



Your Living Environment

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WHY AGRICULTURE?

Why did God create cattle, sheep, poultry and the other domesticated livestock? Why did He create wheat, oats, rice, barley and maize? Why did He design potatoes, beans, peas and cabbage? Why has so much of man's activity from creation till now centred around crop cultivation, orchard and forest management and livestock husbandry? In short WHY did God create agriculture the way He did?

Was God's main purpose in this system to FEED AND CLOTHE MAN? Mankind has historically assumed so! Perhaps you have too. But like so many other human assumptions, this does not agree with the truth of God as revealed by The Bible and His Creation.

This issue of Your Living Environment will draw attention to the fact that food and fibre production is NOT the primary purpose of agriculture. It will also demonstrate that God has a far greater purpose for agriculture than the mere production of so many calories per person per day. By losing sight of God, man has long since lost the true perspective of agriculture. And in so doing we have doomed ourselves and our environment to slow degeneration and destruction.

WHY IS AGRICULTURE SO TIME-CONSUMING?

The Bible indicates that we have been using the same domesticated livestock and crops for food from Genesis till now. But this carefully planned system is without doubt time-consuming, complicated and laborious! Any Time-and-Motion-Study expert would have to condemn God's food system as extremely cumbersome, wasteful, expensive, complex and just plain inefficient.

Take bread for example. God's system involves soil-tillage, seed-planting, a year's delay between harvests, gathering, threshing and cleaning. Then comes the milling and daily making and baking that loaf of bread! Surely a continuously bearing "bread-tree" producing ready-to-eat loaves like apples would be simpler and much more "efficient"!

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And what about milk? It takes three YEARS to produce the cow and even then the milk supply is dependent on a continuous feeding, watering and a daily extraction process. The latter can be unpleasant and even hazardous! Why all this effort to obtain milk and the further complexities of butter and cheese production? Could God not have continued to send manna, or supply all our nutritional needs from a nearby stream? Could we not have been designed to live on air or perhaps eat soil?

WAS GOD AN INEFFICIENT DESIGNER?

Was He incapable of developing more efficient methods? Not at all! Anyone who truly understands God and His Plan, knows better. God does nothing haphazardly. At Creation He deliberately designed an environmental system that demands much of man's time, effort and thought -- for reasons far more important than mere human physical survival!

THE TRUE PURPOSE OF AGRICULTURE

The Bible contains no verse which states plainly -- the main function of man's environment is such and such... But careful analysis of God's plan for man and His system of agriculture does reveal several major reasons behind the true purpose of agriculture.

I. To Enable Man To Understand God More Clearly: Few men have been privileged to speak with God since Adam was evicted from the Garden in Eden, but we can still understand God. He tells us -- "The invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made" (Rom. 1: 20). In fact He has surrounded us with His very mind in the ecological relationship of our complex environment.

In Bromfield's view, agriculture "... is the only profession in which man deals constantly with all the laws of the universe and life" (From My Experience, Louis Bromfield, p.348).

Nothing forces man to study God's creation more than His natural way of feeding and clothing humanity. Without a working knowledge of the laws governing soil, animals, crops, seasons and their inter-relationships -- man could not survive.

II. To Create In Man An Awareness Of His Dependence On God:

Plant and animal production, as God designed it is extremely subject to the vagaries of drought, flood, hail, disease, insect attack etc. Daily dependence on God and obedience to His laws was essential for a man to avoid extreme discomfort and even death from these forces. Today under the influence of Satan, man has developed a system that aims to suspend or delay the penalty of environmental lawlessness. When even farmers obtain most of their food from the local supermarket, one can see the convenience of this system for

ignoring broken agricultural laws!

"There are two spiritual dangers in not owning a farm. One is the danger of supposing that breakfast comes from the grocery and the other that heat comes from the furnace" (A Sand County Almanac, Aldo Leopold, p.6).

Today man's sustenance appears to spring from those vast seas of nutritional junk, called supermarkets, rather than from God! Likewise credit for providing heat, power and light is now given to gigantic national gas and electricity grid systems, rather than God who supplies water, forests, coal and solar energy.

III. To Provide Opportunities For Learning Rulership: "The preservation of the landscape belongs among the essential tasks of mankind, for man has been appointed the master of life on earth ... the forming, maintenance and recreation of the land-scape, is not only an eternal biological problem but a problem with an essential spiritual and social significance" (The Earth's Face, Dr. E. Pfeiffer, pp.34, 36).

"And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness, and let them have dominion [rulership] over the fish of the sea, the fowl of the air, and over the cattle and over all the earth" (Gen. 1:26).

The very design of God's system of agriculture, provides the future members of His all powerful ruling family with ample opportunity to practise rulership! God watches us practise on a small scale and with limited power. If we fail with a few acres of land, plants and animals, can we hope to qualify to rule this whole planet with Christ?

Note how humanity has rebelled over this God-given responsibility. In effect we have fled the land when it would no longer support us, turning food and fibre production into a specialized city-based industry.

IV. To Express Man's Creative Desires: "I know the satisfaction of seeing the whole landscape, a whole small world, change from a half-desert into a rich ordered green valley inhabited by happy people, secure and prosperous, who each day create and add a little more to the world in which they live, who each season see their valley grow richer and more beautiful" (From My Experience, Louis Bromfield).

Here is a man rare among agriculturalists, expressing the satisfaction of having helped to develop a portion of this earth to a higher plateau of beauty, order and productivity. Yes, God's Creation was designed to subtly pressure every individual into working with soil, grass, flowers, trees, shrubs, birds and animals -- the very components of landscape development. God's whole living environment has provided man with an unparalleled opportunity to

exercise the creative desire inherent in the human mind!

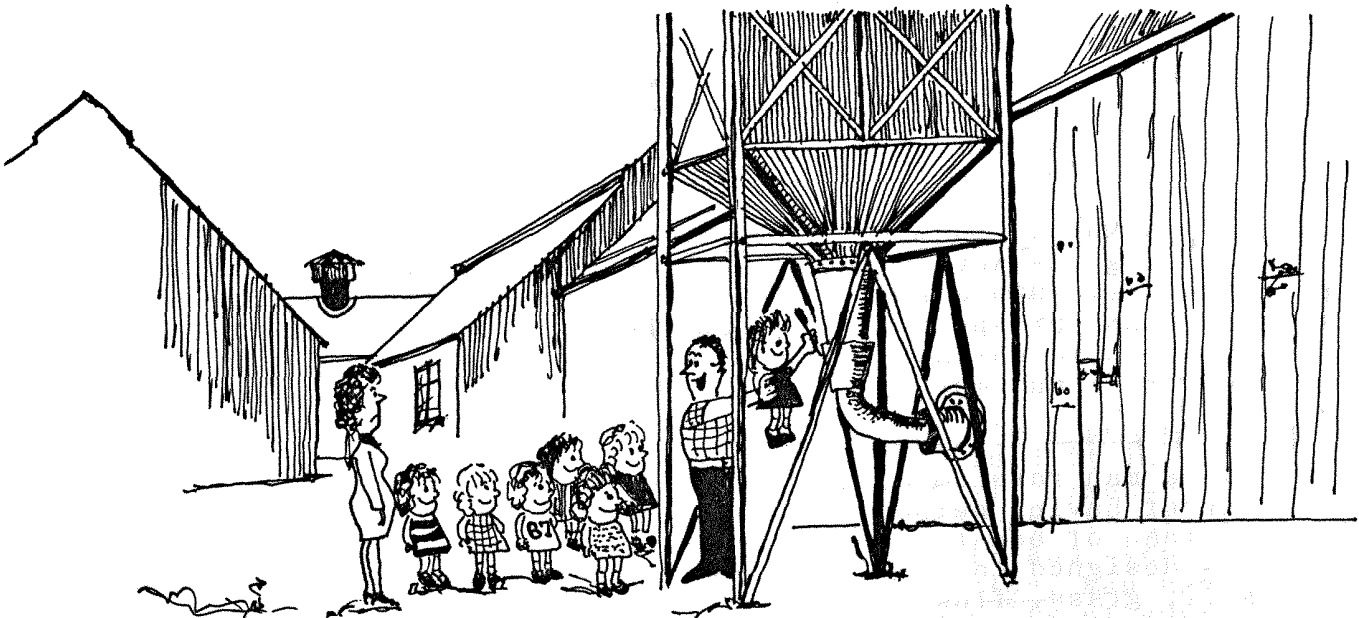
V. To Provide An Ideal Family Environment: "The conditions for the growth of happy and united families are fulfilled to a marked degree on the farm. Here the growing child has ample opportunities to go out with his father; he will be associated both with living things and mechanical devices" (Human Ecology, Sir George Stapleton, p.115).

Another author states: "In the past, rural life presented favourable conditions for the mental development of children, because it exposed them to an immense variety of stimuli -- those from nature, those from the very diverse activities on the farm, and especially those from the chores in which they were expected to participate" (The Human Environment, Rene Dubos, Science Journal, p.79, Oct., 1969)

What better way to channel a child's zest for life and boundless energy than helping parents care for animals, gather eggs, grow vegetables, harvest grain, etc.? The marvellous wisdom of God becomes more apparent when we look at agriculture from this point of view.

MODERN AGRICULTURE -- TOTALLY ASTRAY!

However, understanding the real purpose of our environment is shared by extremely few agricultural thinkers today. Satan has encouraged farmers and scientists to consider voluminous production of food, (regardless of quality) as the real and only purpose of agriculture.



"But darling, the children just love feeding the animals!"

In the last seventy years the economics of the system we are adopting has removed multiple millions from the farming environment of the Western World! And there is no end in sight yet. Politicians say millions more must go and join those already in the city jungles and jobs must be found for them. Their small farms have been replaced by -- vast prairies of grain, battery egg and broiler production, huge animal feed-lots, one man milking one hundred cows daily, and so on.

Large specialised farms with the minimum of people on the farms and the maximum in the cities, may be efficient food production -- from man's point of view. However, God considers not food, but character development to be the most important purpose of agriculture for the future members of His family.

In that respect specialized, mechanized agriculture is failing miserably. The skeleton staff that remain on the farms lose their last chance to understand the true purpose of agriculture. Today "progressive" farmers rub shoulders more with machines than people. For that, they are the poorer. And the profit motive is more likely to debase character than build it up.

AGRICULTURE IN THE FUTURE

God promises a time of the restitution of all things (Acts 3:21). One of the things that will need restoring is a worldwide understanding of the true purpose of agriculture -- from God's point of view.

Agriculture in the future will:

1. Enable man to understand God more clearly as he studies God's physical laws in operation around him.
2. Greatly help the man, under the influence of God's Spirit to become aware of his complete dependence upon God for his every need.
3. Be recognized and fully regarded as an unparalleled opportunity to practise environmental rulership.
4. Encourage man to express his in-built creative desires by the way in which he develops his portion of the environment to a higher plateau of beauty, order and productivity.
5. Provide an ideal family environment in which multiple millions will flow back to man's original God-given job, where "...they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree" (Mic.4:4).