THE DIVINE EARTH

CE 351
Bro. Borup
I have never been very diligent about recycling. When I drink a soda it's not unusual for me to throw the can into the trash instead of rinsing it out and setting it aside to be recycled. Newspapers make it into the recycling bin only if I happen to be passing by one. Yet, I am the type of person who loves to watch National Geographic and Wild Discovery. I love nature. I don't litter and I've cleaned parks and planted trees. I am in the middle of environmentalist extremes. I don't believe that anything is okay so long as it brings pleasure. I don't believe in depopulation so that human effects on nature will lessen. I believe this earth was made for man, but that with greater power comes greater responsibility. Man's dominion over the earth means that we have to take responsibility and we will be liable for our treatment of it. Therefore, the relationship between man and the earth must be based on respect, a sense of duty, and appreciation.

Knowledge of the earth's divine origins can help instill respect for it. The earth did not happen by chance nor was there an evolution from ape to man. Rather, earth and man are both God-made. The Creator of this world was no novice. Jesus Christ had great experience and He created the earth with purpose. "And worlds without number have I created; and I also created them for mine own purpose: and by the Son I created them, which is mine Only Begotten." (Moses 1:33) "Behold, the Lord hath created the earth that it should be inhabited; and he hath created his children that they should possess it." (1Nephi 17:30) All things in the environment testify of its Creator. "...even the earth, and all things that are upon the face of it, yea, an it motion, yea, and also all the planets which move in their regular form do witness that there is a Supreme Being." (Alma 30:44) The earth has even existed with God. "Like each of us, the earth existed for a time in the presence of God in a premortal, uncorrupted condition." (F. Kent Nielsen, Ensign, Sept 1980)

Lack of respect for this world often forms when people don't understand earth's potential. But earth is destined to become the sanctified home of celestial beings.

When the thousand-year period ends, the earth will undergo a still greater change. "dying" to bring to an end its temporal existence and being "quickened again" to become a celestial world, to abide forever in the conditions of that glory by which it will be quickened. It will thus become the inheritance of the righteous who have also been quickened by a fulness of the celestial glory. Christ, having completed the salvation of this earth and its inhabitants, will present it spotless to the Father. (Nielsen, Ensign, Sept 1980)
Environmentalists have no need to worry. Today the earth is scarred from mining and drilling, noxious fumes are continually polluting the air, and industry has dirtied the water. But there is nothing so horrible and corrupt that man can do to prevent the earth from regaining its paradisiacal glory.

However, a sense of duty is still needed. The fact that earth's destiny is unalterable does not give us leave to defile God's creation.

We should be clearly in our persons, in our dress, and in our habitations and surroundings. God has given us the earth as a dwelling place, and when mankind live as they should do, it is a delightful residence. It is our duty to adorn and beautify it—to make it so lovely and attractive that angels may condescend to visit it. (John Taylor, *The Gospel Kingdom*)

We must be careful in what we do. Laws and engineering has helped in improving the environment and limit our destruction of it. But our everyday actions can have an effect and may make it difficult for regulations and technology to succeed. Some people give no thought to what they put down the disposal or toilet just so long as they are rid of it. Many smokers have the bad habit of disposing their cigarette butts out the window when they are driving, tossing them down on the sidewalk, and pretty much anywhere they feel like it. Someday we will have to give an account of our actions.

How much sense of personal responsibility will there finally be for many individuals who do not believe in their ultimate accountability to God?... Can man's sense of stewardship for this planet be sustained if it is not, ultimately, a stewardship for and behalf of a loving God? We can scarcely persuade some today to assume responsibility for their aging parents, let alone feel responsible for generations unborn, unknown, and unseen! (Neal A. Maxwell, *We Will Prove Them Herewith*, p90-91)

The argument has been made that depriving ourselves of natural resources for the benefit of future generations is ludicrous. The best thing we can do for these coming generations is to not plan for them since we have no idea of what they will need. (textbook, p 158) As Elder Maxwell said, this type of thinking is selfishness. How free of guilt will we feel on that day when we come face to face with these future generations? We need to take personal responsibility and do what we can as individuals to make this earth a better place.

The earth is filled with great wonders and miracles. This is why I enjoy watching the nature shows so much. It's fascinating, it's perplexing, and it's incredible what variety this earth holds. Appreciation of the environment can bring joy and satisfaction.

In addition to this he has given you ability to appreciate his glorious gospel, the sunshine, the voice of nature speaking to you. Do you open your eyes and see it? I have rejoiced during this conference to hear the brethren acknowledge the blessing of our environment,
the product of the field, the flowers blooming, the sunsets, and above all, the realization that we are living in God's world and that he is the Creator of it. If you stop to think you still have the power and ability to appreciate and to enjoy things which no one, no depression can take from you. (David O. McKay, Gospel Ideals, p 494)

In a letter written to Elder M. Russell Ballard regarding his experience in space, Senator Jake Garn wrote,

It is impossible for me to describe the beauty of the earth. It is a breathtaking, awe-inspiring, spiritual experience to view the earth from space while traveling at twenty-five times the speed of sound. I know that God created this earth and the universe.

The earth is eternal, man is eternal and they must live together. Man has been given dominion over the earth, but this does not mean that man is free to destroy the earth at his leisure. The earth also has a spirit and it deserves the utmost respect and gratitude for the bounty which it provides mankind. As a whole, we have not been very kind to it.

And it came to pass that Enoch looked upon the earth; and he heard a voice from the bowels thereof, saying: Wo, wo is me, the mother of men; I am pained, I am weary, because of the wickedness of my children. When shall I rest, and be cleansed from the filthiness which is gone forth out of me? When will my Creator sanctify me, that I may rest, and righteousness for a season abide upon my face.

And when Enoch heard the earth mourn, he wept, and cried unto the Lord saying: O Lord, wilt thou not have compassion upon the earth? (Moses 7:48-49)

This is a beautiful earth and we must strive to keep it that way.