

Our Divine Stewardship: Emulating God's Relationship with Nature

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Prophets throughout the millennia explicitly state that this life is a probationary state in which we are to be tested and proven.

The sole purpose of the atonement of Jesus Christ is to enable the perfection of man through the miracle of repentance and the gift of Eternal Life. As sons and daughters of a loving Heavenly Father we are promised that we can become like him and come to live eternally with him.

Rev. 2:7 "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the Tree of Life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God."

In other words, we are expected to overcome our challenges, "follow him" and become "one" with him even as he is one with the Father, that we may all be one *forever in paradise*. D&C 35:2. [*Italics added*]

Our proper relationship with nature is defined by our proper relationship with God. To become like him we have to come to know what he knows and choose as he does. There is no better setting for understanding the ways and means of God than by studying nature and applying the truths that it teaches us. In Genesis 1:28 the Lord told us to "Be fruitful", "Multiply", and "Replenish the Earth". In other words, "Be industrious and add value. Don't go extinct. And Don't Abuse the Planet! – Make your relationship with it sustainable, replenish the resources you use, and care for the system as a whole."

Moments later He said we were to "Have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air and over all the earth, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth". How do we suppose he meant this? The word dominion has two subtly opposing meanings found in Webster's: The power to rule, and Sovereign authority. We can interpret it either way: to dominate, be master over, and compel compliance from OR to be responsible for, caretaker, and steward of.

The primary difference between the plan of salvation and the plan of Satan is agency. Clearly God views his dominion over us as one which empowers us to learn by experiencing the consequences of our actions, his role as one which supports and enables us to make choices, and his life's work (and his glory) to *influence* us to our benefit – to "Bring to pass the Immortality and Eternal Life of Man". As his children, how can we see our responsibility to all living things any less benevolently?

Managing natural systems here on Earth is a direct analog for and preparatory to creating and managing future responsibilities. Deep understanding of physics, chemistry, and biology underlies the ecology, economics, and behavior of complex biological and social

systems. Effectively and efficiently influencing these systems to promote desired outcomes and add value through time requires a commitment to continuous life-long learning and the ability to pass knowledge and understanding to the next generation.

We can only do this by understanding the fundamental universal principles and processes that underlie the behavior of all organisms and by seeking to apply this knowledge for the greater good of all. As we learn about the forces that create and direct changes in this world, and develop our ability to comprehend and use the power of God for good, with a healthy respect for all living things and the capacity to recognize the far reaching impacts of our actions and take responsibility for them, we necessarily become more like Him.

All things are God's creation and were brought into existence for a purpose. Thus, we can not truly become like him without gaining an understanding and an appreciation for everything that is and how they relate to each other and to us. To this end we must continually seek additional light and knowledge until we can comprehend and control our influence on the world and the creatures that inhabit it.

As a global consumer society, continued wanton destruction of the environment is clearly inconsistent with our mandate to care for this Garden and to become like God, with a full awareness and appreciation of all things. However, militant reactionism and heavy handed regulation are not enlightened solutions either. Both extreme "environmentalism" and dictatorial government intervention promote methodologies and philosophies far more akin to Satan's suggested path, than Christ's proposal that we become like Him by: being "anxiously engaged in [] good causes and *doing* many good things of our own free will, [] *to* bring to pass much righteousness," and not by being "commanded in all things; for he that is compelled in all things, the same is a slothful and not a wise servant," D&C 58:26-27 [Paraphrased, *Italics added*].

The theme of the conference we are attending is A Divine Stewardship: Man's Relationship With Nature. I believe sustainable, symbiotic ecosystems glimpsed in mortal life are intended to be metaphors for and types or reflections of Celestial systems and relationships. Each of the individuals that will be speaking will address some facet of this notion and explore ways in which that person strives to fulfill their mission in life by coming to understand and care for nature in a way that glorifies God. For me there is no higher purpose, no higher calling except that within my own home where I put these ideas into practice as I try to teach my children and help them to fulfill the measure of their creation even as I strive to fulfill mine.