

THE PROMISE OF WORLD PEACE

Universal House of Justice

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Section III – How to Bring Peace

in simplified language

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Bringing harmony and cooperation

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The primary question to be resolved is how the present world, with its continuing pattern of conflict, can change to a world of harmony and co-operation.

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World order can be founded only on a firm consciousness of the oneness of mankind, a spiritual truth which all the human sciences confirm.

Anthropology, physiology, psychology, recognize only one human species, although infinitely varied in the secondary aspects of life. Recognition of this truth requires us to abandon prejudice of every kind--race, class, colour, creed, nation, sex, degree of material civilization, everything by which people consider themselves superior to others.

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Acceptance of the oneness of mankind is the first fundamental requirement for reorganization and administration of the world as one country, the home of humankind. Universal acceptance of this spiritual principle is essential to any successful attempt to establish world peace. It should therefore be universally proclaimed, taught in schools, and constantly asserted in every nation as preparation for the organic change in the structure of society which it implies.

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In the Baha'i view, recognition of the oneness of mankind "calls for no less than the reconstruction and the demilitarization of the whole civilized world--a world organically unified in all the essential aspects of its life, its political machinery, its spiritual aspiration, its trade and finance, its script and language, and yet infinite in the diversity of the national characteristics of its federated units."

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On the implications of this central principle, Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith, commented in 1931 that: "Far from aiming at the subversion of the existing foundations of society, it seeks to broaden its basis, to remold its institutions in a manner consonant with the needs of an ever-changing world."

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“It can conflict with no legitimate allegiances, nor can it undermine essential loyalties. Its purpose is neither to stifle the flame of a sane and intelligent patriotism in men's hearts, nor to abolish the system of national autonomy so essential if the evils of excessive centralization are to be avoided. It does not ignore, nor does it attempt to suppress, the diversity of ethnical origins, of climate, of history, of language and tradition, of thought and habit, that differentiate the peoples and nations of the world.”

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“It calls for a wider loyalty, for a larger aspiration than any that has animated the human race. It insists upon the subordination of national impulses and interests to the imperative claims of a unified world. It repudiates excessive centralization on one hand, and disclaims all attempts at uniformity on the other. Its watchword is unity in diversity”.

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This requires several changes in national political attitudes, which now approach anarchy without clearly defined laws or universally accepted and enforceable principles regulating the relationships between nations. The League of Nations, the United Nations, and their many organizations and agreements have been helpful in reducing some negative effects of international conflicts, but they have not prevented war. Indeed, there have been many wars since the end of the Second World War; many are still raging.

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This was already evident in the nineteenth century when Baha'u'llah first proposed world peace. The principle of collective security was included in statements addressed to the rulers of the world.

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Shoghi Effendi commented on his meaning: "What else could these weighty words signify," he wrote, "if they did not point to the inevitable curtailment of unfettered national sovereignty as an indispensable preliminary to the formation of the future Commonwealth of all the nations of the world? Some form of a world super-state must needs be evolved, in whose favour all the nations of the world will have willingly ceded every claim to make war, certain rights to impose taxation and all rights to maintain armaments, except for purposes of maintaining internal order within their respective dominions."

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“Such a state will have to include within its orbit an International Executive adequate to enforce supreme and unchallengeable authority on every recalcitrant member of the commonwealth; a World Parliament whose members shall be elected by the people in their respective countries and whose election shall be confirmed by their respective governments; and a Supreme Tribunal whose judgement will have a binding effect even in such cases where the parties concerned did not voluntarily agree to submit their case to its consideration.”

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"A world community in which all economic barriers will have been permanently demolished and the interdependence of capital and labour definitely recognized; in which the clamour of religious fanaticism and strife will have been forever stilled; in which the flame of racial animosity will have been finally extinguished; in which a single code of international law--the product of the considered judgement of the world's federated representatives--shall have as its sanction the instant and coercive intervention of the combined forces of the federated units; and finally a world community in which the fury of a capricious and militant nationalism will have been transmuted into an abiding consciousness of world citizenship--such indeed, appears, in its broadest outline, the Order anticipated by Baha'u'llah, an Order that shall come to be regarded as the fairest fruit of a slowly maturing age."

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The implementation of these far-reaching measures was indicated by Baha'u'llah: "The time must come when the imperative necessity for the holding of a vast, an all-embracing assemblage of men will be universally realized. The rulers and kings of the earth must needs attend it, and, participating in its deliberations, must consider such ways and means as will lay the foundations of the world's Great Peace amongst men."

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The desire to take this momentous step towards peace requires spiritual and moral qualities such as courage, determination, a pure motive, and selfless love of one people for another. To create this desire requires consideration of the reality of man, namely, his thought. This potent reality is relevant for its unique social value through honest, calm, warm consultation, and acting on the results.

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Baha'u'llah drew attention to the virtues and indispensability of consultation for organizing human affairs. He said: "Consultation bestows greater awareness and transmutes conjecture into certitude. It is a shining light which, in a dark world, leads the way and guides. For everything there is and will continue to be a station of perfection and maturity. The maturity of the gift of understanding is made manifest through consultation." The attempt to achieve peace through consultation can release such a spirit among the peoples of the earth that no power could resist the final, triumphal outcome.

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Concerning the proceedings for this world gathering, Abdu'l-Baha, the son of Baha'u'llah and authorized interpreter of his teachings, said: "They must make the Cause of Peace the object of general consultation, and seek by every means in their power to establish a Union of the nations of the world. They must conclude a binding treaty and establish a covenant, the provisions of which shall be sound, inviolable and definite. They must proclaim it to all the world and obtain for it the sanction of all the human race. This supreme and noble undertaking--the real source of the peace and well-being of all the world--should be regarded as sacred by all that dwell on earth."



'Abdu'l-Bahá at Stanford University in 1912

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“All the forces of humanity must be mobilized to ensure the stability and permanence of this Most Great Covenant. In this all-embracing Pact the limits and frontiers of each and every nation should be clearly fixed, the principles underlying the relations of governments towards one another definitely laid down, and all international agreements and obligations ascertained. In like manner, the size of the armaments of every government should be strictly limited, for if the preparations for war and the military forces of any nation should be allowed to increase, they will arouse the suspicion of others.”

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“The fundamental principle underlying this solemn Pact should be so fixed that if any government later violate any one of its provisions, all the governments on earth should arise to reduce it to utter submission, nay the human race as a whole should resolve, with every power at its disposal, to destroy that government. Should this greatest of all remedies be applied to the sick body of the world, it will assuredly recover from its ills and will remain eternally safe and secure.”

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The holding of this mighty gathering is long overdue.

With all our hearts, we appeal to the leaders of all nations to seize this moment and take irreversible steps to hold this world meeting. All the forces of history push the human race towards this act which will signal its long-awaited maturity.

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Will not the United Nations, with the full support of its membership, rise to the high purposes of such an important event?

Let men and women, youth and children everywhere recognize the lasting value of this essential action for all peoples and raise their voices in willing support. Indeed, let it be this generation that opens this glorious step in the evolution of social life on the planet.