

## Swords to Plowshares, Spears to Pruning Hooks

*I have known from early youth that non-violence is not a cloistered virtue to be practised by the individual for . . . peace and final salvation, but it is a rule of conduct for society if it is to live consistently with human dignity and make progress towards the attainment of peace, for which it has been yearning for ages past.*

*Mahatma Gandhi, quoted in All Men Are Brothers, p. 117*

*We stand today between two worlds—the dying old and the emerging new. . . . There is the danger that those of us who have lived so long under the yoke of oppression, those of us who have been exploited and trampled over, those of us who have had to stand amid the tragic midnight of injustice and indignities will enter the new age with hate and bitterness. But if we retaliate with hate and bitterness, the new age will be nothing but a duplication of the old age. We must blot out the hate and injustice of the old age with the love and justice of the new.*

*This is why I believe so firmly in nonviolence. Violence never solves problems. It only creates new and more complicated ones. If we succumb to the temptation of using violence in our struggle for justice, unborn generations will be the recipients of a long and desolate night of bitterness, and our chief legacy to the future will be an endless reign of meaningless chaos.*

*(—from “Facing the Challenge of a New Age”)*

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*. . . [V]iolence, even in self-defense, creates more problems than it solves. Only a refusal to hate or kill can put an end to the chain of violence in the world and lead us toward a community where men can live together without fear. Our goal is to create a beloved community, and this will require a qualitative change in our souls as well as a quantitative change in our lives.*

*(—from “Nonviolence: The Only Road to Freedom”)*

*Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*

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All fear violence, life is dear to all. Seeing the similarity to oneself, one should not use violence or have it used. He who does violence to creatures seeking happiness like himself does not find happiness after death.

*Buddhism: The Dhammapada, nos. 130-131*

. . . One of those who were with Jesus stretched out his hand and drew his sword, struck the servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear. But Jesus said to him, “Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword.

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Ye have heard that it was said of them of old time, Thou shalt not kill. . . .

*Christianity: The New Testament, Matthew 26:51-52; 5:21*

Weapons are the tools of violence; all decent men detest them.

Weapons are the tools of fear; a decent man will avoid them except in the direst necessity and, if compelled, will use them only with the utmost restraint. Peace is his highest value.

If the peace has been shattered, how can he be content? His enemies are not demons, but human beings like himself. He doesn't wish them personal harm. Nor does he rejoice in victory. How could he rejoice in victory and delight in the slaughter of men?

*Taoism: Tao Te Ching 31*

. . . We decreed for the Children of Israel that anyone who kills a human being—if not in retaliation for a murder, nor for causing corruption in the land—must be accounted to have killed all mankind: and whoever saves a life, it will be as if he had saved the life of all mankind.

*Islam: The Qur'an 5:32*

Behold, the wicked travaileth with iniquity, and hath conceived mischief . . . His trouble will return upon his own head, and upon the crown of his head his own violence will descend.

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They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

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And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever. And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places.

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*Judaism: Psalm 7:14, 16; Isaiah 11:9; 32:17-18*

*The Baha'i Faith:*

**We have forbidden you dissension and conflict in My Books, and My Scriptures, and My Scrolls, and My Tablets, and have wished thereby naught else save your exaltation and advancement. Unto this testify the heavens and the stars thereof, and the sun and the radiance thereof, and the trees and the leaves thereof, and the seas and the waves thereof, and the earth and the treasures thereof.**

*Tablets of Baha'u'llah, p. 120*

**Let none contend with another, and let no soul slay another. . . . What! Would ye kill him whom God hath quickened, whom He hath endowed with spirit through a breath from Him? Grievous then would be your trespass before His throne! Fear God, and lift not the hand of injustice and oppression to destroy what He hath Himself raised up; nay, walk ye in the way of God, the True One.**

*Bahá'u'lláh, The Kitáb-i-Aqdas [Book of Laws], para. 73*

**Know thou that We have annulled the rule of the sword, as an aid to Our Cause, and substituted for it the power born of the utterance of men. Thus have We irrevocably decreed, by virtue of Our grace. Say: O people! Sow not the seeds of discord among men, and refrain from contending with your neighbor. . . .**

*Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, pp. 303-304*

**Religious fanaticism and hatred are a world-devouring fire, whose violence none can quench. The Hand of Divine power can, alone, deliver mankind from this desolating affliction.**

*Bahá'u'lláh, Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, p. 14*

**We cherish the hope that through the earnest endeavours of such as are the exponents of the power of God—exalted be His glory—the weapons of war throughout the world may be converted into instruments of reconstruction and that strife and conflict may be removed from the midst of men.**

*Tablets of Baha'u'llah, p. 23*

**Verily I say, strife and dissension, and whatsoever the mind of man abhorreth are entirely unworthy of his station.**

*Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, p. 196*

God's greatest gift to man is that of intellect, or understanding. ... How grievous it is to see how man has used his God-given gift to frame instruments of war, for breaking the Commandment of God 'Thou shalt not kill', and for defying Christ's injunction to 'Love one another.'

*Abdu'l-Baha, Paris Talks, p. 42*

Instruments and means of human destruction have enormously multiplied in this era of material civilization. But if material civilization shall become organized in conjunction with divine civilization, if the man of moral integrity and intellectual acumen shall unite . . . with the man of spiritual capacity, the happiness and progress of the human race will be assured.

*'Abdu'l-Bahá, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 102*

O ye lovers of God! In this, the cycle of Almighty God, violence and force, constraint and oppression, are one and all condemned.

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If only the darksome dust of this continual fighting and killing could settle forever, and the sweet winds of God's loving-kindness could blow from out the well-spring of peace. Then would this world become another world, and the earth would shine with the light of her Lord.

If there is any hope, it is solely in the bounties of God: that His strengthening grace will come, and the struggling and contending will cease, and the acid bite of blood-dripping steel will be turned into the honey-dew of friendship and probity and trust. How sweet would that day be in the mouth, how fragrant as musk the scent thereof.

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. . . [P]eace must first be established among individuals, until it leadeth in the end to peace among nations. Wherefore, O ye Bahá'ís, strive ye with all your might to create, through the power of the Word of God, genuine love, spiritual communion and durable bonds among individuals. This is your task.

*Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Baha, pp. 149; 275-276, 246*