

Turn the other cheek, an eye for an eye, etc, etc

These are rather strange statements in the Bible, Torah and Qur'an. We all profess that our God is a loving God yet there are these statements which on the surface appear otherwise –

- does 'turn the other cheek' mean 'let others walk all over you'?
- does 'an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth' literally mean we must punish wrong doers in the same way we/others have suffered?
- Then we have those statements that if your right hand does something wrong, cut it off, or remove an organ for doing what is evil.

What do these statements mean for us today where we think we are more advanced than our fellow man(kind) who came before?

A thought struck me the other day, turn your cheek and you will have a different view on the situation, you will see something different. Cut off your hand and you have to learn to adapt, to do things differently – if you write with your right hand and you lose the ability to write for whatever reason (a broken wrist, shoulder injury, stroke) you need to train your left hand to help out. Leave the box and discover new possibilities...

Could this be what we're being encouraged to do rather than enact the actual instruction?

We know violence leads to more violence, but a quiet word can stop it. There are many occasions in history where discussions 'behind the scenes' led to peace deals. Where statements are likely to be misunderstood and taken out of context in public, these can be unpicked, and the real issue got to and dealt with when a small group with a common aim or goal work together.



A country in the Middle East was suffering from uprisings over 100 years ago as the illiterate poor were being suppressed and forced to provide for the wealthy. Religious reasons and the law were used to uphold this status quo which saw an increase in bribery, corruption and the use of force. That is until someone, an outsider, mastered the law and religion and used it to bring greater equality for the masses. By providing opportunities for those less advantaged and suppressed to partake in the riches of the land, some measure of peace was brought to the area. I don't think we're much different today – how much of our behaviour is predicated on our beliefs being right and therefore the only way? How much suffering do we support by not being prepared to look at things differently? John de Gruchy writing about the reluctance of black South Africans to convert to Christianity during the early years of Apartheid suggests it was due to the hypocrisy of whites – what they said and what they did failed to align – at a time when all whites were seen be Christians whether they were or not; a result of the state's claim to being predicated on Christian values. How much does Christianity in the UK suffer in the same way from being the 'state religion'?

Will we, people of all faiths and creeds, be able to solve some of the pressing issues the world faces today if we 'turned the other cheek', or considered losing that troublesome hand or foot and experienced life accordingly? Isn't it time to look at things differently?

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