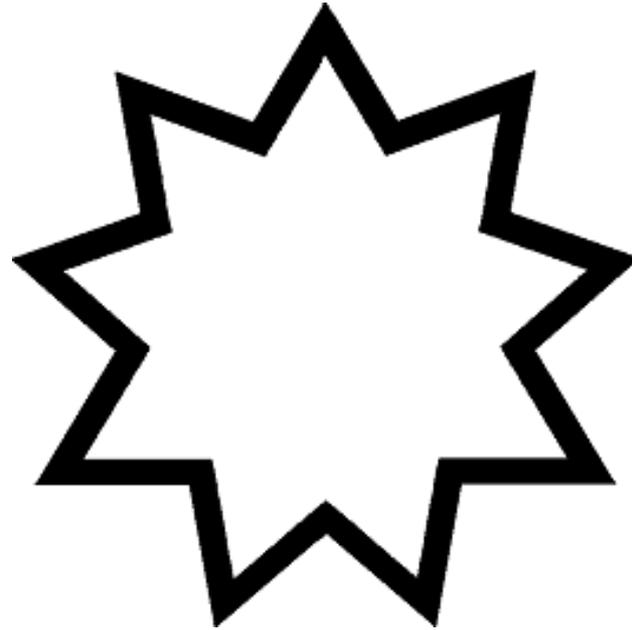


Faiths & Food: Baha'i



George Ballentyne

A BAHÁ'Í CONTRIBUTION

George Merchant Ballentyne

Sun 18 Nov 2018

**TREAD LIGHTLY
ON THIS EARTH**

We cannot segregate the human heart from the environment outside us and say that once one of these is reformed everything will be improved. Man is organic with the world. His inner life moulds the environment and is itself also deeply affected by it. The one acts upon the other and every abiding change in the life of man is the result of these mutual reactions.

Letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 17 February 1933

Every man of discernment, while walking upon the earth, feeleth indeed abashed, inasmuch as he is fully aware that the thing which is the source of his prosperity, his wealth, his might, his exaltation, his advancement and power is, as ordained by God, the very earth which is trodden beneath the feet of all men.

There can be no doubt that whoever is cognizant of this truth, is cleansed and sanctified from all pride, arrogance, and vainglory.

Bahá'u'lláh (1817-92)

Bahá'í Scriptures describe nature as a reflection of the sacred. They teach that nature should be valued and respected, but not worshipped; rather, it should serve humanity's efforts to carry forward an ever-advancing civilization. However, in light of the interdependence of all parts of nature, and the importance of evolution and diversity “to the beauty, efficiency and perfection of the whole,” every effort should be made to preserve as much as possible the earth's bio-diversity and natural order.

Bahá'í International Community,
[Valuing Spirituality in Development: Initial Considerations
Regarding the Creation of Spiritually Based Indicators for Development.](#)
A concept paper written for the World Faiths and Development Dialogue,
Lambeth Palace, London, 18-19 February 1998

Issues of food, nutrition, health and shelter are central to the challenge of providing an adequate standard of living for all members of the human family. These issues cannot, however, be tackled solely as technical or economic problems. Eliminating hunger and malnutrition; establishing food security; providing adequate shelter; and achieving health for all will require a shift in values, a commitment to equity, and a corresponding reorientation of policies, goals and programs. [...] The economics of food production and distribution will have to be reoriented and the critical role of the farmer in food and economic security properly valued.

Bahá'í International Community, Ibid

A core element of a strategy of sustainable development is the reform of agricultural policies and processes. Food production and agriculture is the world's single largest source of employment; nearly 70% of the poor in developing countries live in rural areas and depend on agriculture for their livelihoods. Although farming has been devalued by manufacturing and a rapidly expanding urban population, agriculture still represents the fundamental basis of economic and community life: malnourishment and food insecurity suffocate all attempts at development and progress. Despite this pivotal role, poverty is often concentrated in rural areas. Damage to natural resources, poor information and infrastructure often result in food insecurity, premature deaths and mass migration to urban areas in search of a better life. The farmer must be accorded his or her rightful place in the processes of development and civilization building: as the villages are reconstructed, the cities will follow.