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Plight of the World

TRUE STEWARDSHIP OF THE EARTH

by Cal Beisner, PhD, Founder and National Spokesman of The Cornwall Alliance.

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. All creation belongs to Him (Genesis 1:1; Psalm 24:1).

Though God reveals Himself in creation, the Bible, and His one and only Son, Jesus Christ, He is distinct from and transcendent over creation (Romans 1:25). Those who deny the Creator/creature distinction become futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts are darkened (Romans 1:21).

God made man, male and female, in His own image (Genesis 1:26–27). No other terrestrial life form bears the image of God or is of equal value or priority with human beings (Matthew 10:29–31). Though the earth is the LORD's, He has also given it to men (Psalm 115:16) and mandated that they be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, subdue it, and have dominion over everything that lives in it (Genesis 1:28). Therefore human dominion over the earth is, in principle, not sinful, and the possibility of its abuse does not negate the righteousness of its proper use.

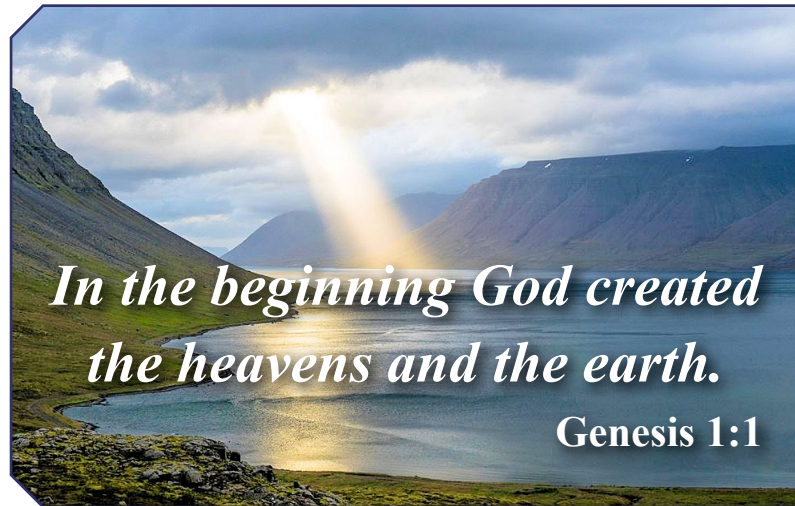
Earth and its physical and biological systems are the “very good” effects of God’s omniscient design, omnipotent creation, and faithful sustaining (Genesis 1:31). God would not have made earth susceptible to cata-

strophic degradation from proportionally small causes. Consequently, wise environmental stewardship will not readily embrace claims of catastrophe stemming from such causes.

Godly human dominion over the earth means men and women, created in the image of God, laboring together to enhance earth’s safety, fruitfulness, and beauty, to the glory of God and the benefit of our neighbors. It does not mean humans are servants rather than masters of the earth. When God had created Adam, He placed him in the Garden of Eden, which is distinct from the rest of the earth, to cultivate and guard it (Genesis 2:15). The instruction to “cultivate and guard” the Garden does not mean, as some modern environmentalists allege, either that man is to “serve and protect” or “worship and protect” the Garden or the earth, or that man is to “worship and hear” God either directly or through the earth or its parts.

A comprehensive understanding

of the relationship between God’s placing Adam in the Garden to cultivate and guard it (Genesis 2:15) and His commanding Adam and Eve to be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue and rule everything in it (Genesis 1:28) entails a growing population that spreads out from the Garden to transform wilderness into



garden and ultimately garden city (Revelation 21:2; 22:1–3). Biblical earth stewardship, or godly dominion, is not limited to keeping earth in the condition in which we find it. It follows that the common environmentalist belief that “Nature knows best,” that its transformation by humans is in principle wrong or harmful, is false.

God placed minerals, plants, and animals in and on the earth for His

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pleasure, to reveal His glory and elicit man's praise, and to serve human needs through godly use (Genesis 2:5–16; 4:22; Numbers 31:21–23; Job 38–41; Psalm 19:1–6; Psalm 104). One way of exercising godly dominion is by transforming raw materials into resources and using them to meet human needs.

Because of man's fall into sin, we often fall into materialism, covetousness, and selfish accumulation of possessions (Luke 12:16–21; 1 Timothy 6:10; Colossians 3:5). This does not, however, entail that the production of wealth is sinful. While man is accountable to God's judgment in all he does with the earth, this does not justify abolishing private property (Exodus 20:15, 17), adopting collectivist economic institutions, or delegating to civil governments — whether local, national, or global — ownership or control of land, natural resources, or private property.

The fall into sin (Genesis 3) led to human abuse of the earth and of fellow humans. In response to man's sin God cursed the ground so that it would not yield easily even to godly dominion, let alone to ungodly, abusive domination (Genesis 3:17–19). He subjected the whole cosmos to decay and corruption. But He is restoring it, partly in history by obedience to the dominion mandate (Genesis 1:28; Romans 8:18–24), and fully in the New Heavens and New earth of the eschaton (Revelation 21:1–3, 22–27; 22:1–5). All of this is secured by the redeeming death and resurrection of Christ (Colossians 1:14–20). God's curse on the earth negates neither the dominion mandate (Genesis 1:28) nor the robustness and self-correcting resilience of the God-sustained earth. Due to God's faithfulness to His covenant, in which He proclaimed, after the Flood, that He would sustain the cycles on which terrestrial life de-

pends (Genesis 8:22), godly dominion remains possible.

Human multiplication and filling of the earth are intrinsically good (Genesis 1:28). In principle, children, lots of them, are a blessing from God (Psalm 127; 128). Earth is not overpopulated; indeed, "overpopulation" is a meaningless term, since it cannot be defined by demographic quantities like population density, growth rate, or age distribution. Hence, godly dominion does not require population control or "family planning." People are not primarily consumers and polluters but, as the image of God implies, producers and stewards.

When the Bible speaks of God's judgment on human societies because they have "polluted the land," the "pollution" in mind is consistently not chemical or biological but moral — the pollution of idolatry, adultery, murder, oppression of the weak, and other violations of the moral law of God expressed in the Ten Commandments (Psalm 106:38; Jeremiah 3:1–10; 16:18). This does not, however, mean that we are free to harm our neighbors and the earth by careless disposal of what we more typically think of as pollution. The commandments against murder and theft, which by implication also prohibit our intentionally or negligently injuring our neighbors or harming their property, prohibit that.

Because of sin and the curse, risk is inherent in every human activity (Hebrews 9:27), so it is proper to balance risk against risk. Cost/benefit analysis (Luke 14:28) is an important aspect of godly dominion (Proverbs 14:4). The mere existence of risk does not make an activity immoral. Proper environmental prioritization will address greater risks before lesser risks. Since resources spent to reduce one risk cannot be used to reduce another, it is wise to allocate resources where

they will achieve the greatest risk reduction. Environmental policies that address relatively minor risks while harming the poor — such as opposition to the use of abundant, affordable, reliable energy sources like fossil fuels in the name of fighting global warming; the suppression of the use of safe, affordable, and effective insecticides like DDT to reduce malaria in the name of protecting biodiversity; and the conversion of vast amounts of corn and other agricultural products into engine fuel in the name of ecological protection — oppress the poor and are unjust.

Because a clean, safe, healthful, beautiful environment is a costly good, wealthy societies can better afford environmental protection and restoration than poor societies. Economic development is, therefore, not a threat to environmental quality but an indispensable precondition of it. Private ownership of land and other resources, because it harnesses God-given human incentives to overcome the "tragedy of the commons," is the best institutional economic system for environmental protection. Collective economic systems are comparatively poor at protecting and improving natural environments.

Intentional exaggeration, as practiced by many environmental advocacy organizations, or minimization, as practiced by many industries, of environmental risks or the effectiveness of various means of addressing them is sinful.

Godly dominion is a responsibility for everyone at all times, regardless of eschatological perspective. Our obligation to love our neighbors requires godly dominion, whether the earth is to remain and be transformed, or be annihilated and replaced, and whether Christ's second coming and the final judgment are moments away or thousands of years ahead. 

EITHER SHOWER OR DO LAUNDRY BUT NOT BOTH

by Ileana Paugh Johnson, PhD, former college economics professor.

Living in Italy, Americans were shocked to learn that they couldn't drive their cars into Verona on certain days if their licenses ended in odd numbers and on other days if their licenses ended in even numbers. Caught driving on the wrong day, the penalty was stiff. It was the bureaucrats' way of dealing with pollution that affected air quality, soot deposits on marble statues, and buildings in town.

In Modesto, California, the city deals with water shortages, whether real or imagined, by giving citations and fines to odd-numbered addresses that water lawns on Tuesdays when only even-numbered addresses can use sprinkler systems.

"We have two seasons of enforcement and so we entered the new

Cal2022 water use controls they call "water-efficiency standards" in preparation for the manufactured global warming now turned into a profitable climate change industry. "The rules are aimed at water districts to cut per capita water usage." This will eventually force individual customers into compliance.

By 2022, each person will be allowed to use 55 gallons per day and by 2030, 50 gallons per day. To put in better perspective, if you take an 8-minute shower, 17 gallons of water are used. A load of laundry uses 40 gallons, and a bathtub can hold 80 to 100 gallons of water.

An old dishwasher uses 10 gallons of water per load. A new dishwasher with standards put in place in 2013 uses 5 gallons of water. An Energy

Star certified dishwasher uses as little as 3 gallons of water per load. It is alleged that a full load of dishes washed by hand uses 27 gallons of water.

An older model top-loading washing machine uses 30-45 gallons of water, depending on the model.

Front-loading and high efficiency washing machines use 15 gallons of water per load.

Sacramento Suburban Water District offers toilet rebates, complimentary showerheads, and complimentary faucets. They are required to perform stress tests on their water leaks. A representative said, "Right now we lose up to 30 percent of urban

water just to leaks in the system." If a water district does not comply, the fines are \$10,000 per day.

Conservation of resources and natural habitats are a noble goal and we should try to conserve as much as we can. But micromanaging people's lives does not work so well, it ends up in tyranny.

I can still vividly remember having to bathe by boiling a pot of water on the stove, going days and weeks without a bath, having to do without water altogether, especially in summer time when the communist government that controlled everything decided to clean the water tanks of rust and mineral deposits while we trekked to the water truck parked conveniently five blocks away to get a bucket of water at a time for drinking and cooking. The globalists who want to stop electricity use and other modern conveniences use in the third world today would have been pleased that we did not have dishwashers or washing machines.

The United Nations declared its megatrend campaign for water for sustainable development (everything now must be "sustainable this" and "sustainable that"), one of the 17 goals of Agenda 21 — now renamed Agenda 2030 — is water and sanitation for all.

We did protect the environment from pollution because nobody had cars except the elites, we just took buses and trains everywhere or walked. We did not have dishwashers or washing machines. Yet the environment was terribly polluted — the air, the soil, and the rivers. The commies did not care about spoiling the environment on an industrial scale.

As Dave Foreman of Earth First



season several weeks ago," Modesto City spokesperson, Thomas Reeves said. "There are strict days; three days a week that you are allowed to water and it's the same for a residential unit or a business."

As always, one-party state environmentalist California is ahead in curbing and controlling use of resources. It has enacted in 2018

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said, “We must make this place an insecure and inhospitable place for Capitalists and their projects — we must reclaim the roads and plowed lands, halt dam construction, tear down existing dams, free shackled rivers and return to wilderness millions of tens of millions of acres of presently settled land.” What a primitive life that will be!

The government can certainly try to control consumption behavior by law and economically through price controls. It has done so and still does with various problems and consequences. Put in simple economic terms, when the quantity supplied is less than the quantity demanded, shortages result.

Governments can micromanage the use of a resource and restrict it through price controls. But government intervention into the free market by law can affect negatively many sectors and subsectors of the economy that need a lot of water to produce their output (paper, agriculture, orchards, vineyards, gardens, livestock) or service (hospitals, water parks, pools).

After 1971, when President Nixon decided to experiment with price controls, the economy experienced a plague of shortages — it seemed to be “running out of nearly everything.” When price controls ended in 1974, most of the shortages disappeared.

Price controls cause favoritism and corruption, enforceability problems, auxiliary restrictions, and limitations of volume of transactions.

When shortages or surpluses are created due to price controls, someone gets to buy or sell the limited quantity available. This can lead to discrimination along various lines, political favoritism, and corruption in government.

We had artificially low prices in the economy run by the Communist

Party of Romania which resulted in long lines and favoritism of the communist elite class which was able to buy scarce commodities in their own special stores, while the rest of us were on the diet imposed by the dictator Nicolae Ceausescu.

Inevitably consumers must pay higher prices to suppliers. It is more insidious in industries where numerous suppliers exist. It is hard to monitor the behavior of so many sellers and their attempts to circumvent the law.

New laws may add auxiliary restrictions in order to enforce the original restrictions. So,

the marketplace becomes more complex and more controlled by the legal system and suffocating government rules.

A classic example is the laws in New York City which ban con-

version of rent-controlled apartments into condominiums. When rent-controlled apartments were enacted, the shortage of affordable apartments increased as landlords remodeled apartments into office space which allowed them to charge whatever rent the free market allowed instead of the low government-controlled rent on apartments.

Last, but not least, government intervention in the market, can lead to misallocation of resources. One example is the Russian farmers who used to feed their animals bread instead of unprocessed grains because price ceilings kept the price of bread very low. Why would they want bread to be so low priced? Because bread was a main staple in the Russian diet

and kept them from going hungry on the rationed food in the stores.

It is true that the developed world contributes to the wasteful utilization of resources, including water. But do we need the daddy government micromanaging the behavior of everything we do?

Do elected bureaucrats have the right to protect a tiny fish, the delta smelt, to the detriment of millions of humans whose crops were devastated during a drought season while the government dumped fresh water into the ocean?



We could do better in conserving in many areas but showering with a bucket of water is not one of them. We could follow the late Venezuelan dictator Hugo Chavez’s advice to take 3-minute showers, but I am not so sure he followed his advice as he became rich beyond any socialist dictator’s dreams. He left his daughter billions when he died. 

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