**Introduction to Year 13 Geography**

Year 13 is the accumulation of everything you have done in school. It means you can do lots of stuff but most importantly it means you can now “think”

Year 13 Geography isn’t so much about just answering questions, it’s about being able to ask good questions too. Ones that involve identifying the important issues that face our world and being able to find solutions to them.

So to start with here are a few questions geographers are interested in answering. Your answer to question one will be used to answer everything else

1. What do you think about our physical world?

There are many ways of looking at the world – is it just a resource to be used by humans to make us wealthy and our lives comfortable or a group of many environments and eco-systems to be protected at any cost or something in between? What is the biblical view of how humans should interact with the world?

1. An example of an issue would be - How should humans live? Are collections of people in areas called cities a good thing or bad thing geographically? (Use the SPENT model)
2. What are some of the current issues facing the world that a geographer would be interested in? List Ten and frame each as a question.
3. Now pick a partner. You are going to present a mini thesis that outlines one Geographic issue. It is called a Pecha Kucha. You will present 10 slides (no more, no less) and speak about each for 20 seconds (no more, no less). Your aim is two fold, in no more than 3minutes and 20 seconds you must present slides that prove your issue is real and a potential solution to it OR you must present slides proving the issue is not real and explain why.

Christians and the Environment: How Should Christians Think about the Environment?

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**Summary**

The claim that Christianity teaches care for the environment has been challenged from both outside and inside the church. By those outside the church, the Christian faith has been accused of holding to a theology that encourages exploitation of the environment. This is based on both a misreading of Scripture as well as the unfortunate practice of some Christians. Those inside the church have put forth five challenges: (1) the utilitarian earth view, (2) the gnostic world view, (3) the conflation of earthkeeping with environmentalism, (4) the “fear of Samaritans syndrome,” and (5) the no crisis/no stewardship philosophy. None of these challenges withstands the testimony of Scripture.

God created the world, holds everything together, and reconciles all things through Jesus Christ. Since the days of the early church, followers of Jesus Christ have known this remarkable teaching of Colossians 1:15-20, and for centuries prior to the Incarnation, God had also been affirmed as Creator. Since “the earth is the Lord’s,” humanity’s responsibility to “serve and keep” God’s creation had been part of the belief and action of God’s people for millennia (Ps. 19:1; Gen. 2:15). Thus since 1967 the claim of Lynn White, Jr., that the “Judeo-Christian tradition” was the cause of “our ecologic crisis” has been troubling.1 White’s paper, “The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis,” which has been reprinted in numerous textbooks and other anthologies, is the main reason college students learn that Christians are the problem. “God planned all of this explicitly for man’s benefit and rule: no item in the physical creation had any purpose save to serve man’s purposes” was White’s assessment of the Christian attitude toward God’s creation.2

**AN APOLOGETIC TO OUTSIDE CRITICS**

Francis Schaeffer was among the first Christian apologists to respond to White’s complaint. “The Christian is called upon to exhibit this dominion, but exhibit it rightly; treating the thing as having value in itself, exercising dominion without being destructive.”3 Moreover, as far back as 1554, John Calvin had interpreted dominion to mean a responsible care and keeping that does not neglect, injure, abuse, degrade, dissipate, corrupt, mar, or ruin the earth.4

God’s economy — “God’s plan or system for government of the world”5 — is always the context and framework within which the human economy works. A literal reading of Genesis 2:15 puts it thus: “And Jehovah God taketh the man and causeth him to rest in the garden of Eden, to serve it and to keep it.”6 Serving and keeping creation,7 not oppressive domination, is the biblical idea of economy. Jesus Christ — our model — reenforces this. The image of God (2 Cor. 4:4; Col. 1:15) takes “the very nature of a servant”(Phil. 2:6-7). And Christians follow the Creator-Servant — the second Adam — joining Him in His reconciliation of all things to God, undoing the damage of the first Adam by doing what Adam was supposed to do.8 Moreover, they cultivate society as part of God’s creation while seeking and preserving truth,9 establishing civility, erecting civilized societies, and building the church of Christ on earth.10 They demonstrate that “a truly biblical Christianity has a real answer to the ecological crisis.”11

**AN APOLOGETIC TO CRITICS WITHIN THE CHURCH**

The first 25 years following White’s paper saw the production of scores of defenses to outside critics.12 Recently, however, challenges to the view that the Bible teaches being a custodian of God’s creation have even come from critics within Christendom. These challenges include views that (1) the earth and everything in it belong to humanity; (2) the material world is unimportant or evil; (3) Christian earthkeepers are “environmentalists”; (4) environmentalists are frequently New Agers, and New Agers should be shunned; and (5) since there is no environmental crisis, biblical earthkeeping is unnecessary.

**1.) The earth and everything in it belongs to man (Utilitarian Earth View).**The first clear challenge from within came from James Watt, a professing evangelical, who became U.S. Secretary of the Interior under Ronald Reagan in the early 1980s. In his article, “Ours Is the Earth,”13 and numerous articles since 1981, he made clear that he viewed earth as “merely a temporary way station on the road to eternal life…The earth was put here by the Lord for His people to subdue and to use for profitable purposes on their way to the hereafter.”14Christian ethicist, Susan Bratton, herself an evangelical, countered Watt’s article, pointing to the Bible’s proclamation, “The earth is the Lord’s, and all it contains.”15 Bratton concluded that “his philosophy of management stems largely from economic and political considerations”16 and that “his economic and political views also greatly influence his ecotheology.”17 Watt’s beliefs and actions complicated the Christian apologetic response to outside critics because they seemed to validate White’s claim against Christians. Thus apologists have had to remind critics within Christendom that the earth and everything in it *is* the Lord’s and that the earth has other purposes than merely serving human needs.18

**2.) The material world is unimportant or evil (Gnostic World View).**Another challenge from within is a dualistic view that teaches the separation between matter and spirit, while arguing that the material world is evil. Christian apologists counter this notion with New Testament texts that affirm matter in the incarnation and resurrection of Jesus, the resurrection of the body, and the reconciliation of all things to God.19 God loves *the cosmos*(John 3:16), pouring out divine love to all creation. Mirroring God’s knowledge and love, we work to know and care for God’s world. As it is inconceivable to honor Rembrandt and yet despise his paintings, so also is it inconceivable to honor the Creator and yet despise His works and workings. To the Creator of matter, matter matters.

While honoring God, we also need to know how creation works. We need to know the human economy so we can maintain, refine, and employ it in our service to God’s economy. If we are careless about science and economics — not caring about how they work and what they describe, creation’s economy will suffer. Inside critics who would disparage the material world have made it necessary for apologists to reaffirm the importance of the material world to its Creator as well as the disciplines for knowing and caring for it.

**3. Christian earthkeepers are environmentalists (Conflation of Earthkeeping with Environmentalism).**A third challenge within Christendom is lumping all who care for creation into the category “environmentalist.” Thus Christians who practice earthkeeping out of dedication to God may be unjustly identified with pantheism (identification of the world with God), paganism, and violent tactics, thereby raising suspicion of other Christians. A student of mine, for example, was chided by another for “having New Age tendencies” when she, out of Christian conviction, picked up a discarded aluminum can along a campus sidewalk.

Moreover, new believers might be expected to abandon “environmental interests.” Another student, upon her conversion, had been taught that caring for creation was inimical to accepting Christ; her mentor had taught her that Christ is a beautiful Savior, but not the Lord of creation. This challenge by inside critics has moved apologists to call for discernment and care when judging fellow Christians’ actions toward creation.

**4.) Stay away from New Agers (Fear of Samaritans Syndrome).**While New Age belief is a problem that needs to be addressed,20 there is a greater problem: shunning “New Agers” and thereby denying them the opportunity to hear the gospel. After a speech I gave to a New Age organization on the New Testament meaning of the Kingdom of God, many of the 250 conferees inquired about the gospel. Only two had been connected with a church; the rest had not heard the gospel message.

As the conference concluded, their leaders asked why Christian picketers were treating them as evil people. Regrettably, these people would not have heard even from me had I not mistaken them for a Christian group when I accepted their invitation to speak. The apologetic response in this instance has led us to discover that many in the New Age do not know God and have not yet been told the gospel, which they desperately need and which we should share with them.

**5.) Since there is no ecological crisis, earthkeeping is not necessary (No Crisis/No Stewardship Philosophy).**Finally, many people are engaging in debates over whether there is even an environmental crisis. Underlying this debate are the troubling implications that we need to have more or better data before we can take action and that if things are not as bad as we thought (or are getting better or never were bad at all), we do not have to act.

The biblical imperative, however, is for stewardship on behalf of God’s creation no matter what the condition of creation. Christian environmental stewardship is not crisis management but a way of life. God’s call to serve and keep the garden is our calling whether it is our vegetable garden or the whole of creation, and no matter if it is being degraded, staying the same, or improving. We need not have all the data, but we must be dedicated to imaging God’s love for the world in our lives and landscapes. Responding apologetically to inside critics on this matter has shown that responsible stewardship is not an option but a continuing privilege and responsibility.

**RESPONDING IN TRUTH**

Our society is discovering that environmental problems are more spiritual than technological. People everywhere are looking for the way, the truth, and the life. The time is ripe for offering the living water that only Christ gives to the world as an expression of God’s love. The time has come for us to carefully seek to learn all that the Bible teaches us about the Creator, creation, and stewardship of His world. We must seek to understand what creation reveals about God’s divinity, sustaining presence, and everlasting power. We must discover what creation teaches us about its God-given order and the principles by which it works. We must not selfishly keep the good news to ourselves. We must tell. We should so behave on earth that our testimony to our Creator is clear. We should so behave on earth that heaven will not be a shock to us.

**NOTES**

1Lynn White, Jr., “The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis,” *Science*155 (1967): 1203-7.2Ibid., 1205.3Francis Schaeffer, *Pollution and the Death of Man: The Christian View of Ecology*(Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House, 1970), 72.4John Calvin, commentary on Genesis 2:15 in *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses Called Genesis* (Grand Rapids: 1948). This teaching is strongly reenforced by Revelation 11:18: “The time has come…for destroying those who destroy the earth.”5This definition, interestingly, is the first definition of “economy” in *Webster’s Third New International Dictionary of the English Language Unabridged*(Springfield, MA: Merriam-Webster, 1981).6*Young’s Literal Translation of the Holy Bible: A Revised Edition*(Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953).7This is the title of the book by Douglas John Hall, *Imaging God: Dominion as Service* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986).8See Ronald Manahan, “Christ as the Second Adam,” *The Environment and the Christian: What Can We Learn from the New Testament?* C. B. DeWitt, ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991), 45-56, who writes, “The work of the last Adam is as broad as the reach of the damage of the first Adam” (55).9See, for example, Steven Shapin, *A Social History of Truth: Civility and Science in Seventeenth-Century England* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), xv-xxiii, 126-92, 409-17.10See Richard Mouw, *Uncommon Decency: Christian Civility in an Uncivil World*(Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1992) and Ronald Manahan, *A Re-Examination of the Cultural Mandate: An Analysis and Evaluation of the Dominion Materials* (doctoral dissertation, Grace Theological Seminary, 1985).11Schaeffer, 81. The term “crisis,” employed by Schaeffer here, should be used advisedly. I agree with Ron Elsdon that in most situations “it is wrong to refer to an environmental *crisis*, since this word implies the existence in time of a sudden and decisive change, either for better or worse.” Ron Elson, *Bent World: A Christian Response to the Environmental Crisis*(Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1981), 9.12See Joseph Sheldon, *Rediscovery of Creation: A Bibliographical Study of the Church’s Response to the Environmental Crisis* (Metuchen, NJ and London: ATLA and Scarecrow Press).13James Watt, “Ours Is the Earth,” *Saturday Evening Post* (January/February 1982), 74-75, cited by Bratton (see note 15).14Ron Wolf, “God, James Watt, and the Public Land,” *Audubon* 83(3) (May 1981):65, cited by Bratton.15Susan Bratton, “The Ecotheology of James Watt,” *Environmental Ethics* 5(3): 225-36. Here Bratton is quoting Ps. 24:1, *New American Standard Bible*(Philadelphia: A. J. Holman Co., 1973). See also Psalm 104:24 and 1 Corinthians 10:26.16Ibid., 225.17Ibid., 234.18For example, to express God’s goodness and creativity (Gen. 1 and 2); for God’s pleasure in His creatures (Job 38–40); to bring God praise (Ps. 104, 148); to witness to God’s glory, divinity, and everlasting power (Ps. 19:1; Acts 14:17; Rom. 1:20); and to induce human beings to seek Him (Acts 17:27).19See, for example, Ray VanLeeuwen, “Christ’s Resurrection and the Creation’s Vindication,” *The Environment and the Christian*, 57-71.20See Douglas R. Groothuis, *Unmasking the New Age* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1986)