

The Environment

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“We cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used when we created them,” wrote Albert Einstein.

The environmental crisis – including climate change – facing our cities, our nation, and the world is one such problem, the solution for which requires a new way of thinking.

Science has already shown that agricultural and industrial facilities designed and operated without regard for the environment can release toxins which poison our air, soil, and water; and that use of fossil fuels over the past decades has led to global warming due to high levels of carbon dioxide in the Earth’s atmosphere.

In our quest to find a solution to this crisis we need both science and religion – two great lights that guide human progress.

Many companies in Silicon Valley and around the world have already embarked on creation of new technologies that will help stop and reverse environmental degradation.

However, the solution to this crisis requires not only new technologies, but also a new consciousness in human beings – that we all live on the same planet, that humanity constitutes but a single people and that people and the environment are interconnected aspects of one organic system.

United Nations’ Human Development Report 2011 shows a correlation between inequality and environmental degradation, suggesting that the relationships linking human beings have a direct impact on the planet’s physical resources.

According to Baha’i writings, “The welfare of any segment of humanity is inextricably bound up with the welfare of the whole. Humanity's collective life suffers when any one group thinks of its own well-being in isolation from that of its neighbours' or pursues economic gain without regard for how the natural environment, which provides sustenance for all, is affected.”

What can promote the consciousness of the oneness of humankind? What can teach individuals the human virtues – such as moderation, generosity, and sacrifice for the well-being of the whole – so necessary for dealing with the environmental crisis? What can establish bonds of love among people and prompt them to put those virtues into action?

“The real bond of integrity is religious in character, for religion indicates the oneness of the world of humanity,” Baha’i writings state. “Religion serves the world of morality. Religion purifies the hearts. Religion impels men to achieve praiseworthy deeds. Religion becomes the cause of love in human hearts, for religion is a divine foundation, the foundation ever conducive to life. The teachings of God are the source of illumination to the people of the world. Religion is ever constructive, not destructive.”

Therefore, religion and religious leaders play an important role in promoting the right attitudes and qualities in individuals, who in turn must translate those to actions that benefit humanity and the environment.

Unity – among leaders of government, the corporate sector, civil society, and others involved in formulation of public policy – must replace the increased polarization that has come to characterize so much of our political and social lives. And science and religion must be permitted to light the way if we are to succeed in building an integrated, sustainable and prosperous world.