



## CHRISTIAN UNDERSTANDING OF DOMINION: A CALL TO RESPONSIBLE STEWARDSHIP

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### Abstract

*The issues pertaining to our natural environment have become matters of serious concern in the contemporary world. The future of the earth is in question and our planet runs the risk of total extinction due to the inordinate ambition and greed of humans who violate all ethical norms to the detriment of the common good. The situation is not different in Nigeria where environmental crisis are experienced in both rural and urban areas. Against this backdrop, this work argues that if all human beings that have been charged with the task to care for the earth as our common home should build a new culture of care, responsibility and sensitivity towards the earth, this will reverse the present ecological crisis that threaten the whole world and will help achieve the purpose of creation. The work begins with an introduction and clarifies some important terms. It then exposes the Christian meaning of dominion and domination. It discusses the problem of dominion and its ecological implications. The work proceeds to discussing the role of human beings as stewards of creation and backs it up with Church teachings on ecology. Finally, recommendations are made for the government, the Church and for individuals and communities and the work concludes.*

**Keywords:** Dominion, Ecology, Ecological Crisis, Stewardship.

### 1. Introduction

The concept of environmental stewardship originates first and foremost from the Yahwist creation stories, in which God gives humans dominion over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, and the animals of the land (cf. Gen 1:28) and the command in Gen 2:15 to “cultivate and care” for the land. These Bible passages reveal God as the creator and owner of the universe but in his benevolence has given the human beings the privilege to utilize all he has created for their good. Still, the passages teach that each individual has a vitally important role to play as a steward in God’s domain. This stewardship includes both the proper use and conservation of natural and human resources in a way that bring glory to God and furthers his purposes in the world. Therefore, the earth which Pope Francis in his Encyclical *Laudato Si* refers to as “our common home,” is a gift from God the creator to human beings to till and to keep. It charges humans with a two-tier responsibility: on the one hand, human beings have the responsibility to produce things in cooperation with nature; and, on the other hand, they have a great responsibility of maintaining the world with its ecological balance. Consequently, ecological balance is not only to protect nature, but also to sustain it.<sup>1</sup> Lynn White, on historical roots of ecological crisis, states:

we shall continue to have a worsening ecological crisis until we reject the Christian axiom that nature has no reason for existence except to serve man... both our present science and our technology are so tinctured with orthodox

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<sup>1</sup> Alangaram, A. “Ecological Concerns in Christian Tradition”, in Asian Horizons, 9(4), (2015).628.



Christian arrogance towards nature that no solution for our ecological crisis can be expected from them alone. Since the roots of our trouble are so largely religious, the remedy must be essentially religious, whether we call it that or not.<sup>2</sup>

Unfortunately, the contemporary world has deviated from the real meaning of dominion as a responsibility to mean selfish use and abuse of the resources of the earth. This distorted notion is also influenced by the rise of scientific research and technological advancement<sup>3</sup>. Information technology, biotechnology, nuclear energy, industrialization and many other abilities have given the human person an impressive dominance over the whole of humanity and the entire world.<sup>4</sup> The consequence of this is the disruption of the original harmony that should exist between humanity and nature with its resultant ecological crisis such as: deforestation, pollution, etc. This has led to devastation of the environment.

## 2. Clarification of Terms

### Ecology

The word ecology derives from the Greek word “*Oikos*”, which means “house.” Originally the term referred to a branch of science, specifically, Biology and it studies the relationship, between living organisms and the environment in which they develop.<sup>5</sup> Ecology is a branch of science that attempts to understand the relationship between living organisms and their environment, and the associated energy flows. Theologically, ecology links with the theology of creation. Concern about the environment engages values such as, reverence for creation, stewardship of earth resources and responsibility towards our fellow inhabitants of a threatened planet.

### Stewardship

Stewardship is a term that refers to the responsibility of a steward to manage wisely the goods and property of another. Stewardship has come to be used in the Christian theology in a broader sense emphasizing both our personal and collective responsibility to care wisely for God’s creation. In view of this, Bugg defines stewardship as “utilizing and managing all resources God provides for the glory God and the betterment of his creation”.<sup>6</sup> Hence, stewardship begins and ends with the understanding of God’s ownership of all; for “the earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it, the world, and those who live in it” (Psalm 24:1).

## 3. The Christian Understanding of Dominion and Domination

In his analysis of the book of Genesis, Westermann points out that the Hebrew verbs used in Gen 1:28 for ‘subduing’ the earth and having dominion over other creatures are ‘*kabash*’ and ‘*radah*’ respectively. These mean bringing the earth under the control of human being because the Hebrew verb *kabash* literally means to ‘tread down’ or ‘bring into bondage’; and *radah* would mean to ‘trample’ or to ‘prevail against’.<sup>7</sup> He explains further that the verbs used in Gen 1:28 are used particularly in terms of kingly rule and his exercise of dominion. Thus, that alone

<sup>2</sup> Pickard H.R, *Fifty Key Concepts in Theology*, (Darton: Longman and Todd Limited, 2007), 28.

<sup>3</sup> John Paul II, *Encyclical letter, Fides et Ratio*, (Vatican City, 1999),15.

<sup>4</sup> Francis, Pope, *Encyclical Letter, Laudato Si, Care of Our Common Home*. (Nairobi: St. Paul Publication, 2015), 105.

<sup>5</sup> Dodson, S I. et.al. *Ecology*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 6.

<sup>6</sup> Bugg C. “Stewardship” in *Holman Bible Dictionary*. (Holman: Tennessee, 2001), 1303.

<sup>7</sup> Westermann, C. *Genesis: A Practical Commentary*. Text and Interpretation, 1-11. (New York: T&T Clark 2004), 101.



would not give way for a whimsical way of exercising dominion, bringing harm to whatever is placed under one's rule. In addition, Westermann writes that, “according to ancient view, however, there is no suggestion of exploitation; on the contrary, the king is personally responsible for the well-being and prosperity of those he rules. His rule serves the well-being of his subjects”.<sup>8</sup> Therefore 'ruling over' would mean taking care and providing for the welfare and prosperity that which is placed under, and anyway of selfish exploitation or abuse would result in the loss of kingly power.

Christian interpretation of the Genesis account, then, does not suggest any exploitation or domineering and destructive action on the part of the human person; rather, the mandate to 'till' and 'keep' implies that the human person should cultivate, plough and work the land, while to 'keep' would mean to care, protect, oversee and preserve the earth. It means “to take responsibility for”; to govern the world with justice. In other words, the human person endowed with intelligence must respect the laws of nature and the delicate equilibria existing between him/her and other created things.<sup>9</sup> Pope Francis points out that the Church in her teaching did not state that other creatures are completely subordinated to the good of the human person as if they have no worth in themselves and can be treated as they wish. Every other creature too possesses its own particular goodness which must be respected by the human person.<sup>10</sup> The mandate “to serve and to preserve” the land places human beings not in a hierarchical position over creation but in a position of service to it. Thus, John Paul II points out that:

The dominion granted to man by the Creator is not an absolute power, nor can one speak of a freedom to “use and misuse,” or to dispose of things as one pleases. The limitation imposed from the beginning by the Creator himself and expressed symbolically by the prohibition not to “eat of the fruit of the tree” (cf. Gen 2:16-17) shows clearly enough that, when it comes to the natural world, we are subject not only to biological laws but also to moral ones, which cannot be violated with impunity. A true concept of development cannot ignore the use of the elements of nature, the renewability of resources and the consequences of haphazard industrialization; three considerations which alert our consciences to the moral dimension of development.<sup>11</sup>

Consequently, the Christian understanding of dominion also shows the human beings as co-creators with God through the care of His creation. Dominion does not mean that the natural world should be seen as resources to be exploited. It is rather, a reality to be respected and even revered as a gift from God. As a result, dominion requires responsible stewardship. The understanding of dominion as a humble submission to the will of God explains why John Paul II maintains that the relationship between humanity, nature and God could best be served through the concept of stewardship<sup>12</sup>. Such stewardship must uphold the common good of humanity, while also respecting the end for which each creature was intended, and the means necessary to achieve that end. Disordered human actions, which harm creation, and by extension, human life and property directly threaten the right to life, to health, to development,

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<sup>8</sup>Ibid, 159.

<sup>9</sup> Francis, Pope, *Encyclical Letter, Laudato Si*, 68.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 69.

<sup>11</sup> John Paul II, *Encyclical letter, Sollicitudo Rei Socialis on Social Concern*. (Nairobi: Paulines, 2005), 34.

<sup>12</sup> John Paul II, *Encyclical Letter, Evangelium Vitae*, (Nairobi: Paulines Publication, 1995), 22.



to housing, to work, to culture and the rights of indigenous people.<sup>13</sup> Therefore, irresponsible consumption, degradation and depletion of natural resources have a huge impact on human life.

The exact understanding of dominion helps to see creation as a gift and also promotes love in stewardship as against irresponsible use of nature. For John Paul II, this fundamental truth requires that natural resources be considered as gifts that have potentials to enrich human life and should be developed, not manipulated. Thus, dominion empowers human beings to acknowledge the truth about creation and to give thanks for the gift.<sup>14</sup> This is why dominion implies a vocation which consists in stewardship. The command of dominion and domination, therefore, is an obligation to look after God's work responsibly on His behalf and to ensure through our participation in the well-being of creation. When the human person obeys the injunction to till and care for the earth, he/she reaps a bounty harvest from the earth; thereby, exhibiting the mutual responsibility in the relationship between the human person and nature.<sup>15</sup> The misunderstanding of dominion engenders ecological crisis that we experience today.

#### **4. The Problem of Human Dominion and its Ecological Implications**

John Paul II's Encyclical *Redemptor Hominis* frequently repeats that the threat to human life today lies precisely in the disordered use of creation by modern society and sees the refusal of human beings to appreciate the place of God in carrying out the command of dominion as fundamental to this problem. He contends that:

At the root of the senseless destruction of the natural environment lies an anthropological error, which unfortunately is widespread in our day... People think that they can make arbitrary use of the earth, subjecting it without restraint to their will, as though it did not have its own requisites and a prior God-given purpose, which people can indeed develop but not betray. Instead of carrying out one's role as the co-operator with God in the work of creation, a person sets himself up in place of God and thus ends up provoking a rebellion on the part of nature, which is more tyrannized than governed by him.<sup>16</sup>

Therefore, in his interpretation of human dominion, John Paul II concurs with the teaching of the Second Vatican Council and refers to the penetrating analysis of the modern world reached at the Council.<sup>17</sup>

This appraisal of the Council's imputes on human dominion echoes in *Veritatis Splendor* when he notes the special attention *Gaudium et Spes* paid to the great and responsible task the mandate of dominion imposes on the human person.<sup>18</sup> Based on the foundation laid by the Second Vatican Council, therefore, John Paul II hinges the problem of human dominion on two factors, namely, the paradox of human existence and the influence of the rise of science. The paradox of human existence concerns the conflicting nature of the two purposes of dominion: the advancement of humans and the glorification of God that human beings have to fulfill.

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<sup>13</sup> Chrysavgis, J. *On Earth as in Heaven: Ecological Vision and Initiatives of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012), 17.

<sup>14</sup> John Paul II, *Encyclical Letter, Redemptor Hominis*, (Nairobi: Paulines Publication, 1979), 10.

<sup>15</sup> Oso, F. A, "Ecology and Social Teaching of the Church" in Ijezie I. E. (ed.) *Theology and Ecological Issue*, (Port Harcourt: CATHAN Publication, 2007), 224-239.

<sup>16</sup> John Paul II, *Encyclical Letter Centesimus Annus*, (Vatican City 1991), 37.

<sup>17</sup> John Paul II, *Encyclical Letter Redemptor Hominis*, 8.

<sup>18</sup> John Paul II, *Encyclical Letter Veritatis Splendor*, (Vatican City 1993), 38.





Paradoxically, while we are called to attend and advance the universal common good that is, to use creation for our benefit and to develop ourselves, we must equally bear in mind our responsibility of caring for the earth to the glory of God.<sup>19</sup> John Paul II argues that this paradox of human existence is heightened by the rise of scientific research as a way of learning because this brought about the separation in the organic link between philosophy and theology and encouraged a distorted notion of dominion. In this way, the organic link between philosophy and theology that would have helped a better understanding of dominion based on God as Creator was distorted due to too much emphasis on the subjectivity of the person by modern scientific research.

It follows that scientists, lacking any ethical point of reference, are in danger of putting at the center of their concerns something other than the human person and the entirety of the person's life. Further still, some of these, sensing the opportunities of technological progress, seem to succumb not only to a market-based logic, but also to the temptation of a quasi-divine power over nature.<sup>20</sup> Hence, how to resolve the paradox of our existence is at the centre of the ecological concerns of John Paul II and such concerns have increasingly occupied the Magisterium of the Church. This concern calls for the rejection of the fallacy that God lacks interest in the wellbeing of other parts of His creation. The Church stresses instead the anthropological implications of the ecological problem and emphasizes the protection of the organic unity of all creation" because the ecological crisis disrupts this unity and affects all creatures.<sup>21</sup>

## 5. Human Beings as Stewards of Creation

The environmental stewardship of the human person can be seen in his/her relationship with the whole of creation. The human person is grounded in three relationships: God, neighbor interrelated environment, and the earth. This shows that everything is there is a relationship between the human person and his between the human persons and God Himself. Human beings` image the triune God by living in authentic communion not only with other human beings but also with all of creation.<sup>22</sup> This is a reflection of Trinitarian theology. God wills communion with all creation and He desires the divine life to be human life. As a theology of communion and relationship, Trinitarian theology is about God's life for all creation and our life with God, others and the earth. Discussing human relatedness to the whole of creation, LaCugna describes the human person as 'Catholic'. This implies that, by being created by a God who wills the goodness of the whole of creation, the human person is to be open to all that exists in the universe.<sup>23</sup> The human person is thus, not a being isolated from the rest of creation. Hefner brings out well the relationship between the human person and creation when he stresses that, "nature is the reality system in which we have emerged and in which we now live, including its past history and its future, what is visible and known to us, as well as what is unknown now and what may well be forever unknowable."<sup>24</sup> This shows that human beings, as the image of God should have a dynamic relationship not only with other human persons, but with whatever has been created by God.

<sup>19</sup> Latourelle Rene, *Gaudium et Spes*, in *Dictionary of Fundamental Theology*, (Cork: Paulist Press, 1968), 84.

<sup>20</sup> John Paul II, *Encyclical Letter Fides et Ratio*, 45-48.

<sup>21</sup> *ibid*, 15-16.

<sup>22</sup> Kusumalayam, J. *Human Rights: Individual or Group Rights*. Bangalore: St. Pauls, 2008), 56.

<sup>23</sup> LaCugna, C. M. *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life*. (San Francisco: Harper, 1993), 34.

<sup>24</sup> Hefner, P. "Can Nature Truly be our Friend?" In *Zygon: Journal of Religion and Science* 29(7), (1994), 507-528.  
<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9744.1994.tb00688.x>, Accessed 4/12/2023.



Wilkinson argues that the relationship of the human person to the created universe can be traced to the etymology of the word used in the creation accounts in Genesis when he notes that, "the Hebrew word used in Genesis 1 and 2 for 'earth' in *adamah*, and the Hebrew word for 'man' is Adam. What the words and the whole account suggest them is that whatever else we are, humans are also earth, and we share our nature with its plants, its animals. Hence we are responsible to all".<sup>25</sup> The human person stands in relation to everything the material, living and non-living world. According to Selling, this can be said to constitute the core meaning of personhood, Such a relationship has also consequences for the world, because a lack of sensitivity to the human persons relation to the material world can result either in the failure to reap the benefits of the world in which we live (use of resources) or in the neglect of the care that must be taken in our relation to the environment (pollution).<sup>26</sup> Of course, the relationship of the human person to the whole of creation calls for a relationship of responsibility. The fact of our being created in the image of God and the fact of our relatedness to God, both direct us towards a committed engagement for the welfare of God's creation.<sup>27</sup> John Paul II in *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* recalls the affinity existing between human beings and other creatures which is based on God's plan for creation and the necessity of human beings to seek the will of God in carrying out the mandate of dominion.<sup>28</sup> The human person has an obligation which consists of what Oso refers to as "three Ps" towards the earth: to protect it, to preserve it, and to promote it. Consequently, human beings have the obligation to invest the talents that God has entrusted to them for the protection, preservation and promotion of the created world.<sup>29</sup>

## 6. The Teachings of the Church on Ecology

In the last two hundred years, the Church has constantly been speaking what Pope Leo XIII called "the words that are hers"<sup>30</sup> with regard to social issues like economy, politics, justice and peace, human relations, not excluding ecology. The Second Vatican Council Fathers had it that "man was created in God's image and was commanded to conquer the earth with all it contains and to rule the world in justice and holiness: he was to acknowledge God as maker of all things and relate himself and the totality of creation to Him, so that through the dominion of all things by man the name of God would be majestic in all the earth"<sup>31</sup>. However, it was Pope Leo XIII's Encyclical Letter, *Rerum Novarum* that marked "the beginning of a new path"<sup>32</sup> on the Church's Social Doctrine. This Encyclical treats specifically issues relating to human labour, the rights and responsibilities of both employers and employees of labour. Pope St. John XXIII in his *Pacem in Terris* addressed the issue of world peace - that peace is preferred to war. Blessed Pope Paul VI, in his Apostolic Letter *Octogesima Adveniens* spoke directly on ecological exploitation. He wrote that "due to an ill- considered exploitation of nature, humanity runs the risk of destroying it and becoming in turn a victim of this degradation"<sup>33</sup>.

<sup>25</sup> Wilkinson, L. *Earth keeping in the Nineties: Stewardship of Creation*. (Michigan: Grand Rapids, 1991), 284.

<sup>26</sup> Selling, J. *Looking toward the End: Revising Aquinas Teleological Ethics*, in *Heythrop Journal* 51(3), (2010), 388-400.

<sup>27</sup> Kusumalayam, J. *Human Rights: Individual or Group Rights*, 60.

<sup>28</sup> John Paul II, *Encyclical letter, Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, 53.

<sup>29</sup> Oso, F. A, *Ecology and Social Teaching of the Church*, in *Ijezie I. E.* (ed.), 224-239.

<sup>30</sup> Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, op. cit., xvii.

<sup>31</sup> Vatican II Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, *Gaudium et Spes*, op. cit., 34.

<sup>32</sup> Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, op. cit., no. 87, p. 49

<sup>33</sup> Paul VI, Apostolic Letter *Octogesima Adveniens*, 14 May 1971, no. 21.



This looks like a prophetic warning, but was it heeded? He was very much concerned about ecological degradation that he capitalized on any and every opportunity to address the issue.<sup>34</sup>

St. Pope John Paul II, made ecological issues one of his very first concerns in his Encyclical Letter *Redemptor Hominis* of 4 March, 1979, the first of his pontificate. He addressed the same issue in his Encyclical Letters *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*,<sup>35</sup> and *Centessimus Annus*.<sup>36</sup> Pope Benedict XVI, in his *Caritas in Veritate*, expressed his concern on the care of the earth.<sup>37</sup> The Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace published a "Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church" and devoted a Chapter to "Safeguarding the Environment". Pope Francis synthesized and enlarged, in the language of the age, all the Social teachings of his predecessors on the Care of the Earth in the Encyclical, *Laudato Si'*: On the Care for Our Common Home. In all her teachings on the Care of the Earth, the Church always recognizes the need for technological development, otherwise, man will not live true to his nature, a rational being. In fact, technology "could be a priceless tool in solving many serious problems, in the first place those of hunger and disease, through the production of more advanced and vigorous strains of plants, and through the production of valuable medicines."<sup>38</sup> The Church however emphasizes and insists on "proper application" of science and technology, realizing that they could be used either to uplift or degrade both nature in general, and human nature in particular. Hence, "it is necessary to maintain an attitude of prudence and attentively sift out the nature, end, and means of the various forms of applied technology"<sup>39</sup>. She therefore maintains that all scientific research must be subordinated to ethical and moral principles and values so that they will be geared towards the enhancement of human dignity. Pope Francis reiterates this fact when he wrote that "authentic human development has a moral character. It presumes full respect for the human person, but it must also be concerned for the world around us and take into account the nature of each being and of its mutual connection in an ordered system"<sup>40</sup>. Thus, the Church teaches that safeguarding the environment should be the responsibility of all.

## 7. Recommendations

### a. For Government:

- i. Legislation: There is first and foremost the urgent need to enforce legislations and regulations meant to safeguard the environment. This can be done by judiciary giving a broader interpretation to the right to life and dignity as contained in the 1999 Nigerian Constitution to embrace positive obligations on the state to safeguard the environment.
- ii. Supervision: Many members of the society do not regard master plans during construction. Therefore, government at all levels in Nigeria should take it as matter of urgency to discouraging building construction on water ways/drainages irrespective of the status of the owner.
- iii. Funding: Funding is another important factor in curbing environmental menace in Nigeria. There is no over stressing the fact that the numerous environmental problems

<sup>34</sup> Paul VI, Address to FAO on the 25th Anniversary of its Institution (16 November 1970), 4: AAS 62(1970), 833 - cited in *Laudato Si'*, p. 9.

<sup>35</sup> *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* no. 34

<sup>36</sup> *Centessimus Annus* nos 38 and 58

<sup>37</sup> Benedict XVI, Encyclical Letter, *Caritas in Veritate: On Integral Human Development in Charity and Truth*, (Vatican City, 2009), 51

<sup>38</sup> Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, op. cit., no. 458, p. 247-248.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid, 249.

<sup>40</sup> Francis, Pope, *Encyclical Letter, Laudato Si, Care of Our Common Home*, 5.



mentioned above requires substantial government funding to address. Fund is needed to control, monitor and remedy the problems.

- iii. Education and Advocacy: This cannot be ruled out in the game of curbing environmental problems in Nigeria. There is no doubting the fact that many of the man-made threats on our environment are fuelled by ignorance and non-commitment of the populace. Government needs to embark on an aggressive advocacy programme that will bring the populace on board as major stakeholders in the protection of our environment. The state should therefore, include environmental awareness education courses in the curricula of primary and post-primary schools.

**b. For the Church:**

- i. Catechesis: The Church, through her instructions and magisterial teachings, should not relent but continue to disseminate information about environmental degradation and the danger it pose to our collective existence in the universe. Church documents such as Pope Francis *Laudato Si* should be more simplified and made available to as many people as possible to enlighten them on the danger of poor environmental condition.
- ii. Canonical Legislations: Apart from her teachings on the need to safe guard the environment, the Church should where appropriate emanate positive legislations by way of canonization of state laws on environment so that her members will feel more duty bound to keep to the laws that would protect the environment and provide quality life.

**c. For Individuals and Communities:**

- i. Vigilance: Individuals and communities should be very vigilant and report serious environmental problems to appropriate authorities for immediate action. They should be ready at all times to take individual as well as collective court actions against any agency or body constituting environmental hazard in any form or shade.
- ii. Waste Management: Refuse dump along the river courses impede the flow of water leading to flooding especially during heavy rainfall. Therefore, dumping of refuse on the river channels and floodplains should be prohibited.
- iii. Ecological Projects: There is a need for urgent actions to mitigate environmental degradation. Safeguarding the environment calls for a holistic action. Large scale tree planting, the addition of mulch and boulders to the soil to restrict erosion on slopes, and the building of fiber logs to keep soil from washing away can all assist to reduce erosion.
- iv. Reduction of Emissions: The public should be educated on how to reduce their carbon footprint through activities such as planting of trees, reusing, and recycling items, proper disposal of waste, and using LED bulbs. Every little eco-friendly action today will help to safeguard the environment for future generations.

**8. Conclusion**

The Church's engagement with environmental issues derives from her belief that Christians have a responsibility to work for the well-being of all humanity, to recognize environmental stewardship as their Christian responsibility. Human being is a being with dignity and rights, having being created by God in His own image and likeness. The rights of the human person come with a responsibility. As the human person has his/her many rights, with other creatures at his/her service, so also has he/she the responsibility to care for them. Consequently, the care of the earth is the responsibility of the human person if he/she must enjoy the benefits of his/her dominance over other creatures. The fact that creation was entrusted to human dominion does





not mean that the natural world should be seen as resources to be exploited. It is rather a reality to be respected and even revered as a gift and trust from God. Human beings as stewards of creation are, therefore, called to enhance the divine purpose for creation and at the same time authentically develop themselves. They have the obligation to invest the talents that God has entrusted to them for the development of the created world. In this way, through responsible stewardship, humanity acts as a bridge of mutual love between God the Creator and His creation. As *Imago Dei*, they are viceroys of a God who found everything 'very good' at the end of Creation. Thus, the human persons are commissioned to keep creation as 'very good'. This is the Christian understanding of dominion.

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