

are indeed the mirror of the world. They reflect the deeds and the pursuits of divers peoples and kindreds. They both reflect them and make them known. They are a mirror endowed with hearing, sight and speech. This is an amazing and potent phenomenon. However, it behoveth the writers thereof to be purged from the promptings of evil passions and desires and to be attired with the raiment of justice and equity. They should enquire into situations as much as possible and ascertain the facts, then set them down in writing."

Freedom and Moderation

Clearly, the ideal of freedom of expression and the reporting of the truth are both essential to human life and healthy societies. Generations of the oppressed have fought and died in order to voice freely their ideals, their concerns and needs. Yet the freedom of individuals to express themselves needs to be tempered by the principle of moderation. Bahá'u'lláh stressed that when liberty passes beyond the limits of moderation the result can be calamitous. In all aspects of communication, from the freedom of the press to the language we use in our everyday conversations, true freedom of expression requires moderation in our choice of words. Only when we show respect for others and their ideas will freedom of speech become a force for peace and unity in the world."Human utterance is an essence which aspireth to exert its influence and needeth moderation. As to its influence, this is conditional upon refinement which in turn is dependent upon hearts which are detached and pure. As to its moderation this hath to be combined with tact and wisdom ..."

Content, volume, style, tact, wisdom and timeliness are among the critical factors in determining the effects of speech for good or evil. By addressing themselves to these concerns, Bahá'ís are striving to achieve a new etiquette of expression which is worthy of the approaching maturity of the human race."For the tongue is a smouldering fire, and excess of speech a deadly poison. Material fire consumeth the body, whereas the fire of the tongue devoureth both heart and soul. The force of the former lasteth but for a time, whilst the effects of the latter endureth a century."

Open Consultation

The principles of Bahá'íconsultation are based on the freedom of speech. Each person is required to express his or her views freely but with courtesy, dignity and care, and to show respect for the opinions of others. The object is to search for the best way, not to win an argument. Divergence of opinion is used as a tool rather than a hindrance:"The shining spark of truth cometh forth only after the clash of differing opinions".

Freedom Of Information

The ideal of freedom of speech needs to become universal. The nations of the world must agree to include both freedom of speech and freedom of information in a universal bill of rights. The advent of satellite dishes and the Internet is already making it increasingly difficult to hide information from the public. The current age has seen a remarkable expansion in access to information, and the multiplication of sources dealing with current events. The increasing interdependence of the world community also makes it desirable that a world language should be chosen, together with an appropriate script, and taught in all the schools of the world. Then, in addition to local and national media in various languages, a variety of genuinely global sources of information would be available. This must be free of censorship by national governments or other bodies. Bahá'u'lláh specifically forbids the destruction of literature for religious or political motives. However, if there is no form of censorship or control imposed from outside then self-restraint is required on the part of individuals and of institutions. As human society matures, self-regulation on the part of the press and self-restraint on the part of the public should become an effective means of maintaining a suitably high standard.

Bahá'ís believe that the goals of unity and harmony must be adopted as the underlying forces directing change. These goals would transform the character of the news media and of human society.

The Power of Free Speech

"One word," Bahá'u'lláh wrote, "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." This is true both for individuals and for the news media. When they have the best interests of humanity at heart, the media will be able to make an ever more valuable contribution to the preservation of the rights and freedoms of individuals. They will have a powerful role in the constructive processes of a society moving inevitably towards global consciousness.

Bahá'ís look forward to a society in which freedom of speech underpins a just and equitable world order, and in which truth and honesty support social harmony and universal progress.

The text of all these leaflets remains the copyright of Warwick Bahá'í Bookshop. The Bookshop is happy for people to download individual copies for their own purposes. Printed copies can be purchased from the Warwick Bookshop. Individuals or communities wishing to translate or print these leaflets in other countries please contact the Bookshop for permission.

METADATA

Views9977 views since posted 2010-07-07; last edit 2026-04-18 15:04 UTC;

previous at archive.org.../warwick_freedom_speech

Language

English

Permission

editor and publisher

Share

Shortlink: bahai-library.com/3798

Citation: [ris/3798](#)

select Collection:

Archives

Articles

Articles-unpublished

Audio

Bibliographies

BIC

Biographies

Books

Chronologies

Compilations

Compilations-NSA

Compilations-personal

Documents

East-asia

Encyclopedia

Essays

Etc

Excerpts

Fiction

Glossaries

Guardian

Histories

Introductory

Letters

Maps

Music

Newspapers

NSA-documents

NSA-letters

Personal

Pilgrims

Poetry

Presentations

Resources

Reviews
Scripts
Software
Statistics
Study
Talks
Theses
Transcripts
Translations
UHJ-documents
UHJ-letters
Video
Visual
Writings

home

sitemap

series

chronology

search:

author

title

date

tags

adv. search

languages

inventory

bibliography

abbreviations

links

about

contact

RSS

new