mack 2001). Prayer is obligatory for the believing Jew, and much of Jewish liturgy is based on the Bible (Mack 2001). At the heart of prayer lies the awareness of the existential, reciprocal bond between the individual and God. This is the fundamental significance of human beings as created in His image and in His likeness. Prayer includes an appeal for future change, possible when there is no concept of fate. That is, the future is subject to change. The root P-L-L, used in the Hebrew word for prayer, *tefillah*, also suggests hope. The heroes of the Bible pray, usually in a state of distress, for themselves and others, appealing to God to intervene in the natural order and influence the course of events: 'and when Moses prayed unto the Lord, the fire was quenched' (Numbers 11:2). Only a minority of prayers are prayers of thanksgiving. The personal prayers that appear in biblical literature are direct, urgent primal cries that are meant to appease God. In this kind of prayer, the individual, of his own free will, addresses the free will of God, who transcends the laws of nature. The biblical prayer, similar to sacrificial worship, serves God in his creation. Divine worship accords humanity freedom (Schweid 2009, pp. 30–33) and offers humanity the divine reward of wielding control over creation. Biblical freedom is associated with humanity's ability to assert its own claims upon the natural environment and the life-forms it contains. The biblical conception views humankind as created to fulfill a designated mission assigned by God: to complete creation, with humankind itself a crucial part of it.

The verses of the Shema, one of the central Jewish prayers, are comprised of three sections from the Torah. In the second section, along with the obligation to obey the commandments, there is mention of the reward promised to humanity and to the society who obey the commandments, as well as the expected punishment should they fail. This is to say, success in life is promised to those who fulfill the commandments and those who do not abide by them are expected to fail. Nature, separate from humanity, will provide for them by virtue of God's commandment:

And it shall come to pass, if ye shall hearken diligently unto my commandments ... That I will give you the rain of your land in his due season, the first rain and the latter rain, that thou mayest gather in thy corn, and thy wine, and thine oil ... thou mayest eat and be full ... and ye turn aside, and serve other gods, and worship them ... that there be no rain, and that the land yield not her fruit.

(Deuteronomy 11:13–17)

4. Hierarchical Attitudes towards Nature in the West

The Old Testament exhibits a clear and prominent hierarchy in many aspects of creation. At the top of the ladder, the one and only God reigns supreme; this is the Old Testament God, who is separate and superior to all other gods and who demands exclusivity: 'Thou shalt have no other gods before me' (Exodus 20:3); 'thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them' (Exodus 20:5). And since the world is full of objects that one might worship (Kasher 2004, p. 33), he even orders: 'Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth' (Exodus 20:4).

Second in the hierarchical ladder is humanity, the crown of creation: 'For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels ... thou hast put all things under his feet: all sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field; the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea' (Psalms 8:5–8); 'I have said, Ye are gods; and all of you are children of the most High' (Psalms 82:6). The Western tradition, which is

based largely on biblical cosmology, sees humanity as superior to all other creatures. That same hierarchy further orders people, distinguishing between the chosen people and all others, and further distinguishes between different chosen individuals.

The idea of the chosen people makes frequent appearances in the text of Old Testament: 'I give waters in the wilderness ... to give drink to my people, my chosen' (Isaiah 43:20); 'the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth' (Deuteronomy 7:6); 'for the Lord will not forsake his people for his great name's sake: because it hath pleased the Lord to make you his people' (1 Samuel 12:22); 'we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture' (Psalms 100:3). The People of Israel are described in the Old Testament as a chosen nation, separate from other nations and essentially unique. As a result, the narrative of the 'chosen people' has become a dominant narrative among Jewish communities throughout the ages (Gertz 1995, p. 67). For example, Yehuda Halevi's celebrated work *The Kuzari* draws extensively on this narrative. Driven by the desire to bolster the faith in the heart of every member of his nation, Halevi depicts the Jewish people as unique among the nations by virtue of being chosen, of being sanctified by the Lord. He argues his point thus: 'If we were required to keep the Torah because God created us, then all peoples would be equally obligated ... But the Torah was given to us because God brought us out of Egypt and remained attached to us, since we are the chosen of humanity' (Halevi 2017, p. 45). In his eyes, the People of Israel carry the 'seed of chosenness' that distinguishes them from among all other peoples.

The idea of being 'chosen' also appears in the Old Testament as a differentiating factor between tribes and groups. For instance, God distinguishes the tribe of Levi from among the twelve tribes of Israel: 'And I, behold, I have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel' (Numbers 3:12). Out of the chosen tribe of Levi, God picks the Cohens, his priests: 'Take the sum of the sons of Kohath from among the sons of Levi, after their families, by the house of their fathers' (Numbers 4:2). Aharon the priest, forefather to all the priests of Israel, is the son of Amram son of Kohath, and Kohath is the second son of Levi son of Jacob, the originator of the tribe of Levi: 'And to the office of Eleazar the son of Aaron the priest pertaineth the oil for the light' (Numbers 4:16). Their status as a chosen faction confers upon them the responsibility 'to do the work in the tabernacle of the congregation. This shall be the service of the sons of Kohath' (Numbers 4:3–4).

The concept of a hierarchical order among people also appears in the Hellenistic tradition, even though this culture does not see humanity as separate from nature. Aristotle's hierarchical attitude towards animals is also reflected in his view of slavery. According to Aristotelian essentialism, nature creates species in order to make them suitable to fulfilling specific functions, and it is based on this viewpoint that Aristotle establishes a hierarchy among animals, men and women, masters and slaves. As he argues: 'For domestic animals are by nature better than wild ones, and it is better for all of them to be ruled by human beings, since this will secure their safety. Moreover, the relation of male to female is that of the natural superior to the natural inferior, and that of ruler to ruled. But, in fact, the same holds true of all human beings ... For he who can belong to someone else ... is a natural slave' (Aristotle 1998, pp. 8–9).

Plato, on the other hand, objects to the ownership of Greek slaves in his *Republic*. Although he remarks that 'barbarians' may be bought as slaves, for they are slaves by nature, the same cannot be tolerated for Greeks of 'inferior' mental capacities. This because 'there is another class of servants, who are intellectually hardly on the level of companionship; still they have plenty of bodily strength for labor, which accordingly they sell, and are called, if I do not mistake, hirelings, hire being the name which is given to the price of their labor ... Then hirelings will help to make up our population' (Plato [1992] 2004, p. 33).

Slavery, just like the subordination of women to male dominion, was a norm in ancient Greece. Aristotle believed it permissible to enslave human beings who have been found lacking in reason by the same logic as it is permissible to enslave animals. In the ancient world, on the other hand, in Egypt, in the Fertile Crescent and in Assyria, the killing of animals for food outside of ritual sacrifice was considered a crime. After the ritual slaughter, the priests would sometimes whisper apologies to the

animal or punish the knife with which it had been killed. In many instances, the animal intended for the sacrifice would be given special care and food prior to the ritual to compensate for its loss of life (Serpell 2007, pp. 29–30). According to Singer (1998, pp. 3–9), Fisher (1979, pp. 190–92), and others, the subordination of women to men's authority was derived from the hierarchical view of animals and the process of their domestication. Fisher believes that the vertical-hierarchical structure, which places the human master above the animal enslaved to his or her needs, has amplified the cruelty of which human beings are capable and prepared the ground for human slavery (Fisher 1979, p. 197).

Among historians and environmentalists, there are those who believe that the fateful passage in Genesis in which God grants humanity control over animals condemned Western civilization to a path of destruction that has lasted two thousand years (Patterson 2002, p. 16). However, while the Old Testament sanctifies the superiority of humanity over animals in the name of God, it also decrees laws prohibiting the physical or mental abuse of animals, which apply certain restrictions to this principle.² The Greco-Roman tradition, which also had a significant influence on Western culture, established a barrier that separated human beings from animals. Nevertheless, despite the exploitation of animals in the Greco-Roman world, the tradition also identified them with divinities, and sometimes the Gods would be depicted in animal form—unlike the monotheistic Judeo-Christian tradition (Gersht 2007, pp. 79–98).

In fact, Christianity absorbed both the Biblical and the Greek views that asserted the dominance of humanity over the rest of creation, but left out the restraints dictated by Hebrew law. It would seem then that the hierarchical attitudes of mastership over animals, although based on Old Testament and Hellenistic sources, reach their apotheosis in Christianity.

According to Saint Augustine, animals are devoid of a rational soul and therefore one need not pay any attention to their suffering. Augustine proclaims that the sixth commandment, 'thou shalt not kill', does not apply to creatures devoid of reason; they do not belong to the community of rational beings and therefore their lives and deaths are only significant in as far as they are useful to us. In his words: 'When we read "You shall not kill" we assume that this does not refer to bushes, which have no feelings nor to irrational creatures, flying, swimming, or walking ... It is by a just arrangement of the Creator that their life and death is subordinated to our needs' (Augustine 2003, pp. 31–32).

Christian sermons often presented animals, and especially dogs, as instruments of divine punishment or messengers of Satan. The medieval Christian doctrine viewed animals with contempt, because they have no soul. This view, based explicitly on Scripture, prevailed until the beginning of the modern era in Christian Europe. In fact, humanity in the West was defined in terms of the absence of animal qualities or animal behavior (Salisbury 1994, p. 167). Animals were considered impulsive and subject by irrational instincts; conversely, the perfect Christian was expected to control himself by relying on reason and experience. Just as an animal's natural tendency is to fulfill its sexual desire as soon as it arises, so a Christian must abstain from sexual activity, and the same principle applies to eating and more. Human beings, supreme in the hierarchy of creation, have free will and therefore, so preaches the Christian tradition, can and must successfully overcome their nature.

5. Epilogue: First Cracks in the Narrative

The Western world was founded on two traditions: the Biblical tradition and the Greek tradition. The two central masterpieces of Western culture, the Bible and the poetry of Homer, formed the basis upon which subsequent religious and cultural works developed (Knohl 2008, p. 15). Judaism was the native landscape out of which Ancient Christianity emerged and the Hellenistic influence on Christianity came primarily via Jewish Greek-speaking communities, which flourished in the diaspora

² The Jewish tradition's relative compassion towards animals stems from the biblical passages prohibiting animal work on the Sabbath and requiring grazing fields to be allotted to beasts of burden, among others. 'He that killeth an ox is as if he slew a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as if he cut off a dog's neck ... they have chosen their own ways, and their soul delighteth in their abominations' (Isaiah 66:3).

and in Israel itself (Vallee 1999). As stated, acceptance of the world as it is and of fate is a tenet of Greek thought. The Bible endows human beings with free will, which compels them to reject the status quo and to improve upon creation, with a will that drives them to establish dominion over nature. The biblical view of creation sanctifies constant action. Human beings are required to create their own world every day anew; they are given permission to do so since they are a partner in creation. Biblical religion shapes God's image as separate from the world He created, free from the laws of nature, and as such, and in contrast with Greek philosophy, it increases God's freedom and strengthens the power of humans' free choice.

In Western discourse, which evolved out of the Greek and the Biblical points of view and revolves around the question of the similarity and difference between them, there was a shift from a narrative discourse to a rationalist one; 'a shift from mythos to logos' (Lurie 2007, p. 64). However, biblical cosmology remains deeply rooted in the cultural context of the West. Western culture developed based on Biblical cosmology, in which men are likened to God, separate from nature, and impose their will on other creatures. As Nietzsche (1977) claims, the Western approach toward other natural creatures is tyrannical, an attitude that is deeply entrenched in culture and education. He points to four fallacies that form the basis of Western education, one of which is humanity's mistaken self-positioning atop the order of nature. Freud refers to the Western assertion of supremacy over other living creatures as 'man's megalomania' (Patterson 2002, p. 17). A culture founded upon the assumption of a scale of inferiority and superiority within a hierarchy is an inequitable culture in every sense. Indeed, some historians and environmentalists believe that it was the fateful biblical text in Genesis, where God grants human beings dominion over all creatures and all of nature, which set Western civilization on a destructive course that has persisted for two millennia (Patterson 2002, p. 29).

For a number of decades now, some ruptures have begun to form in the pro-dominion Western meta-narrative. Some evidence to this effect lies in the relatively new scientific discussion on sustainability, which has brought the question of human attitudes toward the planet, its resources and life forms, to the fore of academic, political, and public discourse. The science of sustainability is grappling with the basic nature of the reciprocal relationship between nature and society, while attempting to find avenues to promote sustainable development in the political agenda (Clark and Dickson 2003).

Of course, the discussion concerning our attitude toward the planet gains public attention primarily during times of crisis. These include the recent wildfires that destroyed large parts of Australia—an eventuality scientists have been warning against for years, owing to climate change (Yu et al. 2020)—or an epidemic like COVID-19, which has sparked interest in the 'One Health' approach that sees the health and wellbeing of humans and wildlife as co-dependent and as hinging on the overall health of the ecological systems in which both exist (Bonilla-Aldana et al. 2020) (The World Organization for Animal Health, the OIE, in fact, recognizes infectious diseases, including COVID-19, as rooted in environmental factors and wildlife (OIE 2020)). Often, this discussion, which exposes the rifts in the accepted narrative, stirs activity in educational directions as well. In fact, since pro-dominion attitudes toward nature are so deeply rooted in our cultural and cognitive schemas, many believe that the solution, and anticipated change, will stem from educational outreach that changes attitudes and heightens ecological awareness. Transformative learning, according to this approach, will expand human consciousness and deepen our understanding of nature. Steiner (2013), one of the pioneers of this approach, asserted that humanity, along with nature as a whole, is inextricably intertwined with the cosmos, and that education should be the conduit to altering humanity's mistaken self-perception as master of nature. Hill et al. (2004) maintains that heightened ecological awareness should prompt growing numbers of people to self-identify as environmentalists and protect the environment, recognizing that there is a correlation between the ecological crises we experience, low levels of ecological awareness, and a culture that is decidedly divorced from nature. That said, efforts to this effect have not yet brought about the necessary shifts, which points to the fact that educational approaches still need to be improved.

Further rifts in the narrative are evident in the general attitude toward nature among the eclectic group broadly referred to as the New Age movement. The scholarly literature generally identifies this

range of beliefs and practices as a late 19th and early 20th century movement (Heelas 1996), although it began flourishing more broadly in the 1980s in the United States (Berger 1999). While scholarly definitions differ in their emphasis—the movement has been variously defined by scholars as a ‘religion’, a ‘zeitgeist’, a ‘lifestyle’, and a ‘social movement’—Ruach-Midbar (2006) suggests viewing it as a counter-culture or as a culture of critique, with the ‘critique’ being its rejection of the dominant attitude toward nature and ecology. Broadly, the New Age movement is associated with values of individuality, the adoption of feminist thought, and, most relevantly, an ecological worldview (Bruce 1996), all subversive rejections of the biblically-rooted underpinnings of Western culture.

Erich Neumann’s *Mystical Man* (Neumann 2007) presents another interesting cultural critique. Neumann suggests that our attitude toward the earth is informed by the patriarchal Christian conception, dominant in the Middle Ages, that associated the earth with the crude and the carnal, embodying the inferior and dark unconscious of flesh and femininity. In fact, the archetype of body and earth symbolism as decidedly feminine goes back to the biblical period, in which the paternal god principle was dominant, while the maternal goddess and natural principle were repressed. It was, in fact, theological dogma that associated the earth archetype with the dark underworld of the feminine and the spirit archetype with the celestial, divine upper realm of the masculine. The medieval conceptualization of human nature as marked by binary contrasts, suggests Neumann, stems from the biblical creation story, in which God’s celestial spirit is imparted into carnal man, who materializes out of the earth: ‘The Lord God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being’ (Genesis 2:7).

In fact, the Renaissance period did see a gradual easing of dogmatic archetypes, but when Neumann was writing in the first half of the 20th century, he still noted that, all of human progress notwithstanding, the spirit was still firmly associated with the celestial and divorced from the earthly. Particularly in modern times, he stated, humanity, lacking the tools to contend with the Earth Mother, is unwittingly trapped in her net and gets carried away into fighting holy wars over the real God (Neumann 2007). In this context, perhaps it is not surprising then, that so many contemporary New Age spiritual groups are calling for an improved relationship with the Earth and with the environment, and for cultivating the relationship with the mother goddess element.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

References

- Arbel, Ilana. 2006. *Ma? Da! [Foucault and Humanism]*. Tel Aviv: Kinneret, Zmora-Bitan, Dvir-Publishing House Ltd.
- Aristotle. 1929–1934. *The Physics*. Translated by P. H. Wicksteed, and F. M. Cornford. London: W. Heinemann.
- Aristotle. 1998. *Politics*. Translated by C. D. C. Reeve. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company.
- Augustine, Saint. 1991. *Confessions*. Translated by H. Chawick. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Augustine, Saint. 2003. *City of God*. Translated by H. Bettenson. New York: Penguin Classics.
- Barzel, Alexander. 2004. *Matza VeMatzav: Iyunim BeTfizat HaTeva BaMahshava HaYehudit [Platform and Position: Studies on the Perception of Nature in Jewish Thought]*. Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuhad Publishing.
- Berger, Helen. A. 1999. *A Community of Witches: Contemporary Neo-Paganism and Witchcraft in the United States*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press.
- Bonilla-Aldana, D. Katterine, Kuldeep Dhama, and Alfonso J. Rodriguez-Morales. 2020. Revisiting the One Health Approach in the Context of COVID-19: A Look into the Ecology of this Emerging Disease. *Advances in Animal and Veterinary Sciences* 8: 234–37. [CrossRef]
- Boslough, John. 1992. *Masters of Time: How Wormholes, Snakewood and Assaults on the Big Bang Have Brought Mystery Back to the Cosmos*. London: Phoenix.
- Bruce, Steve. 1996. *Religion in the Modern World: From Cathedrals to Cults*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Carus, Titus Lucretius. 1924. *Lucretius on the Nature of Things*. Translated by C. Bailey. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

- Clark, William C., and Nancy M. Dickson. 2003. Sustainability Science: The Emerging Research Program. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 100: 8059–61. [[CrossRef](#)] [[PubMed](#)]
- Deleuze, Gilles. 2006. *Nietzsche and Philosophy*. Translated by Hugh Tomlinson. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Deutsch, Karl W. 1981. On Nationalism, World Religions and the Nature of the West. In *Mobilization, Center-Periphery Structures and Nation-Building*. Edited by P. Torsvik. Oslo: Universitetsforlaget, pp. 51–93.
- Dihle, Albrecht. 1982. *The Theory of Will in Classical Antiquity*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Eilon, Eli. 2005. *Self-Creation: Life, Man and Art according to Nietzsche*. Jerusalem: Magnes Press. (In Hebrew)
- Feuerbach, Ludwig. 1957. *The Essence of Christianity*. New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing.
- Finkelberg, Margalit. 1990. Briat HaOlam BaMitologia HaYevanit [The creation in Greek mythology]. In *Briat HaOlam: BaMada BaMitosis BaEmuna [The Creation in Science, Myth, and Religion]*. Edited by L. Mazor. Jerusalem: Magnes Press, pp. 51–59.
- Fisher, Elizabeth. 1979. *Woman's Creation: Sexual Evolution and the Shaping of Society*. New York: Doubleday.
- Fromm, Erich. 1966. *You Shall Be as Gods: A Radical Interpretation of the Old Testament and its Tradition*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Gelander, Shamai. 2009. *Sefer Bereshit [Genesis]*. Raanana: The Open University Press, vol. 1.
- Gersht, Rivka. 2007. 'Elim UBa'alei Khayim BaOmanut UBaEmuna HaRomi' [Gods and animals in Roman art and religion]. In *Bnei Adam VeKhayot Akherot BeAspekaria Historit [Human Beings and Other Animals in Historical Perspective]*. Edited by B. Arbel, J. Terkel and S. Menache. Jerusalem: Carmel Press.
- Gertz, Nurith. 1995. *Shvuya BeKhaloma [Captive of a Dream]*. Tel Aviv: Am Oved.
- Graves, Robert. 1975. *Introduction to New Larousse Encyclopaedia of Mythology*. London: Hamlyn.
- HaCohen, Ran. 2006. *Mehadshei Habrit HaYeshana: Hitmodedut Khokhmat Israel BeGermania Im Bikoret Hamikra BaMeah HaTsha'esre [Reclaiming the Hebrew Bible: German-Jewish Reception of Biblical Criticism in the Nineteenth Century]*. Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuhad Publishing.
- Halevi, Yehuda. 2017. *The Kuzari: Arguments in Defense of Judaism*. Translated by C. Morrison. Scotts Valley: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.
- Hayes, Bernadette G., and Manussos Marangudakis. 2001. Religion and Attitudes towards Nature in Britain. *British Journal of Sociology* 52: 139–55. [[PubMed](#)]
- Heelas, Paul. 1996. *The New Age Movement: The Celebration of Self and the Sacralization of Modernity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Heraclitus of Ephesus. 1987. *Heraclitus: Fragments*. Translated by T. M. Robinson. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- Heschel, Abraham Joshua. 1976. *God in Search of Man: A Philosophy of Judaism*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux.
- Hill, Stuart, Steve Wilson, and Kevin Watson. 2004. Learning Ecology: A New Approach to Learning and Transforming Ecological Consciousness. In *Learning Toward an Ecological Consciousness: Selected Transformative Practices*. Edited by E. V. O'Sullivan and M. M. Taylor. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Homer. 1870. *The Illiad*. Translated by T. A. Buckley. London: Bell and Daldy.
- Jones, Kate E., Nikkita G. Patel, Marc A. Levy, Adam Storeygard, Deborah Balk, John L. Gittleman, and Peter Daszak. 2008. Global Trends in Emerging Infectious Diseases. *Nature* 451: 990–3. [[CrossRef](#)] [[PubMed](#)]
- Jung, Carl Gustav. 1987. *The Psychology of the Unconscious*. Translated by H. Izak. Tel Aviv: Dvir Press.
- Kanagy, Conrad, and Hart M. Nelson. 1995. Religion and Environmental Concern: Challenging the Dominant Assumptions. *Review of Religious Research* 37: 33–45. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Kasher, Asa. 2004. *Yehadut VeElilut [Judaism and idolatry]*. Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defense Press.
- Kaufmann, Yehezkel. 1971. *Toldot HaEmuna HaIsraelit [History of the Religion of Israel]*. MiGalut Bavel Ad Sof HaNevuah [From the Babylonian Captivity to the End of Prophecy]. Jerusalem: Bialik Institute Publishing, vol. 4.
- Knohl, Israel. 2008. *Mea'in Banu? HaKod HaGeneti Shel HaTanakh [Where Are We from? The Genetic Code of the Bible]*. Tel Aviv: Dvir Press.
- Lurie, Yuval. 2007. *Mavo LeKisemei HaPhilosophia: Etika VeMusal [Introduction to the Magic of Philosophy: Ethics and Morals]*. Beer-Sheva: Ben-Gurion University Press.
- Mack, Hanan'el. 2001. *Mavo LeTfilot Israel [Introduction to the Prayers of Israel]*. Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defense Press.
- Malkin, Yaakov. 2003. *Yehadut Lelo El: Yehadut KeTarbut, Tanakh KeSeirut [Judaism without God: Judaism as Culture, Bible as Literature]*. Jerusalem: Keter Publishing.
- Muffs, Yochanan. 2006. *Ishiyuto Shel Elohim [The Personhood of God]*. Jerusalem: Hartmann Institute.

- Naydler, Jeremy. 1996. *Temple of the Cosmos: The Ancient Egyptian Experience of the Sacred*. Rochester: Inner Traditions.
- Neumann, Erich. 2007. *Mystical Man*. Tel Aviv: Resling Publishing.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. 1977. *Twilight of the Idols; and the Anti-Christ*. Translated by R. J. Hollingdale. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Nir, Bina. 2016. 'Kishalon Hhatzlakha' [A Genealogy of 'Success' and 'Failure' in Western Culture]. Tel Aviv: Resling Publishing.
- OIE. 2020. One Health. Available online: <https://www.oie.int/en/for-the-media/onehealth/> (accessed on 20 February 2020).
- Patterson, Charles. 2002. *Eternal Treblinka*. New York: Lantern Books.
- Philo of Alexandria. 1971. *The Essential Philo*. Edited by Nahum N. Glatzer. New York: Schocken Books.
- Plato. 2004. *The Republic*. Translated by C. D. C. Reeve. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company. First published 1992.
- Plato. 1925. *Plato in Twelve Volumes*. Laws: Books I–VI. Translated by W. Rangeley, and M. Lamb. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, vol. 9.
- Ruach-Midbar, M. 2006. *The New Age Culture in Israel: A Methodological Introduction and Ideological Network*. Ramat Gan: Bar Ilan University.
- Rusinek, Sinai. 2004. Nietzsche: Between genealogy and criticism. *Iyyun: The Jerusalem Philosophical Quarterly* 53: 409–27. (In Hebrew)
- Salisbury, Joyce E. 1994. *The Beast Within*. New York: Routledge.
- Schechter, Rivka. 2007. *HaAdam Bore Et Olamo [Man Creates His World]*. Tel Aviv: Safra.
- Schweid, Eliezer. 2009. *Siddur HaTfila: Philosophia, Shira VeMistorin [The Prayer Siddur: Philosophy, Poetry and Mystery]*. Tel Aviv: Yediot Aharonot and Sifrei Hemed Publishers.
- Serpell, James. 2007. 'Tlayav Shel Elohim: Kitzur Toldot Hayakhas LeBa'alei Khayim VeHaEmunot Legabeyhem BaMa'arav' [God's lambs: A brief history of the attitudes and beliefs concerning animals in the West]. In *Bnei Adam VeKhayot Akherot BeAspeklaria Historit [Human Beings and Other Animals in Historical Perspective]*. Edited by B. Arbel, J. Terkel and S. Menache. Jerusalem: Carmel Press.
- Singer, Peter. 1998. *Animal Liberation*. New York: Harper Collins.
- Steiner, Rudolph. 2013. *Harmony of the Creative Word: The Human Being and the Elemental, Animal, Plant and Mineral Kingdoms*. Translated by M. Barton. Lynmouth: Rudolf Steiner Press.
- Vallee, Gerard. 1999. *The Shaping of Christianity: The History and Literature of Its Formative Centuries 100–800*. New York: Paulist Press.
- White, Lynn. 1967. The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis. *Science* 155: 1203–7. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Wolfson, A. Harry. 1960. The Philonic God of Revelation and His Latter-Day Deniers. *Harvard Theological Review* 53: 101–24. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Wright, G. Ernest. 1968. *The Old Testament Against Its Environment*. London: SCM Press.
- Yu, Pei, Rongbin Xu, Michael J. Abramson, Shanshan Li, and Yuming Guo. 2020. Bushfires in Australia: A Serious Health Emergency Under Climate Change. *The Lancet: Planetary Health* 4: E7–E8. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Zielinski, Tadeusz. 1975. *The Religion of Ancient Greece: An Outline*. Translated by G. Rapall Noyes. Palos Heights: Ares Publishers.

© 2020 by the author. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).