

Conservation of the Earth's Resources: What on Earth is the Answer?

by Grahame Howells

Throughout recorded history our planet has been plagued by wars. Great civilizations have risen and fallen in their pursuit of power and wealth. The wheel of life which, turning, leads to the grandest of human achievements, seems also to plunge us into the darkest of our tragedies.

Humanity has survived two world wars, but it now faces its final conflict and greatest crisis - a world war which is totally dissimilar to its two predecessors in that "the enemy" is not human and does not possess sophisticated weapons, but its powers are immense and we stand helpless against its awesome force. Yet, from the beginning it was humanity's friend and provider, but in return we have plundered and poisoned it, and now it is fighting back. Humanity has declared war on *nature itself* and it is humanity that will lose unless we cease hostilities now. This war knows no borders and will ultimately prove to be as much a danger to your village as it is to Chernobyl or London, or Timbuctoo.

There is an ancient wisdom, sometimes referred to as the hermetic wisdom, which states the law of correspondence, namely, as above so below, as within so without, as in the macrocosm so in the microcosm. The universe works as a great oneness in which the whole is reflected in every part. The ancient Greeks knew of the wisdom. Above the temple of Eleusis was carved "Man, know thyself, and thou shalt know the universe". One hundred and forty years ago, the Federal Government of the U.S.A. were transferring to themselves the ancestral Indian lands of the Squamish tribe in the Washington Territory. The leader of that tribe, Chief Seattle, said the following:

"This we know, the earth does not belong to man, man belongs to the earth. All things are connected. Whatever befalls the earth befalls the sons of the earth. Man did not weave the web of life, he is merely a part of it. Whatever he does to the web, he does to himself".

At about the same time in Iran, Bahá'u'lláh, the son of a Persian nobleman and founder of the Bahá'í Faith said "The Earth is but one country and mankind its citizens". These remarks mean nothing to a rational materialistic intellect. They do not make sense. The rational intellect has only reached the point of experiencing separation, not unity. Therein lies part of the problem. People today experience themselves as a separate entity among a mass of other separate entities. In no sense can they say, as the Orient says, "that art thou, you are me".

The environmental problems which humanity now faces is symptomatic of a much deeper problem and that is of the human race in conflict with its own true nature - it is a fight between spirituality and materialism and to win the war, spirituality must be a stronger force than materialism. The battle against the destruction of our environment will not be won by applying materialistic solutions to materialistic problems.

The environmental issue is a direct consequence of man's short-sightedness and greed which is reflected in the economic and political systems prevalent today. A life of simplicity, of moderation and peace, of love for one another, of respect for all creation and of harmony with nature is the spiritual way out of the tragedy which we all now face. This threat to our survival, however, is not the main concern of the large majority of the human race who suffer abject poverty in the developing countries. They are threatened by poverty itself, by lack of social justice and by the technological domination of the old world. If the varying interests of the "haves" and the "have-nots," of the nations and ethnic groups in conflict are to be resolved without catastrophic collapse - if humanity is to achieve the beatific visions of saints and

scholars, of poets, prophets and scientists, then the old failed ways must be put aside and a new spiritual way be adopted.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, the son of Bahá'u'lláh, said that, on the one hand, if you look at the good thing of the developed world, then it is very impressive and it would seem that civilization was conducive to the happiness and progress of the human world. But, if you look at the destructive developments which uproot the tree of life, then you would conclude that civilization is barbaric. "Progress and barbarism go hand in hand unless material civilization be confirmed by divine guidance, by the Revelations of the All Merciful and by Godly virtues and be reinforced by spiritual conduct, by the ideals of the Kingdom and by the outpourings of the Realm of Might".

Humanity has been described as Nuclear Giants and Moral Midgets. Technology has developed at a greater pace than morality. We have the intellect to create, but we do not have the wisdom to use our creations wisely. Technology is born out of intelligence. Both intelligence and wisdom are God-given gifts to be used responsibly. "Proper exercise of our responsibilities is the key to whether inventive genius produces beneficial results or creates havoc in the material world". Material progress should be combined with the Most Great Guidance. In other words, becoming both scientific and Moral Giants will result in "everlasting glory and happiness being revealed".

The planet is entirely subject to the rule and control of natural law and natural laws have absolute organisation. If, therefore, the balance is changed, then the absolute organisation is also changed and the powerful forces that are inherent in nature will run out of natural control. When order is put into imbalance it causes decomposition and disintegration.

"Co-operation and reciprocity are essential properties which are inherent in the unified system of the world of existence and without which the entire creation would be reduced to nothingness". "Reflect upon the inner realities of the universe, the secret wisdoms involved, the enigmas, the inter-relationships, the rules that govern all. For every part of the universe is connected with every other part by ties that are very powerful and admit of no imbalance, nor any slacking whatever".

Bahá'u'lláh addresses those who disregard spiritual values as follows; - "Ye walk on My earth complacent and self satisfied, heedless that My earth is weary of you and everything within it shunneth you". It seems that some sort of world wide catastrophe is inevitable and man's negligence will itself lead to the end of our way of life as we know it. The calamity which we face, however, "must purge the human race of the dross of its age long corruptions and weld its component parts into a firmly knit world-embracing Fellowship - a Fellowship destined in the fullness of time, to be incorporated in the framework and to be galvanised by the spiritualising influences of a mysteriously expanding, divinely appointed Order, and to flower in the course of future Dispensations, into a Civilization, the like of which mankind has, at no stage in its evolution, witnessed". We need, therefore, to restructure and overhaul the entire social fabric, for it is, at the moment, not woven by spirituality and harmony, but by greed and disunity.

Advancing technology has enabled us to analyse nature, to dissect nature, to control nature and to conquer nature, but we have lost a tremendous truth which the founders of all of the major religions knew, and that is "I" means body, spirit and soul. It means us. It means as a part of, and united with, or the same as. It does not mean separated from the rest of humanity, or nature for that matter, because humanity is the fruit of nature. Better perhaps to replace the word "I" with "Us" or "We".

So, what of the future? It is envisaged that, in the long term, protection, exploration and exploitation of the earth's "unimaginably vast resources" must come under the jurisdiction of a world federal system which will exercise unchallengeable authority over the earth's resources and will ensure economic and

social justice for everyone. It is essential that there be global co-operation of the family of nations in devising and adopting measures designed to preserve the ecological balance this earth was given by its Creator. It is a materialistic problem that can only be solved by a spiritual solution. The nations of the world must understand and follow the admonitions of Bahá'u'lláh and wholeheartedly work together in looking after the best interests of humankind, and unite in the search for ways and means to meet the many environmental problems besetting our planet. 'Abdu'l-Bahá sketches the following picture of the future state of life on earth when he says:- "The Lord of all mankind hath fashioned this human realm to be a Garden of Eden, and earthly paradise. If, as it must, it findeth the way to harmony and peace, to love and mutual trust, it will become a true abode of bliss, a place of manifold blessings and unending delights. Therein shall the rays of the Sun of Truth shine forth on every Land". In other words - "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth, as it is in heaven."

The Bahá'ís of the World are sure that the answers to the problems which everyone faces are contained in the writings of the Faith. Hopefully the theme of unity and spirituality has been reflected in this small article and the Bahá'í Faith applies both of these themes to all of its principles. We are sure that everyone will find something of interest and you will be able to contribute to a world-wide spiritual revolution which is taking place right now around this planet of ours.

We all have only one life to live and only one world to live it in – take care of both of them.