

Are All Our Beliefs Helpful To Us Today?

Why Beliefs Can and Do Become Harmful

In our living conditions today it is not uncommon for many to believe that life is the way it always was. This is why beliefs are so misleading if we do not consider when a belief began, neglect to learn how the belief came into being and why it may still exist. Today we define a belief, "a feeling of being sure that someone or something exists or that something is true." The operative point here is "a feeling of being sure." In earlier centuries, before the Common Era (BCE) and into the first half of the CE, beliefs were mainly established by philosophy and religion with the core values of imagination, inspiration, and revelation.

Beliefs Versus Facts:

In this 21st century we have adopted an awareness and certainty for facts, "something that truly exists or happens; something that has actual existence." When science began around the Middle Ages (the 15th century of the Common Era) and solidified in the period of The Enlightenment (around the 17th century), the verification of facts began. Science has matured into verifiable facts with the core values and tools of science, which are: observation, hypothesis (experimentation), and theory. When these tools continue to prove the hypothesis in a sufficient period of time, then it becomes a theory, "an idea or set of ideas that is intended to explain facts or events." They keep that status of theory until a weakness develops in their verification or if any continuing observations and hypothesis shows a weakness or default. Without the application certification of these valuable tools we simply have a belief, "a feeling of being sure that something is true"

Just as the geometric form of an equilateral triangle is purported to give the most strength and stability for reliable construction and the three legged stool envisions the reliable assurance of balanced support, so the triad of these core values, change, diversity, and equality enables the universe to effectively continue in perpetuity. Change provides the assurance and need for continuing renewal, diversity provides the resource and essence for vibrant variety, vitality and consistency, and equality insures the valued importance and effectiveness of all facets within the whole of this trinity.

Changing Beliefs in a brief view of History:

It is important to realize, more than ever, that beliefs, "a feeling of being sure that someone or something exists or that something is true," are only based on feelings. In earlier history beliefs lasted longer, but as time advances, beliefs change more often. We can now no longer state beliefs as, "something that truly exists or happens; something that has actual existence." example, for most of human history it was believed that the earth was flat was the center of the universe with the sun, moon and stars revolving around the earth. All writings produced before the Middle Ages were based on this belief but now they conflict with today's understanding of the universe. It is important to realize as well that all philosophy and religious materials held this primitive view of the universe and, unless they have been conscientiously updated, they are out of date today.

Why is this a serious matter? Well, when Galileo Galilei (1564-1642), following the discovery of Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543) that the Sun was actually the center around which the earth and the heavens rotated, the Catholic Church charged him for heresy and excommunicated Galileo. Galileo, to the rest of the new world, was the father of modern science making major contributions in the fields of physics, astronomy and

cosmology. From then on the Sun, the heliocentric concept, continued to grow, and by The Enlightenment was understood as verifiable fact. This, and other facts from the scientific community began a whole new movement about truth called, facts! Today the fact is, via the Hubble telescope, the universe is made of over 100 billion galaxies – our galaxy is call The Milky Way - of which there are well over 200 billion galaxies in the whole universe. It is important to realize that beliefs are based on personal ideas held by individuals. Facts however are formed in community by hypotheses, lots of observation, testing, and experimentation establishing verifiable truth. When these verifiable facts remain consistent they then are considered proven theory.

It took about 1400 years before basic views of the universe began changing more rapidly and recognized in The Enlightenment, or the Age Of Reason, that began in France in the 1700's. These facts are highlighted in the app *Timeline Eons LITE* and can be easily found in any encyclopedia. French historians traditionally place the Enlightenment between 1715 and 1789, around the beginning of the French Revolution. During this period philosophers widely circulated their ideas through meetings at scientific academies, Masonic lodges, literary salons, coffee houses, and through printed books and pamphlets. These ideas and writings began to undermine the authority of the monarchy and the Church, and paved the way for the political revolutions of the 18th and 19th centuries.

The Common Era, Then and Now:

The beginning of the Common Era was indeed a new beginning. There were many new things that began to take hold in the 1st century, especially a new calendar with a year-numbering system (the Julian and Gregorian calendars) that began this era. The preceding era is now known as BCE, Before the Common Era or before the Current Era. This year-numbering system for the Gregorian calendar is the most widespread system used in the world today. For decades, it has been the global standard, recognized by international institutions such as the United Nations and the Universal Postal System.

The expression has been traced back to Latin usage to 1615, as *vulgaris aerae*, and to 1635 in English as "Vulgar Era". The term "Common Era" can be found in English as early as 1708, and became more widely used in the mid-19th century by Jewish academics. In the later 20th century, the use of CE and BCE was popularized in academic and scientific publications, and more generally by authors and publishers wishing to emphasize secularism or sensitivity to non-Christians, by not explicitly referencing Jesus as "Christ" and *Dominus* ("Lord"), shortened from *anno Domini nostri Jesu Christi* ("in the year of Our Lord Jesus Christ").
[https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Common_Era]

By the 4th century, politics and religion were joined together when the Holy Roman Catholic Church was established under Constantine. The church was the moral authority, setting the tone for ethics, while the powerful armies of the Empire controlled the enforcement of temporal authority. By the early middle centuries of this new era, around 1000 CE, the church had a major split between the Greek Orthodox residing in Constantinople and the Holy Roman Catholic Church of Rome.

The Enlightenment:

The posers and uses of reason had first been explored by the philosophers of Ancient Greece. The Romans adopted and preserved much of Greek culture, notably including the ideas of a rational natural

order and natural law. Amid the turmoil of empire, however, a new concern arose for personal salvation, and the way was paved for the triumph of the Christian religion. Christian thinkers gradually found uses for their Greco-Roman heritage. The System of thought known as Scholasticism, culminating in the work of Thomas Aquinas, resurrected reason as a tool of understanding but subordinate to it to spiritual revelation and the revealed truth of Christianity.

The intellectual and political edifice of Christianity, seemingly impregnable in the Middle Ages, fell in turn to the thoughts made on it by humanism, the Renaissance, and the Protestant Reformation. Humanism bred the experimental science of Francis Bacon, Nicklaus Copernicus, and Galileo and the mathematical investigations of Rene Descartes, Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, and Sir Isaac Newton. The Renaissance rediscovered much of Classical culture, challenged the monolithic authority of the Roman Catholic Church. For Martin Luther as for B of Descartes, the way to truth lay in the application of human reason. Received authority, whether of Ptolemy in the sciences of the the church in matters of the spirit, was to be subject to the probing of unfettered minds.

[From Encyclopedia Britannica, online version - Enlightenment pages 1-2]

Major changes during this period of:

- 1439 CE - **Printing Press** was invented by Johann Gutenberg.
- October 31, 1517 CE - Initiated by the German priest Martin Luther - the Christian **Reformation** denounced the Catholic Church that led to a series of violent religious wars in Europe from 1524 to 1628.
- 1712 CE - English Ironmonger Thomas Newcomen invented the first practical steam engine that sparked the **industrial revolution**.
- Beginning in 1750 and continuing for several decades. **Innovations** that transformed Britain's textile and iron industries to machine based manufacturing.

[from the App - Timeline Eons LITE]

The Conflicting Role of Beliefs:

One of our biggest problems today demonstrates, more than not, that beliefs cause many divisions bringing harm and even death! Belief is defined as, “a feeling of being sure that someone or something exists or that something is true.” Belief is only a feeling of being sure,” without any proof or substantiation. This is very dangerous today because, after The Enlightenment, **truth** was established with **verifiable facts** as science grew along side of religion and philosophy.

Beliefs are a carryover from a previous period of time which consistently differ with verifiable facts of today; a previous era that has passed. Mountains over centuries of time, change. Mountains appear to be very stable but only because it takes much longer periods of time for us to notice the changes. If we look carefully we can observe that large mountains of rocks are effected by erosion and become crumbled stones, stones become pebbles and pebbles become sand and sand becomes soil. Eventually it becomes dirt and dust and becomes fertile soil in which new life grows. This whole process is called evolution, “a process of slow change and development,” from which all life is made out of the same basic elements and molecules of the universe. This process is one of change that brings forth new life forms while not dividing or ending anything or anyone.

The Bible, and all early writings, were written during this period when the earth was believed to be the center of everything and was the central theme. At the beginning of the Common Era this model was officially formulated by Claudius Ptolemy:

The Ptolemaic Model

“Claudius Ptolemy lived in Rome around 100 AD. His model of the solar system and heavenly sphere was a refinement of previous models developed by Greek astronomers. Ptolemy’s major contribution, however, was that his model could so accurately explain the motions of heavenly bodies, it became the model for understanding the structure of the solar system. It is beyond the scope of this course to discuss all the complex social and historical implications of an Earth-centered versus a Sun-centered model of the solar system. But nearly all the early models, including Ptolemy’s version of the solar system, assumed that the Earth was the center of not only the solar system, but the entire universe.

The Ptolemaic model accounted for the apparent motions of the planets in a very direct way, by assuming that each planet moved on a small sphere or circle, called an epicycle, that moved on a larger sphere or circle, called a deferent. The stars, it was assumed, moved on a celestial sphere around the outside of the planetary spheres.”

[http://www.polaris.iastate.edu/EveningStar/Unit2/unit2_sub1.htm]

This belief about the universe was the basic model until the early beginnings of the Middle Ages when the telescope was invented by Galileo Galilei (1564-1642). It followed the discovery of Nicolaus Copernicus (1473-1543) that the Sun was actually the center around which the earth and the heavens rotated. The invention of the telescope brought the beginning of observation as the primary and key witness to scientific discovery. For the first time our human eyes demonstrated that the earth was not the center but actually revolved around the sun. This created quite a struggle for most inhabitants, especially to civil authorities and more particularly to official positions and beliefs of the Vatican. It was a beginning “straw that broke the camel’s back” for church doctrine that was deemed as sacrosanct for all the ages. Doctrines were believed to have been revealed to the church authorities by God just like The Tablets of the 10 Commandments were delivered to the people of God through Moses.

Until well after the 10th century of the Common Era, scriptures were understood within the basic model of this Geocentric interpretation - examples:

- In Genesis the sun and moon did not appear until the 4th day in the Genesis story to separate the day from night. (Genesis 1:14-19) Yet the popular interpretation was that the whole creation took only 6 solar days.
- Joshua 10:13 (KJV), “And the sun stood still, and the moon stayed, until the people had avenged themselves upon their enemies. Is not this written in the book of Joshua? So the sun stood still in the midst of heaven, and hasted not to go down about a whole day.” Given that the sun and moon rotated around the earth there was no problem with this concept in a geocentric world.
- 2 Peter 3:8 (KJV), “But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.” After the 1st century, regarding the delay in the promised soon return of Christ, this interpretation was added to compensate. For many Christians today this same verse continues to explain a reason for the thousands of years for the return of Christ.

While the Bible does not actually teach or proclaim Geocentrism, the language of scripture conveys these perceptions and explanations spoken and written during the Ptolemaic Model. In the scriptures noted in the

verses above we can see the lack of understanding as we understand it today in the heliocentric universe. To enable the sun, for instance, to shine for an extra day would mean that the earth's rotation would have had to stop or be slowed down. This hesitation in the earth's rotation would have caused disasters on the earth and its inhabitants, to say the least.

The early "days" of creation, however, as noted in Genesis, coincides rather well with the latest cosmological understanding of the length of time between the initial Singularity and The Big Bang: after the opening statement in Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning God created heaven and earth." With telescopes that can allow us to see back in time to the Big Bang, there is about 100 million years of darkness from the Singularity to the Big Bang (see graphic below): Genesis 1:2-4 (GW),

"The earth was formless and empty, and darkness covered the deep water. The Spirit of God was hovering over the water. Then God said, "Let there be light!" So there was light. God saw the light was good. So God separated the light from the darkness. God named the light *day*, and the darkness he named *night*. There was evening, then morning—the first day"

In fact it wasn't until the end of the fourth day that our sun and moon appeared leaving millions of more years, day two and day three, before our solar system, the Milky Way, began to form: Genesis 1:14-19 (GW),

"Then God said, "Let there be lights in the sky to separate the day from the night. They will be signs and will mark religious festivals, days, and years. They will be lights in the sky to shine on the earth." And so it was. God made the two bright lights: the larger light to rule the day and the smaller light to rule the night. He also made the stars. God put them in the sky to give light to the earth, to dominate the day and the night, and to separate the light from the darkness. God saw that it was good. There was evening, then morning—a fourth day."

Solar days, as we know them, 24 hour days, did not come to pass until our solar system began its formations around our sun with the moon rotating around our earth.

How surprising is it, that this story of creation in Genesis, written in documents from around the 6th century BCE, spoke of this time centuries before the invention of the telescope and only recently, envisioned more accurately, with our telescopes that reside in outer space around our earth? As science continued to flourish, coming to the fore during the Enlightenment, we extended our understanding through the fossil records that animal life actually dates to the end of the Cambrian period about 500 million years ago. While our human ancestors have been around for about six million years, the modern form of our humanity only evolved about 200,000 years ago. Today we know by observation, hypotheses and theory that our universe is about 13.8 billion years old. Science and earlier visions need not conflict if we are willing to build on the best of our past awareness and fortify them with continuing verification.

In this meditation, by Fr. Richard Rohr, a Franciscan priest who founded CAC (Center for Action and Contemplation) in Albuquerque, NM, shares this about: ***Learning To See***:

"Most religious searches begin with one massive misperception. People tend to start by making a very unfortunate, yet understandable, division between the sacred and the profane worlds. Early stage religion focuses on identifying sacred places, sacred time, and seemingly sacred actions that then leave the overwhelming majority of life unsacred. People are told to look for God in certain special places and in particular events—usually, it seems, ones controlled by the clergy. Perhaps this is related to the clergy's need for job security, which is only natural. Early stage religion has limited the search for God to a very small field and thus it is largely ineffective—unless people keep seeing and knowing at larger levels.

In Franciscan (and true Christian) mysticism, there is finally no distinction between sacred and profane. The whole universe and all events are sacred, serving as doorways to the divine for those who know how to see. In other words, everything that happens is potentially sacred if we allow it to be. Our job as humans is to make admiration of reality and adoration of God fully conscious and intentional. Then everything is a prayer and an act of adoration. As the French friar Eloi Leclerc (1921-2016) beautifully paraphrased Francis, “If we knew how to adore, then nothing could truly disturb our peace. We would travel through the world with the tranquility of the great rivers. But only if we know how to adore.”

For those who have learned how to see fully, everything—absolutely everything—is “spiritual.” This eventually and ironically leads to what the Lutheran mystic Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945) called “religionless Christianity.” Bonhoeffer saw that many people were moving beyond the scaffolding of religion to the underlying and deeper Christian experience itself. Once we can accept that God is in all situations, and that God can and will use even bad situations for good, then everything and everywhere becomes an occasion for good and an encounter with God.”

It is best to see that all life is the big picture forming a complete story! Segments, “one of the parts into which something can be divided,” tends to cause division, “something that physically divides or separates something else.” Educated people today, for the most part, see little or no distinction between the sacred and profane. The Genesis story in chapter one says that all God created was deemed to be good and very good which included everything, sacred and profane. The universe, “all of time and space and everything, stars, planets, galaxies, etc.,” is the reason we call it a **uni-verse**!

Beliefs Can and Do Become Harmful:

Here are two examples of this reality. The first one, Race, has a long history of development and still continues this day with beliefs that harm and kill. The second, Privacy, is rather recent in our history and, as long as it continues to be seriously considered, will continue to bring confusion and divisions among us all.

Understanding Race:

THE HISTORY OF THE IDEA OF RACE... AND WHY IT MATTERS

Audrey Smedley Professor of Anthropology Emerita

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The position taken by many anthropologists, both biological and social, and increasingly many other scholars in the social sciences is that “race is a cultural construct.” It should be clear that this is not a definition or even a characterization of “race,” but an assertion about the scholarly or existential domain in which we can best examine and explain the phenomenon of race. Race should be analyzed as a social/cultural reality that exists in a realm independent of biological or genetic variations. No amount of research into the biophysical or genetic features of individuals or groups will explain the social phenomenon of race.

...the first Africans who arrived in Jamestown were not initially or uniformly perceived as slaves (Parent 2003). They were assimilated into the colony as laborers under varying contracts like those of Europeans. Some Africans worked off their debts and became freedmen. A few ambitious men obtained land and

livestock, built substantial houses, married, and established themselves as well-to-do planters. Some became entrepreneurs and engaged in trading and other commercial activities and had business dealings on an equal footing with whites.

...Edmund Morgan wrote, "There is more than a little evidence that Virginians during these years were ready to think of Negroes as members or potential members of the community on the same terms as other men and to demand of them the same standards of behavior. Black men and white serving the same master worked, ate, and slept together, and together shared in escapades, escapes, and punishments" (1975, 327). "It was common for servants and slaves to run away together, steal hogs together, get drunk together. It was not uncommon for them to make love together" (1975, 327).

No stigma was associated with what we today call intermarriages. Black men servants often married white women servants.

...Both the high-status racial whites and the low-status races, especially blacks and Indians, have been scarred in their daily lives by the racial images to which we all have been conditioned. Knowing the truth about our history will help to free us from the beliefs and attitudes about human differences that were deeply embedded in our culture with the invention of "race" and "races."

...Finally, freedom from the lived experiences of racism, that so acutely damages especially young African-Americans, may help to transform our entire society. By expanding freedom and opening up access to cultural knowledge for all people, it may well be that we will come closer to the ideals of equality and opportunity.

[\[http://www.understandingrace.org/resources/pdf/disease/smedley.pdf\]](http://www.understandingrace.org/resources/pdf/disease/smedley.pdf)

Our beliefs about race are a primary example of how cunning and damaging beliefs can be. In plain English, race was developed socially to create an atmosphere and a means for putting people down!

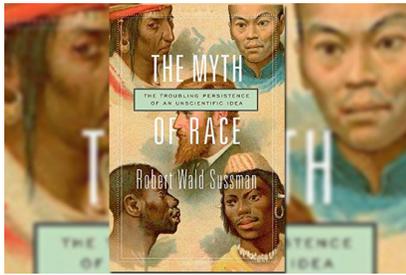
"Race" is fake; I am not."

Dennie T, Atlanta, GA.



"Race" is a human-concocted, cultural construct that has nothing to do with biology and everything to do with (negative) cultural conditioning in racist societies. Human DNA produces a single species of humans – not multiple races of humans. If we are to have an honest discussion of "race," we need to educate ourselves about its origins, intentions, and usage — and, with hope, raise consciousness so that people everywhere reject being classified and divided by racist ideology into these fake "racial" categories. When you classify yourself as a "race," you are adopting destructive beliefs that have been maliciously calculated to make you believe that people are, somehow, inherently different (and they are not) because of (how shallow is this—>) the way that they look. "Race" is anti-intellectual – please reject "race" so that we may move forward to make the world a better place for all.

[\[http://theracecardproject.com/race-fake-not/\]](http://theracecardproject.com/race-fake-not/)



NEWSWEEK

TECH & SCIENCE

RACE

In 1950, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) issued a statement asserting that all humans belong to the same species and that “race” is not a biological reality but a myth. This was a summary of the findings of an international panel of anthropologists, geneticists, sociologists, and psychologists.

A great deal of evidence had accumulated by that time to support this conclusion, and the scientists involved were those who were conducting research and were most knowledgeable about the topic of human variation. Since that time similar statements have been published by the American Anthropological Association and the American Association of Physical Anthropologists, and an enormous amount of modern scientific data has been gathered to justify this conclusion.

Today the vast majority of those involved in research on human variation would agree that biological races do not exist among humans. Among those who study the subject, who use and accept modern scientific techniques and logic, this scientific fact is as valid and true as the fact that the earth is round and revolves around the sun.

[<http://www.newsweek.com/there-no-such-thing-race-283123>]

Race Is a Social Construct, Scientists Argue

Racial categories are weak proxies for genetic diversity and need to be phased out

Read the whole article here in Scientific American

[<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/race-is-a-social-construct-scientists-argue/>]

Understanding Privacy - A Developed Belief:

Prior Centuries Without Privacy. Here is some interesting data from a web source:

Internal Walls (c. 1500 CE)

Most homes didn't have walls separating rooms until the development of the brick chimney, which needed support beams.

Solo Beds (c.1700)

Beds used to be extraordinarily expensive; many homes only had a single large bed that was shared with the entire family and guests. Sex with others in the room was common.

Information Privacy (1900s)

Information about citizens was often public, including the first American census. Even though the post office had introduced the first information privacy laws in the 19th century, postcards (without envelopes) were cheaper, and therefore often more popular. "The Right to Privacy" was coined in 1890, inspired by fears of the camera.

Voluntary Web Tracking (2015)

When AT&T offered a 430 premium service that allowed users to opt-out of browser tracking for ad targeting, few users took it. This portends a future where most people will increasingly choose ever more invasive tracking in exchange for money, health advice, and entertainment.

[Source: The Ferenstein Wire]. [<https://medium.com/the-ferenstein-wire/the-birth-and-death-of-privacy-3-000-years-of-history-in-50-images-614c26059e#.8a211ao3j>]

It seems clear to me that "the right of privacy" is a rather recent idea developed in 1890. Is it protected by the Constitution?

The Issue: Does the Constitution protect the right of privacy? If so, what aspects of privacy receive protection? [<http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/conlaw/rightofprivacy.html>]

In this link from the University of Missouri in Kansas City, you will find a rather comprehensive overview of this topic of privacy. In the Miriam Webster dictionary, privacy is defined as "the state of being away from public attention." I think we certainly have a right to be kept away from public attention but that is not what most people define for the word privacy. Here are some comments from this article regarding Constitutional law:

Bill of Rights (and 14th Amendment) Provisions Relating to the Right of Privacy

Amendment I

(Privacy of Beliefs)

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.

Amendment III

(Privacy of the Home)

No Soldier shall, in time of peace be quartered in any house, without the consent of the Owner, nor in time of war, but in a manner to be prescribed by law.

Amendment IV

(Privacy of the Person and Possessions)

The right of the people to be secure in their persons, houses, papers, and effects, against unreasonable searches and seizures, shall not be violated, and no Warrants shall issue, but upon probable cause, supported by Oath or affirmation, and particularly describing the place to be searched, and the persons or things to be seized.

Amendment IX

(More General Protection for Privacy?)

The enumeration in the Constitution, of certain rights, shall not be construed to deny or disparage others retained by the people.

Liberty Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment

No State shall... deprive any person of life, **liberty**, or property, without due process of law.

"The question of whether the Constitution protects privacy in ways not expressly provided in the Bill of Rights is controversial. Many originalists, including most famously Judge Robert Bork in his ill-fated Supreme Court confirmation hearings, have argued that no such general right of privacy exists. The Supreme Court, however, beginning as early as 1923 and continuing through its recent decisions, has broadly read the "liberty" guarantee of the Fourteenth Amendment to guarantee a fairly broad right of privacy that has come to encompass decisions about child rearing, procreation, marriage, and termination of medical treatment. Polls show most Americans support this broader reading of the Constitution."

According to this article from the *University of Missouri in Kansas City* (cited above) it would appear that more recent claims for the "right of privacy" goes too far, especially as we move into the 21st century, the modern facilities and equipment of the World Wide Web, etc. are we pushing things too far when we consider:

1. Privacy, as we may now wish to consider it was of no concern until 1890.
2. Therefore, the concern for privacy has only been around for about 125 years.
3. Modern communication devices, like FaceBook, SnapChat, and a growing host of others enable individuals to create and bring a lack of privacy on themselves.
4. An expressed conclusion in the article of reference following:

"The future of privacy protection remains an open question. Justices Scalia and Thomas, for example, are not inclined to protect privacy beyond those cases raising claims based on specific Bill of Rights guarantees. The public, however, wants a Constitution that fills privacy gaps and prevents an overreaching Congress from telling the American people who they must marry, how many children they can have, or when they must go to bed. The best bet is that the Court will continue to recognize protection for a general right of privacy." Note: January 22, 1973 CE - Roe vs. Wade, the right of privacy extends to abortion.

Freedom, even in the United States, does not permit unbridled personal freedoms. While the dictionary may define freedom as, "the quality or state of being free," it is only when we initiate privacy on our own behalf that it has the probability or possibility of having some personal reality.

Differences Between the Privacy Laws in the EU and the US:

"Everything we do in the Internet leaves *digital* fingerprints. Therefore, it is only logical that many web users are worried about the issue of privacy. Their worry is not without reason."

"Because privacy laws differ from country to country, a company is not legally obligated to ensure that the processing of personal data will comply with the laws of all countries where the persons whose data have been collected reside."

"Even large countries and organizations, such as the EU and the US, have different approaches in their attempts to regulate the use of personal information in the information society."

"Under EU law, personal data can be collected only under strict conditions and for a legitimate purpose. The main component of the EU data protection law is the Data Protection Directive 1995/46/EC."

"In the US, there is no all-encompassing law regulating the collection and processing of personal data. Instead, data protection is regulated by many state and federal laws."

[<http://resources.infosecinstitute.com/differences-privacy-laws-in-eu-and-us/#gref>]

How Can We Make Sure Beliefs Remain Helpful and Healthy Today?

FIRST: It is important to consider today's definition of a belief, "a feeling of being sure that someone or something exists or that something is true." When we misuse a belief by suggesting it is a statement of fact and true and not "a feeling of being sure" wrongfully force beliefs into the conclusion they cannot be by definition! Beliefs are only the beginning of an idea or thought, like seeds that need to be planted, watered and cultivated to grow into maturity. Growth is the process of becoming and, until maturity of a verifiable fact, they simply remain a belief.

SECOND: Beliefs are important in developing ideas that are usually the beginning of many helpful endeavors. A universe with continuing change, with wide and diverse possibilities, needs many resources for the beginning and development bringing positive progress. Most of our human history was conceived within philosophy and religion whose core values are imagination, inspiration and revelation. These venues are mostly what brought about who we are and what we have accomplished over many centuries. Every act of creation has this impetus of invention and grows with new and developing ideas of action and care. With the development of science we have been able to witness a growing understanding of how our universe became and how it continues. With an awareness of the variety of its character, a deeper understanding of the equal validity of it all coming together, we can learn to share in this stunning grace and dignity .

THIRD: It is through the scientific community that we have the privilege to grow in that grace and knowledge of who and what we are and can be with a certain confidence producing more possibilities in the future. We can see that what sometimes looks like chaos remains cohesive in the mystery of a covenant, a binding agreement, a natural interdependence by and within it all. It is this, according to the stories of creation throughout humanity, that we too can learn to function and grow in cohesive ways toward the betterment of everything, by adopting **actions** and **behaviors** that enable change, diversity, and equality noted in the following acronyms:

LOVE [Limitless Offerings Veracious Expended]

PRAYER [Perusing Reasonable Alternatives Yes Expecting Resolve]

CHURCH [Charitable Humanity Utilizing Resources Creating Hospitality]

LAW [Life Awareness Works]

Allow me to share this covenant as I have learned it from the stories of the Bible. In looking at and studying these stories in scripture so that we may become and continue to be the positive change, diversity and equality that keeps it all together toward a better future.

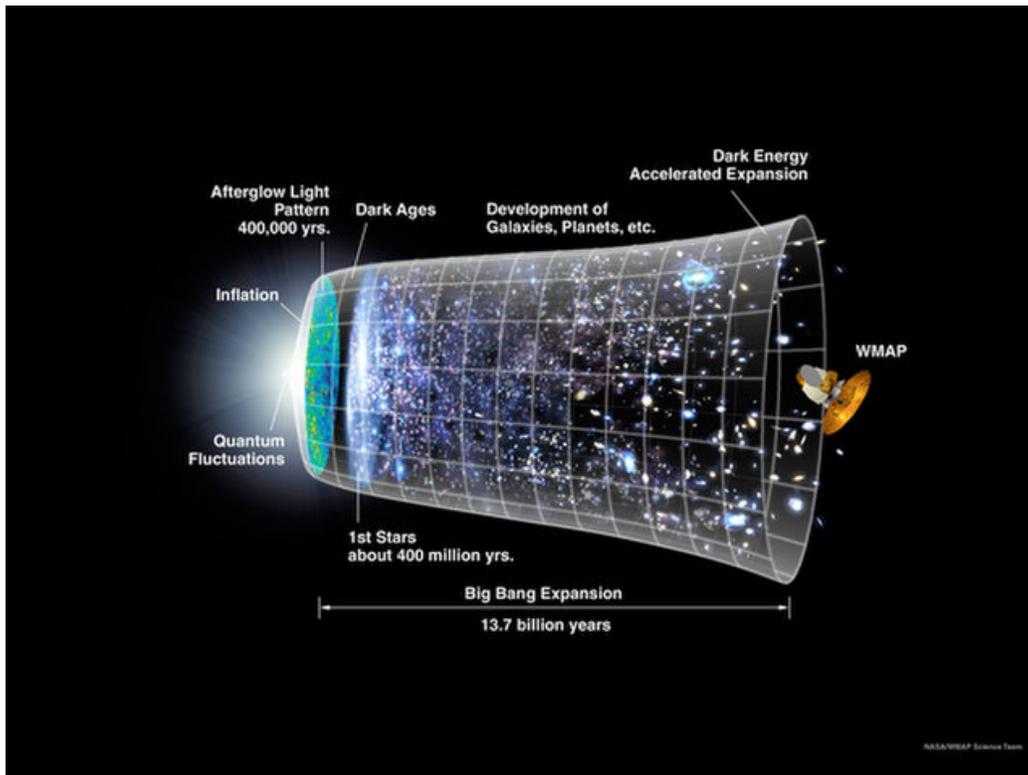
From The Beginning - God - Began with COVENANT:

Covenant, “a usually formal, solemn, and binding agreement” between the creator and the created.

But not the “God” that was developed during the Common Era by many religious sects and communities. This God has become so varied and distorted, especially after The Enlightenment, that many have moved away from this God. In fact, when Moses asked at the burning bush whom he should say sent him, the reply was simply the verb to be - “I AM who I will BE.” God then is the name we have adopted over the ages in our language and writing so the Creator seemingly has no “official” name.

“It took quite a bit more than seven days to create the universe as we know it today. SPACE.COM looks at the mysteries of the heavens in an eight-part series: The History & Future of the Cosmos. This is Part 5 in that series. Our universe was born about 13.7 billion years ago in a massive expansion that blew space up like a gigantic balloon. That, in a nutshell, is the Big Bang theory, which virtually all cosmologists and theoretical physicists endorse. The evidence supporting the idea is extensive and convincing. We know, for example, that the universe is still expanding even now, at an ever-accelerating rate.”

“So what does this theory teach us? What really happened at the birth of our universe, and how did it take the shape we observe today?” [<https://www.space.com/13347-big-bang-origins-universe-birth.html>]



This graphic shows a timeline of the universe based on the Big Bang theory and inflation models. Credit: NASA/WMAP

The observations of the beginning according to science:

Traditional Big Bang theory posits that our universe began with a **singularity** — a point of infinite density and temperature whose nature is difficult for our minds to grasp. However, this may not accurately reflect reality, researchers say, because the singularity idea is based on Einstein's theory of general relativity. So the very beginning of the universe remains pretty murky. Scientists think they can pick the story up at about 10 to the minus 36 seconds — one trillionth of a trillionth of a trillionth of a second — after the Big Bang.

According to the Biblical Account of Creation in Genesis:

At the origin of creation God (science refers to a Singularity) established a Covenant, “a formal and serious agreement or promise.”

- Formal, “belonging to or constituting the form or essence of a thing.”
- Serious, “having an important or dangerous possible result.”
- Agreement, “the act of agreeing.”
- Promise, “a declaration that one will do or refrain from doing something specified.”

Today’s Christians hardly speak about nor mention a covenant that was made with the whole of creation and especially with the first humans in the creation stories in Genesis chapter 1 and 2. From the very beginning, as

the “days” of creation progressed in this story, the Creator was very pleased and called it “good and very good.” At the beginning of each day we read these words, “Then God said,” speaking the universe into existence?” The appearance of The Singularity, as illusive as it still is to our understanding, and The Big Bang, that our newer telescopes are able to visualize take us back billions of light years so we are becoming more familiar with how it all began.

Genesis 1:26-31 (GW), “Then God said, “Let us make humans in our image, in our likeness. ...” So God created humans in his image. In the image of God he created them. He created them male and female.” ... “There was evening, then morning—the sixth day.”

Genesis 2:2-3 (GW), “By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing. On the seventh day he stopped the work he had been doing. Then God blessed the seventh day and set it apart as holy, because on that day he stopped all his work of creation.”

In this 21st century we recognize the three principles of the universe, change, diversity, and equality and, using the tools of modern science, see more clearly our marvelous beginnings and evolution — the beginnings of a “living covenant,” “a formal and serious agreement or promise,” placing together many of the stories passed down to us verbally and in writing with clarity and new awareness.

The first covenant was given, according to the second creation story, in Genesis chapters 2 and 3, in the Garden of Eden between God, Adam and Eve. In this conversation the man was told (2:16-17), “You are free to eat from any tree in the garden. But you must never eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil because when you eat from it, you will certainly die.” This story tells how the woman came into being from the rib of the man so that he would have a proper mate, to which he responds, (2:23), “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. She will be named *woman* because she was taken from man.” Accordingly, in Genesis chapter 3, we learn that God came down in the cool of the evenings to enjoy their friendship. Unfortunately this covenant of friendship was broken when the man and woman ate the fruit of “the tree of knowledge of good and evil.” Having become “accountable” for their actions, knowing good from evil, they were sent out of the Garden to live in the “real” world, to experience life as we all know it, when we become “adults.”

Beginning in the 2nd century the notion of “original sin” was developed by early leaders of developing Christianity. By the 4th century, the Holy Roman Catholic Church made it official under the leadership of the Emperor Constantine. The Doctrine of Original Sin was established by several councils, especially the Second Council of Orange in 529. It was primarily St. Augustine who said it was transmitted by "concupiscence", when people had sex and conceived a child, along with a belief that all humanity is actually and literally the descendants of Adam and Eve. The following resource helps demonstrate how difficult it is to change a belief!

Science shows that the Biblical creation story is not literally true, and demonstrates that Adam and Eve and the Garden of Eden are myths and not historical figures. This destroys the idea of original sin as being caused by the misbehavior of the “first man and woman,” and the idea of inheriting guilt or punishment for that misbehavior. Most modern theologians don't think this a good reason to abandon the doctrine of the fall. They believe that although the story is not historically true, it does contain important truths about the state of humanity.” [http://www.bbc.co.uk/religion/religions/christianity/beliefs/originalsin_1.shtml]

Original Sin is a Christian teaching. 'Sin', as a concept, exists in many religions but may not be called 'sin'. But the general idea of 'sin' is, that we don't always reach a standard of behavior that is acceptable, or correct. That idea exists in other faiths besides Judaism, Christianity and Islam. Sin, “to do something that is

considered wrong according to religious or moral law;” or αμαρτίας in the Greek is simply defined as, “missing the mark.”

This may be the sign of breaking the covenant between God and humanity and, when we don't live up to our part of the covenant, we jeopardize our relationship. God is love and therefore remains open to our returning to that relationship of Covenant, “a formal and serious agreement or promise.” when our behavior signals our desire to return.

There are also two other memorable early stories in Genesis that may also imply covenant: the story of the city of Babel is recorded in Genesis 11:1–9 and the flood narrative in Genesis chapters 6 through 9, the Hebrew version of the universal flood myth.

“The flood myth motif is found among many cultures as seen in the Mesopotamian flood stories, Deucalion in Greek mythology, the Genesis flood narrative, Manu in Hinduism, Bergelmir in Norse Mythology, in the lore of the K'iche' and Maya peoples in Mesoamerica, the Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwa tribe of Native Americans in North America, the Muisca, and Cañari Confederation, in South America, and the Aboriginal tribes in southern Australia.” [https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Flood_myth]

These two stories teach us about times when humanity, even individuals, lose sight of this important sense of being alive within the context of covenant with the Creative Source of all that is. The narrative of the tower of Babel (Genesis 11.1–9) is an etiology or explanation of a phenomenon. This story of the Tower of Babel basically attempts to explain the origins of the multiplicity of languages.

The Clear Establishment of The Covenant:

The Formal Announcement of this Covenant began with Abraham:

In Genesis 12:1-3 (GW),”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.”

Notice the Covenant: Leave, Go, I will bless!

Abram was invited by God to leave his former life, one that was based on fear, obedience, and sacrifice - even human sacrifice. Abram was invited to a new life with God giving him compassion, love, and grace. Abram was assured that he and his family would be blessed, along with **all** nations who shared in this covenant all over the earth. This Covenant, “a formal and serious agreement or promise.” was announced through Abram that it is clearly applicable to everything on earth!

Then the Covenant Established by Moses:

God’s call to Moses:

In chapter 3 of Exodus, God calls his attention through a burning bush that was not consumed. He learns that God has seen the cruelty of his people's treatment by the hands of the Egyptians and invites Moses to lead them out of Egypt.

Exodus 3:11-15 (GW), "But Moses said to God, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the people of Israel out of Egypt?" God answered, "I will be with you. And this will be the proof that I sent you: When you bring the people out of Egypt, all of you will worship God on this mountain." Then Moses replied to God, "Suppose I go to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your ancestors has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' What should I tell them?" God answered Moses, "**I Am Who I Am**. This is what you must say to the people of Israel: 'I Am has sent me to you.'" Again God said to Moses, "This is what you must say to the people of Israel: The Lord God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, has sent me to you. This is my name forever. This is my title throughout every generation."

The Creator of the universe - "the I Am Who I Am" - the beginning and the end of all that is - The One who always **IS** has offered the invitation to all creation in all times and in all places to join in "a formal and serious agreement or promise" of mutual COVENANT.

The most exciting and most generous gift of The Covenant is recorded in the whole long book of Exodus, so allow me to share this summary of what happened.

- God spoke to Moses in a burning bush
- God asked Moses to work things out with Pharaoh
- It took 10 plagues in all
- At the announcement of the exodus, the people enjoyed a roasted lamb celebration meal (today we call this Holy Communion - sharing bread & wine)
- As they departed God opened up the Red Sea so they could escape
- They gathered together on the other side and God met them at Mount Sinai
- From this mountain Moses brought down the 10 Commandments

Why The 10 Commandments?

This was a renewal of God's Covenant made with their father Abraham and The 10 Commandments were given to **guide** them in their friendship with God and with one another.

In the Catechism (An Outline of Our Faith) in the Book of Common Prayer - page 847: in these questions and answers:

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 the purpose of the 10 Commandments?

A. The 10 Commandments define our relationship with God and others.

What do we learn about God in the first 4 commandments?

- I brought you out of Egypt where you were slaves
- Have no other gods but me and never misuse my name
- Make no images of me or anything in heaven, earth or water

- I share my love with all who love me and follow my ways

In the last 6 commandments, to love and respect each other:

- Keep one day a week as your sabbath (a day of rest and thanksgiving)
- Do not murder
- Do not commit adultery (that is: perform or perpetrate a mistake, crime or an immoral act)
- Do not steal
- Do not accuse anyone falsely
- Do not covet (desire) anyone or another's property or possessions

So then again - **God Is Always Merciful!** [love, compassion and grace]

An Important Difference Between “Gods” in Scripture:

This becomes clear to me when we sense that the LAW of God is LOVE which always demonstrates compassion and grace. I interpret this list of “10 primary suggestions” as this acronym suggests, **LAW** [**L**ife **A**wareness **W**orks], the primary advice of these “10 suggestions.” When adhered to we understand the basic idea of what it means to live according The Covenant.

So where does the bad rap about an unmerciful God come from?

From the same Bible wherein it describes the people who have chosen not to be in friendship and in Covenant with God. Included in the scriptures we have stories of people who worshipped foreign gods who required the people to offer **sacrifice**, required absolute **obedience**, and/or harsh punishment. We must be careful to note these differences in reading and in the study of the Bible:

Here are examples from every major prophet giving notice between the gods who required sacrifice, and the Creator with a loving covenant of friendship between all creation and all people:

SAMUEL:

I Samuel 15:22-23, “Is the Lord as delighted with burnt offerings and sacrifice as he would be with your behavior? 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: Isaiah 1:11-13 (GW), “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:

Listen to Isaiah's invitation to love, compassion and grace: 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 follow my lead, 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:

Jeremiah 7:22-23 (GW) "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, 'Listen to 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: [came to continue and announce the Kingdom of God] THE COVENANT:

Jesus Fulfills the Old Testament Scriptures. Jesus was all about BEHAVIOR, not beliefs:

Matthew 5:17-20 (GW), "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."

When we follow Jesus we are invited to continue as people of the COVENANT, "an agreement that brings about a relationship of commitment between God and the people of God," a life that is primarily about behavior and not based on beliefs.

In Conclusion:

There may be a problem with ALL Beliefs because a Belief is, "a feeling of being sure that someone or something exists or that something is true." Belief is only a personal feeling of being sure." without any proof or substantiation. Since The Enlightenment we have become, more and more, a people of facts - verifiable facts - so that the simple "feeling" of being sure that something is true is becoming less and less valid. Beliefs are simply private and personal understandings that only have validity to the person or persons who believes them. When people join together with others in groups, large or small, these unsubstantiated and unverifiable "truths" often become contentious and cause divisions. Truth, by today's definition are, "the real facts about something: the things that are true," with the support of verification. Now, in this 21st century facts are becoming the operative framework for everything we think, say, or do!

Throughout most of our world today we notice hostility and divisions that seems to be getting worse. We have greater extremes in almost every major religion that has also spread into our politics and governments. The divisions that exist in Islam, Judaism and Christianity, even in smaller organized groups, are profuse and seem to be growing in expansion of distain. Most of these divisions are created by disagreements regarding beliefs! The inflections of people quoting their scriptures, and other credal sources, may create multiple and obvious discrepancies between people in every major religion. Most believe that their views of "truth" in these ancient traditions are absolutely correct but, with little or no verification in fact, they remain "a feeling of being sure that someone or something exists or that something is true."

A well known acronym for FEAR, [**F**alse **E**vidence **A**ppearing **R**eal], states one of the biggest problems for many people today - fear! A growing fear of the internet is rising because there is little or no control of what people may publish or say on the World Wide Web. Governments, large companies, and technicians are presently doing their best to protect this modern convenience for communication to provide safety from "hacking" and materials that convey false information. The web is often unreliable today unless we can

eliminate, or at least reduce, the misuse of false or unreliable information! Without significant advancements in our technology for controlling “fake” posts, the internet is not very helpful and becoming another source of hostility and division.

From our Human Beginnings:

As early humanity, we have had our 5 primary senses: sight, hearing, taste, smell, and touch. These were significant tools for evolutionary advancement as a people to learn, grow in knowledge, and develop our understanding for living well. As we became more proficient we developed our bodies, minds, and spirits to be more creative, bodies with exercise and good food, our minds with philosophy, and our spirits with religion. For many centuries these were useful areas of development that enabled us to advance our species beyond other living species. Within these extended disciplines we produced even more with our gifts of imagination, inspiration, revelation, especially in the areas of philosophy and religion.

Throughout most of our centuries, until the Middle Ages of the Common Era, we only had beliefs, “a feeling of being sure,” in small and larger groups of similarity. With the organization of civilization growing into cities, nations, and empires, our beliefs were strengthened by rule and political enforcement. The strength of such beliefs were enforced by emperors, kings and ruling councils with their armies that enforced them on us in body, mind and spirit. Soon after the Common Era the authority of Rome grew very large and, by the 4th century, the spectrum of comprehensive authority of The Holy Roman Catholic Church was formed.

Faith, in the dictionary is, “a system of religious beliefs; belief in the traditional doctrines of a religion.” Doctrines are defined as, “a set of ideas or beliefs that are taught or believed to be true: a statement of government policy especially in international relations.” Looking up into the heavens we began to notice the “outward and visible signs” of the “inward and invisible grace” of a God of love, compassion and grace. The God who IS, who told Moses, “I AM who I will be!” This Creator is that active verb of the beginning and the end of all living things. The real value of faith today can be summarized in this acronym, FAITH — **Finding Authenticity In Today’s Happenings.**

The terms belief and faith are often used synonymously. Yet they are very different. As David Benner says, “Belief is conviction of the trustworthiness of a proposition. . . . Faith, on the other hand, can never be reduced to beliefs or thoughts. . . . Beliefs are often simply objects of attachment that provide a misleading sense of certainty.” [1] David Benner, “Faith and Belief,” interview with Jackie Stinton, posted to <http://www.drdauidgbenner.ca/faith-and-belief/> on August 5, 2016.

I have grown to become a follower of Jesus, the one called Christ, who introduced the “Realm of God” (the way God designed it to be): God of the Covenant! We are told in scripture that Jesus came that “we might have life in all its abundance,” and he introduced this covenantal “way of life” without any creeds or doctrines, only with this simple invitation, “follow me.” My latest book, *The Jesus Movement In The 21st Century*, tells how we are to follow Jesus by acting like he did then in our lives today. I have learned to follow God’s ways knowing that “actions speak louder than words.” It has very little, if anything, to do with beliefs but absolutely everything to do about behavior. The Covenant, from the Creation on, helps us interact together in loving, friendship, and grace with Spirit, that “breath” (breathed in Adam) continues as we share together throughout eternity. "I resonate significantly with a retired bishop in the Episcopal church who said, “The older I get the more deeply I believe, but the less beliefs I have." I discovered this quote in a book written by John Shelby Spong, *The Fourth Gospel: Tales of a Jewish Mystic*.

I am blessed, after many years of living as a “believer,” to have found the solace and peace of **The Covenant** initiated by the Creator in the very beginning of everything. With the gifts of change that fosters new life, the venue of diversity that makes life creative and interesting, and having deemed that every part is equal and essential are the core values of the universe. The keys to **LIFE** [Living Into Future Existence] are mutual respect and **LOVE** [Limitless Offerings Veraciously Expended], and the way we **behave** (not our beliefs) are the essentials to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness!

I close with words that I wrote to poetically capture the joy of this way of life as a follower of Jesus. The musical arrangement can be heard in the recording provided below. The melody was composed by Lina Sandell Berg in the late 1800's.

Enjoy Each Day

Enjoy each day, and ev'ry passing moment,
Alive with God in holy Covenant.
Bless'd are we with all things in Creation,
Together with God's gift of Covenant.
Compassion, love and grace to all forever,
Seen in Christ to be our very best.
Lovingly in sharing pain and pleasure,
Mingling toil with peace and rest.

2

Jesus calls each one of us to follow,
Be like him in service for each hour.
There's no reason life will ever fail me,
With awareness of this quiet pow'r.
Jesus calls us to this special venture,
Sharing all with friends that we have made.
If in each day we claim and use these ventures,
We bring hope to ev'ry progress made.

3

Help me then to always follow Jesus,
Joined with God in holy Covenant.
Serving others with that love of justice,
Bearing peace and grace with full intent.
Be the Christ today as God has called us,
In the strength of Covenant.
Our lives are full within each fleeting moment,
Serving God as now in Christ we can.

Music click here: <https://youtu.be/1Kcps98Xvgw>

Gerard A. Pisani, Jr