Exploring The Roles of Women in The Bible in Efforts to Preserve The Environment in Indonesia

Rama Yanti Simorangkir
Luther Seminary, Minnesota, USA
panggbeanaya@ymail.com

Julius S Sibagariang
Sekolah Tinggi Teologi Cipanas
Juliusstefanus4@gmail.com

Abstract
This article aims to inspire readers to participate in advocating for environmental conservation. Through a reading of the Bible focusing on the role of women, the author intends to highlight the role of women in addressing the current ecological crisis, particularly in Indonesia. The author will employ a descriptive qualitative method with a literature review using a descriptive feminist reading approach from various sources, including the Bible. The current environmental crisis challenges believers to develop a biblical reading that emphasizes environmental preservation. This is crucial due to the impact of exploitation on nature and women within patriarchal cultures that still dominate societal culture and development.

Keywords: Eco-theology; Environment; Woman; Bible

Abstrak

Kata kunci: Eko-teologi; Lingkungan; Perempuan; Alkitab
Introduction

Eco-theology comes from two words, namely ecology and theology. Ecology was first introduced by a biologist, Ernst Haeckel (1866)\(^1\), who came from Germany. The term ecology comes from the Greek words *oikos*\(^2\), which means house, and *logia* or *logos*, which means science. So, literally, ecology can be interpreted as the science of living things and their homes.\(^3\) Theology comes from two Greek words, namely "*theos*" which means God and "*logos*" which means science. So Theology is the science that studies God. From the explanation above, it can be concluded that eco-theology is a science that discusses the relationship between living creatures and their home and God.

The Earth is forms a living system that involves active humankind participation as an inseparable element of nature. For the earth's sustainability, we need to build healthy communities with no discrimination, recognize the intrinsic value of creations, and consider the earth's sustainability for the current and future generations.\(^4\) Building a healthy society necessitates healthy interactions among communities, including exploring the unique role of women in nature, which has often been overlooked and influenced by the long-established patriarchal system that impedes the creative power and potential women possess.

Women's liberation is crucial in granting rights and equality and involves a fundamental shift in the perception or doctrine of women's roles. It is essential to view women as autonomous individuals, not just conforming to patriarchal norms but also to create a fair, healthy, and sustainable society. Exploring the role of women in the environment does not mean sidelining the role of men, nor is it about comparing which is better because "*oikos*" requires the contribution of every element within it.

To talk about women’s liberation, we need to return to the Bible and understand the fundamental view of women. We must seek a deeper understanding of the women portrayed in it. It's crucial to explore the social and cultural context to find the *kerygma*

\(^{1}\) Iswandi U and Eri Barlian, *Ekologi Manusia (Human Ecology)* (Sleman: Deepublish, 2021), 1.
\(^{2}\) “According to Borrong, Oikos Has Two Functions, Namely as a Place of Residence (Oikoimene) and as a Source of Life (Oikoimene),”. Robert P Borrong, *Etika Bumi Baru : Akses Etika Dalam Pengelolaan Lingkungan Hidup* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1999), 17.
or the essential message of women’s role in the Bible. As we know, God, the Creator of this earth, is often depicted as a masculine figure, possessing power, automatically ingrating the notion that those who are masculine have authority and play an active role on this earth. In connection with this, Soles, in her book "Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching - Women in the Bible," quotes Ludwig Wittgenstein, the philosopher of religion, noting that “The limits of my language mean the limits of my world.” Here, Soles emphasizes that our limitations in describing God through language tend to lean towards the masculine.

Although the Bible also portrays God with maternal attributes, the social construction built over time tends to reflect the image of God as male rather than female. This is influenced by the social constructions that have been established. This then creates gender inequality, especially when there are attributes considered essential to women but do not align with patriarchal culture. This is also so where religion participates in a society’s distinction between private and public domains. Soles perspective aligned with Hylen view that gender is a social construct, not a biological category enduring over time but constructed by culture, influencing politics, society, and religion.

Christianity with its roots in the Hebrew and Greco-Roman worlds has perpetuated a patriarchy that marginalized women and non-human nature. This is done by presenting a patriarchal God who is outside and against nature. God is depicted as the Father. This concept influences people's lives. The public sphere in the religious sector is usually dominated by men, while women are in the private or domestic

---

sphere. However, we also need to realize that besides God being portrayed with the masculine concept "Elohim," God is also introduced with the feminine concept "ru-ah".

Hylen emphasizes that to understand women's lives in the Bible comprehensively, we must consider evidence from the legal, social, and material conditions of women's lives alongside philosophical conceptions of sex and gender. This underscores the importance of the idea that gender is socially constructed. Soles asserts that hundreds of named and unnamed women are in the Bible. The Indexes of named and unnamed women in the CEB Women's Bible show 344 (178 named, 168 unnamed). Among these names, we can envision the various narratives of women in the Bible, which should open our understanding of women's values, roles, and actions in responding to God's will. However, Pietz emphasizes the importance of accurate contextual and historical analysis to explore women's roles in the Bible and identify elements of women's empowerment. This ensures that women's empowerment exploring the bible does not distort the kerygma intended to be conveyed to contemporary readers.

In the book “Women in the Bible”, Soles begins the chapter with the story of marginalized women "Of Canaanites and Canines" in Matthew 15 and how she struggles to speak about the problem she deals with so that Jesus can give attention. In a society dominated by a male-centric culture, life as a widow is very challenging because women must be under the shelter and protection of men to gain social, political, and even economic access. Soles interpretation depicts the Canaanite woman referred to as "Syro-Phoenician." The word describes to the reader that the widow not only struggles because of her sick child but also her status as a widow; she is also marginalized religiously, considered impure, and not counted among the Israelites. This story serves as a call to uplift and support women and anyone marginalized, to be allies for those needing healing and liberation, to stand with the marginalized, to speak out against the suffering they endure, and not conform to the status quo.

---

13 Jennifer Vija Pietz, Mary Magdalene, La Malinche, and the Ethics of Interpretation (Lanham: Fortress Press, 2022), 196.
Apart from the dominant patriarchal culture that drives this research, it should be noted that environmental damage can also be caused by development and prosperity in the industrialization process. Currently, the importance and important role of the environment and natural resources in the development of various countries, especially in Indonesia, cannot be denied. This is because the environment is a place of life and provides most of the humans' basic needs in life. This article also wants to state that women who are part of it have a big role in this. The role of women has a direct impact on the environment in the management of the home and in the areas of production and disposal.

Many studies have emerged that examine women's relationship with nature and their contributions, which is also known as eco-feminism. Research has also emerged linking nature and women and theology to the environmental crisis. In this article the author wants to provide an excavation of the Bible regarding the role of women in the environment created by God. The author will take three examples of female Bible characters who made major contributions to the environment created by God. To enrich this research, the author also relates it to more practical matters related to the role of

---


women in the Bible for the environment, especially in the Indonesian context. The author will also show several Indonesian female figures who have played a role in environmental change. The author hopes that this article can encourage and encourage women to play a role in preserving the environment created by God.

This is necessary to considering the Indonesian context that in some areas were experiencing very serious environmental damage, such as in North Sumatra (Lake Toba Region, Tanah Batak), West Sumatra (Mentawai), Sulawesi, Kalimantan, Papua, etc. In the North Sumatra region, the Tapanuli Forest and its ecosystem are starting to be disturbed. Not only forests, the famous lake, namely Lake Toba, has been polluted. Ecological damage in this region is also caused by the presence of large capitalized companies that are not environmentally friendly. In Sulawesi since the 1970s began commercial logging operations which caused forests cleared for agriculture and land settlement schemes. Gold and Nickel mines were opened in the early 1980s, while oil palm plantations were established in the early 1990s mostly in West Sulawesi and resulted in ecological damage.

Method

The author of this research used descriptive qualitative research with a literature study. The literature study is related to activities related to methods of collecting library data, reading and taking notes as well as processing research materials. Literature study was carried out using a feminist descriptive reading analysis approach. The author will use literature and the Bible. This is done in the context of environmental awareness and ecological hermeneutics interests. As expressed by Norman Habel, there is a need


to recognize nature as a subject in the text and empathetically look at how the earth is treated: whether silenced, oppressed, or given freedom. In particular, the author will look at the role of female characters in the Bible in their role towards the environment. By knowing the role of women figures in the Bible, it will provide clarity and encouragement for the role of women today, especially in Indonesia, to protect the environment. Exploring this legacy opens up possible opportunities in the future.

**Findings and Discussion**

1. **Relationship between Women and the Environment**

   Humans and the environment are one unit that coexist and interact with each other. Humans need the environment to live and the environment needs humans to live. Humans are very dependent on the environment and on the other hand, the environment also depends on human activities. The environment is created as a part of human life that can be used and preserved. Nature can also be understood as a home where one lives. Because of this, humans need to organize a home in an environment that is suitable for living in and supports and allows life to develop within it.

   The environment is not just rain play deforestation, wild birds, and holes in the ozone work, layer; it is also where people live and work. Talking about the environment cannot be separated from the role of women. The issue of environmental preservation is closely related to the role of women. Women have an attachment to the environment which can be seen through women’s activities which cannot be separated from the environment.

   The relationship between women and ecology is visible in eco-feminism. Eco-feminism was popularized by Francoise D'Eaubann in 1974 to express the double exploitation of nature (in excess of production) and of women (in excess of

---

reproduction). This was then continued by Shiva as a new approach to analyzing women's and ecological issues. Shiva mobilizes women in the green revolution towards nature, land, seeds and biodiversity. Eco-feminism emphasizes the existence of a harmonious relationship between women and nature.

Women and the environment are two interrelated entities. For women, nature is life because it provides shelter and sources of life for the survival of their families and communities. Women and the environment have similar roles as providers of life, both physically and through work (providers of water, food and clothing). Women and the environment have a role in the production and reproduction of life. In addition, women and the environment are also in the same position as material, inferior objects, and nature that must be controlled.

Environmental components such as soil, water, air and forests are a source of life for women as caregivers and food producers. Therefore, if there is damage to the environment and natural resources, it will cause many problems for women's lives, because environmental and natural resource problems are not gender neutral, because when environmental damage occurs, women are most at risk of being affected. Environmental damage affects women's health and the economy. Therefore, environmental damage can destroy women's lives.

So far, women have been under-included in environmental management, be it in access, participation, control, and benefits and women are also less knowledgeable about how to manage the environment including waste management and prevention of environmental pollution. Based on the aforementioned reality, women need to be given a greater role to play a role and participate in environmental preservation. If tracing history in ancient times, women were decisive in managing land and nature aimed at the

---

needs of their families or colonies. Women have a strategic role to protect and preserve the environment, to monitor environmental damage and pollution and can become "agents of change" and policy makers.

It is clear that the environment and women cannot be separated. Women have a big role in preventing and treating environmental crises. Seeing this, the author's will examine the attitudes of women in the Bible towards their surrounding environment. This is useful as encouragement and dedication for women to fight to protect and maintain the environment which is a source of life. This principle of prioritizing the role of women makes humans care more about and care for nature.34

2. The Role of Women in the Environment in the Bible

Ways of thinking that lead to the destruction of the earth and exploitation of animals are often ways of thinking that lead to the exploitation of women. Women are suffering, the Earth is suffering, and their voices are unheard. Open the horizons of our thinking to continue exploring the role of women in the Bible, to hear the voice of women and the earth. Although the Bible does not explicitly address environmental issues, the values demonstrated by women in the Bible can be applied to current environmental conservation. Women in the Bible serve as exemplary role models in leadership, compassion, courage, and commitment to various environmental issues. I see that, in the Bible, there is an opportunity to explore the role of Eve in science, Esther in environmental crisis advocacy, Lydia in economic aspects, and others. Because environmental issues are closely related to science, the economy, advocacy, and empowerment, the author’s very interested in delving further into these three figures.

2.1 Eve, the Wise Mother, “The mother of All Living”.

The Eve story is very interesting because she is named "Hawwa" because she becomes the mother of all living beings. She is a mother not only to the humans she gives birth to but to all living creatures, including humans and non-humans. This name

indicates Eve's closeness to nature and her power over all living things—a mother's power. The word "mother" has the right meaning to define the word "dominion" in Genesis 1:26-28. "Dominion" is not an abuse of power but empowerment, a kind task of a mother who nurtures, cares for nature and is able to continue the creative process with the creativity that God has given her.\(^\text{35}\) This is significantly different from the traditional anthropocentric concept that overly focuses on humans as rulers without considering the intrinsic value of other creatures. In the context of eco-theology, Drummond emphasizes that "dominion" is reinterpreted to underscore the responsibility to take care of the earth and the relationship between humans and all creation, with responsibility based on wisdom, respect, and ecological justice.\(^\text{36}\) It is crucial to highlight Eve as the mother of all living beings.

However, traditional interpretations often diminish the role of Eve and describe the human narrative in Genesis 2:7-3:24 as a confirmation of male superiority and female inferiority, presented as part of God's divine plan. This perspective emerges from the notion that women are deemed the root cause of sin, the creators of problems, and the primary catalyst for humanity's fall into sin. Consequently, women are portrayed as weak, untrustworthy, irresponsible, easily deceived, and perceived as simple. This understanding also includes the notion that men were created first (as a symbol of superiority), and women were created as helpers to heal the loneliness of men. Such paradigms and interpretations persist in society, contributing to inequality in the social structure.\(^\text{37}\) Therefore, the story of human creation in the Book of Genesis is not intended as a doctrine to establish male superiority over women or assert any race's superiority. Instead, it aims to illustrate the interconnected relationship between God, humanity, and nature. It is not about gender superiority but understanding humanity's shared responsibility towards creation. This responsibility involves preserving, caring for, and nurturing with love, fostering a harmonious relationship with nature.

Soles described Eve as a symbolic mother of scientists, doctors, and first responders—individuals who incubate and sustain human lives. Moreover, she is the mother of botanists, zoologists, and ecological activists—those who recognize that

\(^{35}\) Soles, Women in the Bible, 106.

\(^{36}\) Celia Deane Drummond, A Primer in Ecotheology: Theology for a Fragile Earth (Cascade Companions) (Oregon: Cascade Books, 2017), 11.

\(^{37}\) Soles, Women in the Bible, 108.
humans are but one thread in the intricate tapestry of God's creation. Eve emerges as the mother of life and the first theologian and academic. Curiosity propels her to explore the intricacies of her world—its workings, mysteries, and purpose. Armed with the sensory gifts bestowed by God—sight, smell, hearing, touch, and taste—she embraces a holistic approach to acquiring knowledge. Unafraid to take risks and challenge boundaries, Eve seeks genuine limits rather than accepting untested hearsay that others may passively adopt out of fear or lethargy. Clark-Soles also quotes the reflection of Phyllis in Genesis 3 and observes that Eve's response to the serpent reveals her as intelligent, informed, and perceptive. She becomes a theologian, an ethicist, a hermeneutics, and a rabbi—speaking with clarity and authority. Eve emerges as a beautifully complex figure, resonating with the complexity inherent in each of us.38

Soles also highlights the narrative from Genesis 4:1, where Eve gives birth to Cain. She names Cain because "I have produced a man with the help of the Lord". The name Cain comes from the word “Qaniti,” the first singular of "Qana," which means to create. Creativity signifies the ability to create or generate. The naming of Cain by Eve to her son is a manifestation of Eve's creativity. By giving the name Cain to her son, Eve expresses that God has granted her the ability to continue the creative process or the ongoing creation.39 The author's understand that as “creatio continuo” or the continuity of creation.

In the context of eco-theology, the author's see Eve's naming of Cain as an expression of human creativity, and the responsibility of this creativity is to continue the sustainability of nature/creation. In this context, Eve's creativity reflects the role of women in preserving life and strengthens the understanding that humans are responsible for caring for nature for its continuity. By naming Cain, Eve demonstrates her participation in the ongoing creative process, in line with the Creator's will. This implies that women also have a key role in maintaining and protecting biodiversity and interconnected ecosystems. Therefore, in the decision-making processes of environmental programs, the role of women is crucial, as women possess the creativity for it. Thus, the depiction of Eve's creativity in eco-theology can be interpreted as a call

to see women as active partners in nature conservation and to create a balanced relationship between humans and nature, which is part of God's Will.

Based on the interpretation of Soles, the author’s agree that the story the interpretation of the character of Eve in Genesis 3 transforms or inspires a new perspective of a story of *humanity's fall into sin* to a story of *how knowledge, wisdom, and insight began in human life*. This narrative, delving into the intersection of humanity and science, is profoundly inspiring. Pope Francis's encyclical underlines the complementary relationship between science and religion, emphasizing their collaboration in navigating the complexities of our world. Science and religion are likened to a vehicle heading towards a destination, with religion as the compass guiding our steps. While science propels us to our destination, religion illuminates the right path. Both are valuable, addressing different facets of life and decision-making.

The portrayal of Eve in the biblical narrative, where science intertwines with the human story and religion harmonizes with science, represents a crucial understanding of ecological awareness. Eve's character can be an extraordinary role model for the earth’s continuity, integral ecology, and the relationship between theology and science. Eve's legacy transcends ancient texts, becoming a timeless symbol of resilience, intellectual curiosity, and ecological consciousness in our modern era. Inspired by Eve's example, we can embrace our roles as stewards of the Earth, acknowledging the interconnectedness of all living things and striving for a harmonious coexistence with the diverse tapestry of creation. Eve, the ancient mother, echoes through the ages, encouraging us to explore, question, and care for the world around us as we unravel the mysteries of our shared existence. In the context of Indonesia, this concept can be related to motherland (Ibu Pertiwi). Motherland (Ibu Pertiwi), also called "mother earth", is familiar at least to the generation born in the 1990s, as one of the songs from the national anthem "Ibu Pertiwi" by Kamsidi Samsudin. This can influence behavior in relation to the environment. Motherland (Ibu Pertiwi) is a "mother" who gives birth, encouraging us to explore, question, and care for the world around us as we unravel the mysteries of our shared existence.

---


preserves nature and life. The author’s curious to explore this figure further because Eve's story encourages women's participation in education, training, and science to share knowledge about creative and innovative sustainable living.

2.2 Wise Women in Proverb 31 and Lydia in Acts 16

Economics is like a money coin, having two sides – the negative and positive. It possesses the power to both destroy and build. A healthy economy requires wise and sustainable management of natural resources. Batara Sihombing emphasizes that ecological crises result from human sin, driven by greed to exploit nature. In the Indonesian context, this greed is evident in annual forest fires in Sumatra, Kalimantan, and Sulawesi. He points out in the Bible that greed is considered idolatry (Colossians 3:5). This is a disgusted sin before God. The ecological crisis is fundamentally linked to the pursuit of money, identified as the root of all evil in 1 Timothy 6:10. Ecological and economic crises are strongly connected to greedy behavior. Hence, wisdom is needed in controlling economic power and promoting empowerment rather than abusing power.

Discussing economics and empowerment, the author's find Lydia in Acts 16 to be an exemplary figure. She is a business woman who conducts economic affairs wisely, without greed. Instead, she utilizes economics to support Paul’s service and empower those around her. Through an ecological lens, we see how economics, beyond being a primary cause of earth destruction, can also be a means for earth restoration and empowering local communities.

Lydia, a business woman and the head of her household provided everything Paul needed and his ministry during their stay in Philippi (Acts 16). According to Susan E. Hylen, without some knowledge of the cultural context, it is difficult to know whether it was common for women to be heads of household, to run businesses, or to offer hospitality to traveling teachers. Soles explores Lydia's character, drawing

---

42 Stefanus, “Land is the "Womb" of Papuan Women.”, 55
parallels with the figure described in Proverbs 31 as a wise woman. The wise woman in Proverbs 31 is portrayed as having excellent business and managerial skills, being physically, intellectually, and morally wise, and being a highly talented entrepreneur—all of which align with Lydia's story (Acts 16). Yes, Lydia as a businesswoman selling purple cloth, holds a symbolic nobility and significance.

Lydia also managed her household exceptionally well. The traits of a good manager and leadership are evident in her. When Lydia repented, her household followed suit and received baptism, reflecting her significant role in her home, akin to the portrayal of the Wise Woman in Proverbs 31, who holds similar strength, influence, and roles in her household. Based on this interpretation, the author's see that Lydia, the businesswoman, can be a model of a smart and environmentally friendly economic actor. She is a creative woman who is not selfish or greedy, empowering her surrounding community without harming the ecosystem. In other words, she creates economic value and positively impacts the environment and society, inspiring a new paradigm about the relationship between economy and ecology. The economy can be used to restore ecology.

Next, Soles explains that some scholars propose that the “Wise Woman” in Proverbs 31 is not just an idealized depiction of specific women but a portrayal of truly wise women. Based on this, I see that every woman can embody wisdom because that is a woman's true identity. Women possess influence, authority, and excellent managerial abilities, selflessly considering collective interests rather than personal gain. Women can be environmentally friendly economic actors, empowering their surrounding communities. Women can play a significant role in managing the economy as a force for empowerment rather than abuse of power.

The restoration of the earth and the economy requires roles within wise women's skills. Hence, it is essential to provide opportunities for women to engage, develop themselves, and grow into wise women. Women can support businesses committed to sustainable practices, perhaps by starting their own businesses or supporting enterprises with positive environmental and community impacts.

46 Soles, Women in the Bible, 113.
2.3 Esther, a Clever Woman Who Saves Her People.

The Earth is in crisis condition, and the book of Esther tells the story of the nation of Israel facing a similar crisis, almost dying. In Esther's story, all Jews were under the threat of being killed in the Persian Empire, but Mordecai and Queen Esther saved them. Queen Esther took a big risk to rescue her people, and the situation turned around. The ones who planned to harm the Jews ended up suffering. This book shows how Israel was in a tough spot, facing the danger of extinction under foreign rule. I find it interesting to learn from Esther's clever strategy to save her people in a crisis and connect it with strategies to advocate for saving the Earth, which is also critical.

When we read this book, we learn that the story of Esther begins with the account of Queen Vashti being deposed from her position. When the king's heart was merry with wine (Esther 1:10), he wanted to display the exceptional beauty of his wife, Queen Vashti, to his guests. However, Vashti refused to obey the king's arbitrary command, and the Bible does not explain her reason for her refusal to the king. Isaac Kalimi, in his book, highlights that Queen Vashti's bold refusal is related to maintaining her dignity and honor, not displaying her beauty before lustful and intoxicated men (Esther 1:12). Even though Queen Vashti was aware that her refusal might anger the king and could cost her life or at least her royal crown (Esther 1:10-15), she was indeed later dismissed from her position as the queen of the Persian Empire (Esther 1:10-22). This story implies an inequality between the courageous and noble behavior exhibited by Queen Vashti to preserve her integrity and dignity and the excessive and unbalanced punishment she received. Many scholars depict Vashti as a queen with dignity and self-respect.48

Next, the book tells the story of how Mordecai asks Esther to approach the king for the salvation of her threatened people (Esther 4:8). In responding to Mordecai's request, the author's see Esther taking careful actions and planning clever strategies, seemingly learning from the case of Queen Vashti. With her intelligence, potential, and faith in God (the book tells us that Esther is fasting), Esther invites the king and Haman for dinner twice. Esther uses her physical beauty, intelligence, strength, power, social skills, and relationship with the king to thwart Haman's evil plan that threatens to

annihilate the people of Israel (Esther 5 and 7). Isaac Kalimi interprets that Esther knows well the potential she has; she not only uses her exceptional natural beauty but also employs rhetoric, social skills, personal character, and courage in taking risks to save the entire Jewish nation from the threat of destruction, making her part of the history of Israel's savior.49 Yes, women need to recognize their own potential. Kalimi then continues that Esther's courageous actions received praise from the Protestant reformer Martin Luther, even though he was generally critical of the Book of Esther. In 1523, in a sermon on Luke 16, Luther referred to Esther as the "beloved daughter of God".50

Kalimi says that the story of Esther reflects a noble portrayal of Vashti, Esther, and Mordecai. They are depicted as characters who respect and refuse to sacrifice their integrity, even in front of the king, the Persian emperor who controls their fate. Vashti refuses to display her beauty before the drunken male guests of the king, even if it costs her position. Mordecai refuses to bow to Haman, even if it jeopardizes his life. Queen Esther risks her life and acts bravely and cleverly to free her people from the danger of destruction.51

Esther is known for her courage in saving her people in a crisis caused by a government decree. The author's see; it is important to remember that at that time, Israel, like the environment, also faced a crisis threat as it was under foreign rule. Esther's strategy was marked by faith, using reason, and a diplomatic approach to stakeholders, including the king as the decision-maker and all others involved. Through these efforts, she overturned the misguided decree, ultimately saving Israel from the brink of extinction. Despite not being a decision-maker, Esther effectively utilized her role to save her people. This is highly inspiring to me, showing that regardless of our roles on earth - whether as wives, church servants, or professionals in various fields - we can positively contribute to the sustainability of our societies. The crucial aspect is how we recognize the potential that God has bestowed upon us.

The story of Esther's courage and clever advocacy strategies against the serious threat of the annihilation of the Jewish nation inspires me to compare it with the

49 Ibid, 33.
50 Ibid, 33.
51 Ibid, 83.
challenges of the current environmental crisis. Is there something to learn from Esther's strategy? Mordecai and Esther intelligently and courageously faced the decree threatening their nation. They didn't passively resist but wisely planned strategies to reverse the situation and save their people. The author see this story as an analogy to environmental challenges, where unsustainable policies or human behavior can threaten the sustainability of our ecosystems and planet.

Next, the author will analyze that Esther's advocacy role and courage in speaking up for her people can be linked to environmental advocacy, which, in a crisis, can inspire applying faith and courage to face environmentally harmful policies, change societal behaviors, or promote actions to protect ecosystems. Furthermore, Esther's story uses intelligence, strategic planning, and understanding of her social relationship with the king to influence critical decisions. Similarly, facing an environmental crisis requires courage, faith, determination, strategic planning, and a stakeholder approach. Going deeper, Esther's story inspires women to actively engage in decision-making, intelligently speak in public forums, participate in policy discussions, or even run for political office because these positions can alter the course of established policy regulations. Like Esther, women can take an active role in environmental conservation today.

Even though the name of God is absent in the Book of Esther, it does not mean that the book is entirely secular or that the author is not interested in theological matters. The connection between the absence of the word "theos" and the inspiration that a specific group does not own this Earth but is a shared and collectively responsible possession is significant. Regardless of how religious individuals mention the name of their God, humans must act to defeat evil in the world. God is always present to fulfill His promises, help His people directly or indirectly, or even act quietly "behind the scenes". Esther's story exemplifies courage, strategy, and an active role in crisis situations. Women can adopt these values to become agents of change in environmental preservation efforts.

3. The Role of Women in the Environment in Indonesian Context

Women have a big role in the ecological crisis that is occurring. Women's movements can minimize the ecological crisis. The women's movement is an alternative
to teach that by rejecting patriarchal capitalism which exploits the environment and firmly daring to guarantee the provision of equal roles for women in resolving environmental problems in the use of natural resources. Several figures from the women's movement were present to voice environmental concerns, including Vandana Shiva, Starhawk, Susan Griffin, Dorothy Dinnerstein, Mary Daly, Marie Mies, Karen J. Warren and Francoise D'Eaubonne. The story of women's struggle in Indonesia began with R.A Kartini. R.A. Kartini (henceforth, Kartini) is arguably Indonesia's best-known female national heroine. Kartini is a role model associated with empowered Indonesian women. Kartini was the first figure in women's emancipation in Indonesia. Apart from being called a figure of women's emancipation, Kartini also made a big contribution in the religious and environmental fields. In letters sent to her pen friends, R.A Kartini often talked about the cultural and environmental conditions of Jepara society.

If you look at the Javanese way of life at the end of the 19th century. A century ago, R.A Kartini always stated to her friend from the Netherlands that Javanese people were shackled by customs and superstitions which made their minds dull and stupid. Javanese customs restrict women from interacting or doing things, there are strict rules that make it difficult for people to interact with each other. However, it was not only custom, the religions that existed at that time also made it rigid and restricted women's movements. Girls and women are more shackled by customs and superstitions, as well as religion which makes them very weak creatures. At that time, women were not allowed to have the right to education and interact with the environment. Women are only assigned to be in their homes, look after and care for what is in them and carry out everything as children, wives and good daughters-in-law, without the freedom to have

---

open thoughts, let alone behave, which should be given to all human beings.
completely.58

Kartini realized that this was wrong and she did not remain silent watching this
happen. His religious life regarding God in his view as the Father of all creatures
couraged him to liberate women from existing unfreedom.59 Kartini founded the
school as an opportunity to educate girls. Kartini’s ideas about women's education are a
reference to her sensitivity to social problems and are embedded in the native society in
the form of a feudal system of life.60 Kartini made a breakthrough in women's
liberation. Kartini created space for women to actively participate in every element of
society. Kartini educated women about health and disease, art, cooking, sewing, reading
and writing, crocheting, and taking care of the household.61 Kartini wants women to
have broad insight and participate in the environment and society.62 This is no exception
to Kartini’s movement regarding the role of women in the environment which must be
maintained and preserved.

In Indonesia, several names of female activists also color the struggle for
environmental protection. In East Nusa Tenggara there is Mama Aleta Baun better
known as Mama Aleta.63 He fought against marble mining companies carried out in the
mountains, namely the traditional territory of the Mollo tribe, which caused
deforestation, landslides and river pollution. Mama Aleta developed a strategy for
peaceful resistance by placing women at the forefront to avoid possible physical clashes
and continues to lead efforts to save the environment by replanting damaged forests and

58 Nata Abudin, Filsafat Pendidikan Islam (Jakarta: Logos Wacana Ilmu, 1997).
59 Sumartana, Mission At The Crossroads, 288; Fatimawali, Saepudin Mashuri, and Rani Rosvita
Education in the Family,” Proceeding of International Conference on Islamic and Interdisciplinary
Studies (ICIIS), 2023 2, no. 1 (2023): 6, 2.
60 Muthoifin Muthoifin, Mohamad Ali, and Nur Wachidah, “PEMIKIRAN RADEN AJENG
KARTINI TENTANG PENDIDIKAN PEREMPUAN DAN RELEVANSINYA TERHADAP
PENDIDIKAN ISLAM,” Profetika: Jurnal Studi Islam 18, no. 1 (June 6, 2017): 36, 4.
Adjeng Kartini’s Radical Thoughts about the Idealism of Inclusive Education and Gender,” 2022, 6,
62 Siti Maziyah and Melly Dwi Trivia, “Culture and Environment of the End 19 Th Century
63 A Khoiri, “Aleta Baun, Perempuan Pejuang Lingkungan Di Timur,” CNN Indonesia, last
modified 2022, https://www.cnnindonesia.com/gaya-hidup/20170422102142-277-209416/aleta-baun-
perempuan-pejuang-lingkungan-di-timur-indonesia.
building the economic independence of the Mollo Indigenous community. In Papua, a woman from the Amungme tribe in Timika Regency named Yosepha Alomang or Mama Yosepha fought for the rights of the community. He fought against a mega-corporation called PT. Freeport Indonesia. The women’s action was a form of protest against the confiscation of the Timika community's land and vegetable gardens by PT. Freeport Indonesia is building several buildings and hotels in the Timika area. In the South Sumatra region, there is Butet Saur Marlina who is an educator of forest people and staff at the NGO Warsi (Conservation Information Warung). Butet taught them using the "make friends with nature".

4. The Role of Women Today

It has been explained above that the earth as an oikos has a function as a place of residence (oikoumene) and a source of life (oikonomia). The ecological crisis that is occurring is no longer something foreign, but part of the reality that exists in Indonesia. Indonesia almost never escapes the grief caused by disasters. That is why the ecological crisis has not only become a global discourse, but has become a living reality today. Lawrence Hamilton stated that "it is not ecologists, engineers, economists or geoscientists who will save the planet, but poets, artists and philosophers". Every element of society has a shared responsibility to stop the ecological crisis. Women are no exception. Women have a big role in environmental conservation efforts.

Women have a big role in the existing ecological crisis. As has been seen above, several female figures in the Bible played a large role in environmental conservation.

---

66 Josina Octovina Wospakrik, “Transculturation and Indigenous Amungme Women of Papua, Indonesia” (Australia’s Global University, 2019), 143.
Eve in science, Ester in environmental crisis advocacy, Lydia in economic aspects. The author's in this section wants to provide praxis related to what has been said, as follows:

1. **Women as Educators**
   To bring about change requires good moral and ethical traditions, commitment and responsibility. This of course does not just happen. There needs to be education or upbringing to revolutionize morals, traditions and spirituality. Women as the next generation in reproduction play a major role in educating the next generation. Women in a family, for example a "mother", have a lot of time to educate children. Women can provide education on the importance of preserving the environment. Women can perform their role as educators in the family, school, community, and in public life.

2. **Women as Peace-Justice**
   The environmental damage that occurs cannot be separated from the existence of companies. Both government and private companies in development efforts for collective and personal interests will have an impact on the environmental crisis. Women who have rights in this world of creation have a big role when they become drivers or initiators of policies that prioritize environmental conservation. Women who have a spirit of solidarity and love for the environment can work together to stop efforts to damage the environment carried out by individuals and community groups. Women play a big role in voicing environmental justice.

3. **Women as Economists**
   Lifestyle greatly influences life on earth. Lifestyle influences the destruction of the earth as a place for human life. Lifestyles such as hedonism (emphasizing pleasure), materialism (giving importance to material things), secularism (secularism) and individualism (self-centeredness) have a big influence on environmental damage.\(^7\) For this reason, efforts are needed to

---

\(^7\) Andreas Yewangoe, *Pendamaian: Suatu Studi Tentang Pemulihan Relasi Antara Allah, Manusia Dan Alam Semesta* (Jakarta: BPK Gunung Mulia, 1983), 200-205.
consider a lifestyle that can preserve the environment. Christian Ecology Link provides several considerations for good lifestyles, namely.\footnote{Haskarlianus Pasang, \textit{Mengasihi Lingkungan: Bagaimana Orang Kristen, Keluarga Dan Gereja Mempraktikan Kebenaran Firman Tahan Untuk Menjadi Jawaban Atas Krisis Ekologi Dan Perubahan Iklim Di Bumi Indonesia} (Jakarta: Literatur Perkantans, 2011), 185-186.}

**Conclusion**

Eco-Theology is understood as a combination of ecology and theology. Eco-Theology refers to a special relationship between living creatures and God. God is depicted as the creator and sustainer of the environment. Meanwhile, humans are part of living creatures so humans and the environment are a unity, and the environment is not something separate from or part of human life. Eco-Theology exists as a form of concern for the environment. The increasing environmental crisis and damage makes ecology something important to discuss. This contributes to efforts to minimize environmental damage.

In the Indonesian context, the environmental crisis occurs in many regions in Indonesia. Environmental diversity in Indonesia is starting to be damaged to the point of becoming a crisis. The environmental crisis that is occurring, however, cannot be resolved by itself without looking at its relationship to humans as one element in this large world system. Various efforts have been made to overcome environmental damage. However, the efforts made have not involved all sectors. This can be seen from the neglect of women's involvement in the environment

Women's role in the environment is less of a concern, especially in church circles. As an effort to overcome this problem, this article wants to explain the relationship and role of women towards the environment, especially women in the Bible. Women in the Bible are examples of leadership, compassion, courage, and commitment to various environmental issues. This can be seen from Eve's role in science, Ester's advocacy for the environmental crisis, and Lydia in economic aspects. These women are aware of God's love for the environment and are of course aware of the role of women as custodians of nature. By providing insight into this matter, this article wants to contribute to preserving the environment and encourage women today to participate in environmental preservation.
References


“According to Borrong, Oikos Has Two Functions, Namely as a Place of Residence (Oikoimene) and as a Source of Life (Oikonomia),” n.d.