



Environment

- 1 This world is God's creation. Human creatures – made in God's image – bear a unique responsibility to develop and care for it. Human stewardship should reflect God's ongoing care for creation.
- 2 The creation's vast diversity holds together as an interdependent unity. That which is not human has its own identity and purpose by God's design and does not exist merely as a means for human ends. Consequently, ecological carefulness should be a condition of all development.
- 3 Human wellbeing depends on a clean environment. Accordingly, love of our neighbors, including future generations, forbids pollution and other degradations that may do real human harm.
- 4 God has entrusted humans with many kinds of responsibility, exercised in different types of relationships and institutions. Each family, school, church, business enterprise, and nonprofit organization must exercise care in how it uses resources and in how it shapes the habits, habitats, and practices of its members. Yet all of this is not enough.
- 5 Much of what constitutes the natural environment has the character of a commons – that which is shared by all. Responsibility for the commons rests primarily with political communities of citizens through their governments – and the vocation of governments is to do justice. Governments should not only be environmentally responsible in their own actions; they should establish and uphold laws binding on everyone to ensure ecologically sound development for future generations.
- 6 Government's responsibility is to ensure that justice is done to the environment as a condition of all economic, technological, and scientific development. Governments must not wait for environmental degradation to emerge before trying to restrain it. Local, state, and national governments all bear responsibility to uphold just laws to protect the environment. Yet more must also be done.
- 7 Many growing threats to environmental sustainability – from climate change to overfishing of the oceans – are transnational in scope. Therefore, governments throughout the world, starting with those that are placing the greatest demands on the environment, bear responsibility, cooperatively, to establish and enforce rules to protect the commons, so that just and ecologically sound development will be possible worldwide.
- 8 As certain kinds of environmental degradation are reaching, or have already reached, critical levels, the responsibilities articulated above are all the more urgent and should receive the highest level of attention by governments and international organizations.

Implications

1. Insofar as taxes and other mandatory incentives prove effective in reducing environmentally damaging consumption, taxes on fuels and non-biodegradable products, for example, would be an important factor in curbing further environmental damage. The same can be said for stiffer state and federal requirements that automakers increase the fuel efficiency of new vehicles. The taxes collected from such measures should be used to encourage the development of energy-saving technologies and/or to help clean up or counter environmental degradation.
2. Tax incentives and/or penalties should also be used to promote increased use of insulation in buildings and to encourage or require stricter emission controls on polluting industries.

For Further Reading

Bouma-Prediger, Steven. "God the Homemaker and Recycler: A Biblical Case for a Green God" (Think CD #11). Hamilton, Ontario: Work Research Foundation, 2007.

DeWitt, Calvin B. *Caring for Creation: Responsible Stewardship of God's Handiwork*. Baker Publishing Group, 1998. (CPJ's 1996 Kuyper Lecture, with responses by Richard A. Baer Jr., Thomas Sieger Derr, and Vernon J. Ehlers.)

Skillen, James W. "Liberalism and the Environment," in *In Pursuit of Justice: Christian-Democratic Explorations*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004.

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