

## Faith Growing In Action Implications of John Locke's Tabula Rasa Concept and Ecological Education for HKBP Sunday School Children

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### Abstrak

Artikel ini mengeksplorasi integrasi antara konsep tabula rasa John Locke dan pendidikan ekologi untuk anak-anak Sekolah Minggu di Gereja Huria Kristen Batak Protestan (HKBP). Berjudul "Growing Faith in Action," penelitian ini menyelidiki bagaimana konsep filosofis Locke tentang pikiran sebagai "tabula rasa" yang kosong yang diisi dengan pengalaman dan pembelajaran dapat diterapkan dalam konteks pertumbuhan iman anak-anak. Penelitian ini berfokus pada pendidikan ekologi sebagai sarana pertumbuhan iman anak sekolah minggu yang melibatkan pemahaman mereka akan hubungan mereka dengan alam dan masyarakat sekitar. Konsep ini diterapkan secara khusus dalam konteks Sekolah Minggu HKBP, menyoroti upaya gereja dalam menyampaikan ajaran agama dan memfasilitasi pengalaman langsung yang dapat membentuk iman anak. Menggabungkan pemikiran Locke dan Susan Power Bratton tentang pendidikan ekologi dan konteks gerejawi, artikel ini menawarkan wawasan tentang bagaimana iman dapat berkembang melalui tindakan dan pengalaman konkret, menciptakan fondasi yang kuat untuk pertumbuhan spiritual anak-anak dalam lingkungan gerejawi yang sadar lingkungan dan aktif belajar.

**Kata kunci:** *Tabula Rasa, Sekolah Minggu HKBP, Ekologi*

### Abstract

This article explores the integration between John Locke's concept of tabula rasa and ecological education for Sunday School children in the Huria Kristen Batak Protestan (HKBP) Church. Titled "Growing Faith in Action," this research investigates how Locke's philosophical concept of the mind as an empty "tabula rasa" filled with experience and learning can be applied in the context of children's growing faith. This research focuses on ecological education as a means for Sunday school children's faith growth that involves their understanding of their relationship with nature and the surrounding community. The concept is applied specifically in the context of HKBP Sunday School, highlighting the church's efforts to deliver religious teachings and facilitate hands-on experiences that can shape children's faith. Combining Locke and Susan Power Bratton's thoughts on ecological education and the ecclesial context, this article offers insights into how faith can develop through concrete action and experience, creating a solid foundation for children's spiritual growth in an ecologically conscious and active learning ecclesial environment.

Keyword: Tabula Rasa, HKBP Sunday School, Ecology



## PENDAHULUAN

John Locke wrote the concept of tabula rasa in his book entitled "Essay Concerning Human Understanding (1690). In this book, Locke put forward his epistemological theory, the tabula rasa theory. Locke argues that humans are born with blank minds, like white paper that has not been written on. The human mind is then filled with experiences and perceptions gained through the sensory organs. He also argued that humans do not have innate ideas. Innate ideas are ideas that already exist in the human mind from birth. Locke rejected the existence of innate ideas because, according to him, all ideas come from experience.<sup>1</sup>

Although Locke's thinking was very influential at the time, previous researchers criticized this concept from various perspectives. Petryszak (1981) argued that Locke's tabula rasa formulation was a response to the tension between divine determination and individual freedom, and he did not deny the existence of an innate biological aspect called genes that influence a person's traits, character, and behavior following the inherited traits of his ancestors.<sup>2</sup> Juhansar (2021) further explores Locke's empiricism and the role of sensory experience in knowledge acquisition, emphasizing the passive nature of the mind.<sup>3</sup> Rekret (2018) takes a posthumanist perspective, suggesting that the concept of tabula rasa, with its implications of innocence, has political implications for equalizing all human rights, even though this is very difficult to realize.<sup>4</sup> Eddy (2018) provides historical context, showing how the metaphor of the mind as blank paper was popularised through the material and visual conditions of Enlightenment-era schoolchildren's notebooks.<sup>5</sup> These critiques collectively highlight the complexities and implications of Locke's concept of tabula rasa.

In Christianity, there is also the concept of original sin, which states that humans are born with an inherent sinful nature, which is the result of the fall of the first man, Adam, in the Garden of Eden. The doctrine of original sin has its roots in the teachings of Augustine of Hippo, who developed a comprehensive theory of original sin.<sup>6</sup> The biblical basis for the doctrine of original sin can be found in passages such as Romans 5:12-21 which states that the result of one sin (Adam's

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<sup>1</sup> John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Humane Understanding* (London: The Baffet, 1690).

<sup>2</sup> Nicholas George Ladislaus Petryszak, "Tabula rasa--its origins and implications.," *Journal of the history of the behavioral sciences* 17 1 (1981): 15–27.

<sup>3</sup> Juhansar Juhansar, "John Locke: The Construction of Knowledge in the Perspective of Philosophy," *Jurnal Filsafat Indonesia* 4, no. 3 (2021): 254–60, <https://doi.org/10.23887/jfi.v4i3.39214>.

<sup>4</sup> Paul Rekret, "The posthumanist tabula rasa," *Research in Education* 101, no. 1 (2018): 25–29, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0034523718792162>.

<sup>5</sup> Matthew Daniel Eddy, "The Nature of Notebooks: How Enlightenment Schoolchildren Transformed the Tabula Rasa," *Journal of British Studies* 57, no. 2 (2018): 275–307, <https://doi.org/10.1017/jbr.2017.239>.

<sup>6</sup> Ian A. McFarland, "In Adam's Fall: A Meditation on the Christian Doctrine of Original Sin," in *In Adam's Fall: A Meditation on the Christian Doctrine of Original Sin*, 2010, <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781444327656>.

disobedience) was the condemnation of all men.<sup>7</sup> Ephesians 2:1-3 which states that people are born dead in sin and that their actions are evil and deceitful. Psalm 51:5 indicates that the wicked are conceived in sin and have been since before birth.<sup>8</sup> In other words, Christianity does not view that a child is born as a white paper like Locke's concept of *tabula rasa*.

However, even though the Christian doctrine of original sin is still valid today, it does not mean this concept is free from debate. Previous research has approached the topic from different angles in the debate over the doctrine of original sin in Christianity. McMahon (2002) highlights a Christological shift in recent literature that emphasizes the role of the Incarnation in reshaping the way we understand original sin.<sup>9</sup> Meanwhile, Schmideberg (1950) discusses the historical debates surrounding the doctrine, identifying the major influence of Augustine of Hippo's thought and illustrating its subsequent development through alternative interpretations.<sup>10</sup> Crisp (2015) introduces a moderate approach to the Reformed doctrine of original sin. This approach seeks to unite the tradition with contemporary theological challenges, such as understanding evolutionary human development.<sup>11</sup> By combining the viewpoints of these authors, we can see the diversity and complexity in the debate on original sin, encompassing psychological, Christological, historical aspects, and modern theological challenges.

From the two perspectives described, that of *tabula rasa* and original sin, it can be concluded that in the Christian tradition, accepting the concept of *tabula rasa* is not always absolute. This is due to the doctrine of original sin, which is believed to be passed on to all humanity due to the actions of the first man, Adam, in the Garden of Eden. Thus, it can be recognized that in this view, no individual is born as a "white paper" free from the influence of the idea or concept of sin. Meanwhile, in investigating this dimension, there is an ever-growing debate. Although recognized as a fundamental principle, the doctrine of original sin can only sometimes be considered a comprehensive view of human nature. Whether a person exists due to inheritance from his parents or as a product of the influence of ideas and concepts he receives from childhood to adulthood is a complex and ongoing debate.

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<sup>7</sup> Jonathan Edwards, "The great Christian doctrine of original sin defended.," in *The works of Jonathan Edwards, A.M., with an essay on his genius and writings, by Henry Rogers; and a memoir by Sereno E. Dwight, in two volumes, Vol 1 (rev. and corrected)*, 2009, 143–233, <https://doi.org/10.1037/11935-007>.

<sup>8</sup> McFarland, "Adam's Fall A Medit. Christ. Doctrin. Orig. Sin."

<sup>9</sup> Kevin A. McMahon, "The christological turn in recent literature on original sin," *Thomist* 66, no. 2 (2002): 201–29, <https://doi.org/10.1353/tho.2002.0014>.

<sup>10</sup> (Schmideberg in Gordon, 2019)

<sup>11</sup> Oliver D. Crisp, "On Original Sin," *International Journal of Systematic Theology* 17, no. 3 (2015): 252–66, <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijst.12107>.

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Despite the ongoing debate, this research proposes that the two discourses, namely the concept of *tabula rasa* and the doctrine of original sin, can go hand in hand within a conceptual framework, even though the concept of *tabula rasa* is not explicitly linked to Christian teachings. This research focuses on developing an elaboration of the concept for teaching purposes within the Huria Kristen Batak Protestan (HKBP) Church, particularly in educating children in Sunday school activities to raise their awareness of ecological knowledge. In this context, this research proposes that Christian teaching on ecological dimensions, as presented by Susan Power Bratton (2018), can be combined with Locke's concept of *tabula rasa*. Therefore, this research has the potential to significantly contribute to the development of children's ecological sensitivity within the HKBP Church. Through designing a Sunday school guidebook that empowers children to understand the importance of protecting the natural environment, this research is expected to be a positive step in shaping a generation that is more concerned about ecology.

This research applies the descriptive qualitative method by elaborating on John Locke's (1690) concept of *tabula rasa* and relating it to Sunday school teaching in Huria Kristen Batak Protestan (HKBP) Church. The reason for choosing HKBP Church Sunday School Children is because each Protestant Church sect has its own rules and methods of teaching its congregation. To minimize the differences in these methods, the selection of the HKBP Church became the main focus of the research. In addition, given that the HKBP Church is the third largest religious organization in Indonesia after Nadhatul Ulama and Muhammadiyah.

This method was chosen to provide a deeper understanding of the cultural and social context of ecological teaching within the HKBP Church and to clarify contextual differences that may affect the interpretation and implementation of practices. In addition, this study adopts the Eco-Dimensionality theory proposed by Susan Power Bratton (2018) as an additional theoretical foundation. This theory is used to reflect on the development of ecological teaching to make it more relevant and appropriate to the context of the HKBP Church. The main contribution of this research is the integration of ecological principles into the context of children's worship, which is realized through the development of the HKBP Sunday School Handbook. The handbook illustrates the close relationship between faith and environmental responsibility, creating a holistic understanding for children within the HKBP Church environment.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### Potential and Challenges of the Tabula Rasa Concept

The concept of Tabula Rasa is a philosophical concept associated with empirical epistemology, which states that the mind is a blank slate (*tabula rasa*) at birth and that all knowledge is acquired through sensory experience.<sup>12</sup> This concept has significant implications for children's education. Androne (2014) and Raniszewska-Wyrwa (2019) support this concept, emphasizing the role of education in shaping children's moral development and social integration. They argue that education should be tailored to each child's abilities and focus on instilling moral values and self-discipline.<sup>13</sup> In his article, Enver Uysal (2007) discusses the importance of parents' role in children's moral education and the impact of various environmental factors on their development.<sup>14</sup> These researchers and educators have applied Locke's concept of *tabula rasa* in various ways, such as studying the impact of cooperative learning models on student learning outcomes, evaluating the role of parents in moral education, and exploring the implications of Locke's theory for the development of individual thought and adaptation in children.

However, the concept of *tabula rasa* in children's education is challenged by some researchers. Gallagher (2001) and Driver (1981) argue that children bring pre-existing ideas and beliefs to their learning rather than being blank slates.<sup>15</sup> Duschinsky (2012) further questioned the validity of the *tabula rasa* concept, stating that it has been used to signify an initial state of formlessness.<sup>16</sup> Eddy (2018) adds a historical perspective, showing how the *tabula rasa* metaphor was partially successful due to the material and visual conditions of the students' manuscript culture.<sup>17</sup> These studies collectively suggest that children's education is not a process that starts from zero but rather a process. Nonetheless, the practical implications of Locke's concept for child education remain relevant.

Although the concept of Tabula Rasa has been the subject of debate, there is an awareness of its relevance in child education, which requires adaptation and integration with the

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<sup>12</sup> Locke, *An Essay Concerning Humane Understanding*.

<sup>13</sup> Agnieszka Raniszewska-Wyrwa, "Johna Locke'a koncepcja wychowania moralnego," *Biuletyn Historii Wychowania*, no. 31 (2019): 161–75, <https://doi.org/10.14746/bhw.2014.31.9>; Mihai Androne, "Notes on John Locke's Views on Education," *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 137 (2014): 74–79, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.05.255>.

<sup>14</sup> Enver Uysal, "Kinalizade's views on the moral education of children," *Journal of Moral Education* 36, no. 3 (2007): 333–41, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03057240701552844>.

<sup>15</sup> Kathleen Gallagher, "Tabula rasa: Starting afresh with classroom drama," in *Insights in Applied Theatre: The Early Days and Onwards*, 2022, 176–86, [https://doi.org/10.1386/9781789385243\\_12](https://doi.org/10.1386/9781789385243_12); Rosalind Driver, "Pupils' alternative frameworks in science," in *European Journal of Science Education*, vol. 3, 1981, 93–101, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0140528810030109>.

<sup>16</sup> Robert Duschinsky, "Tabula rasa and human nature," *Philosophy* 87, no. 4 (2012): 509–29, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0031819112000393>.

<sup>17</sup> Eddy, "The Nature of Notebooks: How Enlightenment Schoolchildren Transformed the Tabula Rasa."

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understanding that the education process does not start from zero but is an evolution. This conclusion illustrates an expanded view of the Tabula Rasa concept, recognizing the complexities and dynamics in child education while asserting that the practical implications of Locke's thought remain valuable in developing effective educational strategies.

### Understanding of Ecology in the Context of the HKBP Church

The HKBP Church has long recognized the term ecology. This is evident from one of the ecclesiastical documents, the HKBP Confession 1951 and 1996. In one of the 1996 HKBP Confession articles, article 5 discusses Culture and Environment. It is written

"We believe and testify that God created man with a place to live and work in this world. It is He who owns it all, who gives life to all that He has created. The places where man works are the land, the sea, and the sky. God gave man the power to care for this world with responsibility. He also gave man languages, musical instruments, arts, and knowledge as man's tools and rules to praise God and as means to nurture and beautify friendships between people so that God's kingdom would grow through culture. However, culture that is mixed with heresy and contradicts God's Word must be rejected. The work of Jesus Christ is to liberate mankind, the entire creation and the world. We hereby testify to man's responsibility to preserve all of God's creation so that people can work, be healthy, and prosper. We oppose any activity that damages the environment, such as burning and cutting down trees in forests or deserts. We oppose any business that pollutes water and air, as well as toxic waste water from factories, due to neglect of waste disposal and air pollution, thereby damaging drinking water and human breathing (environmental pollution)."<sup>18</sup>

In other words, for approximately 28 years (1996-2024), the HKBP Church has been struggling with environmental issues that later gave birth to messages in one of its official documents that remind people of the need for sustainability of nature. Furthermore, the HKBP Church also recognizes the term Synod Godang HKBP, which means the highest deliberation in the HKBP Church. The Synod Godang is held annually to discuss and set HKBP policies. In the 2022 HKBP Godang Synod, one of the discussions in this deliberation is about the environment.

"...Synod Godang also deliberated on public issues such as environmental degradation, customary land issues, sexual harassment and violence. In line with the HKBP Confession, HKBP people and ministries must participate in addressing environmental degradation, sexual harassment and violence...."

If examined more deeply, the HKBP Church doctrinally already has a good introduction to ecology, but in its application, the HKBP Church, in general, is still a 'beginner.' Before going further, what an ecological church means has the following characteristics: *a) Creation care:* The ecological church prioritizes responsibility towards the earth and recognizes the importance of

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<sup>18</sup> HKBP, "Panindangion Haporseaon 1951 & 1996" (Pematangsiantar: Percetakan HKBP, 2010).

cares for God's creation. It encourages awareness and action to protect the environment.<sup>19</sup> *b) Sustainable Practices:* An ecological church integrates sustainable practices. This includes conserving energy, reducing waste, and using eco-friendly materials in construction and maintenance.<sup>20</sup> *c) Education and Advocacy:* An ecological church educates its members about environmental issues and encourages them to take action. This church may organize workshops, seminars, and initiatives to raise awareness and fight for environmental justice.<sup>21</sup> *d) Land Use and Conservation:* An ecological church may have a green space or community garden on the church premises, providing opportunities for the congregation to connect with nature and promote biodiversity.<sup>22</sup> *e) Worship and Liturgy:* The ecological church integrates themes of creation care and environmental justice into its worship and liturgical practices. This may include prayers, hymns, and sermons that highlight the importance of environmental stewardship.<sup>23</sup> *f) Collaboration:* Ecological churches seek partnerships with other organizations and communities committed to environmental sustainability. By working together, they can have a greater impact in addressing ecological challenges.<sup>24</sup>

The following will list some of HKBP's track records in some central regions to show HKBP's participation in saving the environment in recent years. This can be a provisional clue to show whether the HKBP has become a viable ecological church. Bastian Simangunsong et al. (2021), in their article, found the contribution of the HKBP through a letter from its leadership calling on the central government, local government, private sector, and communities to take immediate steps to save the forest in the Lake Toba region. Then, they proposed the role of the Church around Lake Toba to teach eco-literacy (ecological education), eco-prophetic (prophetic ecology), and eco-social (the relationship between ecology and social) to the community, especially

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<sup>19</sup> Arnold Donozo, Julius Tutor, dan Kim Guia, "Church's Response to the Earth's Healing in the Face of Ecological Crisis," *Bedan Research Journal* 4, no. 1 (2019): 191–214, <https://doi.org/10.58870/berj.v4i1.10>; Dominic Wilkins, "Pope Francis, Care for Creation, and Catholic Environmental Imagery," *Environmental History* 25, no. 2 (April 2020): 361–71, <https://doi.org/10.1093/envhis/emz085>.

<sup>20</sup> David N. Field, "I Believe in the Holy Earthly Church: Toward an Ecological Reinterpretation of the Holiness of the Church," *Scriptura* 111, no. 0 (2013): 333, <https://doi.org/10.7833/111-0-20>; Jens Koehrsen dan Fabian Huber, "A field perspective on sustainability transitions: The case of religious organizations," *Environmental Innovation and Societal Transitions* 40, no. April (2021): 408–20, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eist.2021.09.005>.

<sup>21</sup> Stefan Altmeyer, "Religious education for ecological sustainability: an initial reality check using the example of everyday decision-making," *Journal of Religious Education* 69, no. 1 (2021): 57–74, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s40839-020-00131-5>.

<sup>22</sup> Joanne M. Moyer dan A. John Sinclair, "Faith-Based Environmental Engagement in Canada: An Environmental Governance Perspective," *Society and Natural Resources* 35, no. 8 (Agustus 2022): 836–55, <https://doi.org/10.1080/08941920.2022.2079786>.

<sup>23</sup> Yusak Budi Setyawan, "The Church as an Ecological Community: Practising Eco-Ecclesiology in the Ecological Crisis of Indonesia," *Ecclesiology* 17, no. 1 (2021): 91–107, <https://doi.org/10.1163/17455316-bja10009>.

<sup>24</sup> Fr. Benigno P. Beltran, "Earth stewardship, economic justice, and world mission: The teachings of Laudato Si' ," *Missiology: An International Review* 48, no. 1 (Januari 2020): 39–56, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0091829619897432>; Mehdi Khedmati, Mohammed Aminu Sualihu, dan Alfred Yawson, "Does religiosity matter for corporate labor investment decisions?," *Journal of Contemporary Accounting and Economics* 17, no. 2 (2021): 100264, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jcae.2021.100264>.

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its congregation.<sup>25</sup> Ranto P. Hamonangan and Martin Gultom (2021) highlighted several activities and actions carried out by the HKBP church related to ecology, such as the development of livestock waste into alternative energy (biogas) and planting tree seedlings in various regions.<sup>26</sup> Several newspaper articles recorded various activities of the HKBP Church in environmental conservation such as the distribution of fruit seedlings to various regions,<sup>27</sup> the sowing of fish seedlings in Lake Toba.<sup>28</sup> and the simultaneous celebration of HKBP Ecology Week on Sunday, 24 September 2023, where HKBP planted hundreds of seedlings in several regions.<sup>29</sup> Apart from the above data, until January 2024, I found no data on the actions, efforts, and measures taken by HKBP in general to pursue environmental sustainability.

Some religious organizations are identified as environmental conservationists. Nahdlatul Ulama shows its seriousness in conserving the environment through various efforts such as regular tree planting and forest conservation campaigns, waste management and waste banks to reduce the waste generation in landfills, anti-burning campaigns, utilization of renewable energy through the Tabung Wakaf Indonesia (TWI) institution, and so on.<sup>30</sup> Muhammadiyah, as the second largest Islamic organization in Indonesia, also plays an active role in environmental conservation efforts, such as routinely holding environmental campaigns through education to the public, planting trees through Muhammadiyah charities such as schools and universities, preserving forests and open

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<sup>25</sup> Bestian Simangunsong et al., “Article History Tanggung Jawab Gereja Membangun Gerakan Eco-literacy di Kaldera Toba UNESCO Global Geopark Institut Agama Kristen Negeri (IAKN) Tarutung” 5, no. 2 (2021): 262–75.

<sup>26</sup> Ranto Praja Hamonangan dan Martin Gultom, “Batak Christian Protestant Church’s View Concerning Ecology,” *Tumou Tou* 8, no. 1 (2021): 46–52, <https://doi.org/10.51667/tt.v8i1.473>.

<sup>27</sup> PristiwaNews, “Masyarakat HKBP Kota Jakarta Salurkan Bibit Pohon Buah Untuk Pelestarian Lingkungan Di Siborongborong,” Pristiwa News, 2023.

<sup>28</sup> Jones, “Giatkan Pastoral Eko Pastoral Care, HKBP Tabur Benih Ikan di Danau Toba,” *Gatra.com*2, 2019; KabupatenSamosir, “PEMERINTAH KABUPATEN SAMOSIR BEKERJASAMA DENGAN GEREJA HKBP MELAKUKAN PENABURAN BENIH IKAN DI TUKTUK SIADONG,” Kabupaten Samosir Satahi-Saoloan, 2019.

<sup>29</sup> BiroInformasiHKBP, “Perayaan Minggu Ekologi, HKBP Memperingati Masa Penciptaan Allah,” *hkbp.or.id*, 2023.

<sup>30</sup> Monika Arnez, “Shifting notions of nature and environmentalism in Indonesian Islam,” in *Environmental and Climate Change in South and Southeast Asia: How are Local Cultures Coping?* (Brill, 2014), 75–101, [https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004273221\\_005](https://doi.org/10.1163/9789004273221_005); Jens Koehrsen, “Muslims and climate change: How Islam, Muslim organizations, and religious leaders influence climate change perceptions and mitigation activities,” *Wiley Interdisciplinary Reviews: Climate Change* 12, no. 3 (2021): 1–19, <https://doi.org/10.1002/wcc.702>; L Maisaroh, “Strategi LAZISNU Preneur Zakat Produktif dalam Pemberdayaan Ekonomi Masyarakat di Kecamatan Sukodono Kabupaten Lumajang” (Universitas Islam Negeri Kiai Haji Achmad Siddiq Jember, 2021); Amanda tho Seeth, “Renegotiating the Islam and Development-Nexus in Indonesia: Fikih Peradaban as a Middle Ground between Local and Global Development Paradigms,” *ISLAM NUSANTARA: Journal for the Study of Islamic History and Culture* 4, no. 2 (2023): 1–26; Muhammad Yakub, Okta Firmansyah, dan Ahmad Muhajir, “Exploring Islamic spiritual ecology in Indonesia: Perspectives from Nahdlatul Ulama’s progressive intellectuals,” *Journal for the Study of Spirituality*, 2023, 1–19, <https://doi.org/10.1080/20440243.2023.2238203>.



spaces, advocating for environmental protection, waste recycling and anti-plastic waste, clean and renewable energy through the Environmental Assembly (MLH), and so on.<sup>31</sup>

Perhaps, the two organizations above are religious organizations with larger congregations than HKBP. However, what about organizations such as Walubi (Buddhist), the Franciscan Order of Minor Brothers in Indonesia, or the Seventh-day Adventist Church (SDA)? Walubi, one of the Buddhist organizations, has made various efforts for environmental conservation such as wildlife conservation, reforestation of temple and monastery areas, environmental campaigns for Buddhists through sangha forums and meetings, support for civil society environmental actions, and so on.<sup>32</sup> The Franciscan Order of Friars Minor in Indonesia has established JPIC Indonesia (Justice, Peace, and Integrity of Creation in Indonesia), focusing on advocacy and activism in environmental, organic farming, and renewable energy. In eastern Indonesia, JPIC endeavors to support the development of a sustainable environment and strengthen local communities vulnerable to environmental damage or potential threats due to natural resource exploitation and geothermal mining activities.<sup>33</sup> The SDA Church, in practice, encourages sustainable environmental management at the personal and social or community levels. At the personal level, SDAs encourage a holistic lifestyle that sees the unity and interconnectedness of the soul and body. SDAs also encourage healthy living practices and vegetarian diets as part of their religious practices. At the societal level, SDAs encourage practices such as the Adventist Development and Relief Agency, which focuses on sustainable development and disaster relief.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Musdodi Frans Jaswin Manalu, "INTER-RELIGIOUS ENGAGEMENT FIGHT FOR ENVIRONMENTAL CRISIS Eco-Bhinneka Muhammadiyah as a Facilitator of Religious Harmony through Environmental Care," *Jurnal Religi: Jurnal Studi Agama-Agama* 19, no. 01 (2023); R Nivitantia, "Evaluasi Pengelolaan Sarana Dan Prasarana Pendukung Ramah Lingkungan Pada Program Adiwiyata Di SMP Muhammadiyah 3 Yogyakarta," *Jurnal Hanata Widya*, no. Agustus (2016): 37–48; Ali Noer Zaman, Ma'mun Murod, dan Nurul Fitralaila Tanjung, "Muhammadiyah dan Advokasi Perlindungan Lingkungan," *KAIS Kajian Ilmu Sosial* 2, no. 2 (2021): 183–200; Musdodi Frans Jaswin Manalu, "TRANSFORMING DA ' WAH INTO INTERRELIGIOUS ENGAGEMENT: Examining the Eco-Bhinneka Muhammadiyah Initiative," *Jurnal Panangkaran* 7, no. 1 (2023).

<sup>32</sup> Metta Puspita Dewi, "Peran Dan Tantangan Penyuluh Agama Buddha Di Desa Kalimanggis Kecamatan Kaloran Kabupaten Temanggung Dalam Mengendalikan Ingroup Favoritism," *Agama Buddha dan Ilmu Pengetahuan* 5, no. 2 (2019): 50–67; Santika Sari, "UPAYA TOKOH AGAMA BUDDHA UNTUK MENINGKATAN KEAKTIFAN UMAT MELALUI KEGIATAN ANJANGSANA ( Studi Kasus Pada Umat Buddha di Sidomulyo )," *PATISAMBHIDA: Jurnal Pemikiran Buddha dan Filsafat Agama* 2, no. 1 (2021): 11–21; Nur Syarifah, "Kerukunan Antar Umat Beragama (Studi Hubungan Antar Umat Beragama : Islam , Katolik , Kristen Protestan , dan Buddha di RW 02 Umbulharjo , Yogyakarta )," *Religi* 9, no. 1 (2013): 121–39.

<sup>33</sup> Suhadi Cholil dan Lyn Parker, "Environmental education and eco-theology: insights from Franciscan schools in Indonesia," *Environmental Education Research* 27, no. 12 (2021): 1759–82, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13504622.2021.1968349>; Emma Salter, "Schools, Religion and Teaching about Climate Change and Sustainable Development – Indonesia and Nigeria," *The Bloomsbury Handbook of Schools and Religion*, 2023, 346–65, <https://doi.org/10.5040/9781350297296.ch-19>.

<sup>34</sup> M Rizal Abdi dan Ferry Goodman Pardamean, "Christianity and Ecology a Critical Study on the Contribution of Sda Theology Toward Ecology," *Jurnal Kawistara* 8, no. 3 (2019): 275, <https://doi.org/10.22146/kawistara.29789>; Erik C. Carter, "The Practice and Experience of the Sabbath among Seventh-day Adventist Pastors," *Pastoral Psychology* 62, no. 1 (2013): 13–26, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11089-012-0482->

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Previously, a discussion on ecology was also held in September in conjunction with the launch of the HKBP Season of Creation on Sunday (24 September 2023). One of the speakers in the broadcast said:

"We always make tree planting part of the ceremony. There is a ceremony, there is a video and so on, then after that the tree dies we don't care... I can point to any (HKBP) church that has done a tree planting ceremony and now doesn't know where the tree is".<sup>35</sup>

The temporary conclusion that can be drawn is that, of course, the HKBP church cares about environmental issues. However, its application through environmental sustainability has not been able to touch the identity of HKBP as an ecological church. This shows that HKBP's knowledge about ecology from the central level to local congregations is still not good enough and not worthy enough to be called an ecological church until now.

### **Eco-Dimensionality and Tabula Rasa: Ecological Education for Sunday School Children**

Susan Power Bratton (2018) offers Eco-Dimensionality, which refers to how religious practices can shape human perception of nature. Its implementation focuses on incrementalism and sustainability and reduces resistance to new ideas by utilizing social forces already in the Christian religious ethos.<sup>36</sup> Dimensions show the various viewpoints on the relationship between religious belief and environmental sustainability. This theory is useful to see how much the HKBP Church relates its teachings (dogma) to environmental existence. This theory highlights the significance of exploring the potential of congregation members. This is manifested in the Church's organizational structure, which is divided into groups based on age, including Sunday School children, teenagers, youth, adults, and the elderly. Considering that general understanding in the HKBP Church, especially among adult congregation groups, still lacks an understanding of ecology, ecological education should not be limited to this group. Instead, ecological teaching should be delivered to Sunday School children. Specifically, the relationship between the concept of tabula rasa and eco-dimensionality can be seen from several aspects, such as educational aspects, learning methods, and evaluation.

*Educational Aspects.* The concept of tabula rasa can be the basis for developing an ecologically sound Sunday school curriculum. The curriculum can include materials on the importance of protecting the environment, ways to protect the environment, and the role of

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8; Floyd E Hayes dan William K Hayes, "Seventh-Day Adventist Faith and Environmental Stewardship," *Biology: A Seventh-day Adventist approach for students and teachers*, 2014, 141–60.

<sup>35</sup> (HKBP Youtube, 2023, "Perayaan Masa Penciptaan Ini Untuk Menjaga Perdamaian Keutuhan Ciptaan | Podcast HKBP" minutes 28-29)

<sup>36</sup> Susan Power Bratton, "Eco-dimensionality as a religious foundation for sustainability," *Sustainability (Switzerland)* 10, no. 4 (2018), <https://doi.org/10.3390/su10041021>.

children in protecting the environment. According to Haris et al. (2017), research consistently shows that children who receive education actively seek information and knowledge about their environment.<sup>37</sup> Leonard C. Epafra (2024) points out that religious lectures can influence people's behavior regarding environmental issues, such as natural resource use, pollution abatement, and adaptation to climate change. For example, suppose religious lectures teach that the environment is a gift from God that must be taken care of. In that case, this may encourage people to act more responsibly towards the environment. Conversely, if religious lectures lead to the view that the environment is only a resource to be utilized as best as possible, this can worsen the environment<sup>38</sup>. Thus, the educational aspect is a reference that the HKBP Church can use in guiding and directing Sunday school children to better understand the importance of ecological aspects as Church teaching materials. To maximize this potential, the HKBP Church should reference ecological teaching in the HKBP Sunday School Handbook (*Buku Panduan Sekolah Minggu HKBP*), a book to guide Sunday School Teachers in delivering their teachings every Sunday to Sunday school children. This book is printed by the *Kantor Pusat HKBP* twice a year, the first in January-June and the second in July-December.

*Aspects of learning methods.* The concept of eco-dimensionality can be the basis for developing ecological learning methods for Sunday school children. Such learning methods can actively involve children in activities related to the environment, such as cleaning the environment, planting trees, or reducing the use of plastic. This approach is based on studies conducted by M. Boulton and R. Boulton (2012) and Coolahan et al. (2000), showing that children's receptivity to education is influenced by factors such as the relevance of information to their experiences and the quality of the living environment.<sup>39</sup> In line with this, the creative activities carried out by children in Sunday School in their neighborhood are a significant first step in building their awareness, care, and love for the ecological world.

*Evaluation aspect.* The concept of tabula rasa can be the basis for developing an ecologically sound evaluation of Sunday school children's learning. The evaluation can measure the extent to which children have understood the importance of protecting the environment and can take action to

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<sup>37</sup> Paul L. Harris, Deborah T. Bartz, dan Meredith L. Rowe, "Young children communicate their ignorance and ask questions," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 114, no. 30 (2017): 7884–91, <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1620745114>.

<sup>38</sup> Leonard Chrysostomos Epafra, "The World is Utterly Unsafe: Gauging Religious Talk on Risk and Danger," in *The World is Utterly Unsafe: Essays on Religion Online and Risk* (Yogyakarta, 2024).

<sup>39</sup> Michael J. Boulton dan Richard Boulton, "Resistant to the message: Are pupils unreceptive to teachers' anti-bullying initiatives and if so why?," *Educational Studies* 38, no. 5 (2012): 485–89, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03055698.2011.643112>; Kathleen Coolahan et al., "Preschool peer interactions and readiness to learn: Relationships between classroom peer play and learning behaviors and conduct," *Journal of Educational Psychology* 92, no. 3 (2000): 458–65, <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-0663.92.3.458>.

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protect it. Some researchers, such as Setianingsih et al. (2022), Dahlina (2019), and Akmalia (2018), highlighted the implementation of interactive media in early childhood education. The results show that learning evaluation is important in improving children's developmental intelligence. Evaluation is done through various techniques, such as daily, weekly, and other assessments, to control and evaluate learning. In addition, the character learning method through worship activities also uses evaluation to assess children's understanding and increase knowledge.<sup>40</sup> Evaluation is used to monitor children's development and the effectiveness of learning methods in improving the quality of education. Overall, this study emphasizes the importance of evaluation to monitor children's development and the effectiveness of learning methods. By implementing evaluation on an ongoing basis, ecology teaching in HKBP Sunday Schools can be continuously improved to enhance the quality of education and children's awareness of environmental issues.

## **CONCLUSION**

The HKBP Church does not directly recognize the concept of tabula rasa in its doctrine and teaching. However, in practice, this concept can be adopted to raise awareness that has implications for teaching Sunday school children about various matters, especially environmental issues. Regarding eco-dimensionality, tabula rasa can be the basis for developing ecological awareness in Sunday school children. By understanding that humans are born with an empty mind, children can be taught the importance of protecting the environment regardless of their background. From the tabula rasa side, the concept of eco-dimensionality can be a way to develop the potential of Sunday school children in ecology. Teaching children about the importance of protecting the environment can help them learn and develop to become individuals who care about the environment. In this way, it is hoped that HKBP Sunday School children will become the next generation of the Church told to environmental sustainability.

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<sup>40</sup> Rahadiani Yuriana Setianingsih, Deti Rostini, dan Kakay Karyana, "Implementasi Pembelajaran Melalui Media Compact Disk (CD) Interaktif dalam Meningkatkan Kecerdasan Perkembangan Anak Usia Dini di TK Amanah dan TK Seroja Kabupaten Bandung," *Jiip - Jurnal Ilmiah Ilmu Pendidikan* 5, no. 4 (2022): 1069–79, <https://doi.org/10.54371/jiip.v4i5.506>; D Dahlina, "Pendidikan Karakter Melalui Metode Pembiasaan Kegiatan Ibadah Pada Kelompok B di PAUD Terpadu Sang Pemimpin Banjarmasin Timur," 2019; Y Akmalia, "Deskripsi Penggunaan Metode Pembelajaran Nilai Agama dan Moral Anak Usia 4-5 Tahun di Taman Kanak-Kanak Umum Se-Kecamatan Pajangan Bantul," in *Pendidikan Guru PAUD S-1*, 2018.

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