

Compilation on Change and Importance of Transformation

By Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Shoghi Effendi, Universal House of Justice

Compiled by Ehsan Bayat

Copyright © Bahá'í International Community

<https://www.bahai.org/library/>

And yet, is not the object of every Revelation to effect a transformation in the whole character of mankind, a transformation that shall manifest itself both outwardly and inwardly, that shall affect both its inner life and external conditions? For if the character of mankind be not changed, the futility of God's universal Manifestations would be apparent.

(Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 222)

Out of all the mass of humankind God hath chosen the friends, and He hath favored them with His guidance and boundless grace. His purpose is this, that we, all of us, should strive with our whole hearts to offer ourselves up, guide others to His path, and train the souls of men—until these frenzied beasts change to gazelles in the meadows of oneness, and these wolves to lambs of God, and these brutish creatures to angelic hosts; till the fires of hatred are quenched, and the flame coming out of the sheltered vale of the Holy Shrine doth shed its splendors; till the foul odor of the tyrant's dung hill is blown away, and yieldeth to the pure, sweet scents that stream from the rose beds of faith and trust. On that day will the weak of intellect draw on the bounty of the divine, Universal Mind, and they whose life is but abomination will seek out these cleansing, holy breaths.

But there needs must be souls who will manifest such bestowals, there needs must be husbandmen to till these fields, gardeners for these gardens, there needs must be fish to swim in this sea, stars to gleam in these heavens. These ailing ones must be tended by spiritual physicians, these who are the lost need gentle guides—so that from such souls the bereft may receive their portion, and the deprived obtain their share, and the poor discover in such as they unmeasured wealth, and the seekers hear from them unanswerable proofs.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 284)
(*Quickeners of Mankind*, p. 14)

... have a perfect reliance upon God; let your heart burn with the desire to serve His Mission and proclaim His call; and you will observe how eloquence and the power to change human hearts will come as a matter of course.

(*Victory Promises*, p. 18)

. . . if the Bahá’ís will but do their part—however unpromising the prospect—Bahá’u’lláh is able to open doors and change conditions in ways far beyond our understanding.

(*Compilations, Victory Promises*, p. 23)

Hearts must be changed. The rich must wish to give! Life in man should be like a flame, warming all with whom it comes into contact. The spiritually awakened are like to bright torches in the sight of God, they give light and comfort to their fellows.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *‘Abdu’l-Bahá in London*, p. 92)

We need a change of heart, a reframing of all our conceptions and a new orientation of our activities. The inward life of man as well as his outward environment have to be reshaped if human salvation is to be secured.

(*The Compilation of Compilations* vol. I, p. 85)

The morals of humanity must undergo change. New remedy and solution for human problems must be adopted. Human intellects themselves must change and be subject to the universal reformation. Just as the thoughts and hypotheses of past ages are fruitless today, likewise dogmas and codes of human invention are obsolete and barren of product in religion.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Bahá’í World Faith - ‘Abdu’l-Bahá Section*, p. 229)

Man must turn to the light and not think that the form of the lamp is essential, for the lamp may be changed; but he who longs for light welcomes it from whatever source it comes.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Divine Philosophy*, p. 33)

O ye Cohorts of God! Strive ye that this human world may be changed into a luminous realm and this mound of earth become the Paradise of Abha. Darkness hath environed the world upon all sides. Savage tempers and inclination predominate. The human world has become the battlefield of the rapacious savages and the arena of the heedless and ignorant ones. The souls are either bloodthirsty wolves or beasts with degenerate reason. They are either deadly poison, or worthless plants. There are a few souls who in reality have some humanitarian intentions and are thinking of the well-being and prosperity of human kind. You must in this instance (that is, service to humanity) sacrifice your lives, and in sacrificing your lives celebrate happiness and beatitude.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá* v1, p. 43)

O Thou Omnipotent God! Perfume the nostrils of the friends in the Occident with the breaths of the Holy Spirit; and illumine the horizon of the West with the light of guidance. Make the remote ones the near ones, change the strangers into compassionate friends, awaken those who are asleep, and make heedful those who are heedless.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá* v1, p. 47)

Praise be unto God! What an effect there lies in divine guidance! It endoweth the blind with sight, granteth strength to the impotent, maketh the darkened ones illuminated, changeth the satanic character into a heavenly beauty, confereth youth to the aged; nay, rather it breathed life into the dead!

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá* v3, p. 658)

There are so many movements in the world at present akin to various Bahá’í principles; indeed we can almost say that the principles of Bahá’u’lláh have been adopted by thinking people all over this planet. But what they do not realize, and what the Bahá’ís must therefore teach them, is that these principles, however perfect, will never be able to create a new society unless and until they are animated by the spirit which alone changes the hearts of and characters of men and that spirit is recognition of their Divine origin in a teacher sent from God in other words, Bahá’u’lláh. When they recognize this, their hearts will change and a change of heart is what people need, not merely a change of intellectual outlook.

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the Bahá’í Youth of Lima, Peru, November 17, 1945)

(Lights of Guidance, p. 425)

All the spiritual and social movements existing in the world, and undoubtedly there are many of them, have some spark of the divine truth. Their very existence shows that they have something to offer to man and fulfil some purpose. But what the world needs, at such a critical moment in its history, is not a mere palliative. It needs a movement that goes deep into its social and spiritual illness and brings about a complete, fundamental change - a change that will include in its scope both the social and spiritual reform of man.

(Shoghi Effendi, Extracts from the USBN)

The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh has, in His own words, “lent a fresh impulse and set a new direction” to this vast process now operating in the world. The fires lit by this great ordeal are the consequences of men’s failure to recognize it. They are, moreover, hastening its consummation. Adversity, prolonged, worldwide, afflictive, allied to chaos and universal destruction, must needs convulse the nations, stir the conscience of the world, disillusion the masses, precipitate a radical change in the very conception of society, and coalesce ultimately the disjointed, the bleeding limbs of mankind into one body, single, organically united, and indivisible.

(Shoghi Effendi, *The Promised Day is Come*, p. 122)

O my God! O my God! Thou seest me in my lowliness and weakness, occupied with the greatest undertaking, determined to raise Thy word among the masses and to spread Thy teachings among Thy peoples. How can I succeed unless Thou assist me with the breath of the Holy Spirit, help me to triumph by the hosts of Thy glorious kingdom, and shower upon me Thy confirmations, which alone can change a gnat into an eagle, a drop of water into rivers and seas, and an atom into lights and suns? O my Lord! Assist me with Thy triumphant and effective might, so that my tongue may utter Thy praises and attributes among all people and my soul overflow with the wine of Thy love and knowledge. Thou art the Omnipotent and the Doer of whatsoever Thou willest.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, p. 72)

As regards the teachers, they must completely divest themselves from the old garments and be invested with a new garment. According to the statement of Christ, they must attain to the station of rebirth—that is, whereas in the first instance they were born from

the womb of the mother, this time they must be born from the womb of the world of nature. Just as they are now totally unaware of the experiences of the foetal world, they must also forget entirely the defects of the world of nature. They must be baptized with the water of life, the fire of the love of God and the breaths of the Holy Spirit; be satisfied with little food, but take a large portion from the heavenly table. They must disengage themselves from temptation and covetousness, and be filled with the spirit. Through the effect of their pure breath, they must change the stone into the brilliant ruby and the shell into pearl. Like unto the cloud of vernal shower, they must transform the black soil into the rose garden and orchard. They must make the blind seeing, the deaf hearing, the extinguished one enkindled and set aglow, and the dead quickened.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Tablets of the Divine Plan, p. 96)

Bahá’u’lláh wrote, many, many years ago: “The vitality of men’s belief in God is dying out in every land; nothing short of His wholesome medicine can ever restore it. The corrosion of ungodliness is eating into the vitals of human society; what else but the Elixir of His potent Revelation can cleanse and revive it?” This is the ebb of the tide. The Bahá’ís know that the tide will turn and come in, after mankind has suffered, with mighty waves of faith and devotion. The people will enter the Cause of God in troops, and the whole condition will change. The Bahá’ís see this new condition which will take place, as one on the mountain-top sees the first glimpse of the dawn, before others are aware of it; and it is toward that that the Bahá’ís must work.

(Japan Will Turn Ablaze, p. 102)

The Guardian does not feel that, if a person has approached this Cause and desires to become a Bahá’í, and is determined to change his way of life, his past should be held against him. Where would forgiveness be if every prospective Bahá’í was judged by his past! But once a Bahá’í, a change of life is expected and hoped for, and the friends must help the people to change.

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, June 29, 1951)
(Lights of Guidance, p. 71)

There is a difference between character and faith; it is often hard to accept this fact and put up with it, but the fact that a person may believe in and love the Cause—even being ready to die for it—and yet not have a good personal character or possess traits at variance with the teachings. We should try to change, to let the Power of God help

recreate us make us true Bahá'ís in deed as well as in belief. But sometimes the process is slow, sometimes it never happens because the individual does not try hard enough. But these things cause us suffering and are a test to us in our fellow-believers, most especially if we love them and have been their teacher!

(Shoghi Effendi, quoted in a letter to an individual believer, dated June 7, 1974, by the Universal House of Justice)
(*Lights of Guidance*, p. 76)

...Peace of mind is gained by the centering of the spiritual consciousness on the Prophet of God; therefore you should study the spiritual Teachings, and receive the Water of Life from the Holy Utterances. Then by translating these high ideals into action, your entire character will be changed, and your mind will not only find peace, but your entire being will find joy and enthusiasm.

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, October 15, 1952)
(*Lights of Guidance*, p. 112)

War is really nothing more but the result of existing forces. Should we desire to end that devastating consequence we should go back to the basic causes and remedy those evils. We should eliminate the hatreds, national bigotry, mistrust and self aggrandisement as well as economic, social and religious differences which now prevail in the world if we desire to establish an abiding peace. And nothing can achieve this save the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, for they change the human heart and also prescribe definite precepts that would render our social environment healthy and peaceful.

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, May 11, 1932)
(*Lights of Guidance*, p. 419)

For the Bahá'í Faith is above all a way of life. It is not a mere philosophical or social doctrine. It is a closely-knit and harmoniously functioning community, a world-wide spiritual fraternity which seeks to reform the world first and foremost by bringing about a deep inner spiritual change in the heart of individuals. To live the teachings of the Cause should be the paramount concern of every true believer, and the only way to do so is to commune both in spirit and through actual concrete means with the entire community of the faithful. The Bahá'í Cause encourages community life and makes it a duty for every one of its followers to become a living, a fully active and responsible member of the world-wide Bahá'í fellowship.

(From letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, August 13, 1936)
(*Lights of Guidance*, p. 476)

... The inestimable value of religion is that when a man is vitally connected with it, through a real and living belief in it and in the Prophet who brought it, he receives a strength greater than his own which helps him to develop his good characteristics and overcome his bad ones. The whole purpose of religion is to change not only our thoughts but our acts; when we believe in God and His Prophet and His teachings, we find we are growing even though we perhaps thought ourselves incapable of growth and change.

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, October 3, 1934)
(*Lights of Guidance*, p. 508)

He urges you to study deeply the teachings, teach others, study with those Bahá'ís who are anxious to do so the deeper teachings of our Faith, and through example, effort and prayer bring about a change.

(From letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, September 30, 1949:
Living the Life, p. 16 (#58))
(Compilations, *Lights of Guidance*, p. 566)

What are the profound changes which He will bring about? The answers are to be found in the Sacred Writings of our Faith and in their interpretation by 'Abdu'l-Bahá and our beloved Guardian. Let the friends immerse themselves in this ocean, let them organize regular study classes for its constant consideration, and as reinforcements of daily prayers and reading of the Word of God enjoined upon all Bahá'ís by Bahá'u'lláh.

(From the Message of the Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'ís of the World, Riqván 1967:
Wellspring of Guidance, pp. 114-115)
(*Lights of Guidance*, p. 569)

Change is an evolutionary process requiring patience with one's self and others, loving education and the passage of time as the believers deepen their knowledge of the principles of the Faith, gradually discard long-held traditional attitudes and progressively conform their lives to the unifying teachings of the Cause.

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer July 25, 1984)
(*Lights of Guidance*, p. 621)

No less serious is the stress and strain imposed on the fabric of American society through the fundamental and persistent neglect, by the governed and governors alike, of the

supreme, the inescapable and urgent duty—so repeatedly and graphically represented and stressed by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in His arraignment of the basic weaknesses in the social fabric of the nation—of remedying, while there is yet time, through a revolutionary change in the concept and attitude of the average white American toward his Negro fellow citizen, a situation which, if allowed to drift, will, in the words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, cause the streets of American cities to run with blood, aggravating thereby the havoc which the fearful weapons of destruction, raining from the air, and amassed by a ruthless, a vigilant, a powerful and inveterate enemy, will wreak upon those same cities.

(Shoghi Effendi, *Citadel of Faith*, p. 126)

There is such a confusion in the world today, so much uncertainty, so much materialism, that it is very hard to hold the attention of even the more spiritually minded people. But we must persevere and do our best knowing this is our duty and that conditions will eventually change completely and follow Bahá'u'lláh's Pattern.

(Shoghi Effendi, *High Endeavours - Messages to Alaska*, p. 49)

The violent derangement of the world's equilibrium; the trembling that will seize the limbs of mankind; the radical transformation of human society; the rolling up of the present-day Order; the fundamental changes affecting the structure of government; the weakening of the pillars of religion; the rise of dictatorships; the spread of tyranny; the fall of monarchies; the decline of ecclesiastical institutions; the increase of anarchy and chaos; the extension and consolidation of the Movement of the Left; the fanning into flame of the smouldering fire of racial strife; the development of infernal engines of war; the burning of cities; the contamination of the atmosphere of the earth—these stand out as the signs and portents that must either herald or accompany the retributive calamity which, as decreed by Him Who is the Judge and Redeemer of mankind, must, sooner or later, afflict a society which, for the most part, and for over a century, has turned a deaf ear to the Voice of God's Messenger in this day—a calamity which must purge the human race of the dross of its age-long corruptions, and weld its component parts into a firmly-knit world-embracing Fellowship—a Fellowship destined, in the fullness of time, to be incorporated in the framework, and to be galvanized by the spiritualizing influences, of a mysteriously expanding, divinely appointed Order, and to flower, in the course of future Dispensations, into a Civilization, the like of which mankind has, at no stage in its evolution, witnessed.

(Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to the Bahá'í World - 1950-1957*, p. 103)

True, the work to be achieved is immeasurably difficult, the obstacles to be surmounted innumerable but our reliance is in His all conquering Spirit which has effected such a change in the past, and is sure, according to his explicit promise, to effect a still greater change in future.

(Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to the Indian Subcontinent*, p. 3)

A world, dimmed by the steadily dying-out light of religion, heaving with the explosive forces of a blind and triumphant nationalism; scorched with the fires of pitiless persecution, whether racial or religious; deluded by the false theories and doctrines that threaten to supplant the worship of God and the sanctification of His laws; enervated by a rampant and brutal materialism; disintegrating through the corrosive influence of moral and spiritual decadence; and enmeshed in the coils of economic anarchy and strife—such is the spectacle presented to men's eyes, as a result of the sweeping changes which this revolutionizing Force, as yet in the initial stage of its operation, is now producing in the life of the entire planet.

So sad and moving a spectacle, bewildering as it must be to every observer unaware of the purposes, the prophecies, and promises of Bahá'u'lláh, far from casting dismay into the hearts of His followers, or paralyzing their efforts, cannot but deepen their faith, and excite their enthusiastic eagerness to arise and display, in the vast field traced for them by the pen of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, their capacity to play their part in the work of universal redemption proclaimed by Bahá'u'lláh. Every instrument in the administrative machinery which, in the course of several years, they have so laboriously erected must be fully utilized, and subordinated to the end for which it was created. The Temple, that proud embodiment of so rare a spirit of self-sacrifice, must likewise be made to play its part, and contribute its share to the teaching campaign designed to embrace the entire Western Hemisphere.

(Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 47)

The tasks facing the believers everywhere are great, for they see only too clearly that the only permanent remedy for the many afflictions the world is suffering from, is a change of heart and a new pattern of not only thought but personal conduct. The impetus that has been given by the Manifestation of God for this Age is the sole one that can regenerate humanity, and as we Bahá'ís are the only ones yet aware of this new force in the world, our obligation towards our fellow men is tremendous and inescapable!

(Shoghi Effendi, *The Unfolding Destiny of the British Bahá'í Community*, p. 172)

He urges you to grasp firmly the teachings of our Faith, the love of your family and many Bahá'í friends, to put the past behind entirely, realising that it can do you no more harm; on the contrary, through changing you and making you spiritually aware, this very past can be a means of enriching your life in the future! He will certainly ardently pray for your happiness, your victory over yourself, and that you may become an exemplary and active Bahá'í.

(Shoghi Effendi, *The Unfolding Destiny of the British Bahá'í Community*, p. 450)

The Faith of Bahá'u'lláh has assimilated, by virtue of its creative, its regulative and ennobling energies, the varied races, nationalities, creeds and classes that have sought its shadow, and have pledged unswerving fealty to its cause. It has changed the hearts of its adherents, burned away their prejudices, stilled their passions, exalted their conceptions, ennobled their motives, coordinated their efforts, and transformed their outlook. While preserving their patriotism and safeguarding their lesser loyalties, it has made them lovers of mankind, and the determined upholders of its best and truest interests. While maintaining intact their belief in the Divine origin of their respective religions, it has enabled them to visualize the underlying purpose of these religions, to discover their merits, to recognize their sequence, their interdependence, their wholeness and unity, and to acknowledge the bond that vitally links them to itself. This universal, this transcending love which the followers of the Bahá'í Faith feel for their fellow-men, of whatever race, creed, class or nation, is neither mysterious nor can it be said to have been artificially stimulated. It is both spontaneous and genuine. They whose hearts are warmed by the energizing influence of God's creative love cherish His creatures for His sake, and recognize in every human face a sign of His reflected glory.

(Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 197)

Whatever suffering and turmoil the years immediately ahead may hold, however dark the immediate circumstances, the Bahá'í community believes that humanity can confront this supreme trial with confidence in its ultimate outcome. Far from signaling the end of civilization, the convulsive changes towards which humanity is being ever more rapidly impelled will serve to release the "potentialities inherent in the station of man" and reveal "the full measure of his destiny on earth, the innate excellence of his reality".

(Letters of The Universal House of Justice, 1985 Oct, *The Promise of World Peace*)

The Power of God can entirely transmute our characters and make us beings entirely

unlike our previous selves. Through prayer and supplication, obedience to the divine laws Bahá'u'lláh has revealed, and ever-increasing service to His Faith, we can change ourselves.

(Shoghi Effendi, *Spiritual Foundations* 17)
