



The Essential Role of Religion in Fostering a Sustainable World

by Peter Adriance



33rd Annual Conference - Association for Bahá'í Studies
&
13th Annual Conference - International Environment Forum
Washington, DC
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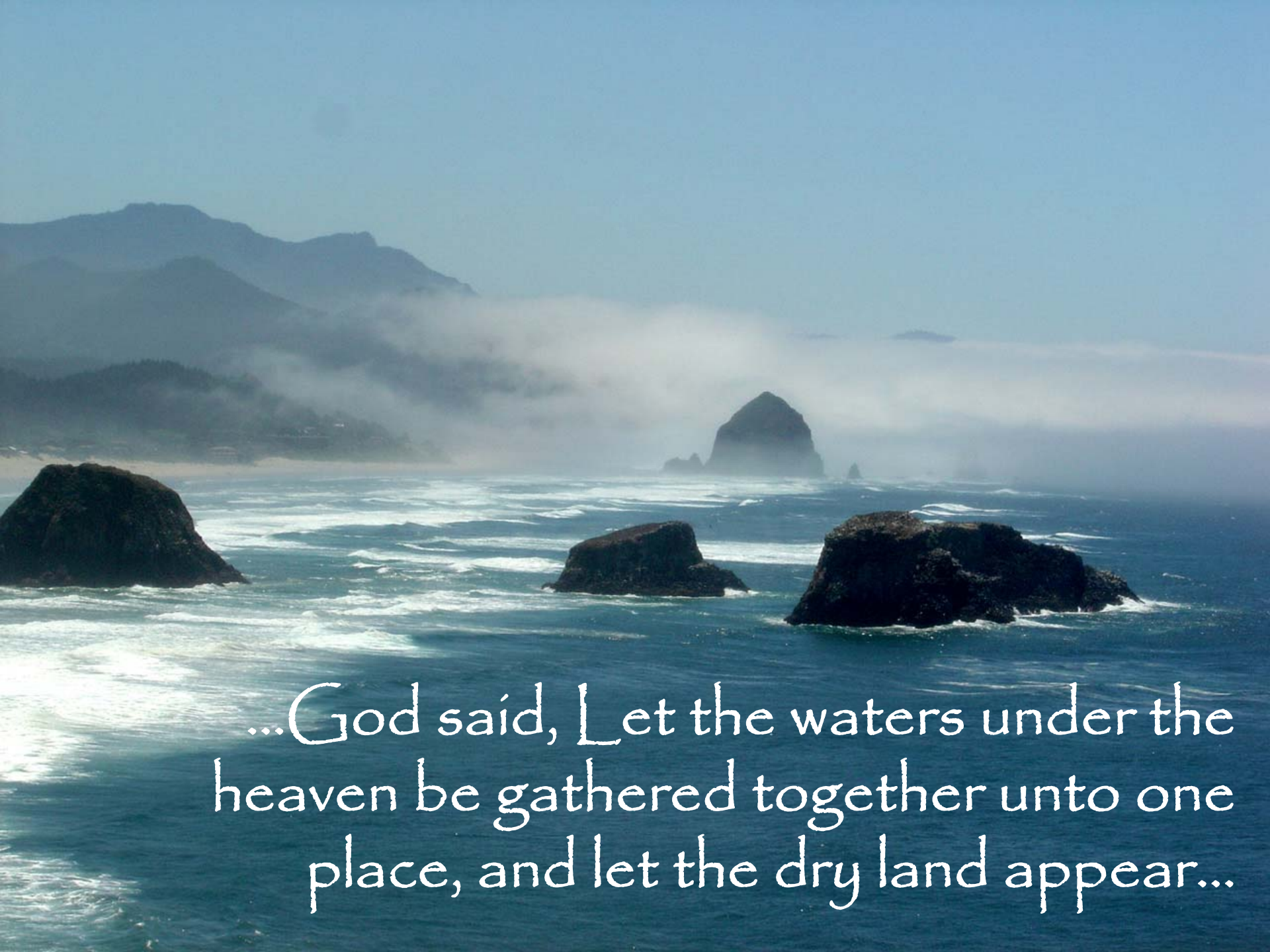


The Essential Role of Religion in Fostering a Sustainable World

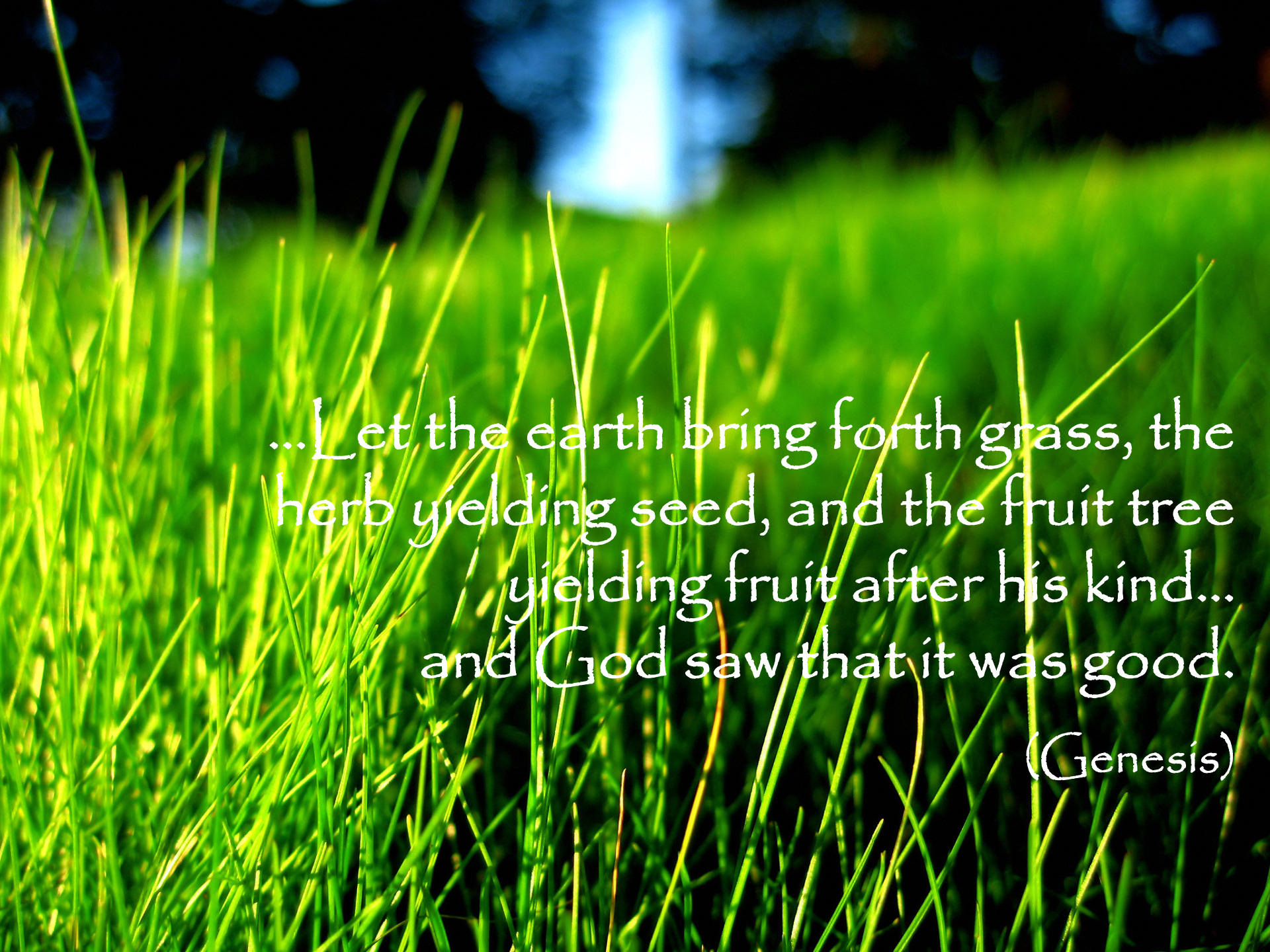
- **Spiritual Foundations**
- Faith in Action
- Science and Religion – Symbiosis
- The Bahá'í Community - vision and approach

A row of large, ancient trees with thick, gnarled trunks and dense, moss-covered branches. The trees are set in a lush green park with a red path visible in the background. The scene is bathed in soft, natural light, creating a serene and majestic atmosphere.

Faithful Environmental Stewardship
Rooted in the Sacred...

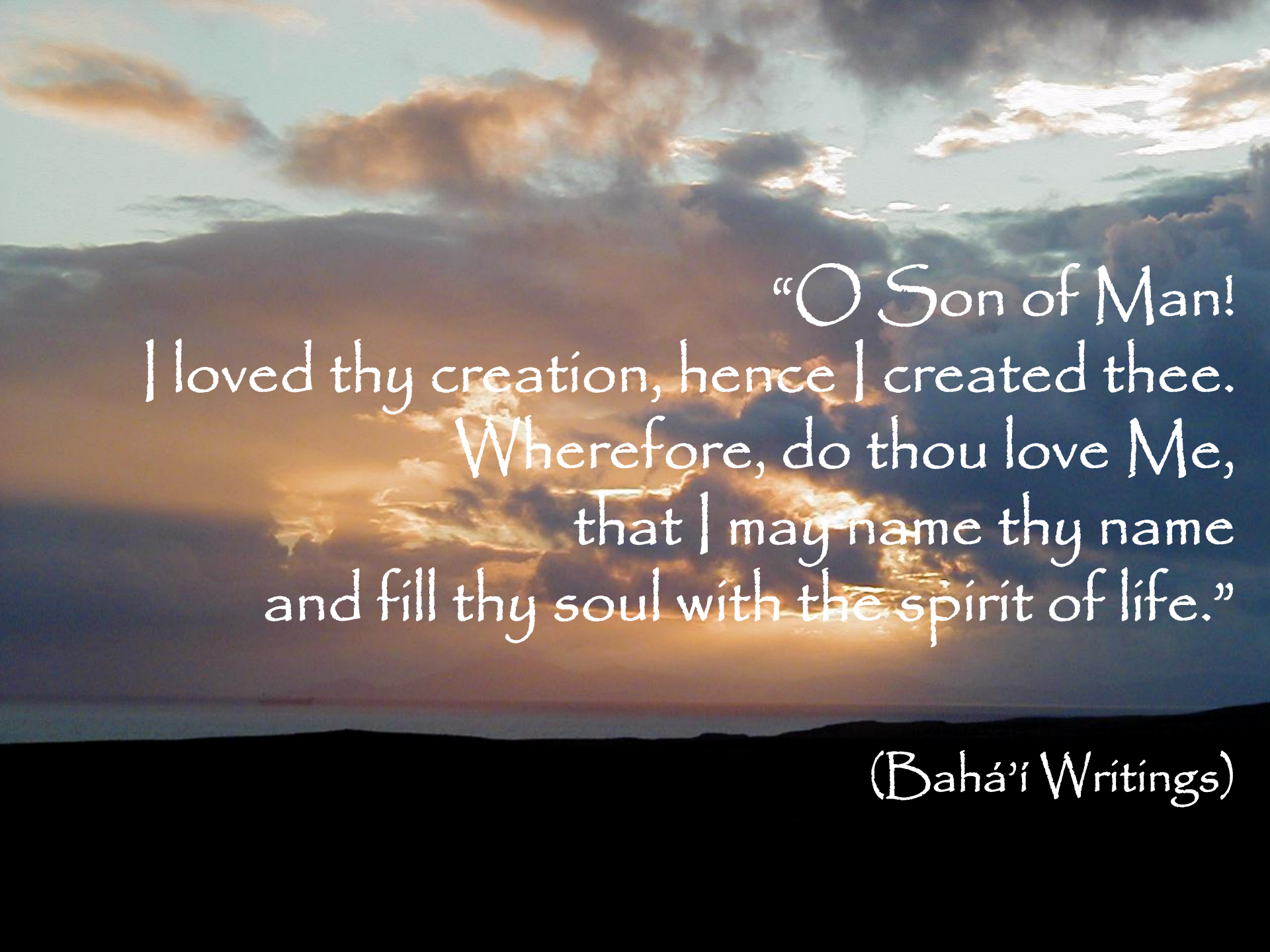
A scenic coastal landscape featuring a clear blue sky, misty mountains in the background, and a rocky coastline with waves crashing against the shore. The foreground shows dark, jagged rock formations in the ocean. The text is overlaid on the lower portion of the image.

...God said, Let the waters under the
heaven be gathered together unto one
place, and let the dry land appear...




...Let the earth bring forth grass, the
herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree
yielding fruit after his kind..
and God saw that it was good.

(Genesis)



“O Son of Man!
I loved thy creation, hence I created thee.
Wherefore, do thou love Me,
that I may name thy name
and fill thy soul with the spirit of life.”

(Bahá'í Writings)



The earth is the Lord's,
and everything in it.
(Psalm 24)



Every created thing in the whole universe
is but a door leading into His knowledge...

...a sign of His sovereignty, a revelation of
His names, a symbol of His majesty....
(Bahá'í Writings)

I am the fresh taste of the water...

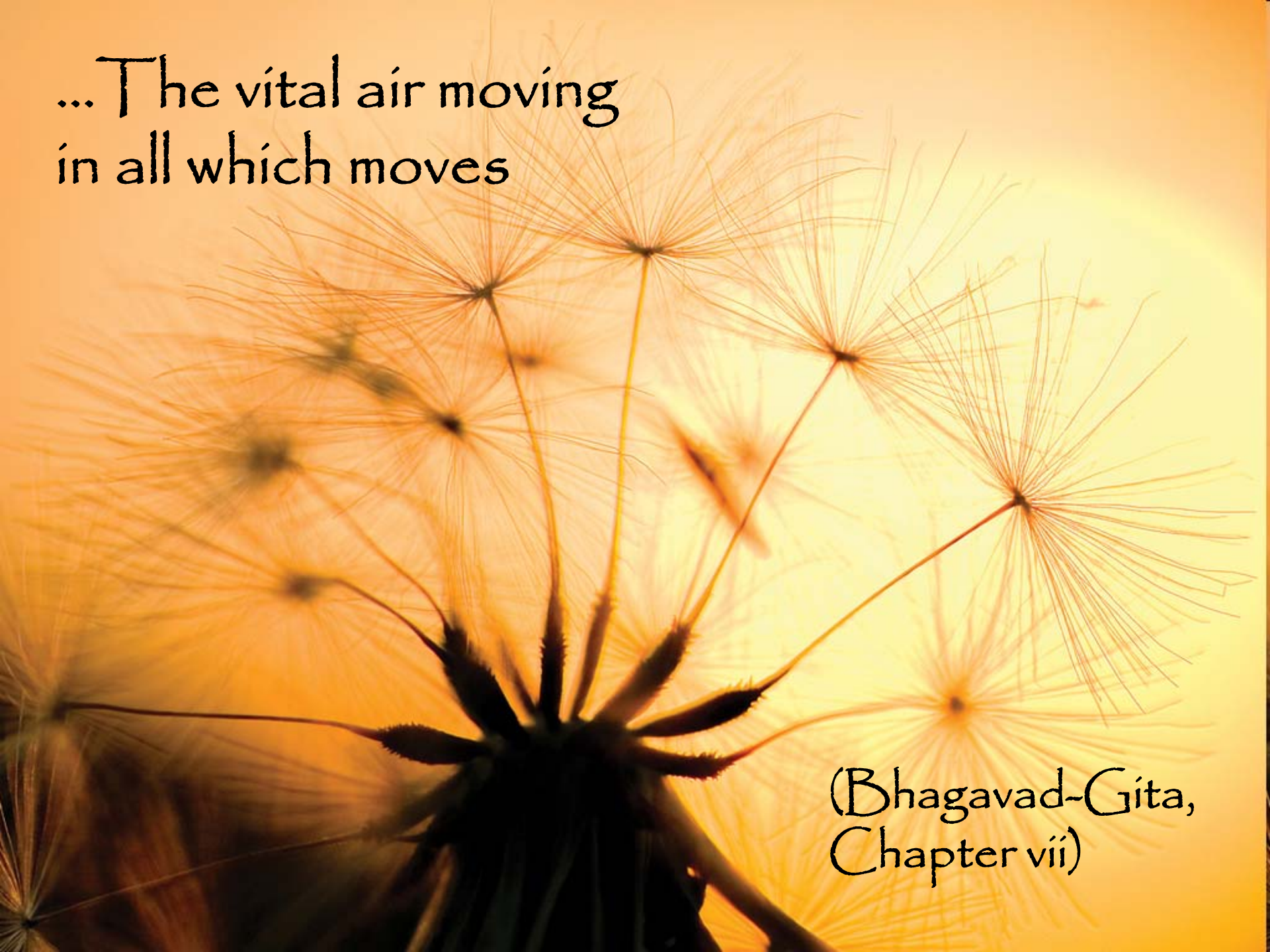


...the silver of the moon...



...I am the fire's red light...





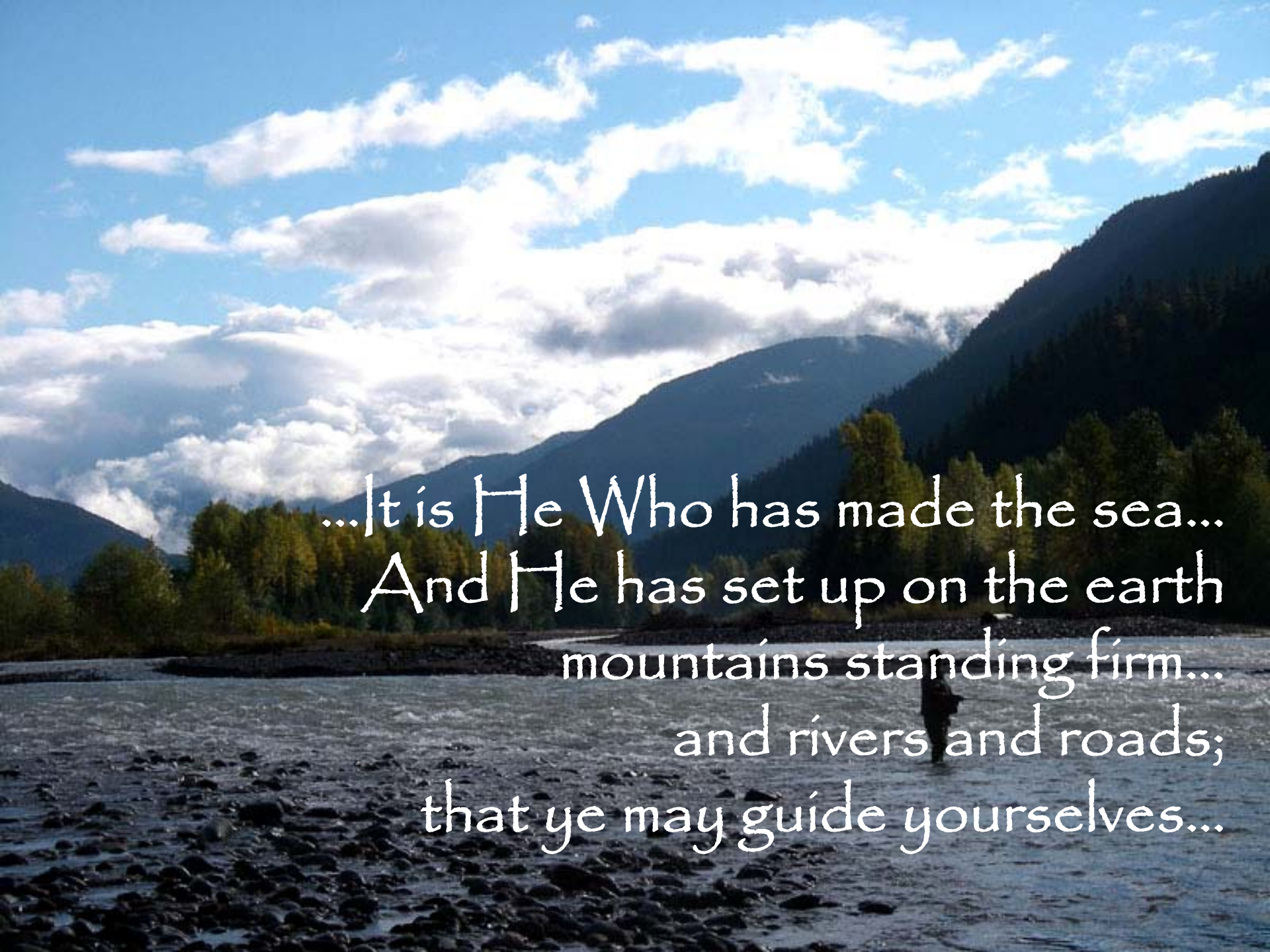
... The vital air moving
in all which moves

(Bhagavad-Gīta,
Chapter vii)

It is He Who sends down rain from the sky... He has made subject to you the Night and the Day...

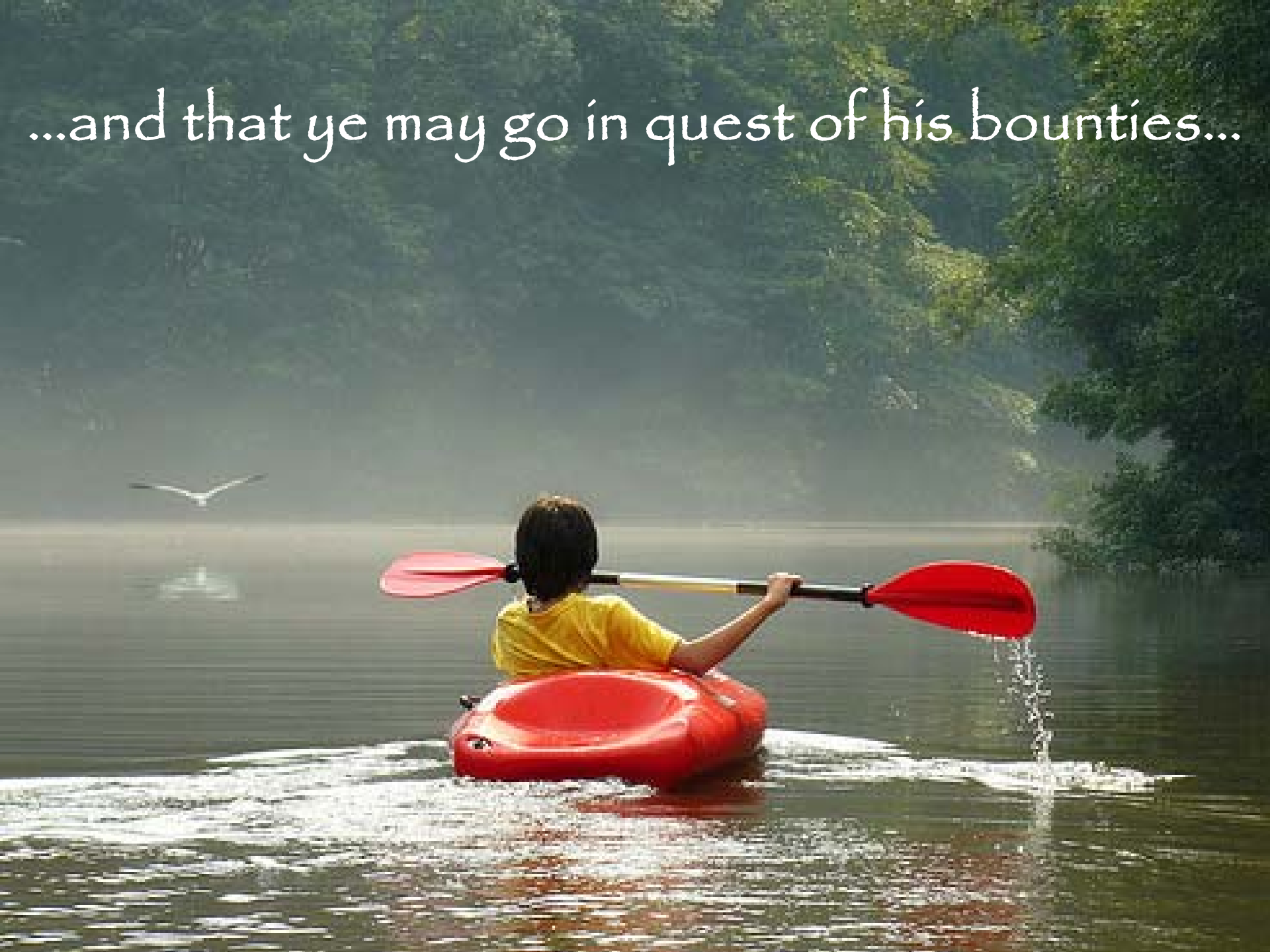


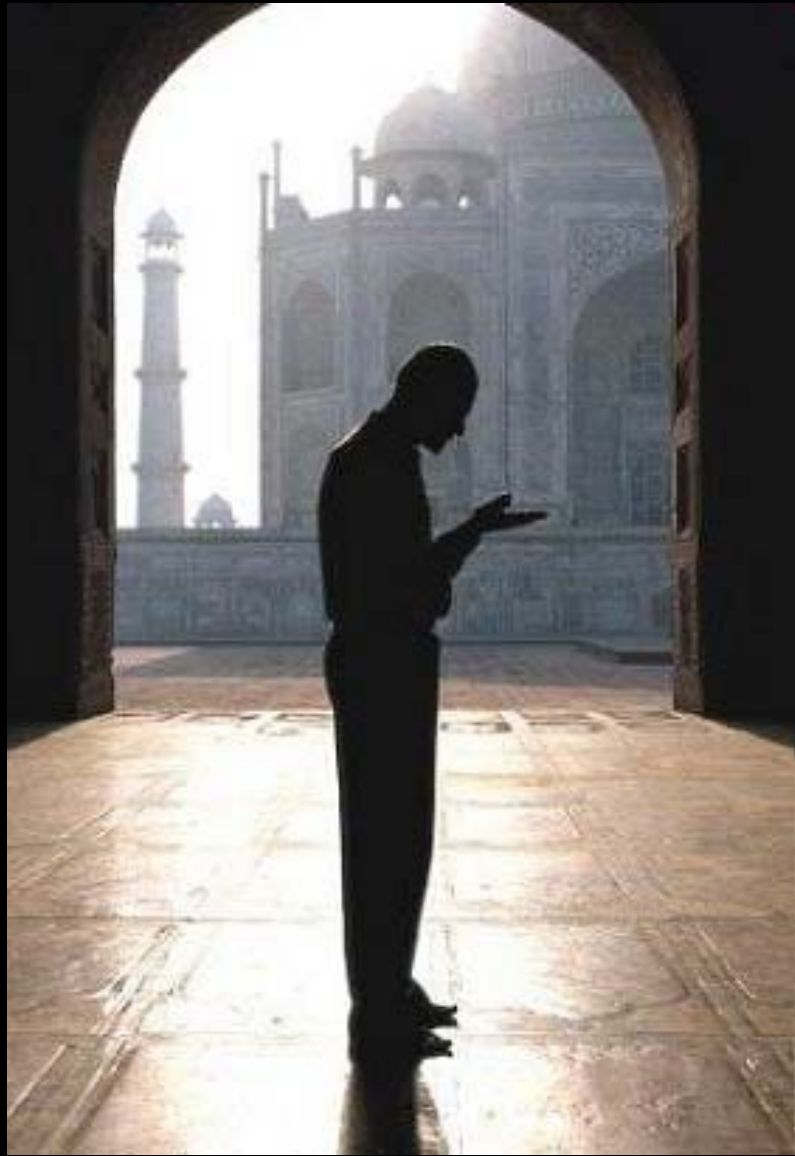
And the things on this earth which He has multiplied in varying colors...

A scenic landscape featuring a wide, rocky river in the foreground. A person is standing in the water, likely fishing. The background consists of lush green trees and dark, forested mountains under a bright blue sky with scattered white clouds. The text is overlaid on the right side of the image.


...It is He Who has made the sea...
And He has set up on the earth
mountains standing firm...
and rivers and roads;
that ye may guide yourselves...

...and that ye may go in quest of his bounties...





...and that ye might give thanks.
(Quran, Surih 16)

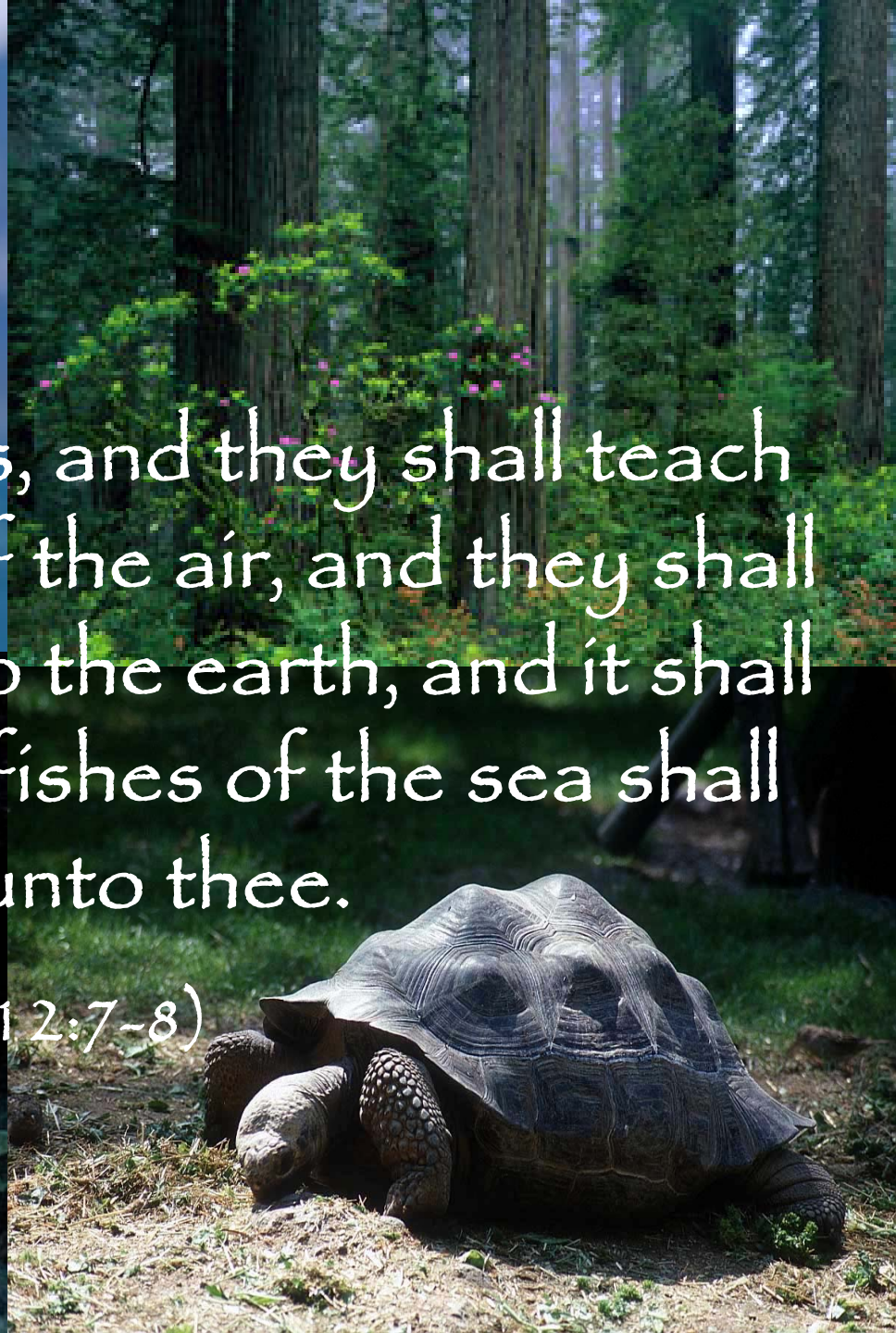
A composite image featuring four distinct natural elements: a dragonfly in the upper left, a purple bell-shaped flower in the upper right, a pine cone in the lower left, and a beaver in the lower right. The text is overlaid in the center, spanning across the dragonfly, flower, and beaver.


Consider the world
of created beings,
how varied and
diverse they are in
species, yet with one
sole origin... This
diversity of type is
apparent
throughout the
whole of nature.
(Bahá'í Writings)



But ask... the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee: Or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee: and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee.

(Job 12:7-8)





...the universe is a scroll that
discloseth His hidden secrets.
(Bahá'í Writings)

A close-up photograph of a vibrant green tree frog with black stripes on its back, perched on a large, deep red flower. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green. The text is overlaid on the image in a white, serif font.

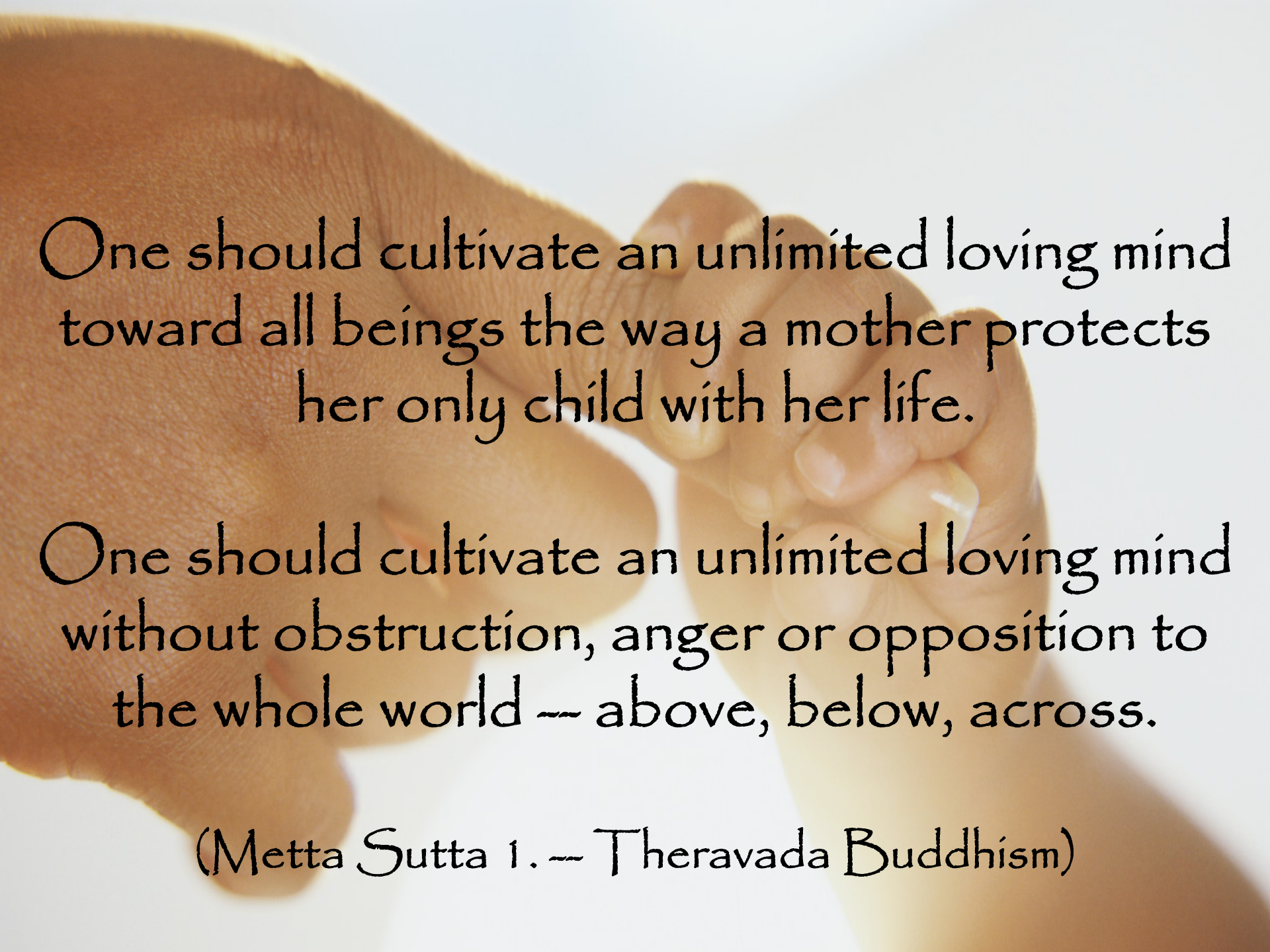
"See my handiwork, my creation, how beautiful and balanced it is.

Be careful not to ruin or destroy it, for if you do, there will be no one to repair it after you."

Midrash Ecclesiastes Rabbah 7:13 (Judaism)

O ye friends of God!
... exercise the
utmost kindness
towards every
living creature...
(Bahá'í Writings)

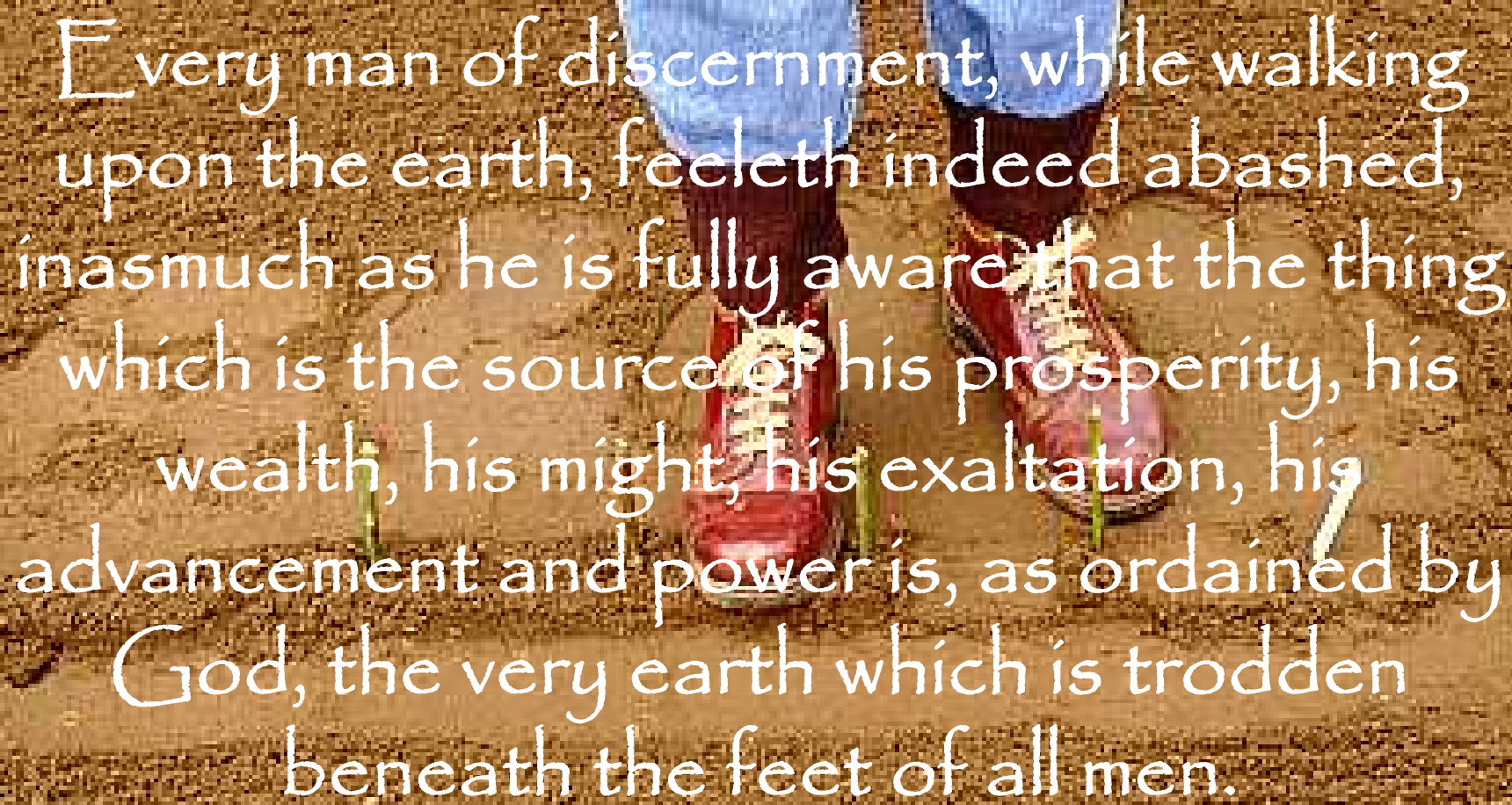




One should cultivate an unlimited loving mind toward all beings the way a mother protects her only child with her life.

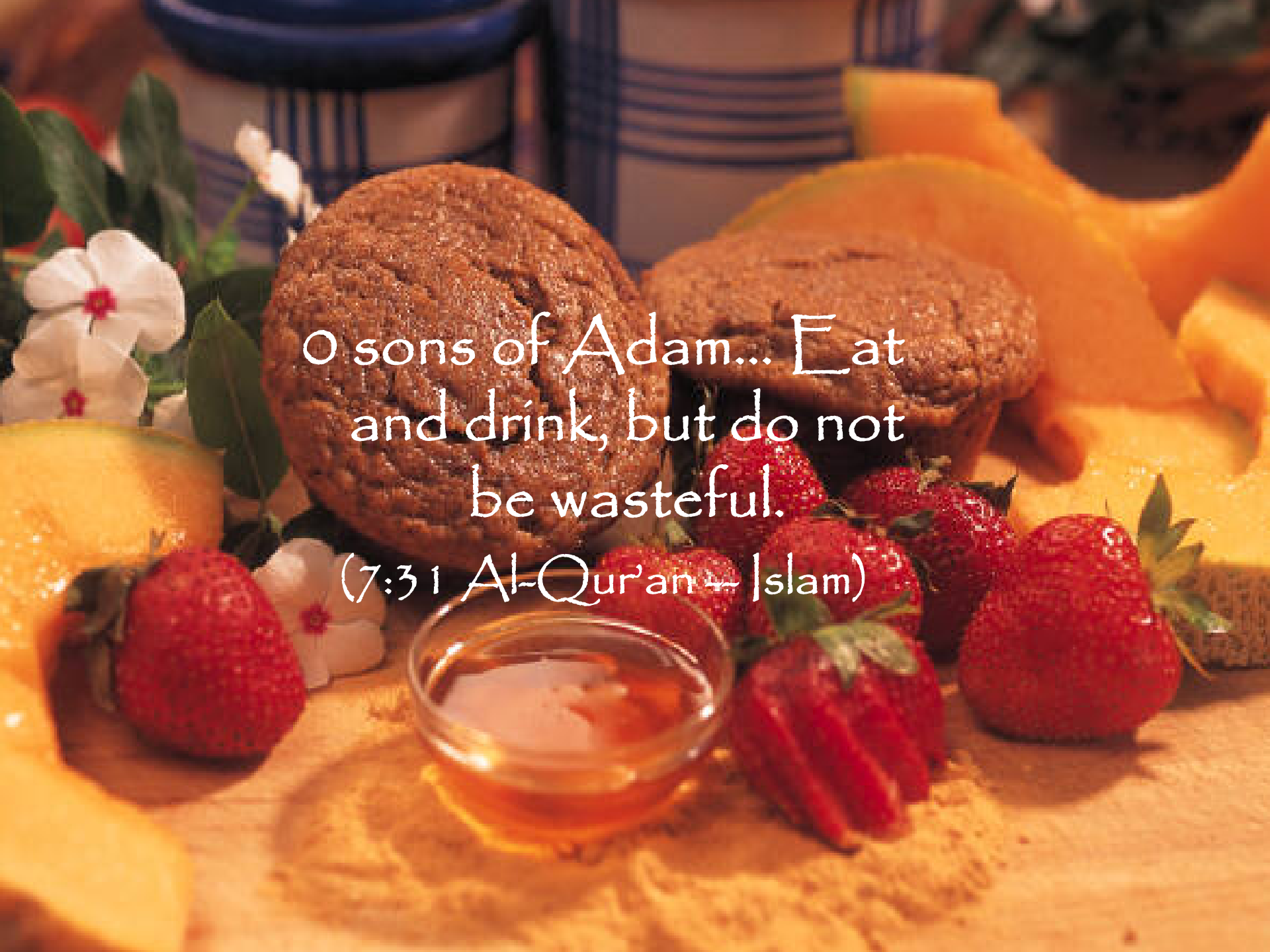
One should cultivate an unlimited loving mind without obstruction, anger or opposition to the whole world — above, below, across.

(Metta Sutta 1. — Theravada Buddhism)

A photograph showing the lower legs and feet of a person walking on a sandy beach. The person is wearing blue denim jeans and red lace-up boots. The sand is light brown and textured. The text is overlaid on the image in a white, serif font.

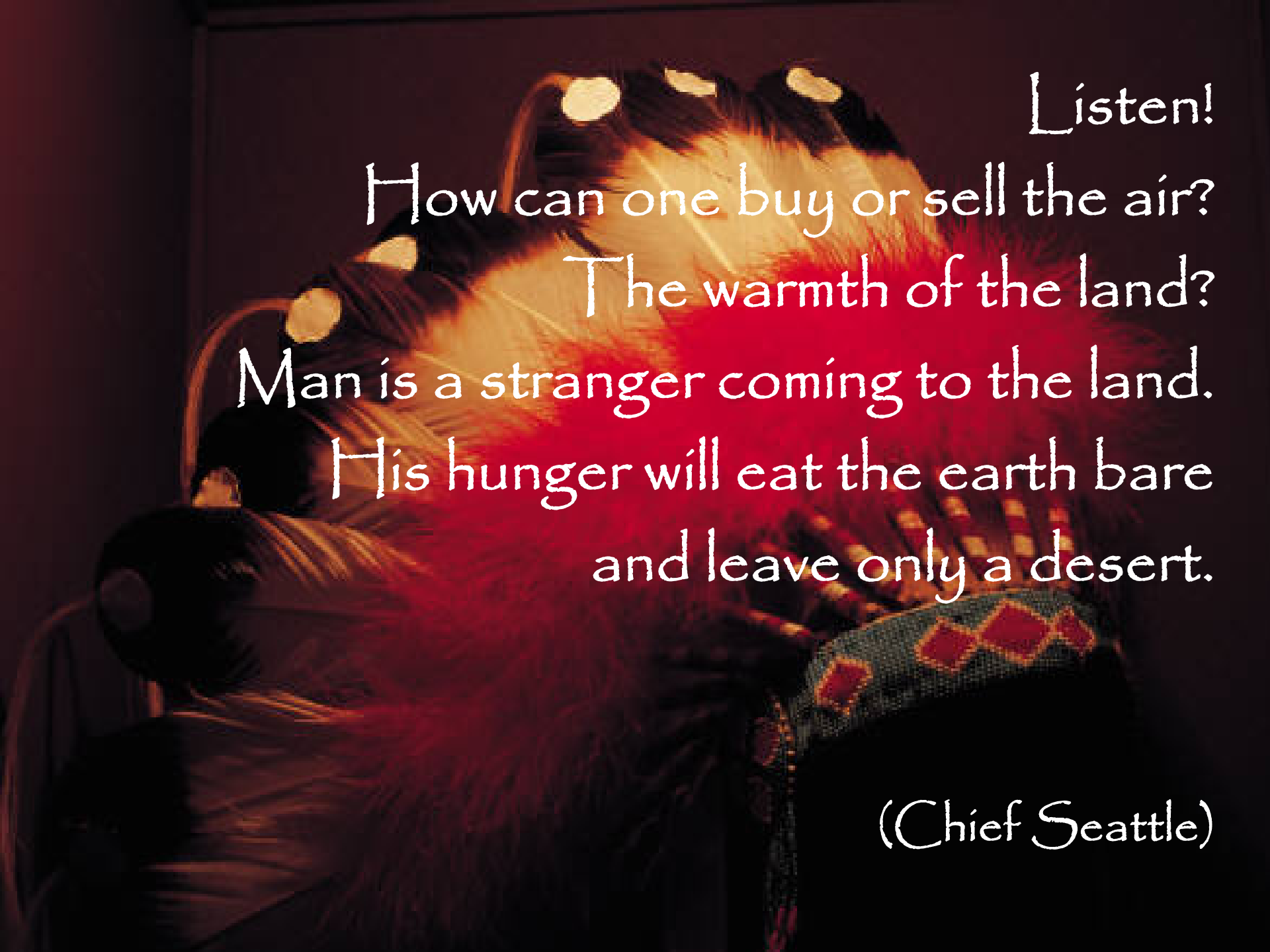
Every man of discernment, while walking upon the earth, feeleth indeed abashed, inasmuch as he is fully aware that the thing which is the source of his prosperity, his wealth, his might, his exaltation, his advancement and power is, as ordained by God, the very earth which is trodden beneath the feet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

(Bahá'í Writings)



O sons of Adam... Eat
and drink, but do not
be wasteful.

(7:31 Al-Qur'an - Islam)



Listen!
How can one buy or sell the air?
The warmth of the land?
Man is a stranger coming to the land.
His hunger will eat the earth bare
and leave only a desert.


(Chief Seattle)





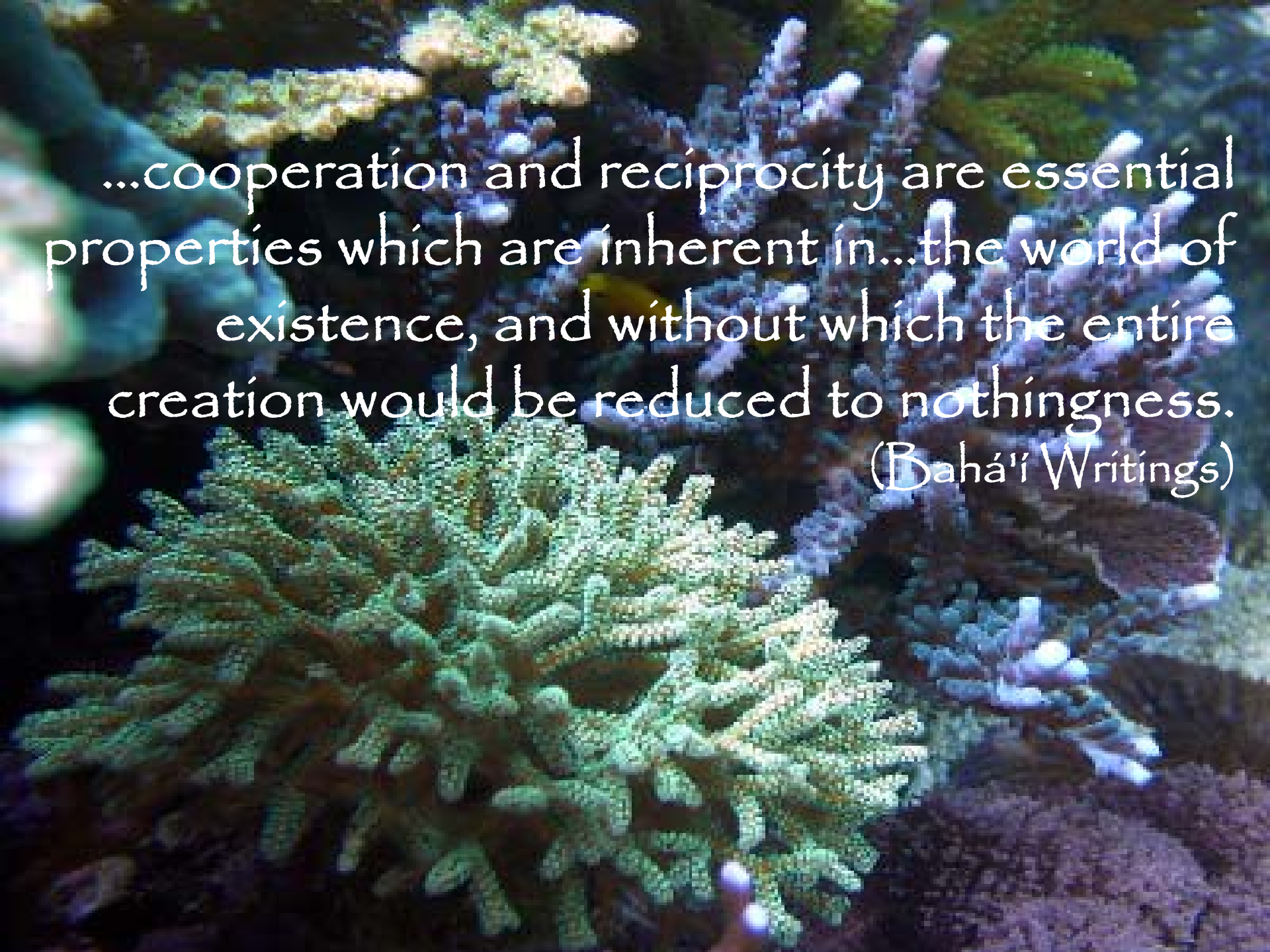
If carried to excess, civilization will prove as prolific a source of evil as it had been of goodness when kept within the restraints of moderation.

(Bahá'í Writings)



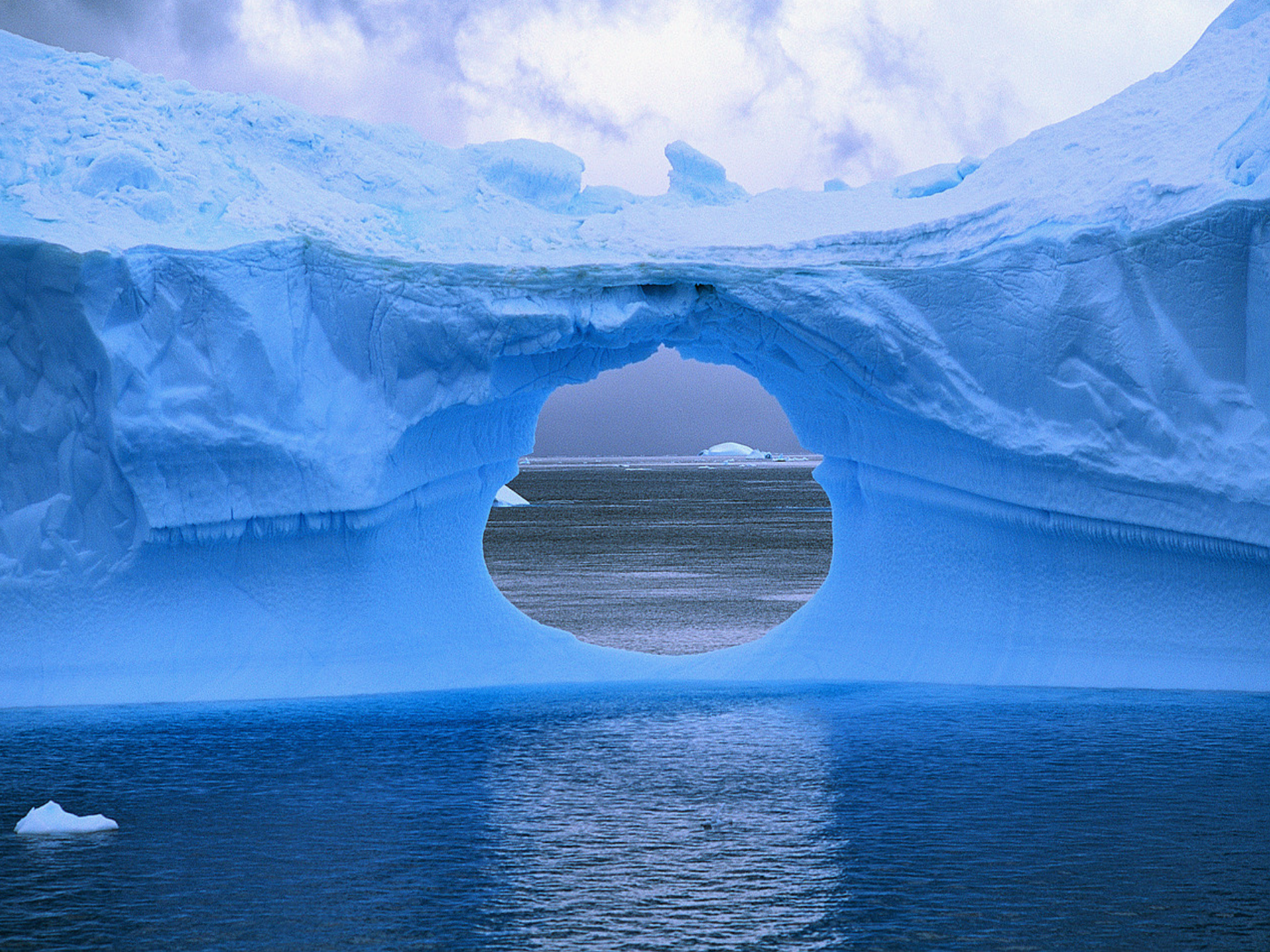
I do not think the
measure of a civilization
is how tall its buildings of
concrete are, But rather how
well its people have learned to
relate to their environment
and fellow man.

(Sun Bear of the Chippewa Tribe)



...cooperation and reciprocity are essential properties which are inherent in...the world of existence, and without which the entire creation would be reduced to nothingness.

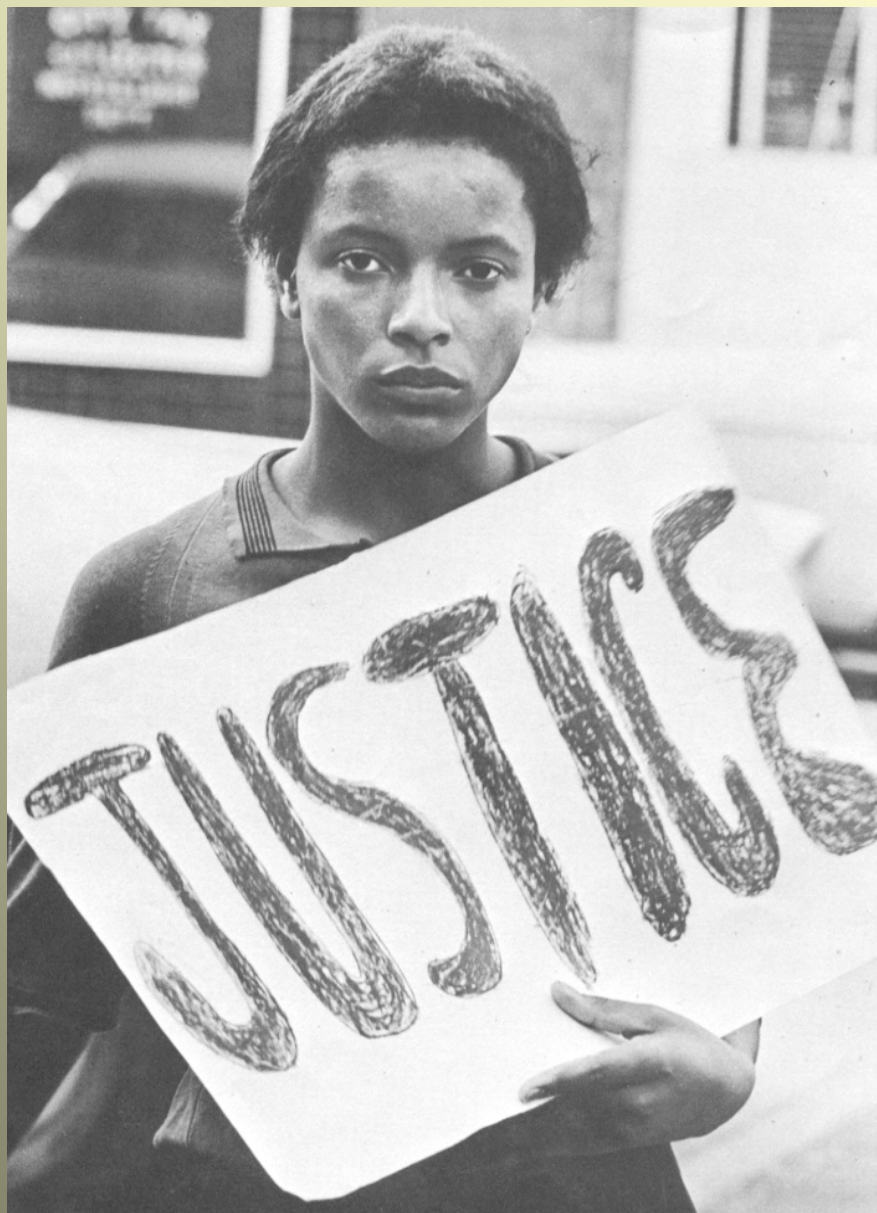
(Bahá'í Writings)




Treat the earth well.
It was not given to you by your parents,
It was loaned to you by your children.



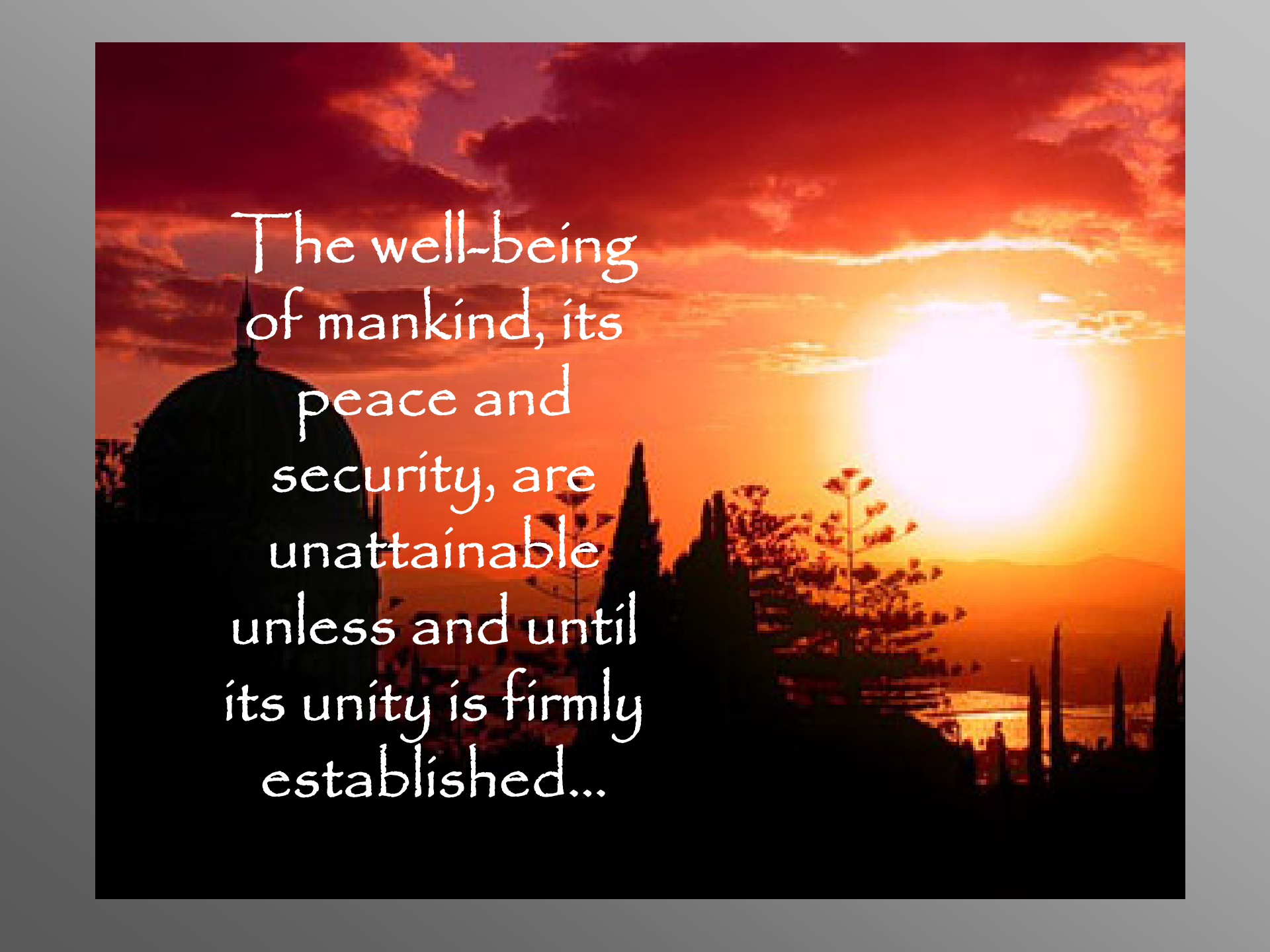
~ American Indian Proverb ~



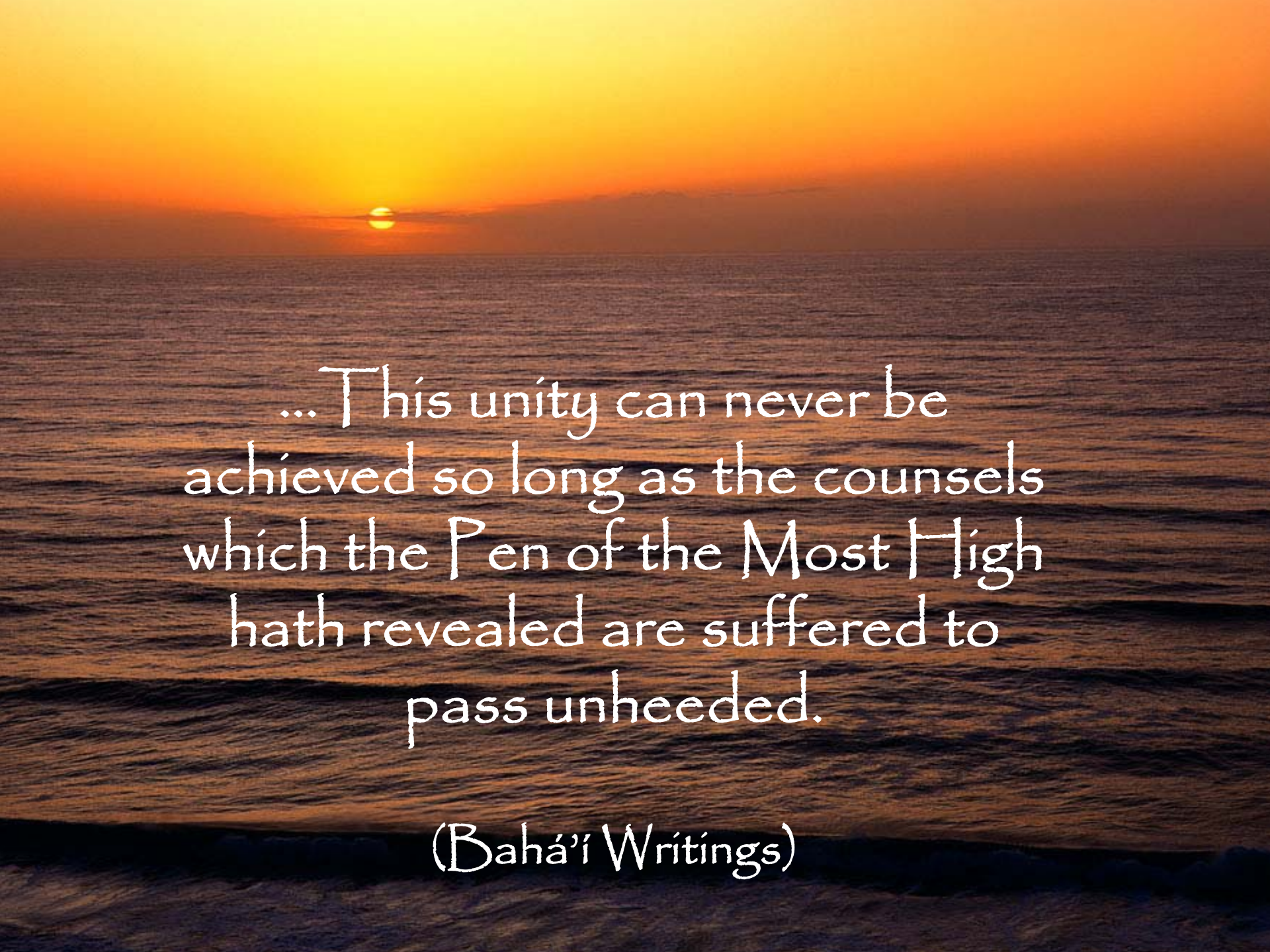


The oneness of humanity is the
fundamental spiritual and social truth
shaping our age.

(Bahá'í International Community)


A vibrant sunset scene with a large, bright sun low on the horizon, casting a golden glow over a cityscape. In the foreground, the dark silhouette of a large dome, likely St. Peter's Basilica, is visible on the left. The sky is filled with orange and red clouds, and the city lights are visible in the distance.

The well-being
of mankind, its
peace and
security, are
unattainable
unless and until
its unity is firmly
established...

A serene sunset over a vast ocean. The sun is a bright, glowing orb on the horizon, casting a warm, golden light across the sky and reflecting on the water's surface. The sky transitions from a deep orange near the horizon to a lighter, hazy yellow at the top. The ocean is dark with gentle ripples, and the overall mood is peaceful and contemplative.

...This unity can never be
achieved so long as the counsels
which the Pen of the Most High
hath revealed are suffered to
pass unheeded.

(Bahá'í Writings)



Imbued with the same virtues
as man, rising through all the
degrees of human
attainment, women will
become the peers of men,
and until this equality is
established, true progress
and attainment for the
human race will not be
facilitated.

(Bahá'í Writings)



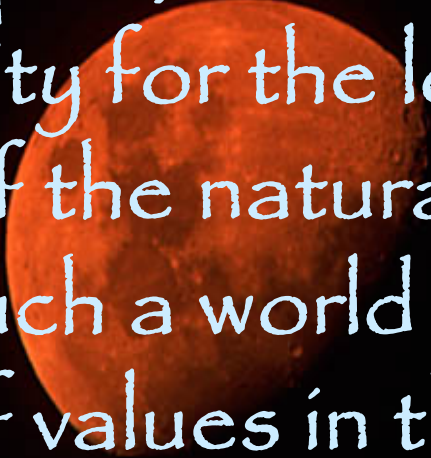
Humankind has not
woven the web of life.

We are but
one thread within it.

Whatever we do
to the web,
we do to ourselves.

All things are
bound together.
All things connect.

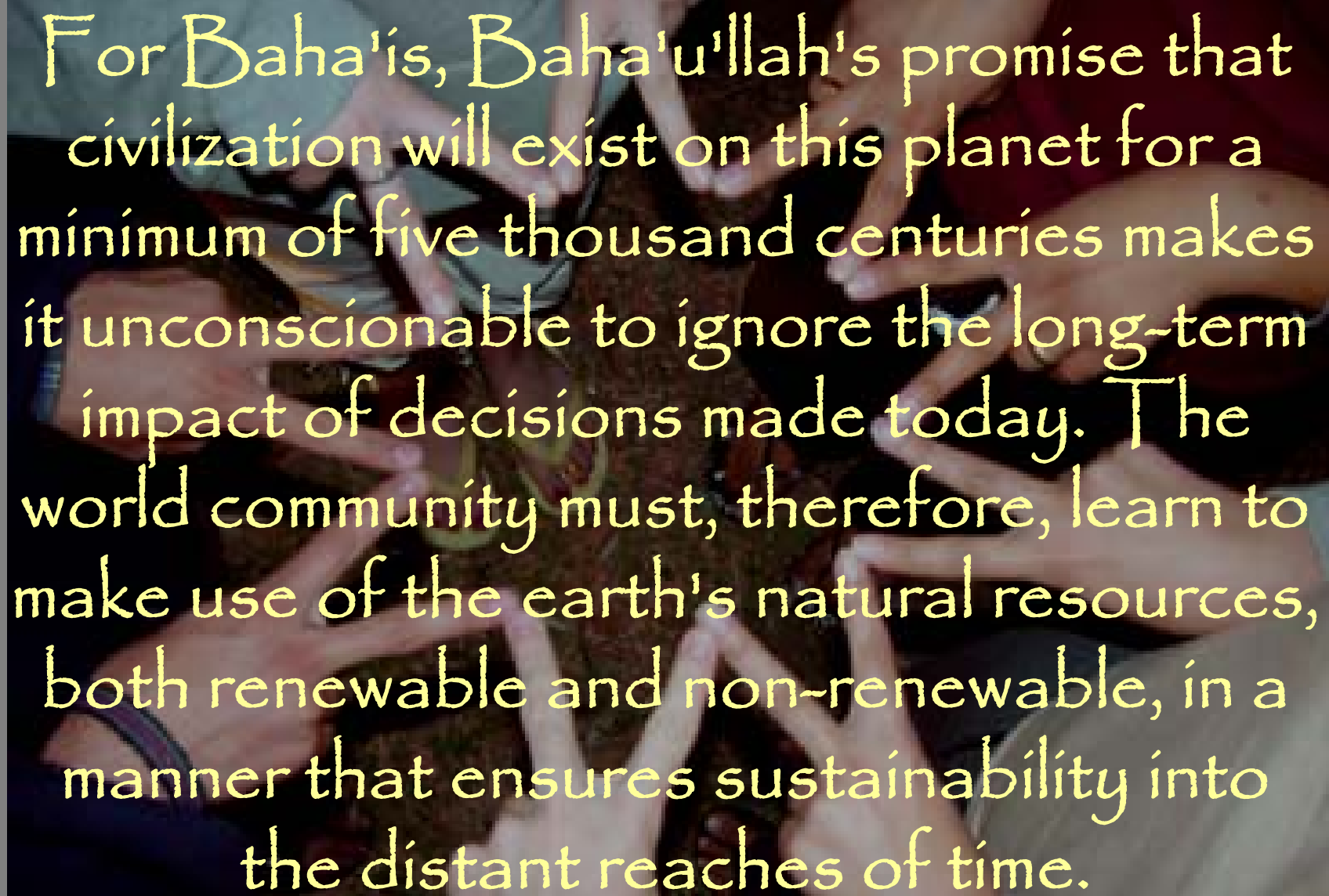
(Chief Seattle, 1854)



“Only a comprehensive vision of a global society, supported by universal values and principles, can inspire individuals to take responsibility for the long-term care and protection of the natural environment. Bahá’ís find such a world embracing vision and system of values in the teachings of Bahá’u’lláh – teachings which herald an era of planetary justice, prosperity and unity.”

(Bahá’í International Community)



A group of people, including children and adults, are shown from the chest up, holding their hands together in a large circle. They are wearing various colored shirts (green, red, blue, grey). The background is dark and slightly blurred, focusing attention on the hands and the gesture of unity.

For Baha'is, Baha'u'llah's promise that civilization will exist on this planet for a minimum of five thousand centuries makes it unconscionable to ignore the long-term impact of decisions made today. The world community must, therefore, learn to make use of the earth's natural resources, both renewable and non-renewable, in a manner that ensures sustainability into the distant reaches of time.

(Bahá'í International Community)

The Earth is
but one
country, and
mankind its
citizens.

(Bahá'í Writings)





The Essential Role of Religion in Fostering a Sustainable World

- Spiritual Foundations
- **Faith in Action**
- Science and Religion – Symbiosis
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“The changes required to reorient the world toward a sustainable future imply degrees of sacrifice, social integration, selfless action, and unity of purpose rarely achieved in human history. These qualities have reached their highest degree of development through the power of religion...”



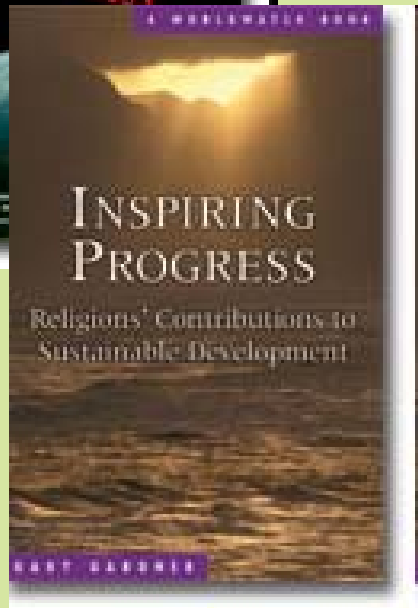
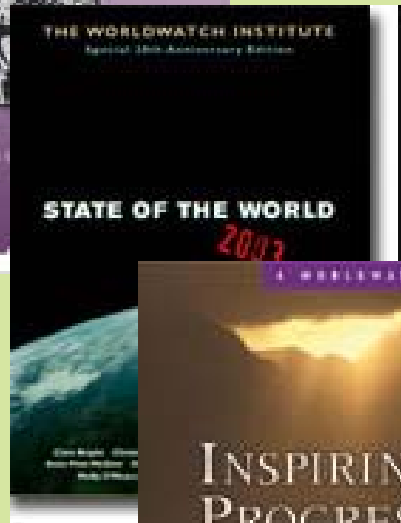
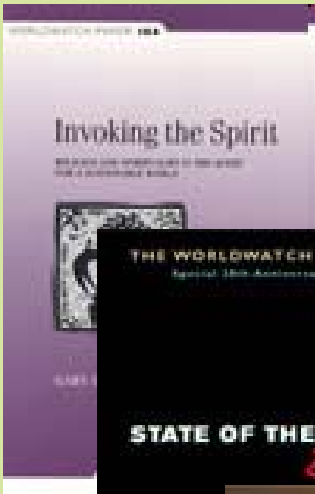
(Bahá'í International Community, *Earth Charter*, 1991)

“...the world's religious communities have a major role to play in inspiring these qualities in their members, releasing latent capacities of the human spirit and empowering individuals to act on behalf of the planet, its peoples, and future generations.”



(Bahá'í International Community, *Earth Charter*, 1991)

- *Invoking the Spirit - Religion and Spirituality in the Quest for a Sustainable World* (2002)
- *State of the World 2003, Ch. 8*
- *Inspiring Progress: Religion's Contributions to Sustainable Development* (2006)



Gary Gardner, Worldwatch Institute

Religious “Assets” for Building a Sustainable World

- **Capacity to Shape Worldviews**
- **Moral Authority**
- **Sheer numbers of Adherents**
- **Significant Material Resources**
- **Community-Building Capacity**

(Gardner, 2002)

The Story of Tony Deamer, Vanuatu



- Entrepreneur/ Businessman
- Creator of “Island Fuel” (no plans for patent)



- Employs as many women as men (including mechanics)

Deamer (Bahá'í): inspired by his Faith

(Gardner, Inspiring Progress, 2006)

Deamer's "life story embodies both a challenge and a hope for human advancement in the 21st century..."



THE CHALLENGE: "to redefine progress -- to revamp economies to work in harmony with the natural environment and serve all people."



THE HOPE: "that religious leaders and communities will recognize the powerful contribution they can make and lend their considerable influence to it."

Deamer (Bahá'í): inspired by his Faith

(Gardner, Inspiring Progress 2006)

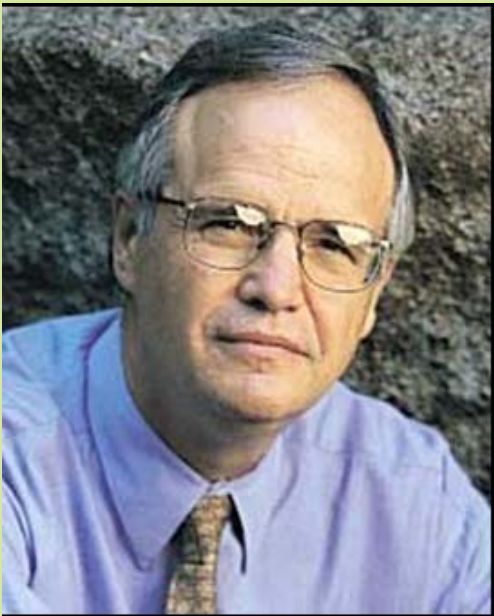
2007 Yale Conference Report

“Toward a New Consciousness: Values to Sustain Human and Natural communities”



“The changes needed to sustain human and natural communities can only be achieved in the context of the rise of a new consciousness...a spiritual awakening...a transformation of the human heart...”

“ Religions played key roles in ending slavery, in the civil rights movement, and in overcoming apartheid in South Africa, and they are now turning attention with increasing strength to the environment.” - Gus Speth, 2007



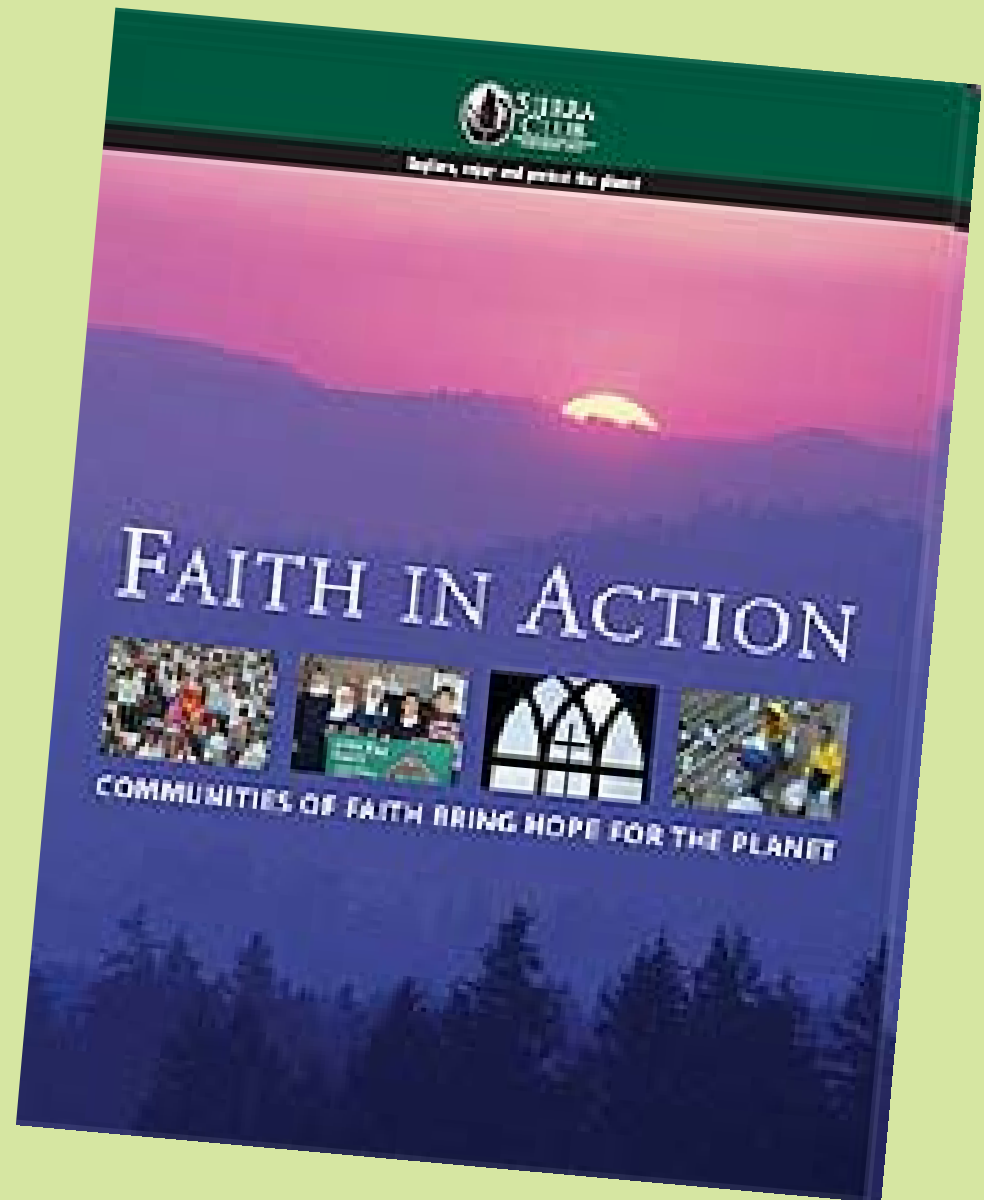


“No other group of institutions can wield the particular moral authority of the religions”

Mary Evelyn Tucker, co-founder
Forum on Religion and Ecology

**2008: Sierra Club's
first ever national
report on
environmental
engagement of
faith communities**

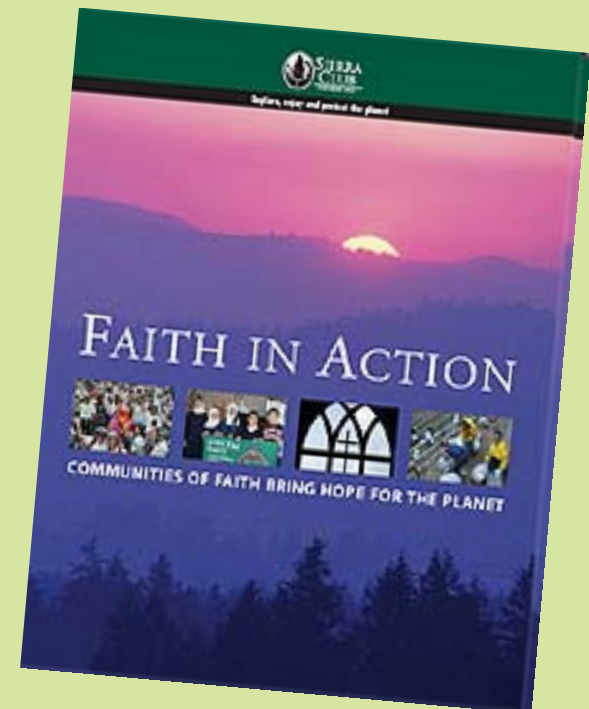
Examples from 50 states



Faith in Action – Sierra Club

“We recognize that lasting social change rarely takes place without the active engagement of communities of faith.”

“For... two decades, religious leaders...[have been] linking core religious values such as stewardship, justice, and concern for future generations with environmental concerns”



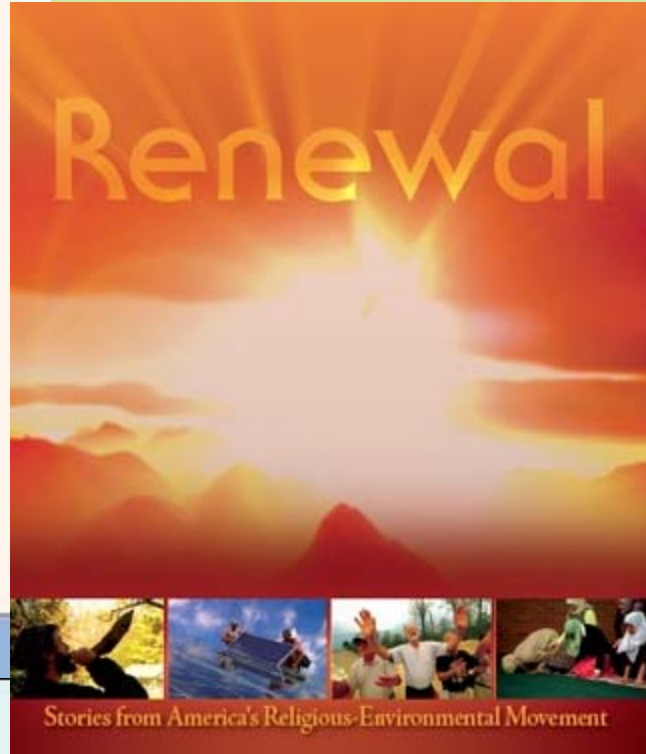
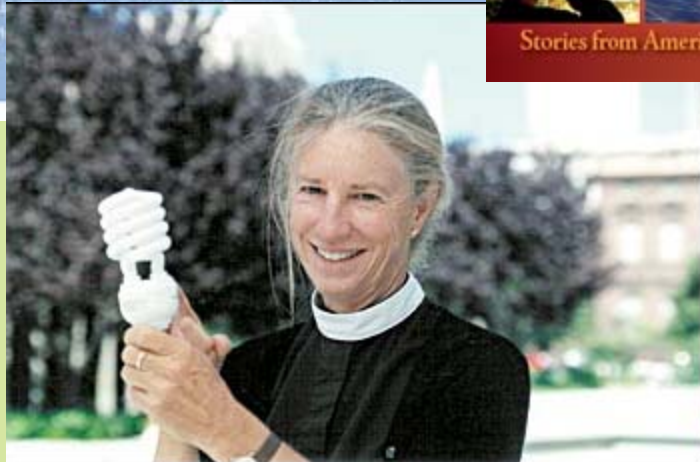
21 Leading Religious Voices Speak Out
on Our Sacred Duty to Protect the Environment

LOVE GOD HEAL EARTH



The Rev. Canon Sally G. Bingham

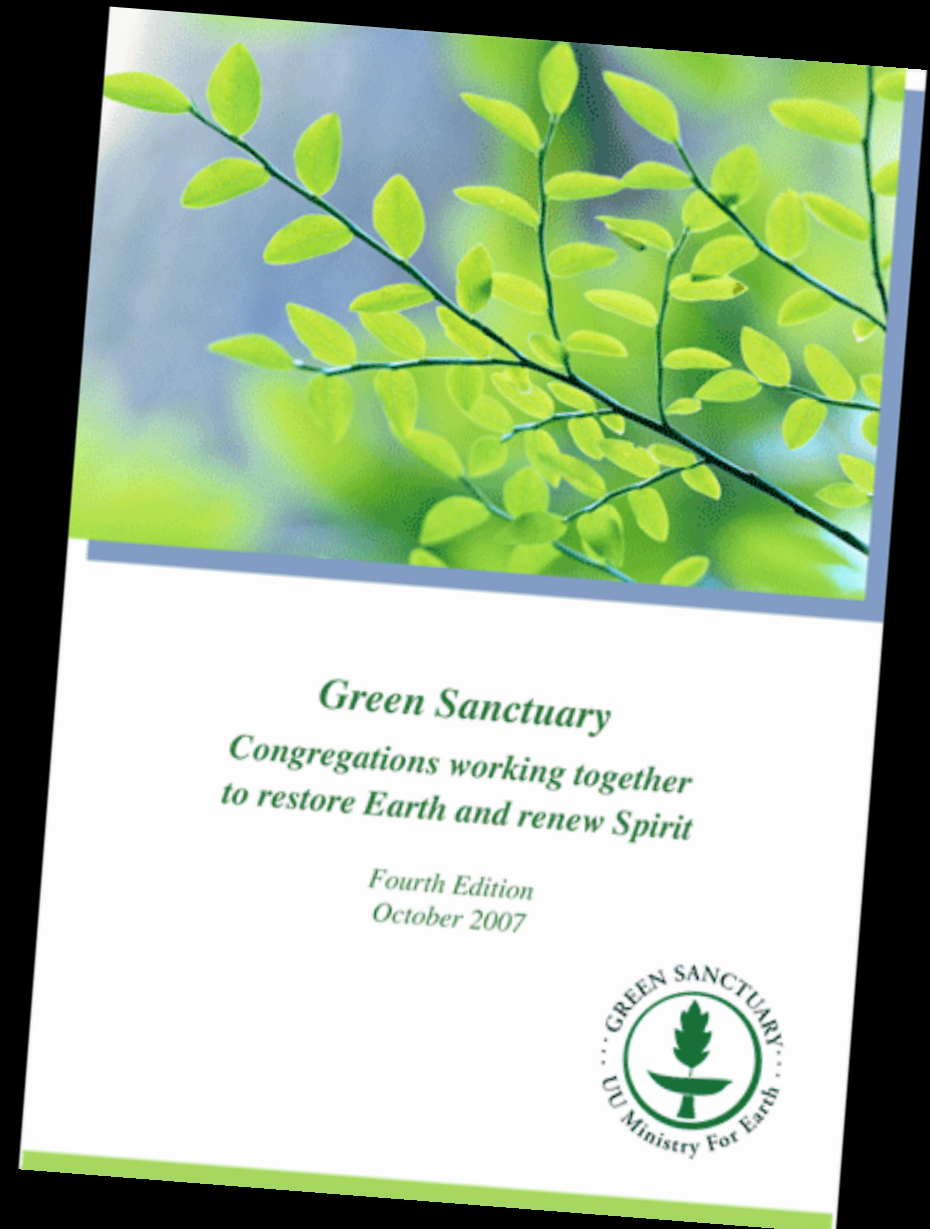
Evangelical
United Methodist
Pastor



Interfaith Power and Light & The Renewal Project

Rev. Sally G. Bingham

**Green
Sanctuary
Program
--
Unitarian
Universalist
Ministry for
the Earth
(2007)**



“these environmental crises may be the greatest moral challenge facing humankind in the 21st century... religions may be the only human institutions still able to respond to the challenge... A different level of awareness—a spiritual awareness—is critical.”

Green Sanctuary Program

Unitarian Universalist

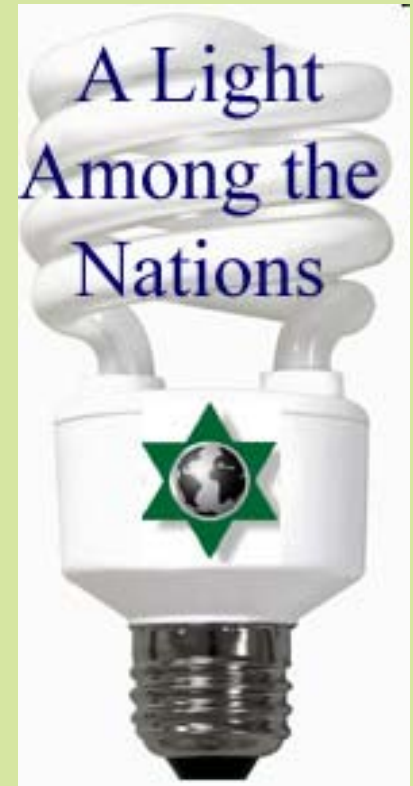


*"How Many Jews Does It Take
to Change a Light Bulb?"*

**Coalition on the Environment
and Jewish Life**

"A Light Among the Nations" campaign

"Take a Scientist to Synagogue" speaker's bureau





U.S. Partnership for Education for Sustainable Development

www.uspartnership.org

***“Faith Sector” and Other
Resources for Sustainability
Education***



UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development

ARC/UNDP seven year plans for generational change



Environmental action plans by organizations and traditions within the world's faiths to be launched in late 2009.





International Environment Forum

A Baha'i inspired organization addressing
the environment and sustainable development

The International Environment Forum



www.bcca.org/ief



**A Bahá'í-inspired
forum for knowledge-
sharing, education and
information exchange**

Faith in Action, more...

- *National Religious Partnership for the Environment*
- *EnergyStar for Congregations – U.S. EPA*
- *FCNL Headquarters – Washington, DC*
- *Vineyard Christian Fellowship - Boise*
- *Faith in Place – Chicago*
- *Faith and the Common Good*
- *GreenFaith*
- *Etc...*



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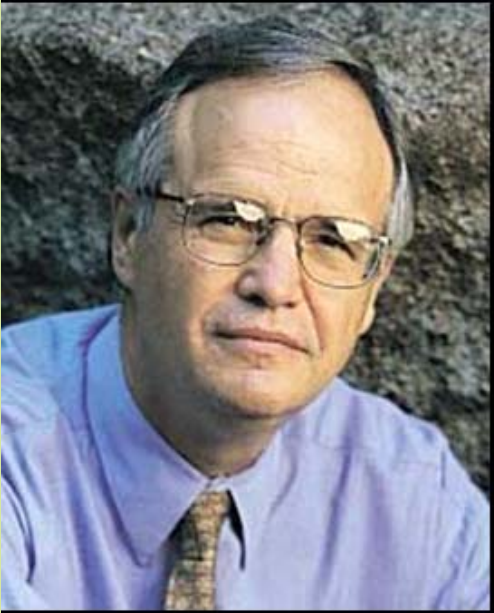
Science and Religion



"Science and Religion should go forward together; indeed, they should be like two fingers of one hand."

(Abdu'l-Baha in London, p. 71)

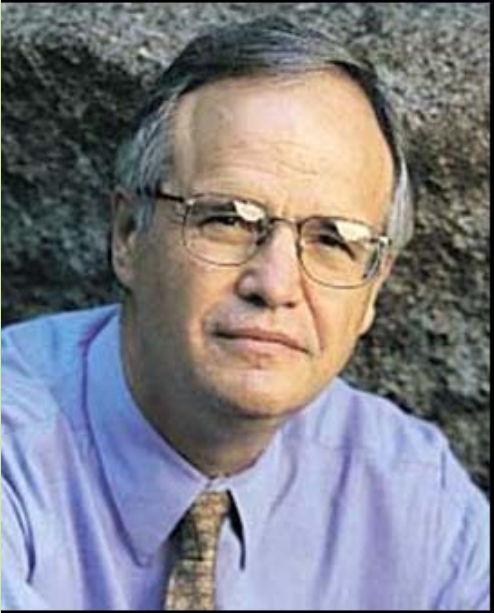
Science and Religion



“Thirty years ago, I thought that with enough good science we would be able to solve the environmental crisis. I was wrong. I used to think that the greatest problems threatening the planet were pollution, biodiversity loss and climate change. I was wrong there too...”

**Gus Speth, Dean, Yale School of Forestry and the Environment
at a 2008 meeting between scientists and evangelical leaders**

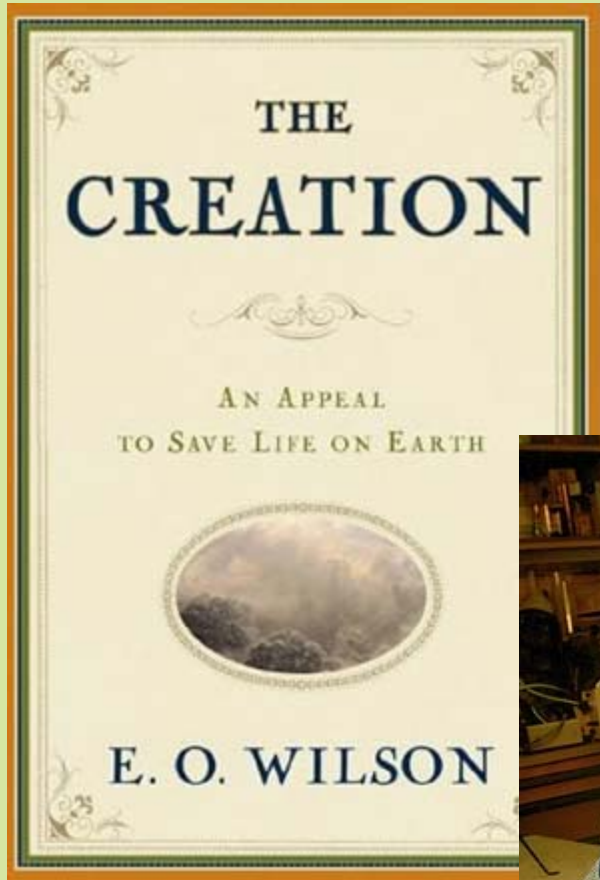
Science and Religion



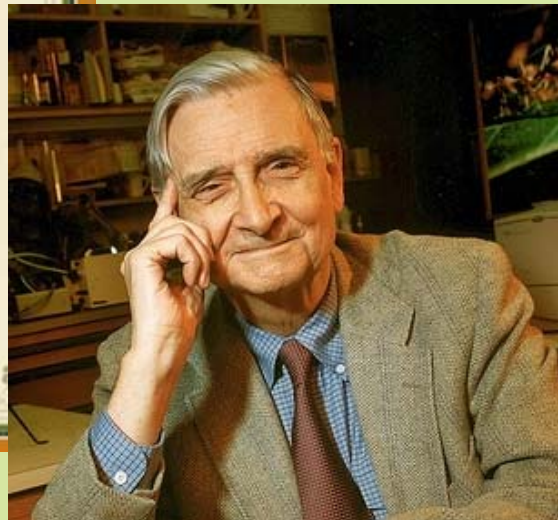
*“... I now believe that the greatest problems are pride, apathy and greed. Because that’s what’s keeping us from solving the environmental problem. For that, I now see that we need a cultural and spiritual transformation. And we in the scientific community don’t know how to do that. But you [**in the faith community**] do. We need your help.”*

**Gus Speth, Dean, Yale School of Forestry and the Environment
at a 2008 meeting between scientists and evangelical leaders**

Science and Religion



"Science and religion are two of the most potent forces on Earth, and they should come together to save the creation."



E.O.Wilson,
Naturalist

Science and Religion



Convened 30 scientists and evangelical leaders in 2005

"We left changed people, more convinced than ever that scientists and Evangelicals had to speak with one voice and do everything in their power to save this indescribably beautiful and precious gift we have all been given."

Scientist,
Eric Chivian
& Evangelical Leader,
Richard Cizik



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The Universal House of Justice

*“The next four years will represent an extraordinary period in the history of our Faith, a turning point of **epochal magnitude.**”*

(Ridvan 153, 1996)



The Universal House of Justice

*“What the friends throughout the world are now being asked to do is **to commit themselves**, their material resources, their abilities and their time to the **development of a network of training institutes on a scale never before attempted.**”*

(Ridvan 153, 1996)



The Universal House of Justice

“This Plan...is set at one of the most critical times in the life of the planet. It is meant to prepare our community to cope with the accelerating changes... occurring in the world...”

(Ridvan 153, 1996)



The Universal House of Justice

“...and to place the community in a position both to withstand the weight of the accompanying tests and challenges and to make more visible a pattern of functioning to which the world can turn for aid and example in the wake of a tumultuous transition.”

(Ridvan 153, 1996)



The Universal House of Justice

“The world's crying need for the divine prescriptions is made plain by the ills afflicting society at every level in all parts of the planet. We must be swift in ministering to this need.”

(2001 Jan 14)



The Universal House of Justice

*Humanity's crying need will not be met by a struggle among competing ambitions or by protest... of the countless wrongs afflicting a desperate age. It calls, rather, for a **fundamental change of consciousness... that the time has come when each human being on earth must learn to accept responsibility for the welfare of the entire human family.***

(2001 May 24)

