

African Journal of Contextual Theology

SIST, Attakwu Enugu
P.O. Box 9696, Enugu, Nigeria
ajct@sistenugu.com

Subscriptions

The *African Journal of Contextual Theology AJCT* (ISSN 2141-3037) is published annually. The subscription price is the following:

Nigeria: N300 per issue

Foreign: US\$20.00 per issue (including postage)

Payment may be made in cash or by cheque, payable to:

Spiritan International School of Theology, Attakwu
Enugu, Nigeria

The issues are available from Spiritan International School of Theology (cf. address above).

Permissions

For information on how to request permissions to reproduce articles/information from this journal, please visit www.sistenugu.com/ SIST Journal.

All editorial correspondence should be sent to:

The editor-in-chief

African Journal of Contextual Theology

Spiritan International School of Theology, Attakwu

P.O. Box 9696 Enugu, Nigeria

e-mail: editorajct@sistenugu.com ; editorajct@yahoo.com

Advertising

Enquiries about advertising and requests for review of Books should be sent to:

The Editor Advertising

Spiritan International School of Theology, Attakwu

P.O. Box 9696 Enugu, Nigeria

e-mail: ajct@sistenugu.com

Journal Logo: the logo of the Journal is the map of Africa and the SIST logo, with the symbolic depiction of the Holy Spirit and the book. The Holy Spirit inspires our studies (the book) and the context (Africa) in which we do theology.

© All rights reserved; no part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form, or by any means without prior written permission of Spiritan International School of Theology, Attakwu Enugu, Nigeria.

Typeset, printed and bound by:

Change Publications Ltd.

2, Alimosho Road, Iyana-Ipaja, Lagos, Nigeria.

08023266858, 08033314742

2

Creation Account in Genesis 1:1-2:4 as a Model of Political Governance

Luke Emehiele IJEZIE

Catholic Institute of West Africa (CIWA), Port Harcourt

1. Introduction

The account of creation in Genesis 1-3 has been read and interpreted from diverse perspectives, and majority of the readers see in it a clear statement on the origin of the world. This type of reading may continue for some time to take the prime position since the story is told as if it were a factual or historical account of the creation of the universe. However, critical readers and interpreters have continued to point out the fact of the literary and imaginative nature of the account.¹⁸ According to Gerhard von Rad, "When Israel talked of the creation and ordering of the cosmos, she was discussing matters that were topical for the man living here and now."¹⁹ Many elements within the text itself point in many directions, calling the attention of the reader to search for deeper meanings. M. Vervenne puts it well when he considers the book of Genesis as "a marvelous literary work of human imagination which Ancient Israelite society created in order to develop an understanding of the 'condition humaine' and its foundations in the divine realm in particular."²⁰ Just as Israel used the Genesis account to address the condition of life in its society, one can also critically use the same Genesis account to address some complex sociopolitical issues in the contemporary society.

This essay wishes to read the account of creation in Genesis 1:1-2:4 as an act of governance and a model of governance of the

¹⁸ See the recent studies in: A. Wénin, ed., *Studies in the Book of Genesis. Literature, Redaction and History* (BETL 95; Leuven: Univ. Press, 2001); James Alfred Loader, "The Primeval Narrative as a Literary Myth," *OTE* 16 (2003) 309-321.

¹⁹ G. von Rad, *Genesis. A Commentary*, OTL; London: SCM Press, 1972, p48.

²⁰ M. Vervenne, "Genesis 1,1-2,4. The Compositional Texture of the Priestly Overture to the Pentateuch," in *Studies in the Book of Genesis. Literature, Redaction and History*, p35.

universe. The principle that can aid the inquiry may be stated simply: Governance is an act of putting order into reality. It is the ordered reality that can be called a meaningful reality. The creation account is presented as an act of ordering a disordered reality, and it is in the process of this ordering activity that meaning is found.

2. Creation as Progress from Disorder to Order

It is the opinion of most scholars that the opening account of creation in Genesis (1:1-2:4a) belongs to the Priestly writer or the Priestly school, as the case may be.²¹ According to R. Clifford, the account in Gen 1:1-2:4 was composed as a preface to the whole book of Genesis, and more especially the primeval history in Gen 2:4b-11:26.²² This Priestly writer confronts the reality of a disorderly situation at the very beginning of creation. The term "chaos" is purposely avoided here because it appears to give a misleading idea of the situation described in Gen 1:1-2. The situation is better described in general terms as "disorder". The problem of disorder and its resolution by the Creator is a guiding principle for reading many other texts within the Priestly corpus. It can be related to the account of the deluge in Gen 6-9 where God overcomes the forces of disorder in creation and reestablishes a new order with Noah. This is concretized in the Noahic covenant. This covenant, which has come to be regarded as the universal covenant, is meant not just to restore a permanent order on creation but to constitutionalize this order so that it can no longer be broken arbitrarily. In this covenant, God promises with an oath

²¹ See the articulation of this majority opinion in Richard J. Clifford, "The Hebrew Scriptures and the Theology of Creation," *Theological Studies* 46 (1985) 507-553; Vervenne, "Genesis 1, 1-2, 4," pp35-79; M. Bauks, "Genesis 1 als Programmschrift der Priesterschrift [P]," in *Studies in the Book of Genesis*, pp333-345.

²² Clifford, "The Hebrew Scriptures," 520. While many scholars agree on the P origin of Gen 1:1-2:4a and some other P texts in Genesis, there has been much debate on the origin of the other Genesis accounts. Since the mid 1980s there has been a serious rethinking on the identity of what used to be called the Yahwistic (J) and Elohist (E) Sources. The current state of scholarship is that only very few are courageous to argue on the existence of these two sources. Much more emphasis has been laid on the Priestly and Deuteromic/Deuteronomistic Sources with the other materials being attributed to unidentified and miscellaneous sources both antedating and postdating the two major sources. For critical review and bibliography, see J. Blenkinsopp, *The Pentateuch. An Introduction to the First Five Books of the Bible*, New York: Doubleday, 1990, pp1-97, 229-242; E. Nicholson, *The Pentateuch in the Twentieth Century*, Oxford: 1998, pp196-221.

never to allow the flood again to destabilize the created universe. With the Noahic covenant, the unending rhythm of nature and human life is divinely assured.

2.1 *The Disorderly Situation Requiring Ordering (1:1-2)*

The story begins by addressing the problem of disorder in the world which is expressed by the two terms *tohu wabohu* meaning literally “emptiness and formlessness”. This is another way of saying that the earth was void, having no form and thus meaningless. The cause of this formlessness and meaninglessness is expressed in the next half verse (v. 2b) by the three terms, darkness (*hoshek*), abyss (*tehom*) and waters (*mayim*). But the text does not say how these forces of disorder were created in the first place. This has given rise to endless debates and speculations by interpreters. If one takes seriously this Genesis text in its own right as an independent creation narrative, the conclusion would be that these forces were consequent on the first act of creation in 1:1 (“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth”). However one decides to translate this first verse of Genesis 1,²³ one can hardly run away from the fact that the author here expresses the actual creation of heaven and earth. It is problematic to interpret this first verse as a summary of the whole creative act that is narrated in the subsequent verses. What can be deduced from the text is that the creation of the heavens and the earth is a product of one single act. This single act is qualified as *bārā*? (“he created”) in 1:1.

The Hebrew verb root *br'* occurs 49 times in the Hebrew Bible, and 10 of these are in Genesis and all in P texts.²⁴ A particular feature of its use in the Hebrew Bible is that the subject is always

²³ Some interpreters translate the text as “When God began to create the heavens and the earth.” The argument is that phrase *bereshit* is bettered rendered as “when” rather than “in the beginning”. Consequently, the Hebrew verb *bārā*? is rendered as “began to create” rather than the usual sense of the perfect “created”, thus making the whole verse a subordinate clause to v. 2 which functions as the main clause. The arguments for interpreting *bereshit* as “when” rather than “in the beginning” are not convincing enough. One of these arguments is the fact that some ancient Near Eastern texts, like the Babylonian epic of creation, *enuma elish*, begin in that form. But this may not be enough to overlook the peculiarity of the syntax in the Genesis account.

²⁴ See Karl-Heinz Bernhardt, “*bārā*?,” *TDOT* 2, p245.

the divine being.²⁵ As stated above, all the occurrences in Genesis are in P texts (Gen 1:1, 21, 27^{thrice}; 2:3, 4; 5:1, 2; 6:7). Significantly, after its use in Gen 1:1, the author does not use it again to describe the ordering of the universe until v. 21 where it now expresses the coming to be of the animal species. All the occurrences of the verb in the creation account in Gen 1:1-2:4 are with reference to the creation of three entities: the material universe represented by the heavens and the earth (1:1; cf. 2:4), the animal species (1:21) and the human species (1:27). What can be deduced from this is that its use in 1:1 refers to the actual creation of the material universe (the heavens and the earth) as distinguished from its ordering in 1:3-19.

For the author, the creative act represented as *bārā?* in Gen 1:1 inaugurates the history of the universe such that after this v. 1 everything is within the stream of history. So the disorderly situation described in v. 2 is not within prehistory but within the history of the universe already created in v. 1. The point is that the state of creation at this primordial stage is that of a watery mass which the text calls *ṭhôm* (abyss = primeval sea). The Hebrew noun *ṭhôm* occurs 36 times in the Hebrew Bible, and only 4 of these are attested in Genesis (1:2; 7:11; 8:2; 49:25).²⁶ It denotes the great deep containing the great mass of water, and because of this it is often used synonymously with the water itself. In Gen 1:2, it refers to the whole mass of the universe covered with water. Because the whole scenery is one of immense water enveloped in darkness, the author qualifies it as *tohu wabohu* (= a state of formlessness, emptiness). A point to note here for the understanding of the whole text is that the formless universe is not treated as an evil state. Even though, it is interpreted as a disorderly situation, the author does not recount it as a state of rebellion or conflict with opposing forces as in related creation accounts of the neighbouring cultures of the ancient Near East. As Bruce Vawter argues, "There is no reason to look for a hidden

²⁵ See Helmer Ringgren, "*bārā?*," *TDOT* 2, p246.

²⁶ See C. Westermann, "*ṭhôm*," *TLOT* 3, p1411.

mythological allusion, such as to the Phoenician goddess Baau on the one hand or to the Babylonian *Tiamat* on the other.”²⁷ The author probably knew of the myths of creation involving these deities and similar deities within the region, but he chooses to demythologize, to present the issues in a non-mythological way. According to Vawter, “The Priestly author has modeled himself so far on the prevailing mythological pattern and is in a process of waging a subtle polemics against the mythological presuppositions, but his performance throughout is low-key and never obtrusive. He is simply picturing the mess he conceived to be the lot of the world apart from the creative, saving, and sustaining intervention of God.”²⁸

The last point made by Vawter here presupposes that the state of disorder is not a product of the creative act. One then wonders how it came about. Since the writer of this account does not give further explanations, it can be assumed that he purposely wants to present the subsequent acts of divine intervention in creation as determined efforts to bring order in a situation of disorder. This primordial situation is simply a fact of nature taking its own course. The *t'hôm* is never presented in the Old Testament as evil. As seen already, this term occurs four times in Genesis (1:2; 7:11; 8:2; 49:25). In 7:11 and 8:2, the abyss simply denotes the subterranean sea or ocean from which the waters of the flood emerge. In the account of Jacob's blessing of his sons in Gen 49:1-27, the abyss (*t'hôm*) is regarded as a blessing for Joseph: “From the God of your father who will help you, God Almighty who will bless you with the blessings of heaven above, the blessings of the abyss (*t'hôm*) that lies below, the blessings of breasts and womb” (Gen 49: 25). The present text of Gen 1:2 simply expresses the watery universe as a state of formlessness. The subsequent creative acts will consist in governing the natural forces, that is, controlling or regulating the three causes of the disorder: the darkness, the abyss and the waters. The point is that nature needs

²⁷ Bruce Vawter, *On Genesis: A New Reading*, Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1977, p40.

²⁸ Vawter, *On Genesis*, p40.

to be governed and controlled for it to serve its creative purpose.

The situation is further complicated by the report that the divine Spirit (*ruah Elohim*) was hovering over the waters. Some interpreters render *ruah Elohim* here as "terrible storm" or "mighty wind",²⁹ but this appears to reduce the force of the imagery with the divinity. Since the basic meaning of the Hebrew word *ruah* is breath, wind, spirit, the basic idea could still be wind. However, the text presents this wind as a divine force or power which is the same as the divine spirit. What is really meant is that a great storm was stirring the waters.³⁰ This great storm or wind is attributed to God.

2.2 *The Provision of Light (Gen 1:3-5)*

The first act of divine ordering is the provision of light. Here in v. 3 one encounters the first divine speech, "Let there be light!" This emergence of light, which is described in v. 4 as good (*tob*), is presented as a divine intervention to overcome the effect of the darkness. It is noteworthy that the darkness is not destroyed. Rather, it is separated from light. The coming of light carries with it the emergence of time as the darkness marks the night while the light marks the day (v. 5). The darkness, which is actually the absence of light, remains a natural condition. As Norman Habel puts it, "There is no negative verdict on the darkness, no designation of the darkness as evil, sinister or forbidding. The darkness is simply a condition that hides the presence of several components in the primordial domain. Without light the primordial state and any subsequent states of reality remains hidden and unseen."³¹ The darkness serves a useful purpose, that of marking the night.

The point of perplexity here is that among the two opposites (light and darkness) only the light is qualified as good. The darkness is

²⁹ For instance, von Rad, *Genesis*, p49.

³⁰ See von Rad, *Genesis*, p49.

³¹ Norman Habel, "Geophany: The Earth Story in Genesis 1," in *The Earth Story in Genesis*, ed. Norman Habel & Shirley Wurst, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000, p36.

not so qualified. The question then is, Was creation really good from the beginning in v.1? Does the goodness of creation only begin with the creation of light? On this point, one can draw some inspiration from the argument of André Lacocque that the goodness (*tob*) of creation is not to be understood as something innate or intrinsic to the nature of creatures but as 'a dynamic force' operating within history.³² According to Lacocque, "*tob* is no declaration of aesthetic beauty or inner efficiency. It expresses the vocational capacity of the creature to fulfill the expectation of its Creator. Hence, goodness is characterized by order within disorder (or 'order-lessness'), an order brought about by God that is to be made operational, so to speak, by God's human partner."³³ The light is said to be good because it fulfills the dynamic role of bringing order in the midst of disorder. As Lacocque further argues, the harmony or order of the world is not in the nature of things but imposed by divine decree, and only obedience maintains this order.³⁴ This goes on to buttress the fact that nature needs to be controlled or governed so as to enable it achieve its creative purpose. Goodness is a function of this determined effort to govern creation, to bring order and meaning to creation. Any agent or element that functions to effect this order qualifies as good. Thus light is good because it accomplishes the divinely assigned task of illumining the world immersed in darkness.

2.3 *The Control of the Waters (Gen 1:6-8)*

The next act of creation has to do with the governance of the unruly waters covering the universe. This is effected by the creation of the dome or firmament, expressed by the Hebrew word *rāqīaʿ*? (vv 6-8). This functions to separate the waters by marking two levels of water, one above the firmament and the other under the firmament. What this text implies is that the heavens and the earth reportedly created in v. 1 were actually

³² André Lacocque, "Genesis 2-3: Cracks in the Wall. Thinking Creation," in A. Lacocque and P. Ricoeur, *Thinking Biblically: Exegetical and Hermeneutical Studies*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998, pp5-6.

³³ Lacocque, "Cracks in the Wall," p6.

³⁴ Lacocque, "Cracks in the Wall," p6.

enveloped in water. The firmament, apart from controlling the indiscriminate flow of the waters, also serves as a setting for other governing bodies.

2.4 The Provision of Habitable Land (Gen 1:9-13)

The control of the unruly waters continues on the third day with the creation of the mass of water (sea, ocean) and the dry land, called *yabasaḥ* (v. 9). In this way the earth and the waters are made conducive for the emergence of all forms of life. This brings to an end the resolution of the initial crisis caused by the chaotic situation in v. 2. What has happened so far is the empowerment of the created universe to accommodate the emergence of life.

2.5 The Provision and Ordering of the Ecosystem (Gen 1:14-25)

This long section recounts the creation of the heavenly bodies on the fourth day (vv. 14-19) and the creation of all forms of land and aquatic animals on the fifth day (vv. 20-25). The heavenly bodies are the sun, the moon and the stars, and their specific function is to govern the day and night by ensuring the continued separation between the light and the darkness. This is followed by the creation of the animals that fly over the heavens and those that inhabit the waters and the dry land. The two initially created entities of heaven and earth are now in a position to provide habitable environments for life. The whole ecosystem is thus set in order.

2.6 Creation of Human Beings as Provision of Administrative Staff (Gen 1:26-31)

The creation of the humans on the sixth day marks the crowning point of the whole creation. It is the only act of creation preceded by divine deliberation, as in the statement, "Let us make man (*'ādām*)" (v. 26)! The word *'ādām* is used here in a generic sense, denoting human beings in general, comprising male and female. The text of v. 26 makes it clear that human beings are created for a specific purpose, to take over the governance of the whole created universe. The Hebrew verb used to express this is *rādāḥ* which

means “to rule”. The verb is used 22 times in the Old Testament, and in all these it refers always to human rule as distinguished from divine dominion.³⁵ The Creator, as it were, hands over to human beings the continued creative activity in the world, which is actually the further control and development of the created world. To be able to accomplish this assignment, the human being is created in the image (*selem*) and likeness (*demut*) of Elohim (God). Much has been written on the meanings of these terms, image (*selem*) and likeness (*demut*). According to von Rad, *selem* means an image in the sense of a duplicate, an actual plastic work, an idol, while *demut* denotes “likeness” in the sense of the abstract idea of appearance, similarity, analogy, and sometimes, a copy.³⁶ Von Rad argues that these terms express also the corporeal resemblance of the human being to the divine being and not just the intellectual or spiritual resemblance, as often thought.³⁷ The use of the two terms, image and likeness, is an idiomatic way of saying that the human being in his totality is made to resemble the divine beings. The creation of humans is presented as a democratic activity. The Deity, as it were, invites the whole divine family to a consensus decision. “Let us make man in our own image and likeness!” Until this moment the work of creating and ordering appears to have been a unilateral operation. After this climatic event, the divine beings will withdraw from direct involvement. Human beings will take over. God wants to establish a structured government with the human being as his minister.

The whole text of Gen 1:1-31 can be read as the story of how human beings came to be, how the Creator prepared the universe for the emergence of human life. This is confirmed by the fact that the whole creation is put at the disposal of human beings to govern and to use.³⁸ This is well articulated in vv. 28-29: “God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth

³⁵ See William White, “*rādā*,” *TWOT2*, p833.

³⁶ Von Rad, *Genesis*, pp57-58.

³⁷ Von Rad, *Genesis*, p58.

³⁸ A contrary view is argued by Habel (“Geophany: The Earth Story in Genesis 1,” pp34-48) who sees the whole text as a story of Earth, with the human appearance playing a disruptive role.

and subdue (*kibš*) it. Be masters of the fish of the sea, the birds of heaven and all the living creatures that move on the earth.' God said, 'See, I give to you all the seed-bearing plants everywhere on the surface of the earth, and all the trees with seed-bearing fruit; this will be your food.'" According to this text, the human leadership role in creation consists mainly in subduing and mastering the earth. According to Blenkinsopp, this means "replicating on earth the order established by God in the cosmos as a whole."³⁹ The verb *kbš* (to subdue) expresses the sense of effective control and subjection. In other words, the earth together with all its contents is to be brought under complete human governance. Sometimes one notices the tendency to read this text ideologically to suit nuanced ecological views. The human being is not made to adore the earth or to remain subservient to the natural condition of the earth. Rather, responsible cosmic leadership involves constant transformation and development of the earth and its resources.

3. The Seventh Day Rest as Institutionalization of Order (2:1-4)

With the creation of human beings on the sixth day as the administrative staff of the whole created order, the reported rest of the Creator on the seventh day (2:1-4a) becomes very logical. This seventh day rest is presented as the myth of the origin of the later Israelite Sabbath observance. The Sabbath law is given as path of the Sinai covenant (Exod 20:8-11).

The law of the Sabbath is based on doing exactly as God did (*imitatio Dei*). According to Hasel, the human being, who is made in the *imago Dei* (Gen 1:26-28), is invited to express his likeness to God through *imitatio Dei* by the seventh-day rest, and in this way he acknowledges God as his Creator.⁴⁰ An important feature of Priestly theology is that union with the divine is achieved through imitation of the divine, a point that comes out clearly in

³⁹ Blenkinsopp, *The Pentateuch*, p62.

⁴⁰ G. F. Hasel, "Sabbath," *ABD* 5, p851.

the divine injunction: "Be you holy since I YHWH your God am holy" (Lev 11:44-45; 19:2; 20:7,26). J. Klawans points to two organizing principles central to the Priestly traditions of the Pentateuch, and these are: the imitation of God (*imitatio Dei*) and the maintenance of the divine presence in the community. According to him, the purity regulations are based on separating the people from whatever makes them less God-like, as only a state of ritual purity enables one to approach the divine presence.⁴¹ This makes meaningful logic for the seventh day rest after creation. Since human beings are made to resemble the divinity and to continue the work of creating, they are to express this likeness to the divinity by observing the Sabbath.

4. Political Governance of the Universe

The government of the universe can be identified as a basic theme of the biblical narrative. It informs the creation accounts and gives coherence to the whole gamut of the accounts of Israel's history. The Bible is not really about the history of Israel per se, but about the government of the universe within which Israel is divinely chosen to play a prominent role. The centre is not Israel, but God or YHWH himself. Israel acts as the instrument of the divine governance. The human being is created to serve in this work of governance. Even when the creation of the woman is recounted in the text of Genesis 23, the stated aim is to help the man in the work of service.

The whole account provides a rich material for contextual reflection on theological and sociopolitical levels. According to Vervenne, the text of Genesis 1-3 "is a text written to serve as a tool for the readers/listeners to define their religious, cultural and macro-political identity."⁴² The text of Gen 1:1-2:4a, particularly, presents a model of effective governance which can be applied on the political, religious and diverse cultural levels. This model is four-dimensional: a. the control of natural and environmental

⁴¹ J. Klawans, "Pure Violence: Sacrifice and Defilement in Ancient Israel", *HTR* 94 (2001) 133-155.

⁴² Vervenne, "Genesis 1,1-2,4," p43.

forces; b. structural and institutional development; c. provision of effective administrative staff; d. fidelity to the Creator's will.

4.1 *Control of Natural and Environmental Forces*

Natural forces can become destructive of the creative order if they are left on their own. They need to be constantly controlled for the benefit of living beings. The human being has been empowered to take control of these forces. As a matter of fact, the contemporary world suffers from a host of controllable natural forces. These forces have brought about the diminishing of life both qualitatively and quantitatively. Africa suffers most in this menace of natural and environmental forces. Natural forces, such as drought, erosion, bad roads and various forms of natural and airborne diseases still pose great dangers to life in African nations. Most of these are consequences of undeveloped natural surroundings or environmental degradation. The state of nature is a state of underdevelopment. This is why integral human development is indispensable. This is done through sound education. A society that remains largely uneducated is often menaced by primordial instincts.

4.2 *Structural and Institutional Development*

A recurring feature in the creation account is the establishment of structures to ensure effective maintenance of order in the universe. The firmament and the sea were created as structures to control the unruly nature of the waters and to provide space for cosmic life. In the same vein, the sun, the moon and the stars were established as institutional structures to maintain the regularity of light, the times and the seasons. Thus, the regularity of space and time is assured with the provision of these regulating bodies. Development in any society depends on the existence of good structures and strong institutions. Weak social and political structures have been the bane of most African societies. In what is called the theory of social forces, Theodore Brameld states, "In order that human nature may reach the heights of fulfillment of which we now know it is capable, we are required not only to reconstruct institutional patterns but to analyze, utilize, or

paralyze, as the case may be, those forces in our culture which accelerate or retard such reconstruction."⁴³

4.3 *Provision of Competent Leadership*

The whole creation account attests to how the Creator progressively empowers different cadres of creation to function as agents of cosmic control and governance. This reaches its climax in the creation of humans. The creation of human beings has the expressed aim of establishing competent and efficient leadership personnel for the continued governance of the universe. Just as God governs the universe through collaborative leadership, empowering all to take part, in the same way, the human beings created to resemble the divine being are expected to continue this pattern of collaborative administration. A society develops better when the system of leadership is well defined and collaboratively structured. One of the tragic experiences of contemporary African states is the discontinuity between the collaboratively structured systems of traditional politics and the imported new forms of political organization. This point is elaborately analyzed by Elochukwu Uzukwu who laments the current autocratic and anti-people leadership in most African societies.⁴⁴ According to him, "The traditional African experience of democratization has the power of transforming African societies, and of making the church in Africa witness to an alternative society."⁴⁵

4.4 *Fidelity to the Will of the Creator*

Creation has a purpose and this purpose has to be realized. In the creation account, one sees a pattern of command and execution. The Creator gives a command and this is obeyed, leading to the emergence of things. The earth is given a command to produce and it accomplishes this in obedience to the Creator's command. The continued order in creation depends on the human obedience

⁴³ Theodore Brameld, "Education as Reconstruction," in *Education for What? Readings in the Ends of Education*, ed. Charles H. Monson, Jr.; Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1970, p51.

⁴⁴ Elochukwu E. Uzukwu, "A Servant Church in a New African Nation: Leadership as a Service of Listening," *Bulletin of Ecumenical Theology* 6/1 (1994) 4-32.

⁴⁵ Uzukwu, "A Servant Church," p5.

to this command of the Creator. This is in line with the point made by Lacocque that order is not intrinsic to the nature of things but imposed by the Creator. For him, only obedience to the divine command brings about order in creation.⁴⁶ It is a both a religious and historical fact that a society grows only on the basis of the fear of God which expresses itself in the rule of law. Here one finds the relationship between creation and the Torah in the Israelite context, which translates into a creation-covenant relationship. This nuanced relationship between creation and covenant is well articulated by Mary Sylvia Nwachukwu as she links the theme of human obligation to obey the divine command to rule creation and God's unilateral and unconditional commitment to save humanity vulnerable to weakness and infidelity.⁴⁷ It is this grace-dimension of the God-human relationship that has continued to sustain creation despite the continued recklessness of the human partner. Lawlessness brings about both human and ecological disaster, but God's mercy and covenant commitment continue to hold creation in place. As a matter of fact the contemporary society can develop better to the extent human beings recognize their responsibility in creation and respond with fidelity to the divine ordinance to take effective control of creation and its allied forces.

5. Conclusion

The account of creation in Gen 1:1-2:4 has continued to be studied from diverse perspectives. The text is so reach that one can hardly claim to say all the relevant things that should be said on it. This essay has studied the text from the point of view of governance. One of the key elements of the elements of the analysis is the consideration of the reading of Gen 1:1-2 as the description of the first act of creation and not a summary of the whole account. In this way, the real message of the text is made to sound out. The text is seen as offering a coherent model of

⁴⁶ Lacocque, "Cracks in the Wall," p6.

⁴⁷ Mary Sylvia Nwachukwu, *Creation-Covenant Scheme and Justification by Faith: A Canonical Study of the God-Human Drama in the Pentateuch and the Letter to the Romans*, Tesi Gregoriana, Serie Teologia 89; Roma: EPU, 2002, pp47-84.

political governance which serves as a challenge to all political systems. The fact is that the divine command to human beings to continue the task of creation is best realized through effective political governance. Most of the ecological disasters and challenges of natural forces in the contemporary world and society can best be confronted by competent and responsible political leadership.