

### III. BAHA'I

Compiled from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, Abdu'l

Original English



### [pg 95] III. BAHA'I

#### A. Bahá'í Archives

##### 1. Bahá'u'lláh Admonishes Care in Preservation of the Tablets

"...The people of God should do all that lieth within their power to protect and preserve the Tablets. In the Land of Ta whatever there was in the homes of the friends was taken and fell into the hands of the heedless. We have commanded all to safeguard that which hath proceeded from the Pen of the Most High. We ask God to aid them to act in accordance with His wish and desire, and to draw them nigh to Him. He, verily, is the Almighty, the Powerful."

"We have commanded all to observe wisdom, but from the friends we see heedlessness and negligence. They should guard the Tablets as they guard their eyes, nay with greater vigilance, if they be of them that comprehend."

"Truly, none must be careless in the matter of safeguarding the divine Tablets. In former times, when plans were laid to seize some of the friends, before all else it was the writings that fell into the hands of the enemy. This is not permissible. The friends should designate a strong, secure place for storing the divine verses so that they may not be exposed to the touch of unworthy hands, even though these verses are, and shall always be, such as 'none shall touch but the purified'"<sup>1</sup>

(Bahá'u'lláh: From three previously unpublished Tablets, The Importance of Collecting and Safeguarding the Bahá'í Writings, p. 1, October 1986)

##### 1. Tablets and Verses to be Gathered into the Archives

"In one of the Tablets, the Pen of the Most High, referring to this foundation,<sup>2</sup> which provides the best and surest, the soundest and most perfect means of collecting, safeguarding and classifying the scattered, but growing body, of Sacred Writings and relics, states: 'It is the concern of the True One to reveal, and the concern of men to spread what hath been revealed. He will, verily, promulgate His Cause by the hands of His scattering and well-favoured angels. Spiritual souls will assuredly emerge from behind the veil of divine protection who will gather

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1. Quotation from the Qur'an, 79:56

2. The International Archives Building



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together the tokens and verses of God and put them into the most excellent order. This is His sure and irrevocable decree."

(Shoghi Effendi's 1954 Naw-Ruz Message to the Bahá'ís of the East, translated from the Persian: Ibid., p. 2)

#### **1. Bahá'í Archives, Institution of**

The importance of the institution of Bahá'í Archives is not due only to the [pg 96] many teaching facilities it procures, but is essentially to be found in the vast amount of historical data and information it offers both to the present day administrators of the Cause, and to the Bahá'í historians of the future. The institution of Bahá'í Archives is indeed a most valuable storehouse of information regarding all aspects of the Faith, historical, administrative as well as doctrinal."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, September 25, 1936)

#### **1. Future Generations Will Appreciate Archives**

"...Future generations of believers will be surely in a better position than we are to truly and adequately appreciate the many advantages and facilities which the institution of the Archives offers to individual believers and also to the community at large."

(Ibid.)

#### **1. All Assembly Members Should Have Access to the Files — Certain Items Can Be Listed as "Confidential"**

"In reply to your letter of May 13th, 1976 the Universal House of Justice instructs us to say that all members of the Spiritual Assembly are equal and should have access to the files and minutes of the Assembly of which they are members. It is, however, within the discretion of any Spiritual Assembly to so organize its files and records that certain items could be listed as 'confidential' and access to those so classified could only be had by a specific decision of the Assembly itself."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Assembly of Ireland, June 8, 1976)

#### **1. Every Believer Has Responsibility to Assist with Preservation of Sacred Relics**

"...has suggested to the Guardian that he should ask your N.S.A. to address an appeal to the ... believers urging them to co-operate with the National and Local Bahá'í Archives ... in their efforts for the collection of Bahá'í sacred relics, and specially the Tablets, and their safe preservation."

"As this is undoubtedly one of the most urgent tasks facing the believers at present, he strongly feels it advisable that your N.S.A. should once more impress upon the friends the necessity of their giving full and continued support to the truly valuable work which the National as well as the Local Archives Committees are accomplishing for our beloved Faith..."

"Now that the Cause is rapidly passing through so many different phases of its evolution is the time for the friends to exert their utmost in order to preserve as much as they can of the sacred relics and various other precious objects that are associated with the lives of the Founders of the Faith, and particularly the Tablets They have revealed."

"Every believer should realize that he has a definite responsibility to shoulder in this matter, and to help, to whatever extent he can, in rendering successful [pg 97] the valuable work which National and Local Bahá'í Archives Committees are so devotedly accomplishing for the Faith in...."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, 25 September 1936: *The Importance of Collecting and Safeguarding the Bahá'í Writings*, A Compilation, p. 4)

#### **1. Bahá'í Archives to be Established in Each Bahá'í Administrative Centre**

"Another necessary and highly commendable undertaking is the founding of a Bahá'í Archives in each of the Bahá'í provincial administrative centres. ...Anyone who, spontaneously and of his own free will, donates material to the Archives of his National Spiritual Assembly — whether this be Tablets, books, pictures, objects or the like — and especially if his inheritors are not accounted of the people of Baha, or are not considered by him as trustworthy or reliable, will have performed a highly meritorious act in the sight of God, and his name will be perpetuated in the records of the Spiritual Assemblies and his memory enshrined in the Archives for ever."

(From a letter of Shoghi Effendi to the Bahá'ís of the East, July 1925, translated from the Persian: *Ibid.*, p. 2)

#### **1. Documents of Historical Value Should Not Be Destroyed**

"The Universal House of Justice has received your letter of 13th November, 1975 asking about the policy to be followed for keeping correspondence and we have been asked to reply as follows:"

"While it is within the jurisdiction of the National Spiritual Assembly to decide which papers in its files are not of long-term value and to have them destroyed you should always bear in mind the historical value of your files. Letters which at this time seem to be of little value could prove to be of great interest to future historians of the development of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh in the... We suggest that when your secretary has sorted out from among your files the papers which she feels could be destroyed, you should appoint a committee composed of members of your National Assembly to go over them with their historical value in mind and submit a recommendation to your National Assembly. Obviously, those records or letters needed for legal purposes should be retained."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands, November 26, 1975)



## B. Bahá'í Arts and Drama<sup>3</sup>

### 1. Three Central Figures Cannot Be Portrayed

"...the Faith can certainly be dramatized, but two things must be remembered: no personal presentation of the Bab, Bahá'u'lláh or the Master, only Their words can be used, but no figure must represent Them; great dignity must be the keynote."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, August 19, 1951)

### 1. Dramatic Works

"With reference to your question whether the Figures of the Bab and Bahá'u'lláh should be made to appear as characters in dramatic works written by the believers, [pg 98] Shoghi Effendi's opinion is that such an attempt to dramatize the Manifestations would be highly disrespectful, and hence should be avoided by the friends, even in the case of the Master. Besides it would be practically impossible to carry out such a plan faithfully, and in a dignified and befitting manner."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, January 27, 1935)

### 1. Dancers Must Be Decently Clad

"Dancers may appear, but great care should be used that they are not indecently clad or the dances vulgar in any way. Naturally, there should be no dancers at regular Bahá'í meetings. Vocal soloists, of course, may appear."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, August 19, 1951)

### 1. The Artistic Presentation of the Faith Will Attract a Certain Type of Individual

"Lighting, sound, floral decorations, etc.; the House of Worship, too, may all be used, but the point to remember is that real beauty and dignity must be achieved, and all impression of our being in any remote sense a cult, or a group of 'artistes' be avoided."

"It is always good to remember that this more artistic presentation of the Cause will attract only a certain type — and, fortunately, a type hitherto ignored in our approach to the public — of person; other methods must also be used to attract other types, such as the intellectual and more reserved type."

(Ibid.)

### 1. Art Can Better Awaken Noble Sentiments

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3. (See also: Nos. 1360-1371)

"Shoghi Effendi was very much interested to learn of the success of the 'Pageant of Nations' you reproduced..."

"It is through such presentations that we can arouse the interest of the greatest number of peoples in the spirit of the Cause. That day will the Cause spread like wild fire when its spirit and teachings will be presented on the stage or in art and literature as a whole. Art can better awaken such noble sentiments than cold rationalizing especially among the mass of the people."

"We have to wait only a few years to see how the spirit breathed by Bahá'u'lláh will find expression in the work of the artists. What you and some other Bahá'ís are attempting are only faint rays that precede the effulgent light of a glorious morn. We cannot yet value the part the Cause is destined to play in the life of society. We have to give it time. The material this spirit has to mould is too crude and unworthy, but it will at last give way and the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh will reveal itself in its full splendour."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, October 10, 1932)

#### 1. **Taking Part in Dramas — Dancing**

"In the teachings there is nothing against dancing, but the friends should remember that the standard of Bahá'u'lláh is modesty and chastity. The atmosphere of modern dance halls, where so much smoking and drinking and promiscuity goes on, is very bad, but decent dances are not harmful in themselves. There is certainly no harm in classical dancing or learning dancing in school. There is also no harm in taking part in dramas. Likewise in cinema acting. The harmful thing, nowadays, is not [pg 99] the art itself but the unfortunate corruption which often surrounds these arts. As Bahá'ís we need to avoid none of the arts, but acts and the atmosphere that sometimes go with these professions we should avoid."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of India, June 30, 1952: Dawn of a New Day, p. 153)

#### 1. **Film Companies**

"With regard to your question relative to the advisability of having Bahá'ís join film companies. Although on principle there is no objection if any believer wishes to become a cinema actor, yet in view of the excessive corruption that now prevails along such a line of occupation, the Guardian would not advise any believer to choose this kind of profession, unless he finds this to be the only means of earning his livelihood."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, September 4, 1935)

#### 1. **Movies**

"With reference to ... question whether it is permissible for the Bahá'ís to see pictures: There is nothing in the Teachings that would forbid such a practice."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of India, December 14, 1940: Dawn of a New Day, p. 85)

#### **1. Dramatizing Historic Episodes of the Faith**

"As to your question concerning the advisability of dramatizing Bahá'í historic episodes: The Guardian would certainly approve, and even encourage that the friends should engage in such literary pursuits which, no doubt, can be of an immense teaching value. What he wishes the believers to avoid is to dramatize the Personages of the Bab, Bahá'u'lláh and Abdu'l-Bahá, that is to say to treat Them as dramatic figures, as characters appearing on the stage. This, as already pointed out, he feels would be quite disrespectful. The mere fact that They appear on the scene constitutes an act of discourtesy which can in no way be reconciled with Their highly exalted station. Their message, or actual Words, should be preferably reported and conveyed by Their disciples appearing on the stage."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, July 25, 1936)

#### **1. If Light Suggests Personification of the Manifestation, It Should Not Be Used**

"The use of light, either of great intensity or in different colours, needs your careful consideration. If the use of light in any way at all suggests a personification of the Manifestation of God it should not be used, but if it can be done without in any way giving the impression that the Prophet is being represented or personified then there is no objection to its use."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, August 12, 1975)

#### **1. Prohibition on Representing Manifestations of God in Paintings or Drawings Applies to All Manifestations**

"The prohibition on representing the Manifestation of God in paintings and drawings or in dramatic presentations applies to all the Manifestations of God. There are, of course, great and wonderful works of art of past Dispensations, many of which portrayed the Manifestations of God in a spirit of reverence and love. In this [pg 100] Dispensation however the greater maturity of mankind and the greater awareness of the relationship between the Supreme Manifestation and His servants enable us to realize the impossibility of representing, in any human form, whether pictorially, in sculpture or in dramatic representation, the Person of God's Manifestations. In stating the Bahá'í prohibition, the beloved Guardian pointed out this impossibility."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, March 9, 1977)

**1. Need for Skill to Produce an Effective Film about History of the Faith**

"As you are no doubt aware, it is not permissible to portray the Manifestations of God in dramatic works and it can be understood that great skill will be needed to produce an effective film about the history of the Faith in which neither the Bab nor Bahá'u'lláh could actually appear. Because of the overwhelming significance of the Bahá'í message and the Bahá'í Revelation, any such film produced under the aegis of the Bahá'í community would have to be of the very highest quality in all respects."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly, September 24, 1978)



## **C. Bahá'í Authors/Writers**

**1. Bahá'í Authors Should Write in Such Manner as to Attract the Souls**

"...Whatever is written should not transgress the bounds of tact and wisdom, and in the words used there should lie hid the property of milk, so that the children of the world may be nurtured therewith, and attain maturity. We have said in the past that one word hath the influence of spring and causeth hearts to become fresh and verdant, while another is like unto blight which causeth the blossoms and flowers to wither. God grant that authors among the friends will write in such a way as would be acceptable to fair-minded souls, and not lead to cavilling by the people."

(Bahá'u'lláh: Extracts from the Bahá'í Writings on the Subject of Writers and Writing, A Compilation, p. 3, July 1980)

**1. Bahá'í Writers Should Have Their Works Approved for Publication by National Assembly of Country Where Published**

"It is not the practice of the World Centre to review the writings of individual Bahá'ís intended for publication. As you know, Bahá'í authors, writing about the Faith, are requested to have their work approved for publication by the National Spiritual Assembly of the country where such work is published. There is no objection whatever, to your submitting your manuscript to a non-Bahá'í firm, provided that the approval of the manuscript by the National Assembly is first obtained."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, December 10, 1981)

## **1. Bahá'í Authors/Writers Should Welcome Review of Their Works**

"Bahá'í authors should welcome review of their works, and can greatly assist [pg 101] promptness in review by supplying a sufficient number of copies of the manuscript for each member of the Reviewing Committee to have one."

"Bahá'í authors may submit their works for review to any National Spiritual Assembly, and may send their works, once approved, to any publisher they like, Bahá'í or non-Bahá'í, at home or abroad. It should be remembered, however, that the approval should be given by the National Spiritual Assembly of the country where the work is to be first published. And in the case of a non-Bahá'í publisher the author should insist on use of the system of transliteration at present used by the Faith for languages employing the Roman alphabet."

"It is hoped that Bahá'í authors will provide a constant stream of new works. Introductory books, commentaries, dissertations on various aspects of the Revelation, text books, histories, reviews, audio-visual material are all needed to stimulate study of the Faith and to promote the vital teaching work."

(The Universal House of Justice: from Memorandum on Bahá'í Publishing, Ridvan 1971)

## **1. Review of Magazine Articles Written by Individual Believers**

"In the Feb. 'Bahá'í News', page 3, it mentions that magazine articles about the Cause ... 'written by individual believers as their personal understanding of the teachings' ... need not be reviewed officially. He feels this is unwise, in view of the Master's own instructions that articles about the Cause should not be published by individuals without proper approval of some responsible body."

"The Guardian says the Local Assemblies can pass upon such articles; it is not necessary to refer them to a National Committee."

"So often persons can be carried away by their enthusiasm and express something detrimental to the Faith. Therefore they must either refer their articles to their Local Spiritual Assembly or the National Reviewing Committee."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, April 13, 1946)

## **1. The Reviewing Committee**

"It is recommended that Reviewing Committees be small, composed of two or three believers with adequate education and knowledge of the Cause. It is essential that works submitted be dealt with promptly. The standards to be upheld by reviewers are the following: (a) conformity with the Teachings, (b) accuracy, (c) dignity in presentation. The Spiritual Assembly, on the basis of its Reviewing Committee's report, gives or withholds approval of the work."



"...In general the function of a reviewing committee is to say whether the work submitted gives an acceptable presentation of the Cause or not. Reviewers may win the gratitude and good will of authors by calling attention to such things as occasional grammatical or spelling errors, but approval should not be refused on such grounds; all such details are editorial matters for agreement between author and publisher."

(The Universal House of Justice: Memorandum on Bahá'í Publishing, Ridvan 1971, March 28, 1971 to the National Spiritual Assemblies of the Bahá'í world, pp. 1-2)

#### **1. Obligation of Bahá'ís to Present the Faith in Dignified Manner**

"We approve your action in writing to the Public Information Department and in publishing a statement instructing Bahá'ís who are authors not to attempt or be persuaded to write articles on the Faith for unsavoury publications." [pg 102]

"It is an obligation of all Bahá'ís to present the Faith in a dignified manner and therefore when writing articles about the Faith they should take into consideration the type of magazine or other publication in which the article is to appear. Should there be any question about its character they should consult with the National Spiritual Assembly. In addition, all authors should bear in mind that anything written about the Faith for publication is subject to review before submission to the publishers."

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice written to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, September 15, 1968)

#### **1. The Function and Purpose of Reviewing**

"The function of reviewing is, essentially, to check the Author's exposition of the Bahá'í Faith and its teachings, which may include verification of any quotations from Bahá'í writings. This function should not be confused with evaluation of the literary merit of a work or of its value as a publication, which are normally the prerogative of the publisher...."

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles, March 11, 1965)

#### **1. Purpose of Review**

"...The purpose of review is to protect the Faith against misrepresentation by its own followers at this early stage of its existence when comparatively few people have any knowledge of it. An erroneous presentation of the Teachings by a Bahá'í who is accounted a scholar, in a scholarly journal, would by that very fact, do far more harm than an erroneous presentation made by an obscure Bahá'í author with no pretensions to scholarship."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, October 8, 1980)

## 1. No Objection to Bahá'ís Writing Novels Portraying Historical Events

"There is no objection to Bahá'ís writing novels portraying historical events and figures of the Faith. However, in view of the impossibility of ever portraying adequately the Manifestation of God as a character in a novel, and of the disrespect implicit in such an attempt, the House of Justice feels that no such portrayal should be attempted. Of course, His sayings and the events of His life may be recounted, but in this case care should be taken to quote His exact words as we have them in authorized translations, and events in Bahá'í history should not be distorted."

"Generally speaking, works of fiction which the writers hope will help to promote knowledge of the Cause of God will fulfill this purpose better if they are set against the background of particular events or developing processes in the Cause of God, and not used to portray the actual historical events themselves and the figures taking part in them. The reality of the actual events and the actual personages is so much more convincing than any fictional account. In this connection the Guardian's secretary wrote on his behalf:

'He would not recommend fiction as a means of teaching; the condition of the world is too acute to permit of delay in giving them the direct teachings associated with the name of Bahá'u'lláh. But any suitable [pg 103] approach to the Faith, which appeals to this or that group, is certainly worthy of effort, as we wish to bring the Cause to all men, in all walks of life, of all mentalities."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, September 23, 1980)

### 1. Journalists

"There is no objection to your being a journalist as long as you try to keep off political issues; especially the big East-West issues. You have a talent for writing, and it might be of help to you financially and in making contacts for the Faith."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, November 30, 1950)

### 1. Sciences that Begin and End with Words — Bahá'u'lláh Never Meant to Include Story Writing Under this Category

"What Bahá'u'lláh meant primarily with 'sciences that begin and end in words' are those theological treatises and commentaries that encumber the human mind rather than help it to attain the truth. The students would devote their life to their study but still attain no where. Bahá'u'lláh surely never meant to include story writing under such a category; and shorthand and typewriting are both most useful talents very necessary in our present social and economic life."

"What you could do, and should do, is to use your stories to become a source of inspiration and guidance for those who read them. With such a means at your disposal you can spread the spirit and teachings of the Cause; you can show the evils that exist in society, as well as the way they

can be remedied. If you possess a real talent in writing you should consider it as given by God and exert your efforts to use it for the betterment of society."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, November 30, 1932: Extracts from the Bahá'í Writings on the Subject of Writers and Writing, A Compilation, July 1980, p. 6)

#### **1. The Faith Needs Bahá'í Authors**

"Regarding the advice you asked him for, he feels that to devote all one's studies with the object of becoming a Bahá'í author is rather risky. We need Bahá'í authors badly, but you have to be assured that you have the talent to earn your living in that field, and also serve the Faith in it."

"He feels that the best thing for you to do is to devote your studies to acquiring a sound education, if you like along literary lines, and then see what develops."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, May 14, 1957)

#### **1. Doctoral Theses and Similar Treatises**

"It has been decided that doctoral theses and similar treatises submitted to institutions of learning for the obtaining of a degree are not subject to Bahá'í review unless they are to be published more widely than is required for the degree in question."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, May 11, 1982) [pg 104]

#### **1. No Publisher Has the Right to Alter Author's Manuscript**

"A publishing trust has the right to refuse publication of any particular title, and a National Assembly has the right to review any proposed Bahá'í publication for accuracy and propriety. But no publisher has the right to alter or change an author's manuscript without his knowledge and consent."

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice written to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, July 28, 1966)



## **D. Bahá'í Publication, Translation, Review and Copyright**

#### **1. Bahá'í Newsletters and Bulletins — Why Circulation is Restricted to "Bahá'ís Only"**

"In reply to your inquiry of 18th November 1982 about Bahá'í newsletters and bulletins being for Bahá'ís only, we are asked by the Universal House of Justice to quote below from letters written

by the Universal House of Justice or at its instruction to other National Assemblies which have asked similar questions.

'With reference to your letter of October 31st asking why the circulation of Bahá'í News should be restricted to Bahá'ís we wish to point out that the same reasons that make it necessary to restrict the attendance at a Nineteen Day Feast to Bahá'ís only apply also to the circulation of Bahá'í Newsletters.'

'A Bahá'í news bulletin assumes that the reader is a Bahá'í and it would therefore normally contain items which are purely of a domestic nature of no interest to the general public and which, in some cases, may give the wrong impression to those not familiar with the Bahá'í teachings. However, there is no objection to the friends showing their newsletters to non-Bahá'ís if they so wish or find it useful at times. Furthermore, if the words 'For Bahá'ís Only' which appear on some newsletters are found to be offensive to the non-Bahá'í, there is no requirement for these words to appear on every copy of the newsletter.'

'In answer to your query concerning the policy of keeping "Bahá'í News" for Bahá'ís only, the House of Justice instructs us to explain that the circulation of Bahá'í Newsletters is restricted to Bahá'ís because they are vehicles of news that is primarily of internal interest to the friends and the Assembly should be able to write freely to the believers without having to so word the information that it would be easily understandable to a non-Bahá'í reader. In other words, a Bahá'í newsletter is not secret but is an internal journal intended for an informed readership.'

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Mexico, December 19, 1982)

#### **1. Usage in Spanish Texts of Accents on Persian and Arabic Words**

"The question as to whether or not the accents on the word Bahá'í (and indeed on other words transliterated from the Persian and Arabic) should be used when the word is printed entirely in capital letters is one that should be uniform in usage throughout the Spanish-speaking world unless usage varies significantly from country to country. It is suggested, therefore, that you refer this question to the two Bahá'í Publishing Trusts in Spain and Argentina for their comments. The guiding [pg 105] consideration should not be the usage in relation to accents on Spanish words, but the usage in Spanish texts of accents on capital letters on foreign words appearing in Spanish texts, such as the German umlaut, etc. It should be borne in mind that, whereas the accent in Spanish indicates merely a presence of stress, in the transliteration of Persian words it indicates a difference in articulation of the vowel. For example, the words 'VAHID' and 'VAHID' are two words with different meanings and different pronunciations."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Mexico, July 22, 1984)

#### **1. Publications from World Centre — No Restriction on Use of Quotations**

"There is no restriction on Bahá'í authors, institutions and publishing agencies using quotations from the publications of the World Centre, and permission to do so need not be sought. This freedom to quote likewise applies to compilations of the World Centre which have been published."

"Permission to quote from publications of Publishing Trusts should be sought from the Trust concerned except in cases where the Trust has merely printed a compilation issued by the World Centre."

"Of course, Bahá'í authors should seek review of their works by the National Assembly of the country in which it will be printed."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice, December 11, 1980)

#### **1. Copyright Clearance on Sacred Writings Not Necessary for Assemblies and Bahá'í Believers**

"The Universal House of Justice has been concerned of late to note an apparently growing impression among Spiritual Assemblies and individual believers in many parts of the world, that they must obtain copyright clearance before they may quote from the Sacred Texts of the Faith in any publication. It has now instructed us to make it clear that the Spiritual Assemblies and individual believers are free to quote in their publications from any of the Writings of the three Central Figures of the Faith or from the writings of the beloved Guardian, whether in the original language or in translation, without obtaining clearance from the copyright holder, unless the copyright holder in the case of a translation is an individual or is a non-Bahá'í institution. It is recognized that this ruling may endanger copyrights, but we feel that this is a risk that must be taken."

"The ruling is made to ensure that the Sacred Scriptures of our Faith and the writings of the beloved Guardian may be freely used by the believers; it does not change the existing requirements for individual believers to submit their works on the Faith for review before publication, neither does it relieve Spiritual Assemblies of their responsibility to protect the dignity of the Faith and uphold the proper standard of reverence in the use of its Sacred Scriptures. Thus, if any Assembly sees that one of the friends is making use of any of the Holy Texts in an unbecoming manner, it should remonstrate with him and, if necessary, require him to stop doing so."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, September 4, 1981)

#### **1. Capitalizing Pronouns in English**

"The Guardian wishes your Committee to capitalize all pronouns when referring [pg 106] to Bahá'u'lláh, the Bab and the Master, even though the newspapers do not use them."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the Bahá'í News Service Committee, February 5, 1938)

"In regard to your question about capitalizing the pronouns: The Guardian realizes this looks a little strange to non-Bahá'ís, but he feels we, being believers, and having the full sense of the Stations of the Central figures of our Faith, should do this as a sign of respect under all circumstances."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, November 22, 1949)

### 1. Capitalizing Pronouns in Other Languages

"He is interested in accomplishing two things — he would like in the European languages to have as much uniformity with the English translations as possible; he does not wish the Bahá'í translations to be in any way a flagrant violation of the rules of the language into which our literature is being translated."

"Your Committee must conscientiously study this question, and then do the best you can to have the Bahá'í literature in French meet the high standards of the French language and grammar."

"If the possessive and demonstrative adjectives and pronouns in French are never capitalized where they stand for 'God', then this should not be done in the Bahá'í literature. If there is a precedent for doing so in the French language, however, they should be. The same is true of the attributes of God."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the National Translation and Publication Committee of France, February 15, 1957)

### 1. Quotation Marks — Must Uphold Rigid Standard Inculcated by the Cause

"Also the Guardian feels it is absolutely essential that in all releases issued by your Committee quotation marks be used when passages from Bahá'í Sacred Writings are quoted. The friends should be careful to uphold under all circumstances the rigid standard inculcated by the Cause, and not to compromise easily with the common and accepted standards of the time."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to the Bahá'í News Service Committee, February 5, 1938)

### 1. National Spiritual Assembly Authorizes Translations Through a Committee of Bahá'í Translators — The Guardian's Method of Transliteration Should Be Used

"The National Spiritual Assembly which undertakes the translation, usually through a committee of Bahá'í translators, is the body which 'authorizes' the translation, if it is approved. In some instances, if there are no Bahá'í translators available, there is no objection, in principle, to employing non-Bahá'ís for this purpose. It is usual for the National Spiritual Assembly to appoint

a Reviewing Committee, or establish some means of providing review of the completed translation. You will note from the enclosed memorandum that, with the exceptions enumerated therein, new translations of the Sacred Text into languages other than English must be made from the Guardian's English translation where it exists; and when no such translation exists, advice should be sought from the Universal House of Justice. In the case of Spanish, to avoid [pg 107] duplication of effort and to achieve the highest standard of accuracy, the National Assembly concerned should feel free to consult EBILA and/or the National Spiritual Assembly of Spain, and indeed the House of Justice encourages the closest co-operation between all administrative bodies and publishing trusts responsible for the production of literature in Spanish."

"Regarding the transliteration of Persian and Arabic words the House of Justice requests that the method adopted by the beloved Guardian, and which is described in the various volumes of 'The Bahá'í World', be followed, as it permits all languages which use the Roman alphabet to transliterate such terms in the same way throughout the Bahá'í world."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Panama, July 16, 1979)

#### **1. Guidelines for the Translation of Bahá'í Sacred Writings**

"Translations into languages other than those akin to Persian and Arabic should normally be made from approved English translations rather than from the original Persian and Arabic. In such cases it is an advantage if it is also possible for the translator(s) to check with the original."

"All new translations into English, and all revisions of earlier translations in that language must be checked at the World Centre and officially approved before publication."

"Any believer is free to translate for his own use anything he wishes, but dissemination or publication of such translation is dependent upon their approval by the appropriate National Spiritual Assembly or, in the case of translations into English, by the World Centre.

a) If an individual Bahá'í spontaneously makes his own translation of a passage he may willingly make it available to a Spiritual Assembly but he cannot be compelled to do so.

b) If a translation made spontaneously by an individual is approved and published, he retains the copyright of his translation unless, of course, he wishes to surrender it."

"When a Spiritual Assembly wishes to have a translation made it should, if possible have the task undertaken by a committee rather than by individuals, as is explained by Abdu'l-Bahá.

a) The members of such a committee need not all be Bahá'ís.

b) Translations made by a committee are the property of the Assembly appointing the committee, and not of the members of the committee.

c) Except for translations into English, a translation made by a committee does not have to be checked unless the Assembly deems it advisable.

d) In accordance with the instructions of Shoghi Effendi the name of the committee should appear in the book as the translator, but the names of the members must not so appear."

(Guidelines for the Translation of Bahá'í Sacred Writings attached to a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Assembly of Panama, July 16, 1979)

### **1. An Individual Can Be Commissioned to Make Translations — Translations Become Property of the Assembly**

"If it is not feasible to form a translation committee, translations must, perforce, be made by individuals. [pg 108]

a) When an individual is commissioned by an Assembly to make a translation for it the translation should become the property of the Assembly, not of the individual, even if the work is done without remuneration. It is advisable to have this and other matters agreed in writing before the work is undertaken so that there may be no ground for subsequent misunderstandings.

b) A translation made by an individual should be checked before being published, if possible, and such checking should be done by a committee rather than by an individual, if this is feasible.

c) When a translation made by an individual is published, his name may appear as translator if he so wishes.

"Normally credit for translation should appear on all complete works and compilations that are published, as well as on books that quote translated passages.

a) Credit for translation should not appear in the case of passages quoted in communications from Bahá'í institutions, even when these are published.

b) Credit for translation need not appear on published leaflets and pamphlets unless there is a legal requirement that it do so."

(Ibid.)

### **1. Translation of Bahá'í Literature into Everyday Language — Simplifications and Paraphrasing Not to be Published as Scripture**

"The Universal House of Justice, in response to your letter of 20 April concerning translations into French or Creole using simpler words than the original text, has requested us to send the following three quotations. These make it clear that a quotation in English may be rendered into simple English in order to facilitate its translation into another language or dialect. However, it is not permissible to publish simplifications and paraphrased extracts of Bahá'í Writings as Bahá'í Scripture.



'We have noticed a tendency in a number of countries to attempt to translate Bahá'í literature into the current, easy, everyday language of the country. This, however, should not be an overriding consideration. Many of the Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh and Abdu'l-Bahá are in exalted and highly poetic language in the original Persian and Arabic and you will see, for example, that when translating Bahá'u'lláh's Writings into English the beloved Guardian did not use present-day colloquial English but evolved a highly poetic and beautiful style, using numbers of archaic expressions reminiscent of the translations of the Bible.' (From a letter dated 7 October 1973 written by the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly)

'Obviously teaching literature and books about the Faith can be written in simple English. However, we feel that when the Sacred Writings are published the standard English translation should be used, but there would be no objection to printing alongside it the translation into simple English which should be described as a paraphrase of the Holy Word. Thus, for the people of ... who have difficulty in comprehending standard English, the simple English version would be in the nature of an explanation of the Writings which they could understand. In the case of teaching literature in which quotations from the Writings appear, [pg 109] these could either be paraphrased or a simple English version could be used with the standard version printed as a footnote. This method would also provide a means whereby the people of ... could improve their knowledge and understanding of the English language.' (From a letter dated 20 September 1973 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly)

'It is, of course, permissible to translate Bahá'í Writings into other languages and dialects of languages. It is also possible to simplify or paraphrase the Bahá'í Writings in order to facilitate their translation into languages and dialects having small vocabularies. However, it is not permissible to publish simplifications and paraphrases of Bahá'í Writings as Bahá'í Scripture.'" (From a letter dated 13 March 1969 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a National Spiritual Assembly)

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the Spiritual Assembly of Guadeloupe, May 13, 1986)

#### **1. Translators Should Utilize Most Recent Editions of Books**

"The Universal House of Justice has requested us to advise you to base your translations on current editions of all the books referred to, if translation is involved. In each instance you should consult the original publisher and obtain a copy of the latest printing or edition to ensure that all approved corrections are embodied in your translation."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Taiwan, May 22, 1984)



## E. Miscellaneous Subjects

### 1. Friday is Day of Rest in Bahá'í Calendar

"Abdu'l-Bahá gives no reason whatever why Friday has been chosen as the day of rest in the Bahá'í calendar. He just affirms it."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, July 10, 1939: Bahá'í News, No. 162, April 1943, p. 5)

### 1. Use of Bahá'í Dates

"It is advisable to use both the Bahá'í dates, according to the Bahá'í Calendar, and the usual Gregorian dates as well. The friends at present are free to do as they please."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, December 24, 1943: Bahá'í News, No. 173, February 1945, p. 11)

### 1. Bahá'í Faith, Designation of

"In reply to your letter of January 26th, we realize that there are occasions on which the use of the term 'Bahá'í World Faith' may be justified and useful. However, it is our hope that the friends will gradually lose the habit of using this term as widely as they do now. The designation 'The Bahá'í Faith' is more dignified and preferable. Any adjective added to this name tends to a diminution of its stature and might be taken to mean that there are other 'Bahá'í Faiths'."

(From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles, February 5, 1967: Copies to various National Spiritual Assemblies) [pg 110]

### 1. Symbol of Bahá'í Faith — Five-Pointed Star

"...Strictly speaking the five-pointed star is the symbol of our Faith, as used by the Bab and explained by Him. But the Guardian does not feel it is wise or necessary to complicate our explanation of the Temple by adding this."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, October 28, 1949: U.S. Supplement to Bahá'í News, No. 50, p. 4, April 1962) [pg 111]

