

## Theological Background

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Belief in God as creator is not merely a belief about how everything began; it is the perspective from which we are to view all life including our own.

It means that we place the highest value on this earth and see life as God's gift.

Pre-technological societies lived in close dependence on the earth. The daily struggle for food and shelter, at the mercy of natural forces and the changing seasons, led to a profound respect for the environment. With technological mastery has come a different attitude: one that sees the earth as there to be plundered and exploited.

Now we are reaping the whirlwind: with climate change, crises over access to water and food, destruction of habitat and the rapid extinction of species. It is not clear whether the earth can still renew itself or whether the damage has gone too far. It is also not clear that there is the will to stop, to restore this 'blue planet', our only fragile home.

In Genesis, God gives humans certain rights over his creation. With these rights, come responsibilities. We are stewards. A steward manages an estate on the owner's behalf. We have been given the earth to look after by God and to hold it in trust for future generations. If the earth is to sustain our children and succeeding generations, this clearly places limits on how we treat the earth.

There have always been elements in the Christian tradition to remind us of our responsibilities and priorities. The Law of Moses made provision for a year's 'Sabbath rest' for the land every seven years and Francis of Assisi addressed the sun, moon, earth, wind and water as his mother, sisters and brothers.

Harvest and Rogation remind us of our dependence on the earth for our survival, and lead us to thank God as the ultimate source of all the earth's riches.

Although Genesis chapters 1 and 2 contain the most well-known accounts of Creation, it should be remembered that there are extended presentations of the wisdom and majesty of God the Creator in Job 38-41 and in Isaiah 40-45. Also, in the New Testament, Paul explains how Christ was central to creation (Colossians 1:15-16) and that not only humankind but all creation shares in the redemption and renewal that Christ achieved (Romans 8:19-22). The New Testament comes to a close with a vision of a new heaven and a new earth where, in imagery that recalls the Garden of Eden, all are nourished by the spring of the water of life and all have access to the tree of life (Revelation 21).

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### Biblical References

Genesis 1:31

God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.

Leviticus 25:3-4

For six years sow your fields, and for six years prune your vineyards and gather their crops. But in the seventh year the land is to have a sabbath of rest, a sabbath to the LORD. Do not sow your fields or prune your vineyards.

Job 38:4-5

'Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand. Who marked off its dimensions? Surely you know! Who stretched a measuring line across it?'

Psalm 8:3-4

When I consider your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which you have set in place, what is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him?

Psalm 19:1

The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.

Isaiah 45:18

For this is what the LORD says - he who created the heavens, he is God; he who fashioned and made the earth, he founded it; he did not create it to be empty, but formed it to be inhabited.

Colossians 1:15-16

He (Christ) is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him.