

THE EARTH IS THE LORD'S

by

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God, man, the soil, forests, and wildlife, the entire earth are all related. There can be no separation of people and the earth which is man's heritage. Man's whole existence is tied to the earth. He was created from it, it gives him his food, clothes, shelter, and many luxuries, and the earth finally receives his body when he dies.

Conservation of the soul and conservation of the soil and all of its resources are inseparable. We are a part of our total environment, and our existence depends upon it. What is good for man is good for the land, and whatever is good for the land is good for man. A psalmist once wrote, "the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof." Certainly this is true, for in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth and all things on it. The way man has despoiled the earth could hardly be called paying for it or using it wisely. Man has had little consideration for the future generations that follow him. God alone, through the processes of nature, can produce our heritage, and His methods of preserving the soil were to cover it with trees and grass so the wind could not blow it away as dust, or the rains wash it away as silt in the floods. This vegetation we call flora, and it cannot exist without insect and animal life to pollinate and fertilize and control. Insects pollinate, birds distribute seeds, squirrels plant and replant forests, etc.

Yes, the psalmist of old knew what he was writing when he scribed out the 24th psalm: "The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof." Throughout the ages, man has disputed its ownership using it for private and often selfish gains rather than as a steward of the Lord's earth, but in the end he could not take it with him; and we might wonder what will be his report of stewardship—did he leave the earth he used in a better or worse condition? It is our duty as citizens to encourage the wise use and conservation of all resources in every way we can. The future of this country and of every country depends upon how our total environment is handled. This fact has been proven over and over again in ancient countries. When the soil and natural resources of many parts of North Africa were misused and depleted and could not produce the needed food, many great empires fell. Today vast portions of this area are man-made deserts. Our soldiers saw the remains of great cities with marble courts, blocks square and columns standing 30 feet high. What was once a great civilization is now surrounded by barren hills and empty deserts. China and Korea once looked very much like these beautiful hills and forests of West Virginia. Yes, it can happen here as it did there.

From the land of Mesopotamia came the stories of the flood and Noah, Jonah and Ninevah and the Tower of Babel. Here was the traditional site of the Garden of Eden where the Lord gave to Adam and Eve a land of abundance and charged them with the care of it. Today, this area is as bare of trees and vegetation as if shaven with a giant razor. Ancient city ruins sit on bare limestone rock three to six feet above the earth while other places are covered with 20 feet of soil. How wonderful the report of Joshua and Caleb must have sounded to Moses and the children of Israel when the country was described as one that flowed with milk and honey. Of course, we know that this was just a figure of speech, but it does denote a land of plenty where a productive soil could produce an abundance to meet their needs. The great cedars of Lebanon which were felled to construct Solomon's temple are evidence of the soil's fertility. But this fertile land is no more. The great forests are gone. Dr. W. C. Lowdermilk, an eminent student of land use in Biblical days, wrote that this land of milk and honey is so devastated that half the topsoil is gone, and it is largely inhabited by wandering Arabs and has only about one-third the population of the Roman days. We have all seen the tragic

television pictures of starving people in India and Africa. Millions right now are dying and millions more will be dead from starvation in the next two weeks. This is only the beginning we are told. In two years the face of famine may well be a worldwide problem. In an area in Northern Africa the size of the United States six million are dying of starvation.

Some years ago while studying the history of erosion and man's influence on the land, Dr. Lowdermilk concluded that had Moses foreseen the conditions that man had brought about through the misuse of land, he might have included in the Ten Commandments a recognition of man's duty to the land as well as to his God and fellow man. As a result of these meditations, Dr. Lowdermilk wrote the Eleventh Commandment as he felt Moses might have written it.

XI - "Thou shalt inherit the holy earth as a faithful steward conserving its resources and productivity from generation to generation. Thou shalt safeguard thy fields from soil erosion, thy living waters from drying up, thy forests from desolation and protect thy hills from overgrazing by the herds, so that thy descendants may have abundance forever. If any shall fail in this stewardship of the land, thy fruitful fields shall become sterile, stony ground and wasting gullies, and thy descendants shall decrease or be destroyed from the face of the earth."

Jeremiah pictured exactly what has happened when he wrote: "Many shepherds have destroyed my vineyard; they have trampled down my portions; they have made my pleasant lot a desolate waste. They have made a desolation that in its desolation mourns to me. The whole land is desolate because no man layeth it to his heart." The Great Creator blessed our country with wonderful soil and towering forests, clean, unpolluted streams and abundant wildlife, but we have misused it badly. In our scientific world, with all of our existing knowledge, we have polluted the air we breathe, the water we drink, and depleted the resources that are vital to our basic existence.

There must be no place in our society for land laid waste and bare. We are going to pay a terrible price in floods and human destruction for much of the wanton ruin from strip mining in many areas of our states. The rains will come and so will floods, and there will be no forests, leaves, roots and topsoil to serve as reservoirs to let this water gently into our valleys. Instead it will come in muddy, acid-polluted torrents, wiping out valleys, homes, farms and people.

I witnessed once such a flood and heard the comment of one who stood by me with a pious religious look, "Say look what devastation God hath wrought. "My answer is as indignant today as it was then: God did not do it, it is the works of our own hands, and our own selfish greed. How long will it take us to learn that the law of cause and effect is God's law too? We cannot break the laws of God without breaking ourselves upon them. The erosion or destruction of our resources leads to the erosion of the soul. The word soil comes from the word soul, meaning life. The philosophy to eat, drink and be merry—disregards the future and leads only to disaster for the individual and the nation. The philosophy when in Rome do as the Romans do led to the destruction of Rome and can lead to our destruction too. We must act quickly to bring about a total public consciousness of the importance of our total environment; there must be education from the beginning, in our school system and homes for a sacred regard for life and a new concept of values. There must be action and proper law enforcement to conserve and use wisely what we have left. This enforcement will and can come only with trained, dedicated, knowledgeable men. Men who see a ministry in their service. Men who serve with pride and dignity in a public service that involves not only law enforcement but education, public relations and human service in safeguarding a total society. These enforcement people must be well trained in the practice of what I call the 3 C's: (1) Courtesy, (2) common sense, and (3) cooperation. Time does not permit me to elaborate upon these vital aspects of law enforcement, but they are, nonetheless, most important in the fulfillment of this stewardship task.

Many species of earth have already become extinct because a part of their environment was destroyed. Man with his intellect should learn from the past. He should remember that he too could, by the unwise use of these God-given resources, become one of the extinct species. Evaluation, worthship and worship should all be rethought

in the light of our heritage. "The goodness of the earth is God's goodness." This psalmist calls it God's mercy as God proved his good intention toward man by giving him a productive soil, great forests, abundant wildlife, clean water and fresh air. "It ought to humble us and fill us with gratitude and inspire us to a genuine stewardship to remember that ours is a heritage and not an achievement. God's goodness is in the soil, the minerals, the plants and the animals." It is our entrusted duty to use them wisely for ourselves and those who follow. Let us never forget that we ourselves may become extinct if we destroy our wild heritage.

Ladies and Gentlemen, "We are laborers together with God." You serve God as you serve your fellow man—with an all out conservation program which is good stewardship. Let us join hands in all professions to see that these beautiful hills be not charred, eroded and denuded lifeless ruins, which stand as monuments to our greed and stupidity, but instead beautiful symbols of our partnership with God.

May God help us in this inspiring task and may God have mercy upon us if we fail.

UNIFORM COMPUTER RECORDS AND REPORTS

by

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A large volume of data is generated each year by state fish and game law enforcement agencies. Much of the information results from prosecution reports. The usefulness of the information is determined by the ease with which it can be accessed, tabulated, and analyzed.

Strictly manual filing of such records limits their usefulness. Unless more than one copy is available, only one filing system can be used, and that filing system must anticipate the most important use of the information. Filing in alphabetical order by name may be best for looking up a person's violation history, but it is not suitable for most other uses, such as tabulating violations in some particular way. Manual tabulation of information is very time-consuming, especially if the filing system hinders rather than helps the particular tabulation. Thus, a special request for information can result in many hours of searching and manual tabulation. This process is so laborious that it discourages looking at the data in new ways.

If more than one copy of the reports is available, then two or more filing systems can be maintained. Even so, there is no guarantee that any of the filing systems will help with a particular request. Also, considerable time and space are required to maintain several different files.

A more suitable method of maintaining prosecution reports is to adapt the data for use on a computer. This will provide the greatest amount of flexibility and may provide the shortest time between receipt of a special request for information and fulfilling the request.

The Division of Law Enforcement in West Virginia's Department of Natural Resources recently contracted with the Biometrics Section of the Division of Wildlife Resources to develop and maintain a computer-based prosecution report system. Such an approach has many advantages and may be applicable to other fish and game law enforcement agencies. It is probably the least expensive approach, since it uses the specialized personnel and equipment already available in another agency. It permits developing the system on a trial basis with easy termination if the system does not meet the needs of the law enforcement agency. It also limits the areas of concern for the law