

# THE ELEVENTH COMMANDMENT

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MOSES was inspired to deliver to the Children of Israel wandering in the wilderness of Sinai the Ten Commandments to regulate man's relation to his Creator and to his fellow men. These guides of conduct have stood the test of time for more than 3,000 years. But Moses, during those forty years in the wilderness, failed to foresee the vital need of the future for an additional Commandment to regulate man's relation and responsibility to Mother Earth, whose cultivation and production must nourish all generations.

If Moses had anticipated the wastage of land due to man's practices of suicidal agriculture and the resulting man-made deserts and ruined civilizations, if he had foreseen the impoverishment, revolutions, wars, migrations, and social decadence of billions of peoples through thousands of years and the on-coming desolation of their lands, he doubtless would have been inspired to deliver an "Eleventh" Commandment to complete the trinity of man's responsibilities—to his Creator, to his fellow men, and to mother earth. Such a Commandment should read somewhat as follows:

"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 thy 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 and live in poverty or be destroyed from off the face of the earth."

But no such commandment has been a part of man's attitude toward his occupation of the earth except in very limited areas. Man has generally been an exploiter, despoiler and destroyer of natural physical, plant and animal resources of the earth. He has brought upon himself the curse of destruction, impoverishment and desolation in vast areas.

To-day literally billions of acres of originally productive lands throughout the world bear

the curse of unfaithful stewards through the centuries. This curse upon the land, by generations of ignorance, neglect, lack of forethought, greed, or oppression, represents a waste to humanity so stupendous as to exceed the comprehension of the human mind.

The world is now more fully occupied by the human race than ever before. In the face of the limited area now available, the idea that man is still destroying its usefulness by inconsiderate and wasteful methods, comes as a shock to thinking people. If man is making deserts out of productive lands, it is a matter not only of national, but of world-wide concern.

Travels through the morgues of former prosperous areas, now desolate and depopulated, are depressing to one who reads the Macbethan tragedy written far and wide on the landscape. It is appalling to see ruins of once great cities, of civilizations and flourishing culture, strewn like weather beaten skeletons in the graveyard of their erosion-wasted lands.

The exploitation of great areas, whether in America, Africa, Australia, or elsewhere, where farmers and stockmen have cleared and grazed new lands at a rate hitherto unknown, tell the same story. Within the memory of the present inhabitants of certain portions of the world, men have witnessed the transformation of fertile plains from luxuriant vegetation into barren windswept desert-like lands. Stockmen tell of grazing paradises, which within their day have been depleted of vegetation and gouged with gullies. People who paid taxes for the building of irrigation dams and reservoirs have already seen some of them abandoned and useless, while other reservoirs are silting up at an alarming rate.

The vast virgin forests of all these newly exploited continents have largely disappeared under wasteful exploitation. It has been annihilation rather than rational cutting with a planned maintenance of the forest for permanent productivity, and for the control of erosion and flashy storm run-off. In a few countries such as Germany, Italy and Japan, a high conception of the permanent value of natural resources for future national greatness