

The Faith is as yet in its infancy. Despite its emergence from obscurity, even now the vast majority of the human race remains ignorant of its existence; moreover, the vast majority of its adherents are relatively new Bahá'ís. The change implied by this new stage in its evolution is that whereas heretofore this tender plant was protected in its obscurity from the attention of external elements, it has now become exposed.



This exposure invites close observation, and that observation will eventually lead to opposition in various quarters. So, far from adopting a carefree attitude, the community must be conscious of the necessity to present a correct view of itself and an accurate understanding of its purpose to a largely skeptical public. A greater effort, a greater care must now be exercised to ensure its protection against the malice of the ignorant and the unwisdom of its friends.

A Statement by the Universal House of Justice, dated 29 December 1988, published as *Individual Rights and Freedoms in the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*

Purpose / criteria for review

- To ensure that the Faith is represented –
 - accurately,
 - in conformity with the teachings, and
 - with dignityPlus timeliness (e.g., would a work further endanger the Bahá'ís in Iran)
- Review is not concerned with –
 - proofreading all Bahá'í quotes (= author/publisher responsibility)
 - literary merit or style
 - marketability
 - general copyediting

What needs to be reviewed

- Review – works with specific Bahá'í content
(such as quotes from the Writings, explicit references to the teachings, Central Figures, history, etc.)
- No review – passing reference to the Faith
- No review – referencing Bahá'í principles but not expressly identifying them with the Faith
- Online materials:
 - Review – more formal online publications
(such as eBooks, journals with institutional sponsorship)
 - No review – social media, blogs, YouTube, personal websites

Which institution reviews

The National Spiritual Assembly is responsible for reviewing:

- literature for broad or national / international distribution, and
- all audio-visual materials and music (e.g., CDs, DVDs, films)

Local Spiritual Assemblies are responsible for reviewing:

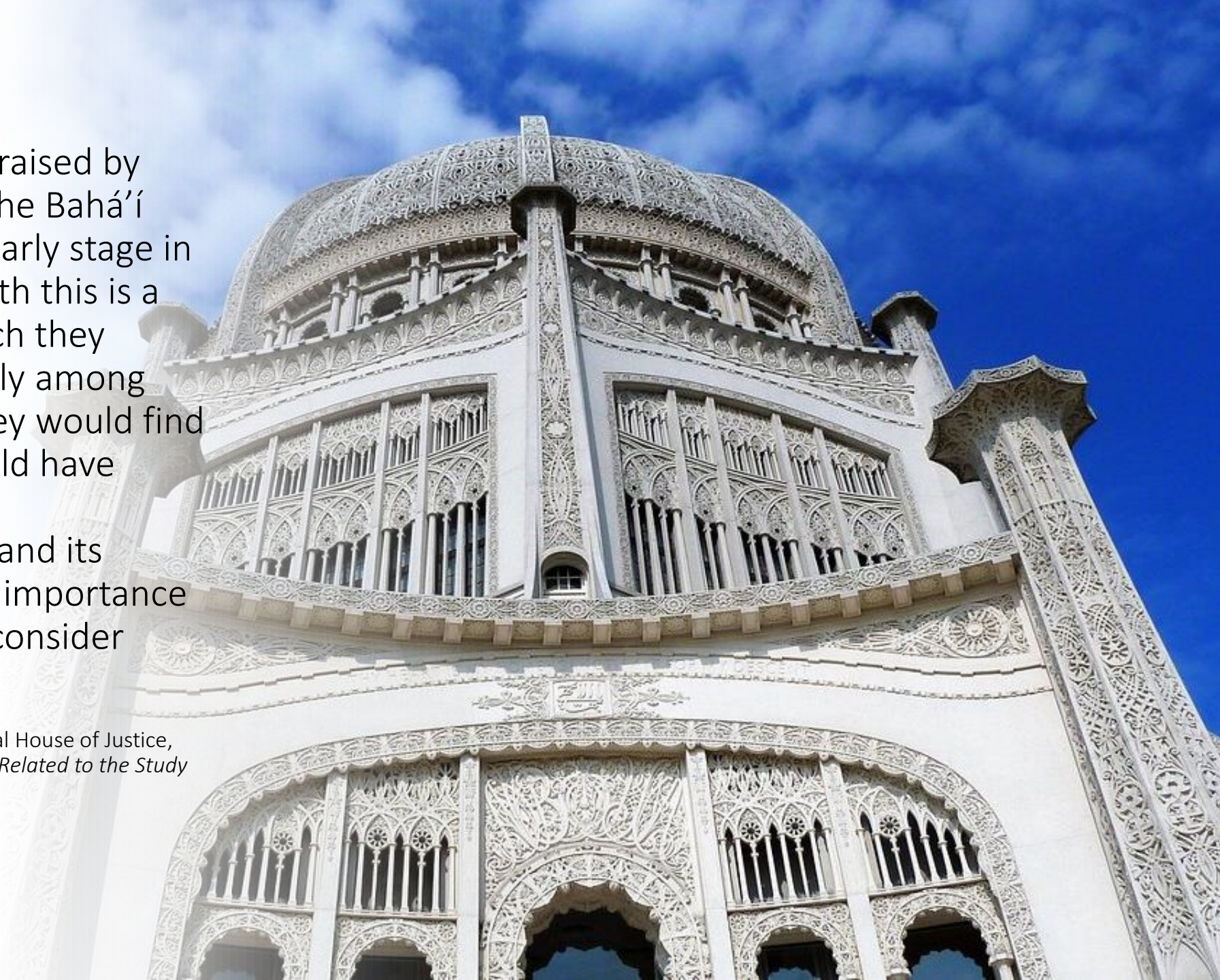
- literature that is for local use only, and
- all "special materials" produced by individuals residing in their jurisdiction, whether for local or national distribution
(e.g., artwork and graphic creations, greeting cards, T-shirts, crafts, jewelry, simple calendars, etc.)

Which country reviews, and When

- Books or journal articles produced by a publisher:
Review by National Spiritual Assembly in whose jurisdiction the work will first be published
 - WHEN review – before submit to publisher (unless BPT or Bahá'í-owned)
- Self-published works:
Review by the author's own National Spiritual Assembly
 - WHEN review – before published or submitted to self-publishing service

If the question of review is raised by non-Bahá'í academics, let the Bahá'í academics say that in this early stage in the development of the Faith this is a species of peer review which they welcome, since it is primarily among their fellow-Bahá'ís that they would find at this time those who would have sufficiently wide and deep understanding of the Faith and its Teachings to raise issues of importance which they would want to consider before publication.

From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice, dated 10 December 1992, published in *Issues Related to the Study of the Bahá'í Faith*





Given the long history and overwhelming current examples of repression in the world, it is not surprising that in a country like the United States, which upholds freedom of speech as a cardinal principle, the non-Bahá'í collaborator in a filmmaking project, such as you have described, would be concerned about any perceived, or misperceived, notion of censorship. As you know, review of manuscripts before publication is a discipline which the Bahá'í community applies to its own members as a temporary necessity, for it is anticipated that in due time this practice will cease. . . .

Therefore, a Bahá'í author is expected to ensure to the extent possible a correct representation of the Faith in his work; as an aid he draws upon the reviewing facilities provided by Bahá'í institutions. . . . In the same way that scientists have acceded to the discipline of review in the interest of ensuring the precision and integrity of their dissertations, Bahá'í authors respect the function of review in the Bahá'í community.

From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice, dated 25 September 1989



The principal reason for the decline and fall of peoples is ignorance. Today the mass of the people are uninformed even as to ordinary affairs, how much less do they grasp the core of the important problems and complex needs of the time.

It is therefore urgent that beneficial articles and books be written, clearly and definitely establishing what the present-day requirements of the people are, and what will conduce to the happiness and advancement of society. . . . The publication of high thoughts is the dynamic power in the arteries of life; it is the very soul of the world.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Secret of Divine Civilization*

