

## The Law of Peace and Prosperity?

### LAW:

Although people in almost any country might hear the word "law" mentioned rather often, this is especially true in the United States of America. In the USA we are proud to speak about the "rule of law", defined as, "The restriction of the arbitrary exercise of power by subordinating it to well-defined and established laws." Since our fore-parents came to this land to get away from the rule of the king or queen, we can understand the desire to get away from the rule of potentates. The key words that perhaps reflect our disdain in that definition are, "arbitrary exercise of power." This same spirit of disdain may often be shared by children living in more restrictive environments at home because of an arbitrary exercise of power like that of a potentate. The "rule of law" needs to come from laws that are "well-defined and established."

Too often the word *rule* is used to emphasize a spirit of power, force, or compliance and with a spirit of "do as I say and not as I do." Laws that are "well defined and established" should apply equally to everyone, especially true for those who are in charge of a supervisory role for our maintaining and keeping the law. The most efficient way of leadership is by example and the Golden Rule, "do unto others as you would have others do unto you." Respect and kindness are the best and most positive ways for sharing instructions and encouragement along with the moral influence of one's own behavior.

The people of God today might become more aware of the fact that, in the beginning, God did not institute the law! During the story of the creation in Genesis, after each day, God said "it was good." In many churches today we seem to have forgotten this primary quality of God and have evolved a false sense of fear and punishment from God. From the beginning we have been introduced to God who is good and all God's creative work was very good. When God finally said, "let us make man in our image," he took the "dust," materials already created, to "form" human beings. The image of God, the "breath" of God, was then infused into us and we became a "living soul." How creative is that?

The Genesis story continues with the companionship of God with Adam and Eve in the Garden, God's home place for them wherein God came to visit in the cool of each evening in friendship. During these times they began to mature, and like all children tend to do, they begin to do things their way. Having disobeyed the "covenant" that they would not eat of two trees, they did eat from "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." After this God escorted them out of the Garden but still loved them and gave them a new, independent life in their own "place" outside the Garden. Having broken the covenant, God never ended their friendship part of the covenant. God has always been faithful to the Covenant offered to us and always ready to accept us whenever we chose to return.

**The Noahic Covenant**, a story of Noah and his family, became God's promise to all people of the earth. Many people believe that Adam and Eve were "kicked" out of the Garden as punishment for eating from the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil," but their connection to God was not ended. The point of the story is that when we do not keep our part in the Covenantal agreement, we experience spiritual loss but not death. When people choose to leave God's compassion, love, and grace, they suffer that loss but are never "punished" in the sense

of being abandoned or unloved by God. These stories help explain how important our relationship to God is throughout life and how self-centered sense affects us when we chose to leave God's Covenant.

So it was with the majority of the people in the days of Noah. They also absented themselves from God's compassion, love, and grace by focusing on their own desires, separating themselves from their primary source that gave them their gift of life. This story simply points out that Noah, as the "archetype" of humanity, represents all who remained in covenantal relationship with God and were saved from the "flood;" the comfort of remaining connected to our source. No one's life was really "ended" because death is not the end of life because all life is "eternal;" matter can neither be created nor destroyed - death is only a passing from this life to life eternal. Having the benefit of today's scientific understanding of Relativity, we realize that all matter and energy are made equal by the speed of light squared, realizing the broader aspects of all universal existence.



Watch this must-see documentary for free on iTunes.

Urgent and captivating, *Before the Flood* is a movie the world needs to watch. It follows actor and activist Leonardo DiCaprio on a two-year journey around the world, creating a dialogue with people from all rungs of society about how we as a planet must respond to climate change. Watch the movie for free now on iTunes, and listen to the incredible score featuring Trent Reznor and Atticus Ross. Plus, explore other standout documentaries.

[Watch It Now >](#)

NOTE WELL: Before we blame this tragedy on God as a punishment - please see this movie to learn where the real disaster was founded - a factual story of today of how we are like the people before the flood!  
WATCH!

"Urgent and captivating, *Before the Flood* is a movie the world needs to watch. It follows actor and activist Leonardo DiCaprio on a two-year journey around the world, creating a dialogue with people from all rungs of society about how we as a planet must respond to climate change. Watch the movie for free now on iTunes, and listen to the incredible score featuring Trent Reznor and Atticus Ross." [<https://youtu.be/90CkXVF-Q8M>] OR - go to iTunes and rent the movie "BEFORE THE FLOOD" to watch it.....

By National Geographic on iTunes - *BEFORE THE FLOOD!*

**Next, God's Covenant with Abraham.** It is God's continued desire to re-connect with all people who will accept the Covenant, "a binding agreement, a divine promise establishing or modifying God's relationship to humanity." When Abraham, another "archetype" of all humanity, responded positively to God's call to him, the Covenant was re-established for all accepting humanity.

Genesis 12:1-3, (GW-God's Word Translation), The Lord said to Abram, "Leave your land, your relatives, and your father's home. Go to the land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation, I will bless you. I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you, I will curse. Through you every family on earth will be blessed."

The end of this record to Abraham makes it very clear that this applies to all humanity who will accept and continue in Covenant with God. Thus far there is no intention on the part of God for retribution or punishment except that, when this relationship of friendship is broken, the goodness of God is diminished by our separation.

## **The greatest story about the Covenant in the Hebrew Scripture is the Story of The Exodus.**

It is about the people of Israel being treated cruelly in Egypt and the story of Moses confronting Pharaoh to gain release from their bondage. Because the Book of Exodus is 40 chapters long, we will briefly share this outline to get to our main point for this paper:

The Israelites set free from Egypt - 1:1 - 15:21

- a. Slaves in Egypt - 1:1 - 22
- b. Moses' birth and early life - 2:1-4:31
- c. Moses and Aaron confront the king of Egypt - 5:1-11:10
- d. The Passover and the departure from Egypt - 12:1-15:21

From the Red Sea to Mount Sinai - 15:22 - 18:27

The Law and the covenant - 19:1 - 24:18

The Covenant Tent and Instructions for worship - 25:1-40:38

(Outline from The Good News Bible page 62)

As I pointed out in the third paragraph from the beginning of this paper, God did not establish the law until this time in history when he gave the law to Moses on Mount Sinai. As the Israelites were led out of the land of Egypt they were becoming a rather large nation under the leadership of Moses. They had become used to the rules and regulation of a Pharaoh in a well-organized country, so that it was necessary for some formulation to help organize to function well together. Cities and countries need some sort of polity to help them stay together and know how to provide for all the diverse needs of this Exodus. Remember, these people came out of captivity, much like those who come out of our prisons with no freedom of choice during the length of their stay. Now that they were leaving Egypt, what would they do with their time, who would care for them and how would they stay alive and well? One can see how this transition would not be easy.

As Moses, their leader and reason for freedom, was invited up the mountain, how did they react to his leaving them so soon? Aaron and Miriam who were beside Moses thus far were the only ones left. Remembering the story of the Golden Calf, this shows that the people wanted to replace the gods of Egypt who directed the Pharaoh's court. The people, longing for leadership and order, showed how willing they were to contribute their valuables to construct a new god to lead them forth. While Moses, Aaron and Miriam were aware of God and the Covenant of God, the people had no awareness yet, and were unfamiliar with their God of compassion, love, and grace. They were more familiar with the pagan gods of fear, sacrifice, and retribution. How anxious most of them must have felt seeing Moses leave them without any protection and no clear prescription of security and purpose.

Moses finally did descend from the mountain with the tablets. They had time for the completion of the golden calf and for the people to worship it for their protection. Moses was so angry with the people and Aaron and Miriam for allowing this to happen that he smashed the tablets in frustration. So we read about the second tablets for the Israelites and their opportunity to accept the Ten Commandments.

## Jewish numbering - Ten Commandments

From Exodus 20:2-17 (GW) (The number of the verse is in parenthesis.)

1. (2) "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of slavery in Egypt.
2. (3) "Never have any other god. (4) Never make your own carved idols or statues that represent any creature in the sky, on the earth, or in the water. (5) Never worship them or serve them, because I, the Lord your God, am a God who does not tolerate rivals. I punish children for their parents' sins to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me. (6) But I show mercy to thousands of generations of those who love me and obey my commandments.
3. (7) "Never use the name of the Lord your God carelessly. The Lord will make sure that anyone who carelessly uses his name will be punished.
4. (8) "Remember the day of rest by observing it as a holy day. (9) You have six days to do all your work. (10) The seventh day is the day of rest—a holy day dedicated to the Lord your God. You, your sons, your daughters, your male and female slaves, your cattle, and the foreigners living in your city must never do any work on that day. (11) In six days the Lord made heaven, earth, and the sea, along with everything in them. He didn't work on the seventh day. That's why the Lord blessed the day he stopped his work and set this day apart as holy.
5. (12) "Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live for a long time in the land the Lord your God is giving you.
6. (13) "Never murder.
7. (14) "Never commit adultery.
8. (15) "Never steal.
9. (16) "Never lie when you testify about your neighbor.
10. (17) "Never desire to take your neighbor's household away from him. "Never desire to take your neighbor's wife, his male or female slave, his ox, his donkey, or anything else that belongs to him."

An explanation of the Ten Commandments (from the Catechism) of the Book of Common Prayer, pages 847-848:

Q. What are the Ten Commandments?

A. The Ten Commandments are the laws given to Moses and the people of Israel.

Q. What do we learn from these commandments?

A. We learn two things: our duty to God, and our duty to our neighbors.

Q. What is our duty to God?

A. Our duty is to believe and trust God;

1. To love and obey God and to bring others to know him;
2. To put nothing in the place of God;
3. To show God respect in thought, word, and deed;
4. And to set aside regular times for worship, prayer, and the study of God's ways.

Q. What is our duty to our neighbors?

- A. Our duty to our neighbors is to love them as ourselves, and to do to other people as we wish them to do to us:
5. To love, honor, and help our parents and family; to honor those in authority, and to meet their just demands;
  6. To show respect for the life God has given us; to work and pray for peace; to bear no malice, prejudice, or hatred in our hearts; and to be kind to all the creatures of God;
  7. To use all our bodily desires as God intended;
  8. To be honest and fair in our dealings; to seek justice, freedom, and the necessities of life for all people; and to use our talents and possessions as ones who must answer for them to God;
  9. To speak the truth, and not to mislead others by our silence;
  10. To resist temptations to envy, greed, and jealousy; to rejoice in other people's gifts and graces; and to do our duty for the love of God, who has called us into fellowship with him.

This is why I use the acronym, for LAW [Life Awareness Works]  
LIFE [Living Into Future Events]  
AWARE [Attentively Willing And Readily Engage]  
WORK [Welcome Others Respecting Karma]

The giving of the Law was to help lead the people to the kind of behavior that would enable them to become a community of the people of God. This would affect their behavior toward God and toward one another that would enable them to live in peace, and especially to support one another in community as well as their neighboring communities around them. They continued under the leadership of Joshua, followed by a time Judges who were leaders in the Book of Judges. Next we have the Book of Ruth, a story following the violent times of the Judges, a Moabite woman who is married to an Israelite. The story in Judges show the disaster that came when God's people turned away from God and the Book of Ruth shows the blessing that came to a foreigner who turned to Israel's God and so became part of God's faithful leadership.

### **How Laws Expanded Over Time:**

GOD'S COMMUNITY (with-unity) is all about Behavior (as noted in the 10 Commandments) wherein GOD is all about Agreement, Relationship, and Commitment! This is how God behaves toward us and how God expects reciprocal behavior from us. This is why I describe the 10 Commands as LAW (Life Awareness Works) and how the Covenant, a mutual agreement of relationship, must be continued.

The God of Israel was introduced as a God of compassion, love, and grace while the gods of all the other communities were described as gods who required sacrifice, obedience, and punishment.

Sadly, in addition to The Law (10 Commandments), many additional laws and rules were added in the years following. (The first 5 books, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy) are called the Torah.

"The Talmud tells us (Tractate Makkot 23b) that there are 613 commandments in the Torah; 248 Positive Commandments (do's) and 365 Negative Commandments (do not's). However, the Talmud does not provide us with a list of these commandments."

[[http://www.chabad.org/library/article\\_cdo/aid/756399/jewish/The-613-Commandments.htm](http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/756399/jewish/The-613-Commandments.htm)]

All through history different groups of people, in separate communities, tended to imitate and copy from one another in thought and practice. This is the way change and diversity has affected our beliefs and behaviors over many centuries. There is also the difficulty and confusion in translation of the Bible from one language to another with variance in grammar and idioms. (Idioms: "A speech form or an expression of a given language that is peculiar to itself grammatically or cannot be understood from the individual meanings of its elements.") Sometimes laws and rules in one culture do not automatically become useful or relate well to another culture.

There is some description about such cultural difficulties throughout the stories of the books of Joshua, Judges and Ruth. The book of Ruth points out how disasters came when God's people turn away from the Covenant God established from the very beginning of creation. The key issue was The Covenant, ("A binding agreement; a compact; a divine promise establishing or modifying God's relationship to humanity or to a particular group,") and only when it was honored and kept were God's people prosperous and pleased. This Covenant was to continue for all who wanted to be The People of God and was clearly presented in all the Prophets and even with Jesus - here is a little of what they said:

SAMUEL:

I Samuel 15:22-23, **"Is the Lord as delighted with burnt offerings and sacrifice as he would be with your obedience? To follow instructions is better than to sacrifice. To obey is better than sacrificing the fat of rams. The sin of black magic is rebellion. Wickedness and idolatry are arrogance."**

ISAIAH:

**God is clear:**

- Regarding sacrifices, in Isaiah 1:11-13 (GW) we read: **"The Lord asks, "What do your many animal sacrifices mean to me? I've had enough of your burnt offerings of rams and enough fat from your fattened calves. I'm not pleased with the blood of bulls, lambs, or male goats. Don't bring any more worthless grain offerings. Your incense is disgusting to me, so are your New Moon Festivals, your days of rest—holy days, and the assemblies you call. I can't stand your evil assemblies."**

**God is inviting:**

- Let us talk about this together: Isaiah 1:18-20 (GW), **"Come on now, let's discuss this!" says the Lord "Though your sins are bright red, they will become as white as snow. Though they are dark red, they will become as white as wool. If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the best from the land. But if you refuse and rebel, you will be destroyed by swords." The Lord has spoken."**

JEREMIAH:

- In Jeremiah 7:22-23 (GW) God said: **"When I brought your ancestors out of Egypt, I did not tell them anything about burnt offerings and sacrifices. But I did tell them this, 'Obey me, and I will be your God, and you will be my people. Live the way I told you to live so that things will go well for you.'"**

JESUS:

Jesus announces that "the Kingdom of God is at hand" and continues with THE COVENANT: Matthew 5:17-20 (GW) Jesus fulfills the Hebrew Scriptures in word and deed and calls us to follow him.

Jesus was about BEHAVIOR; **“Don’t ever think that I came to set aside Moses’ Teachings or the Prophets. I didn’t come to set them aside but to make them come true. I can guarantee this truth: Until the earth and the heavens disappear, neither a period nor a comma will disappear from the Scriptures before everything has come true. So whoever sets aside any command that seems unimportant and teaches others to do the same will be unimportant in the kingdom of heaven.”**

"Follow Me" was the key and invitation to bring that Realm of God to fruition in his time and in all time to come.

**PEACE:**

Psalms 29:11 (GW), "The Lord will give power to his people. The Lord will bless his people with peace."

Psalms 34:14 (GW), "Turn away from evil, and do good. Seek peace, and pursue it!"

Psalms 37:37 (GW), "Notice the innocent person, and look at the decent person, because the peacemaker has a future."

Psalms 119:165 (GW), "There is lasting peace for those who love your teachings. Nothing can make those people stumble."

I offer this acronym, PEACE [People Energizing Alternatives Causing Equality] to draw attention to the basic core of peace. Peace is defined as, "Inner contentment; serenity; freedom from quarrels and disagreement; harmonious relations; the absence of war or other hostilities." Peace is utilizing the LAW (Life Awareness Works) that God shared with Moses for Israelites to live in harmony wherever and whenever people of God are gathered.

James 2:14-24 (GW)

We Show Our Faith by What We Do

"My brothers and sisters, what good does it do if someone claims to have faith but doesn't do any good things? Can this kind of faith save him? Suppose a believer, whether a man or a woman, needs clothes or food and one of you tells that person, "God be with you! Stay warm, and make sure you eat enough." If you don't provide for that person's physical needs, what good does it do? In the same way, faith by itself is dead if it doesn't cause you to do any good things.

Another person might say, "You have faith, but I do good things." Show me your faith apart from the good things you do. I will show you my faith by the good things I do. You believe that there is one God. That's fine! The demons also believe that, and they tremble with fear.

You fool! Do you have to be shown that faith which does nothing is useless? Didn't our ancestor Abraham receive God's approval as a result of what he did when he offered his son Isaac as a sacrifice on the altar? You see that Abraham's faith and what he did worked together. His faith was shown to be

genuine by what he did. The Scripture passage came true. It says, "Abraham believed God, and that faith was regarded as the basis of Abraham's approval by God." So Abraham was called God's friend. You see that a person receives God's approval because of what he does, not only because of what he believes."

People who know the reality of God's gift of peace have the responsibility to bring that gift to the fore of their life practice to make it a reality in their own lives and within their community. When we seek and practice this power by turning away from evil and work to do good, we can pursue peace. This activity of life awareness is what leads to prosperity!

Peace, by many, is defined by saying that "peace is the absence of war," but war is caused by our actions as people and, if we were practicing peace, wars would probably never start. Peace is clearly based on how we behave and thus a part of our behavioral practices. As the acronym suggests:

### **PEACE [People Energizing Alternatives Causing Equality]:**

People - are the primary cause and bearers of peace.

Energizing - is the basic and continuing force for cultivating peace.

Alternatives - are the creative tools and ideas that support its existence.

Causing - is the result of these first three initiatives by human beings.

Equality - is the ending result that enables peace to blossom, continue, and be sustained.

Here is a prayer, based on scripture that is used in the Episcopal Church at the close of services of Eucharist and Prayer that reminds us of our real work as we leave:

May the compassionate caring peace of God that goes beyond human comprehension, declare God's love for you in your heart, body and mind as we see it in Jesus the Christ; and may that blessing of God, loving Creator, gracious Liberator, and life giving Spirit keep you steadfast now and forever. Amen.

### **PROSPERITY:**

Prosperity, in the dictionary, is simply defined as being prosperous, "Having success; flourishing." What else might we say about prosperity to clarify a wholesome meaning for us today?

Most people are familiar with the story of Job in the Hebrew Scriptures, a very prosperous man. Here is what the Oxford Study Bible has to say in the introduction that prefaces the book of Job, page 510:

In the book of Job, a gifted poet and theologian examines the problem of a just God allowing the innocent to suffer. While the literary form may be modeled after the Babylonian "discussion literature" - rather than after Greek tragedy, as is sometimes suggested - the story itself possibly derives from an ancient folk tale about an Edomite. External similarities to the Mesopotamian literary works, "The Babylonian Theodicy," "I will Praise the Lord of Wisdom," and "Man and His God," are worth notice, but Job surpasses them in theological depth, human insight, and literary skill."

These three verses from the Book of Job may help summarize my thoughts:

- Job 22:21 (GW), "Be in harmony and at peace with God. In this way you will have prosperity."
- Job 36:11 (GW), "If righteous people listen and serve him, they will live out their days in prosperity and their years in comfort."
- Job 42:10 (GW), "After Job prayed for his friends, the Lord restored Job's prosperity and gave him twice as much as he had before."

The Covenant extended by God from the beginning of Hebrew Scriptures and throughout the extent of these writings confirms a consistent approach to that friendship and relationship enjoying mutual respect for the creator and the created. Being in harmony is the beginning foundation to prosperity. When we are righteous, in peace with God and others, this way of behavior will bring prosperity and comfort throughout our years. When we include our friends in our prayers, PRAYER [Perusing Reasonable Alternatives Yet Expecting Resolve], this inclusive prosperity extends to even twice as much as before, as the book of Job concludes.

This ancient concept of prosperity and grace is seen in the life of Jesus throughout his ministry in the areas of Galilee in the 1st century. This concept notably continued in the writings of the earliest authors of the Christian scriptures, especially in Paul's letter to the Galatians. Having never met Jesus in person, Paul was a religious Jew who understood this concept of prosperity provided by God. Here is a quote from Galatians 5:22-23 (GW),  
"But the spiritual nature produces love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There are no laws against things like that."

This prosperity, from within the very character of God - compassion, love, and grace - is what dwells in our very beings; as partners in relationship with God we are in a Covenant of prosperity.

This Covenant, "a binding agreement, a divine promise establishing or modifying God's relationship to humanity," that extends to the whole of creation does not come from laws added by human ingenuity but from the Law handed down through Moses - the code of the 10 Commandments, LAW [Life Awareness Works]

THE GODLY SOLUTION:

### **Rehabilitation:**

The primary recipe for those who fall away from or reject God's Covenant is repentance, "deep sorrow, compunction, or contrition for a past sin, wrongdoing, or the like." As was quoted earlier from the prophet Isaiah: Isaiah 1:18-20 (GW):

"Come on now, let's discuss this!" says the Lord "Though your sins are bright red, they will become as white as snow. Though they are dark red, they will become as white as wool. If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the best from the land. But if you refuse and rebel, you will be destroyed by swords." The Lord has spoken.

Throughout scripture God is found to be more than reasonable for discussion about our behavior and for showing us the way to become the righteous people we are meant to be. Regardless how depraved our

conduct may have become, God, even toward the ending of Biblical writings, is full of compassion, love, and grace. 1 John 1:9 (GW), "God is faithful and reliable. If we confess our sins, he [sic] forgives them and cleanses us from everything we've done wrong."

Rehabilitation, "To restore the former rank, privileges, or rights of; To cause to be regarded again in a positive way; reestablish esteem for; To restore to good condition." This is the compassion, love, and grace that must follow any and all of our depravity! As we have shown earlier under the heading **How Laws Expanded Over Time**, we have no right to supersede the 6th Commandment - "Never murder!" Here is where Matthew 10:28 (GW), "Don't be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Instead, fear the one who can destroy both body and soul in hell." Death is only a transition, a passing into the eternal, knowing that matter can neither be created nor destroyed. The "death penalty" solves nothing except early transition but rehabilitation restores us to a positive way and good condition today and in the future.

Given this lifelong Covenant established by God we must consider how murderous and foolish war is. War solves nothing and only creates more distain for peace and prosperity! These acts of murder mainly result in perpetual wars and rumors of war. Ending so many innocent lives along with the so called guilty is tantamount to insanity! As the noted scientist Albert Einstein has been quoted as saying, "Insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results." Certainly God disapproves of these atrocities but few, if any, people in their right minds look forward to the next war.

In closing I would like to present three suggestions to become partners and remain partners with God and the universe:

- Respect God's creation by being an active partner within the Covenant
- Become and consistently remain active as a peacemaker
- Share prosperity by contributing to the harmony of equality of the world

I believe that what we want most is law, peace, and prosperity. Let us work toward reaching this goal as the way we live our daily lives.

Gerard A. Pisani, Jr.