

Topic: How green should Christians be?

I need to know:

- The type and purpose of the Genesis Creation texts.
- How Christians have responded to the idea of stewardship, as a community and individually. What the golden rule is and to explain the impact it could have on daily life.
- What is meant by dominion and the impact that this may have on the environment.
- Different meanings of stewardship in the context of the relationship between religion and science.
- Religious and non-religious views of the environment.



Key Words and Definitions

- **Stewardship** – Caring for the planet and managing it’s resources. Many believers sat that God has given humans the special duty to care for the world in his place.
- **Dominion** – the idea that God gave humans power and authority of the Earth – we can use the world and its resources for our own use.
- **Omnibenevolent** – The state of being all-loving and infinitely good.
- **Omnipotent** – All-power, all mighty and unlimited nature of God.
- **Creator** – One who brings something into existence.
- **Transcendence** – This is the idea that God is above and beyond the physical realm, not subject to the limitations of the material.
- **Environmental sustainability** – Ensuring the demands placed on natural resources can be met without reducing capacity to allow all people and other species of animals as well as plant life, to live well, now and in the future.
- **Augustine (354–430 C.E.)** - was the Bishop of Hippo (now Annaba, Algeria) from 396 to 430.
- **Ecology** - The study of how living things on Earth interact with and rely on other living and non-living things in the environment where they live.
- **Anthropocentric** – Human beings are the central or most important element of existence. For example, they are more important than animals.

Stewardship

Stewardship suggests we should be stewards/caretakers of the earth and not exploiters and that humans have a responsibility to do this.

The Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it.’ Genesis 2:15.

The earth is the Lord’s and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it.’ Psalms 24:1

Dominion

This is the idea that some Christians have that God gave us the earth to rule over. This would give us the right to utilise the world’s natural resources.

Then God said. ‘Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so they may rule over the fish in the sea, and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground’. Genesis 1:26.

St Francis of Assisi (1181–1226)

- Francis was an Italian monk.
- He gave away all his possessions and committed his life to God.
- He believed that all living creatures God had created were on an equal level and that nothing was better than another.
- He was known for his care of animals and was made a Saint in 1228.
- In 1979 Pope John Paul II named him Patron Saint of Ecology.
- In 1986 representatives from the world faiths met in Assisi to declare their support for protecting the environment. Their statements have become known as the Assisi Declarations.

Creation and the nature of God

Creation reveals something about the nature of God. For example, being omnipotent and transcendent. It reminds Christians of their place dependent upon the Creator.

There are various ways of resolving the conflict between science and religion, such as by interpreting Genesis in different ways.

The Eco Church Awards

A Rocha is UK’s eco award scheme for churches in England and Wales. They want to ‘demonstrate that the gospel is good news for God’s earth’. They offer a free online survey and supporting resources which are designed to equip churches. They want them to express their care for God’s world in worship and teaching; in how they look after their buildings and land; in how they engage with their local community and in global campaigns, and in the personal lifestyles of their congregation.

Arrow Tasks – You could enhance your learning further by visiting A Rocha website and BBC Bitesize.

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Genesis 1

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. ² Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. ³ And God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. ⁴ God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. ⁵ God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night." And there was evening, and there was morning—the first day.

⁶ And God said, "Let there be a vault between the waters to separate water from water." ⁷ So God made the vault and separated the water under the vault from the water above it. And it was so. ⁸ God called the vault "sky." And there was evening, and there was morning—the second day.

⁹ And God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered to one place, and let dry ground appear." And it was so. ¹⁰ God called the dry ground "land," and the gathered waters he called "seas." And God saw that it was good.

¹¹ Then God said, "Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds." And it was so. ¹² The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good. ¹³ And there was evening, and there was morning—the third day.

¹⁴ And God said, "Let there be lights in the vault of the sky to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark sacred times, and days and years, ¹⁵ and let them be lights in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth." And it was so. ¹⁶ God made two great lights—the greater light to govern the day and the lesser light to govern the night. He also made the stars. ¹⁷ God set them in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth, ¹⁸ to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. ¹⁹ And there was evening, and there was morning—the fourth day.

²⁰ And God said, "Let the water teem with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the vault of the sky." ²¹ So God created the great creatures of the sea and every living thing with which the water teems and that moves about in it, according to their kinds, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that it was good. ²² God blessed them and said, "Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the water in the seas, and let the birds increase on the earth." ²³ And there was evening, and there was morning—the fifth day.

²⁴ And God said, "Let the land produce living creatures according to their kinds: the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground, and the wild animals, each according to its kind." And it was so. ²⁵ God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their

kinds, and all the creatures that move along the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

²⁶ Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals,^[a] and over all the creatures that move along the ground." ²⁷ So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. ²⁸ God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground." ²⁹ Then God said, "I give you every seed-bearing plant on the face of the whole earth and every tree that has fruit with seed in it. They will be yours for food. ³⁰ And to all the beasts of the earth and all the birds in the sky and all the creatures that move along the ground—everything that has the breath of life in it—I give every green plant for food." And it was so. ³¹ God saw all that he had made, and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day.

Genesis 2

⁵ Now no shrub had yet appeared on the earth^[a] and no plant had yet sprung up, for the LORD God had not sent rain on the earth and there was no one to work the ground, ⁶ but streams^[b] came up from the earth and watered the whole surface of the ground. ⁷ Then the LORD God formed a man^[c] from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being. ⁸ Now the LORD God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. ⁹ The LORD God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. ¹⁰ A river watering the garden flowed from Eden; from there it was separated into four headwaters. ¹¹ The name of the first is the Pishon; it winds through the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold. ¹² (The gold of that land is good; aromatic resin^[d] and onyx are also there.) ¹³ The name of the second river is the Gihon; it winds through the entire land of Cush.^[e] ¹⁴ The name of the third river is the Tigris; it runs along the east side of Ashur. And the fourth river is the Euphrates. ¹⁵ The LORD God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to work it and take care of it. ¹⁶ And the LORD God commanded the man, "You are free to eat from any tree in the garden; ¹⁷ but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die." ¹⁸ The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."

¹⁹ Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. ²⁰ So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals. But for Adam^[f] no suitable helper was found. ²¹ So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs^[g] and then closed up the place with flesh. ²² Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib^[h] he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. ²³ The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man." ²⁴ That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh. ²⁵ Adam and his wife were both naked, and felt no shame.

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