religions

MDPI

Article

The Institutionalization of Religious Minorities in Spain: The Recognition of the Bahá'í Community's Notorio Arraigo

Óscar Salguero Montaño

Department of Social Anthropology & Social Psychology, Complutense University of Madrid, 28040 Madrid, Spain; oscarsal@ucm.es

Abstract

On 18 September 2023, the Spanish State recognised the Notorio Arraigo (firmly established, or literally, notorious deep rootedness) of the Bahá'í Community of Spain through a Ministerial Order, integrating it into the group of recognised religious denominations, albeit without any signed cooperation agreements. This milestone reflects the evolving legal–political frameworks of religious freedom since the arrival of the Bahá'í Faith in Spain in the mid-20th century, as well as the strategies employed to consolidate and institutionalise itself as a religious denomination, influenced by Bahá'í principles. This paper examines how these principles have inspired the Community's secular strategies throughout different historical phases: from a restrictive Catholic confessional framework to the current non-confessional state, which guarantees religious freedom. It also analyses the actions undertaken to obtain recognition of Notorio Arraigo and considers the challenges and needs faced by the Bahá'í Community at this new level of recognition.

Keywords: Bahá'í Faith; Notorio Arraigo; religious diversity; religious freedom; institutionalisation

Academic Editor: Moojan Momen

Received: 5 September 2025
Revised: 6 October 2025
Accepted: 11 October 2025
Published: 14 October 2025

Citation: Salguero Montaño, Óscar. 2025. The Institutionalization of Religious Minorities in Spain: The Recognition of the Bahá'í Community's Notorio Arraigo. *Religions* 16: 1306. https://doi.org/10.3390/rel16101306

1. Introduction

This article examines the process that led the Spanish State to recognize the Notorio Arraigo (firmly established, or literally, notorious deep rootedness) of the Bahá'í Community of Spain through a Ministerial Order on 18 September 2023. This milestone is of great significance, as it elevates the Bahá'í Community to a higher level of public recognition. The legal framework for religious denominations in Spain is structured into several distinct levels, which also function as "steps towards a greater or lesser privilege for different denominations". The first of these is occupied by the Catholic Church, "as the majority confession, explicitly recognized in the Constitution itself, and whose relations with administrations are based on international treaties, which have shielded various privileges" (Díez de Velasco 2023, p. 45). The second level includes the three denominations with Cooperation Agreements signed in 1992: Evangelical, Jewish, and Muslim communities. These agreements are developed through laws, and not through international treaties (and thus of higher rank) like their Catholic counterparts. Such instruments seek to enforce the constitutional mandate of State cooperation with denominations (in the manner of positive secularism). The third level includes the denominations recognized with Notorio Arraigo, although currently without signed Cooperation Agreements. These are the Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, Buddhists, Orthodox Christians, and the case addressed here, the Bahá'ís.

In addition to possessing a relevant institutional presence demonstrating their significance in shaping Spanish identity and a representative structure for dialogue with the State, these five denominations may be potential recipients of a Cooperation Agreement with the State (though signing such an agreement is not mandatory for the State; indeed, it is highly significant that no other Agreement has been signed in over thirty years); form part of the Religious Freedom Advisory Commission, which is the public body responsible for granting Notorio Arraigo; and, perhaps the most visible effect, gain civil recognition of marriages performed according to their religious form under the terms provided by civil regulations.

Building upon this context, the main objective of this article is to analyse the factors and strategies that have influenced the consolidation and institutionalisation of the Bahá'í Faith in Spain, from its "official arrival" in the mid-20th century to the recent achievement of Notorio Arraigo. The central research question guiding this investigation is: How have the fundamental religious principles and secular strategies of the Bahá'í Community of Spain facilitated its formal institutionalisation within the changing Spanish legal and political framework? This work thus aims to contribute to the specialised literature by updating the state of research on a community little studied in Spain, providing empirical data that illustrates the complex negotiation between religious minorities and the State in the post-secular public sphere.

Beyond the description of the Spanish case, this article seeks to contribute to the international academic debate on the institutionalisation of religious denominations, state regulation, and the delimitation of religious categories. It is important to note that terms such as "religion", "sect", or "community" are not taken as natural or given entities, but are analysed critically, as categories that are socially and politically constructed and negotiated within the State (Astor et al. 2023). Specifically, it engages with the contributions of key authors such as Saeed (2016), regarding how state institutions formalise diversity and negotiate orthodoxy, and Beckford (2003), whose work on the political regulation of New Religious Movements (NRM) offers a framework for understanding the processes of classification and social control within the context of political secularisation processes. By making explicit how the Bahá'í Community case in Spain is embedded within these political and institutional processes of "religious definition," the analytical and comparative relevance of this research is reinforced.

To address the research question, the article is structured in several sections. First, the Bahá'í Faith is contextualised within the sociological debate (NRM, world religion, or modern religion). Next, the study's methodological notes are detailed. The central body of the work traces the incidence of Bahá'í principles on the Community's secular strategies in Spain across three differentiated historical stages. Finally, the specific actions undertaken to obtain Notorio Arraigo are analysed, concluding with the challenges and needs the Community faces at this new level of recognition.

2. The Bahá'í Faith: A Discussion on Its Status as a New Religious Movement, "World Religion", or "Modern Religion"

The Bahá'í Faith is a religion that emerged in the mid-19th century within the Islamic society of former Persia—modern-day Iran—founded by the prophet Bahá'u'lláh (1817–1892), thereby constituting the most recent of the major revealed religions. It is monotheistic and upholds the existence of a transcendent and unknowable divinity manifested through prophets such as Moses, Krishna, Buddha, and Zoroaster, the most recent being Bahá'u'lláh. It claims to lack rituals and sacraments; the believer's relationship with the divine is direct, and the personal study of the numerous Bahá'í texts is essential. Equally important are community gatherings for collective decision-making, problem-solving, assistance,

and missionary work. The Bahá'í Faith is universalist, perceiving the world as a unified entity beyond national borders. Migration of Bahá'ís to establish new communities is not uncommon. There are no notable doctrinal divisions, and all communities are subject to the Universal House of Justice, the supreme governing body based in Haifa, Israel (Macías and Salguero 2010, pp. 3–4).

In under two centuries, the Bahá'í Faith has become present in more than two hundred countries, though it remains a minority religion in each. This global presence correlates with a notable increase in followers, rising from just over one million in the late 1960s (Jones 2005, p. 739) to approximately eight million today, according to estimates from the World Religion Database think tank.

Its recent and global nature poses certain difficulties when it comes to classifying the Bahá'í Faith. However, excessive zeal in classification can be counterproductive, overshadowing important aspects such as the strategies and discourses adopted by Bahá'í communities and their followers in favour of theoretical debates often marred by subjective and ethnocentric connotations. It is thus sufficient to outline one of the key debates—closely linked to the emic/etic distinction—that is, how academia perceives the Bahá'í Faith versus how the Faith perceives itself.

One of the most widespread academic classifications of the Bahá'í Faith is as an NRM, referring to recent religious groups that are in latent or manifest tension with the society they inhabit (Siegler 2006). There is no doubt concerning the first two criteria—recency and religiosity—and the third is evident in countries such as Iran, where the Bahá'í Faith is banned and its adherents persecuted through economic pressure, educational restrictions, physical assaults, arrests, and executions (Tuset 2024, pp. 539–42). In fact, Jehovah's Witnesses and Bahá'ís were among the most frequently banned groups in six Asia-Pacific and MENA countries in 2019, according to the Pew Research Center. That is, NRMs are seen by dominant religious communities not merely as different, but as "unacceptably different" (Melton 2004, p. 27). This tension has existed since the Bahá'í Faith's inception, originally as a *firqa* within Shi'a Islam in 19th-century Persia (Siegler 2006, p. 102), embodied in a "religious and progressive movement" led by Siyyid Mirza 'Ali-Muhammad—the Báb—who foretold the coming of the Promised One, later revealed in Bahá'u'lláh in 1863 (Fischer 1999, p. 60). This level of societal tension is a key criterion distinguishing churches from sects, with the former seen as socially accepted denominations and the latter as groups eliciting suspicion. As groups distinguish themselves and withdraw from their surroundings—to admit only devoted members and enhance religious "productivity"—they generate greater tension with the society in which they exist. The transformation from sect to church is thus essential, as successful religious groups tend, over time, to reduce their tension with the surrounding society (Stark and Iannaccone 1993).

Nevertheless, the classification of the Bahá'í Faith as an NRM is controversial, particularly due to the semantic vagueness of the term, which encompasses a vast array of groups (Barker 1999, p. 3), and its frequent association with prejudice and negative stereotypes (Siegler 2006, p. 16; Ančić 2014). While it is true that the Bahá'í Faith is relatively young—with fewer than two hundred years of history, marking it as a "religion of a new era" (Esslemont 2006)—Bahá'í secular literature tends to emphasise its rapid and widespread global expansion, portraying it as a world religion (Schaefer 1988), an "emerging religion of global scope" extending to nearly every corner of the planet (Hatcher and Martin 2002). For example, the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Spain begins its submission for recognition of Notorio Arraigo with a section entitled "The Bahá'í Faith as a World Religion," highlighting its global presence and spread (National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Spain 2023, pp. 15–16).

> *Bahá'ís define their Faith as a 'worldwide and independent religion'. The adjective 'worldwide' underscores the recognisability of the Bahá'í Faith as one of the great global religious systems. The adjective 'independent' emphasises that the Bahá'í Faith is not a derivative sect or reducible to any of the previously established systems of belief.* (National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Spain 2023, p. 21)

Given the legitimate desire to avoid the negative connotations associated with the term "sect" (Castón and Ramos 2007, p. 3), the NRM category may nevertheless prove useful for explaining the emergence of the Bahá'í Faith, particularly in societies where it has only recently taken root—even if it perceives itself as a new world religion, akin to Christianity, Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, and Islam (Ančić 2014, p. 194).

From these discussions, it can at least be affirmed that the Bahá'í Faith is, in some sense, a "modern religion": a product of secular modernity that has, with varying degrees of success, established itself globally. It is modern in that it espouses a "progressive, humanitarian, universalist, and democratic discourse" and promotes "values and ideals similar to those of democratic, rights-respecting states" (Tuset 2024, pp. 531–47). It is also modern in its embrace of scientific worldviews and its advocacy for religious freedom and human equality, all of which are reflected in some of its fundamental principles since its inception. The more pertinent question, therefore, is not whether the Bahá'í Faith is an NRM or not, but rather: what factors have contributed to its success? A success that, in the Spanish case, culminated in 2023 with the official recognition of Notorio Arraigo, which is the focus of this study.

3. Methodological Framework

To address the objectives set forth, this article forms part of a broader research project on public policies and religious freedom and equality, currently ongoing. This larger project has served as the foundation for everything concerning the public recognition and institutionalisation of the Bahá'í Community of Spain. Adopting an inherently multidisciplinary approach, the perspectives of State Ecclesiastical Law and Social Anthropology have been combined. This approach offers the fundamental advantage of transcending mere juridical description to delve into the social, political, and practical dimensions of the religious phenomenon. The different types of empirical material were mutually complementary: while the documentary and normative analysis (the legal and political framework) establishes the formal structure of institutionalisation, the qualitative material obtained enables the contrast between the regulation and its effective application, as well as the perceptions of the relevant actors. As part of this initiative, two in-depth interviews were conducted with representatives of the Community, primarily focusing on the issue of the recognition of Notorio Arraigo. The Community has shown itself to be highly receptive, allowing for continuous feedback during the data systematisation and analysis phases.

Additionally, the fieldwork included two sessions of participant observation at the national headquarters of the Bahá'ís of Spain, located in the Arturo Soria district of Madrid: one meeting between students and researchers of the anthropology of religion and young members of the Bahá'í Community of Madrid (18 November 2022) and participation in a documentary produced by the Community regarding the Bahá'í Faith in Spain following the recognition of Notorio Arraigo (24 September 2024). Furthermore, specific excerpts from three previous interviews with Bahá'í individuals carried out as part of earlier investigations in Andalusia, Ceuta, and Melilla have been drawn upon, thereby contributing to a synchronic understanding of the Bahá'í Faith's development in Spain.

The review of written sources comprises the other principal methodological approach upon which this text is grounded. This review has been structured into three interrelated sections. Firstly, with regard to Bahá'í principles, the analysis has drawn upon litera-

ture from within the Faith, including key texts authored by its early figures (Bahá'u'lláh 1992; 'Abdu'l-Bahá 2009; Shoghi Effendi 1944), as well as other texts that reflect upon these principles and the broader foundations of the Faith (Esslemont 2006; Schaefer 1988; Hatcher and Martin 2002, among others). This literature is referred to herein as "Bahá'í secular literature".

Secondly, various academic texts have been reviewed, ranging from general works in the sociology and anthropology of religion, which have illuminated the history, conceptualisation, and broader dynamics of the Bahá'í Faith (Fischer 1999; Jones 2005; Siegler 2006; Díez de Velasco 2023, among others), to more specific analyses regarding its history and establishment in Spain. The latter include sections on Bahá'ísm contained in successive volumes of the *Pluralism and Coexistence* series, dedicated to religious diversity across different Spanish territories (Buades and Vidal 2007; López et al. 2007; García-Hernández 2008; Briones et al. 2010, 2013, among others).

Given that this multidisciplinary research team is composed primarily of legal scholars and, to a lesser extent, social scientists, a third section was also consulted, comprising legal literature on the concept of Notorio Arraigo. Notably, some of the texts consulted on this subject were authored by adherents of the Bahá'í Faith themselves (Alastruey 2024; Nieva 2024; Tuset 2024), which indicates a clear objective of institutionalisation within the Community and is linked, as will be explored, to deeply rooted Bahá'í principles such as the harmony between science and religion.

Lastly, due to the prominent role played by legal considerations in this research, various laws and other applicable regulations from multiple jurisdictions have been reviewed and analysed. In addition, primary sources were consulted, including public sources such as the Religious Entities Register and the Directory of Places of Worship provided by the Observatory of Religious Pluralism in Spain, as well as private sources such as the websites and social media platforms of national and international Bahá'í institutions and think tanks like the Pew Research Center and the World Religion Database.

4. The Intersection of Religious Principles and Secular Processes: A Study of the Bahá'í Faith's Institutionalisation

To understand the scope of Bahá'í principles, it is essential to recognize that there is no fixed or taxonomic list akin to the Ten Commandments in Christianity or the Five Pillars of Islam. The authoritative Bahá'í texts span over one hundred volumes and include the writings of its two prophets—the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh—such as the laws and ordinances set out in the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, first published in 1872 (Bahá'u'lláh 1992). In addition to the written legacies of these two divine messengers, the corpus includes the writings of Bahá'u'lláh's eldest son and successor, 'Abdu'l-Bahá (1844–1921), and those of his final descendant, Shoghi Effendi (1897–1957). This extensive material may be categorised into various "teachings", some more spiritual and others more secular in nature: practices for individual believers, collective practices, institutions the Bahá'í Community must establish, mystical and social concepts, prayers and meditations, prophecies, commentaries on spiritual themes, and principles for organising society with the aim of achieving peace, prosperity, and unity. It is within this final category that the so-called "Bahá'í principles" are situated.

These principles emerged from the exegesis carried out by 'Abdu'l-Bahá between 1911 and 1913 during a series of travels through Western countries, during which he delivered numerous public lectures. Since the Bahá'í principles were never compiled into a single, definitive list, 'Abdu'l-Bahá emphasised certain ones over others depending on his audience. In Paris in 1911, he outlined eleven principles: the independent investigation of truth; the unity of humanity; religion as a cause of love and affection; the unity of

religion and science; religious, racial, or sectarian prejudice destroys the foundations of humanity; equal opportunities in subsistence; equality before the law; universal peace; religion should not involve itself in political affairs; the education of women; and the power of the Holy Spirit as the sole means of spiritual development (‘Abdu’l-Bahá 2011, pp. 153–54). In *God Passes By* (1944), Shoghi Effendi presented a similar list of twelve: the independent investigation of truth; the oneness of the entire human race; the basic unity of all religions; the condemnation of all forms of prejudice—whether religious, racial, class-based, or national; harmony between religion and science; equality of men and women; introduction of compulsory education; adoption of a universal auxiliary language; elimination of extremes of wealth and poverty; establishment of an international tribunal for the adjudication of disputes between nations; exaltation of work performed in the spirit of service to the rank of worship; and the promotion of justice and religion as the bulwark for the protection of peoples and nations; and the establishment of permanent and universal peace as humanity’s supreme goal (Shoghi Effendi 1944, pp. 280–82).

What is most relevant here is not the precise number of principles or their exact wording, since Bahá’í principles are historically and contextually adaptive—they are not weighed down by tradition and are inherently “modern”.

> *Many times, we try to summarise or present some of these principles to simplify or explain the teachings that inspire us, and we cite them based on the issues at hand and the literature we rely on. That’s why you find different references.* (Bahá’í woman, 50 years old, migrant background, Madrid, 2025)

What truly matters—as emphasised in interviews—is that from their collective interpretation and synthesis emerges the theological axis upon which the Bahá’í Faith pivots: unity. Unity of God, of humanity, of the divine messengers… Unity, therefore, in diversity—since, as was explained to us, “this is a unity that differs from uniformity, as unity always implies diverse components coming together”. When asked during fieldwork about the essential core of Bahá’ísm, the response was invariably “unity in diversity,” which is conceived in three dimensions: unity of God—a single Creator that may be named and conceived in many ways; unity of religions—as different paths leading to God; and unity of humankind. Furthermore:

> *Some of the Bahá’í Community’s own laws are focused on promoting human understanding so that we may live in peace and develop a civilisation in continuous progress, one in which extremes of wealth and poverty are eliminated, a culture of well-being is promoted, and we truly see each other as beings in need of collaboration, cooperation, and other values.* (Bahá’í woman, 50 years old, migrant background, Madrid, 2024)

Taken as a whole, these principles straddle the religious and secular spheres, serving as guiding values for public life, interpersonal relationships, institutional engagement, and the evolution of nations. They may thus be considered a form of early “strategic secularism,” wherein explicitly religious reasoning is deliberately replaced or supplemented with scientific arguments and juridical–political discourse (Vaggione 2005, p. 240). This does not suggest that religious institutions or discourse have lost their centrality—on the contrary, such centrality must be understood as, initially, a reactive politicisation against the religious and political establishment of Persia, and now against certain states where Bahá’ís face persecution. In this way, the Bahá’í Faith maintains a significant public dimension.

Accordingly, Bahá’í principles align well with contemporary contexts of religious pluralism grounded in the right to religious freedom. They constitute a repertoire of “modern” religious practices and discourses that seek to address other forms of social demand, such as equality, coexistence, inclusion, and recognition of difference. Both the more secular principles—such as the independent search for truth free of superstition or tradition, human

unity, condemnation of all forms of prejudice, gender equality, compulsory education, and the abolition of wealth extremes—and those with a more theological inspiration—such as the essential unity of all religions, religion as a bastion for the protection of nations and peoples, harmony between science and religion, religion as a source of friendship, and spiritual equality across religious messages—respond effectively to the key demands made of religion in post-secular modernity: the generation of genuinely dialogic spaces in which all voices, religious and non-religious, may engage freely, openly, and without reciprocal prejudice, and the recognition of religion's potential contributions to modernisation (Ruiz Andrés 2022).

In this respect, it is evident how the guidance offered by these principles and the Bahá'í teachings in general has contributed to the global reach achieved by the Faith in under two centuries. A clear example is the Bahá'í International Community, the body encompassing all national Bahá'í communities worldwide, which maintains consultative relationships with international organisations such as the United Nations, the Economic and Social Council, UNICEF, the World Health Organization, the United Nations Development Fund for Women, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Spain 2023, p. 24). This global perspective has, as the next section will show, a direct counterpart at the national level in Spain.

5. The Process of Institutionalisation of the Bahá'í Faith in Spain: A Historical Overview

The seemingly successful establishment of the Bahá'í Faith is exemplified in the Spanish context. However, it is appropriate to distinguish between the successive stages of the Faith's consolidation and institutionalisation process, shaped largely by the evolving conceptions of religious freedom held by the Spanish state since the Bahá'í presence in the country began. Each phase was navigated by Bahá'í communities through the inspiration of their core religious principles, which were progressively translated into discourses and strategies aimed at achieving public visibility and institutional engagement.

5.1. The Franco Dictatorship and the Bahá'í Faith: A Period of Religious Monopoly (1946–1978)

There is evidence of the Bahá'í Faith in Spain dating back to 1874, with a series of contacts between Spanish individuals interested in the Bahá'í Faith—so-called "seekers"—and Bahá'í believers from countries such as the United States and Persia (Mohabbat 1997). It is precisely then when the earliest references to the Bahá'í Faith (and also to the Bábí Faith) are documented in Spain, both in the press (*Diario de Barcelona* or *La Época*) and in certain intellectual circles, such as the Krausist philosopher Francisco de Paula Canalejas, with articles appearing in specialized journals like the *Revista Europea* (Egea 2010).

However, the religion did not gain an "official" presence in Spain until 1946, when the American Virginia Orbison arrived, having been sent by Shoghi Effendi to introduce and establish the Bahá'í Faith (Macías and Salguero 2010). From the outset, as noted in one interview, "the goal was also to gain recognition for this new religion in Spain". The context that Orbison encountered was one of a political regime inspired by National Catholicism (Díaz-Salazar 2006, p. 15): Article 6 of the 1945 *Fuero de los Españoles* declared the Catholic nature of the State and permitted only Catholic worship in public: "No other ceremonies or public religious manifestations will be allowed except those of the Catholic religion". Sources describe these early years as marked by "severe hostility" and "police surveillance and some imprisonments, necessitating small domestic meetings to avoid public gatherings," as seen in the case of Valencia (Buades and Vidal 2007, p. 270), and similar surveillance and restrictions in Madrid (López et al. 2007, p. 85).

> *. . . there were constant inspections. As far as I know, there were no arrests here in Andalusia; there were in Catalonia—once in the 1950s during a summer school and again at a convention. . . All Bahá'ís were monitored by the police. For example, in Murcia in the 1950s. . . The police were stationed in the flat next door, where they listened to meetings held in Juanita Ortuño's home. There was a concierge, and plain-clothed officers were watching who entered and exited.* (Bahá'í woman, 30 years old, Spanish origin, Granada, 2008).

Even worse were the accounts from Bahá'ís across the Strait. Three believers from Ceuta and another who would later be based in Melilla were among a group of 14 Bahá'ís prosecuted by the Moroccan government under Hassan II. They faced multiple life sentences and one death sentence during a crackdown on Bahá'ísm between 1962 and 1963 (Cameron and Momen 1996, p. 328; Salguero 2013, pp. 192–93).

Nevertheless, just sixteen months after Orbison's arrival, the first Local Spiritual Assembly in Spain was formed in Madrid. Over time, new Bahá'í communities emerged, and additional local assemblies were established across the Spanish territory. This was greatly aided by coordinated efforts to bring Bahá'ís from other countries to Spain with the same purpose as Orbison. Such was the case of the American True family, pioneers who arrived in Tenerife in 1953 (García-Hernández 2008, p. 253), and the Forougis from Iran, who settled in Málaga in 1961 (Macías and Salguero 2010, p. 4). From the beginning, institutional recognition was pursued: in September 1954, several Bahá'ís submitted an unsuccessful application for official registration to the Ministry to prevent the police raids and arrests that occurred throughout the 1950s (National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Spain 2023, p. 40).

In short, the combination of a well-planned global strategy, an effective organisation of nascent local groups often meeting in private homes, and a clear objective of institutional recognition enabled the Bahá'í Community to resist—at least partially—the limitations imposed by the Franco regime. As a result, in 1957, the Iberian Regional Assembly was established jointly for Spain and Portugal. A decade later, the Bahá'í Faith became the second religious denomination to be registered in the newly created Register of Non-Catholic Religious Associations under the Francoist regime:

> *From 1968 onwards, there was a shift, because our identity as a religion was acknowledged. It's not as if they wanted to help us prosper—certainly, there were obstacles—but no longer outright persecution.* (Bahá'í woman, 30 years old, Spanish origin, Granada, 2008)

> *We were still being monitored here, because it was Franco's time, but even so, there was a certain respect. During Franco's era, freedoms were already beginning to open up. That counted for something.* (Bahá'í man, 70 years old, migrant background, Melilla, 2010)

This initial public recognition is interpreted as a "significant step", helping to consolidate the Bahá'í presence in Spain and to establish a more robust organizational structure for future growth and expansion (Alastruey 2024, p. 353).

5.2. An Active Minority Within the Minorities: The Bahá'í Community in Spain (1978–2010)

The second stage begins with the democratic period, which establishes a legal framework promoting pluralism and religious freedom of worship, replacing the religious monopoly previously exercised by the Catholic Church through the coercion of the State, with a new context of religious majorities and minorities. Within this context, the Catholic Church continues to play a leading role in relation to other faiths, which progressively present demands to institutions and citizens aimed at the effective implementation of a more egalitarian framework. This era also marks new contacts with Iranian Bahá'ís, who at this time arrived in Spain fleeing the newly established Islamic Republic of Iran, which

generated a "wave of Iranian Bahá'í refugees arriving in our country" and "resulted in closer relations with humanitarian organisations and the competent State bodies in these matters" (National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Spain 2023, p. 9).

From the mid-1980s onwards, "the number of Bahá'í activities increased, as did their participation in the forums and conferences of Spanish civil society, whose presence became increasingly evident in all spheres of public life" (National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Spain 2023, p. 10). In 1997, the local assembly of Terrassa (Barcelona) was the second Bahá'í body to register with the Ministry of Justice's Register of Religious Entities (RER). Between 1999 and 2000, a total of ten local assemblies (including those in Alicante, Valencia, Zaragoza, Cartagena, and Murcia) were constituted as religious entities.

Within this context, the level of public recognition of the Bahá'í Faith in Spain corresponded to what Díez de Velasco (2023, p. 45) has termed the "fourth level", which applies to groups "registered in the RER, but without further agreements or recognition". By the end of the previous decade, this level was shared by native pagan confessions, Hindus, Scientologists, Sikhs, and "others". Such recognition, as has been noted, was limited precisely to public acknowledgment granting entities full organizational autonomy, given that the collective rights of religious freedom are held by all religious groups, whether registered or not. It is within this context that the needs of religious minorities generally consist primarily of a shift in societal perception towards "other religions" and improved institutional attention, demanding equal treatment comparable to that accorded to other religious confessions (Salguero 2010, p. 489). These needs were also shared by the Bahá'ís:

> *For a believer to have any kind of dialogue, for example with a school or the Town Hall, with the authorities, it is often the case that 'the Bahá'í Faith. . .' and the response you get is: 'The faith what? The faith what? The "baha" what?' You must explain that the Bahá'í Faith is a religious community that has been in Spain for 76 years and that we now have notable roots here. Most people outside this sphere simply cannot understand this.* (Public Affairs of the Bahá'í Community of Spain, Madrid, 2024).

5.3. The First Application for Notorio Arraigo Recognition: A Ten-Year Process (2011–2020)

Due to the inherent limitations of this legal status, and building on the recent experience of Orthodox Christianity—which in April 2010 had been granted Notorio Arraigo recognition by the Advisory Commission on Religious Freedom of the Ministry of Justice at the request of the Orthodox Episcopal Assembly (now the "Assembly of Canonical Orthodox Bishops of Spain and Portugal")—the Community began in 2011 to plan the process of applying for Notorio Arraigo. This was done to be on an equal footing with the legal status of the Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, Buddhists, and Orthodox Christians. To this end, between 2011 and 2012, up to 20 entities were registered (Madrid, Sant Quirze del Valles, Santa Cruz de Tenerife, Oviedo, Telde, Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Valladolid. . .). This significant increase in the number of entities, along with the extensive institutional activity of the Bahá'í Community of Spain, was framed within the desire to fulfil the goal of the Faith's recognition in this country.

However, the 1980 Organic Law on Religious Freedom conceived of Notorio Arraigo as an ambiguous and indeterminate concept (Torres-Sospedra 2023, p. 45). For the Administration, "it was not entirely clear what criteria should be followed when granting said recognition of Notorio Arraigo", so an attempt was made to "clarify and define the precise requirements to obtain such legal recognition, with the healthy purpose of achieving greater legal certainty" (Torres-Gutiérrez 2024, p. 10). The then recently announced upcoming regulatory changes for obtaining Notorio Arraigo therefore required a rethinking of the contents and forms of the application initiated by the Bahá'í Community. Nevertheless, the application had been taken into consideration by the Advisory Commission on Religious

Freedom, which had commissioned an expert report that turned out to be positive. The Bahá'í Community of Spain requested that the Commission certify this fact so that the conclusions of the report could be considered for relevant purposes in the future (National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Spain 2023, p. 46). These changes were those that would later be established by article 3 of Royal Decree 593/2015, which determined the new requirements for obtaining Notorio Arraigo: being registered in the RER for at least 30 years and having at least 100 registrations in the RER, or annotations of communities or places of worship; being present in at least ten Autonomous Communities; having an adequate structure; and having an active presence in society. Despite such changes, the interviews conducted show a fluid dialogue throughout the process with the responsible authorities, which would contribute to the future success of the application.

> *. . . at that very moment, the Deputy Directorate General for Relations with Religious Confessions was exploring how to establish criteria to make it more transparent, and they told us: 'You can proceed, and we'll see what happens, or you can withdraw the application until this Regulation is approved.' So that's when the Bahá'í Community decided to withdraw the file.* (Public Affairs of the Bahá'í Community of Spain, Madrid, 2024).

To meet these requirements, six more entities were established between 2014 and 2020, bringing the total to 39 registered religious entities. Overall, the establishment of the Bahá'í Faith was present in a large part of the state's geography, particularly concentrated in different areas with a certain population density. The institutionalization of the communities, together with a growing human group that numbered around five thousand people at the end of the last decade, had peak moments as indicated, in which a notable number of local assemblies were constituted as religious entities.

5.4. The Final Stage of Recognition: The Bahá'í Community's Successful Bid for Notorio Arraigo (2021–2023)

The present decade began with a clearly defined project for the application, which also included "a team delegated by the National Assembly to gather information and draft the report," as we were informed. It was then that the most significant increase in the number of entities occurred. In 2021, the Bahá'í Community of Spain registered up to 70 additional entities distributed throughout the country to reach the quorum of "at least one hundred registrations in the Register". Since then, no new registrations have been made. The minority character of the confession in general, and of some of its groups in particular, meant that in certain municipalities the quorum of nine individuals required to constitute a local assembly was not reached. This led to a major organizational reconsideration within the Bahá'í Community to enable the formation of local assemblies with members residing in neighbouring municipalities, as in the case of Santander, which necessitated a reformulation of the statutes and was subsequently submitted for consultation to the Universal House of Justice.

> *We had to amend the legal statutes concerning the formation and registration of Bahá'í communities in order to register them as entities. But this was an internal matter; it was not something demanded by the Government or the Subdirectorate; each confession may register communities as it deems appropriate. However, our statutes stated that registration occurred only by municipality, by local assemblies. Therefore, the entire consultation process had to be undertaken, with adjustments and approvals. . . It took a very long time.* (Public Affairs of the Bahá'í Community of Spain, Madrid, 2024)

During this final stage, we were told, the attitude of the institutions continued to be facilitative, characterised by a spirit of "let us learn together, of continuous collaboration".

As a result, on 26 September 2023, the Official State Gazette (BOE) published the Ministerial Order whereby the State recognised the Notorio Arraigo of the Bahá'í Community of Spain.

> *. . . the applicant entity has been registered for fifty-five years and counts one hundred and eight registered entities and seventeen places of worship noted across fifteen Autonomous Communities and Autonomous Cities. It possesses a structure encompassing the National Assembly and local assemblies, with its statutes defining the manner of election of legal representatives, the minimum number of members required to form a local community, and the coordination rules within its structure that ensure continuity and accountability within it.* (Order PCM/1065/2023)

The human team delegated by the National Spiritual Assembly behind this endeavour included experts in various fields such as archive management, communication, institutional relations, and legal affairs. Among the challenges faced by the group was, in general, the selection of which contents should be included in the report, and more specifically, how to demonstrate an active presence and participation in Spanish society (Nieva 2024, p. 360). Indeed, this difficulty noted by the Bahá'ís has also been expressed in the academic literature, where it is regarded as an "excessively indeterminate" requirement, necessitating a precise definition of what is to be understood by it, and a need to "distinguish between presence and participation, active and passive" (Torres-Gutiérrez 2024, p. 16).

> *We had to respond to the five criteria. The first four are very straightforward: a history of more than 30 years; presence; communities; organisational form. . . All of that is easy. But then we reached the part concerning rootedness, contribution, social commitment, and public presence. For this, we had to go back a long way. It was extremely difficult, because since Virginia Orbison arrived in 1946, the vocation of the Bahá'í Community has always been public, as it is not the case that we do Bahá'í things just for Bahá'ís. Alongside more internal activities, such as celebrating our holy days or holding meetings, others are more open. All the major activities and most activities have a social vocation.* (Public Affairs of the Bahá'í Community of Spain, Madrid, 2024)

Special attention should be paid to the fact that, alongside meeting the material requirements (number of entities and locations, adequate structure, etc.) and the work carried out in the fields of human rights and relations with the academic and legal worlds—both actions with significant potential for public visibility—the Order also explicitly references Bahá'í principles, notably religious freedom with respect to religious persecution, and equality between men and women. These principles have a clearly secular reach, yet they form part of the very foundations of the religion:

> *. . . the activities carried out in society within the field of non-formal education, the defence of Human Rights, particularly religious freedom and the plight of those persecuted for being Bahá'ís, the equality between men and women which is part of the principles of the Bahá'í Faith as expressed by its founder, and activities within academic and legal spheres, as well as participation in interreligious forums and dialogue panels. Finally, they demonstrate a significant international presence, having obtained recognition of a status like Notorio Arraigo in neighbouring countries such as Portugal, Italy, the United Kingdom, France, and Germany.* (Order PCM/1065/2023)

As a result of its extensive community trajectory, 60% of the content of the Report to substantiate Notorio Arraigo (National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Spain 2023) was devoted to Social Commitment and Public Presence (Nieva 2024, p. 361), which was structured into three subsections: "Contribution to Public Discourse and Social Life," "Social Action," and "Relations with the State and Spanish Administrations". Regarding social action, this document accounts for a repertoire of activities primarily focused on

values education and community development; these differ, therefore, from more charitable endeavours generally undertaken by many religious confessions, such as soup kitchens or charitable clothing banks. These initiatives are "formal and informal" (park clean-ups, activities in nursing homes or foster care for minors, recycling efforts, school support, urban gardens, tree planting and care, accompaniment of the sick, etc.) carried out in collaboration with local civic organizations, neighbourhood associations, and public institutions. They are "modest, short-term undertakings" aimed at "applying Bahá'í teachings and principles to improve some aspect of the social and economic life of a specific population or neighbourhood" (National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Spain 2023, pp. 84–85). Regarding the evaluation of all this, some members of the Advisory Commission on Religious Freedom suggested in their comments that it would be useful in future to have an objective criterion to assess this final regulatory requirement, given the broad scope of interpretation it entails (Nieva 2024, p. 361).

6. Challenges and Outlook: The Bahá'í Community as a Recognised Religion of Notorio Arraigo

The significant establishment of the Bahá'í Faith in terms of organisational structures and adherents, alongside its corresponding recognition as a religion of Notorio Arraigo, has occurred within a context of religious pluralism where Evangelical Christianity and Islam occupy the foremost positions: by the end of 2024, there were 3485 Evangelical religious entities and 2100 Muslim ones. In terms of volume, these constitute the "large religious minorities", followed by Jehovah's Witnesses, Orthodox Christians, Mormons, and Buddhists. As in many other countries where the Bahá'í Faith is recognised and has some presence, it is notably active in the formation of groups and the carrying out of public activities. However, this presence never translates quantitatively into communities and adherents comparable to those of the majority religion, nor to the "majority minority".

Within this context, the new phase of consolidation and institutionalisation of the Bahá'í Faith in Spain presents a series of challenges both for the Community itself and for the institutions, as well as raising questions regarding the current plausibility of legal frameworks and recognition levels in relation to the realistic prospects for the immediate future of this confession in Spain. The Bahá'í Faith has ascended from the fourth level of recognition to the third—that is, to the level corresponding to those confessions recognised with Notorio Arraigo, albeit currently without signed cooperation agreements, which is attributed to "a lack of political will, although all have expressed interest in this regard" (Torres-Gutiérrez 2024, p. 9). As outlined in the contextualisation section, Notorio Arraigo function as a hallmark that attests to the confession's relevance in shaping Spanish identity, as well as a formal channel of dialogue with the State. The direct benefits include the possibility—still remote for the Bahá'ís and other confessions—of signing a cooperation agreement (thereby equating them with Jews, Evangelicals, and Muslims); membership in the Advisory Commission on Religious Freedom; and the recognition of civil effects for religious marriages.

> *It gives you that moral authority and that backing that it is a religion recognised by the Government. So, you proceed with great confidence, we are recognised, we have tried. That shows seriousness, firstly as a believer and then for the rest of society. (. . .) Then, in practical terms, you enter the 'guest list' (. . .) we have been at two events that we would not have been able to attend before. Receiving an invitation from the Royal Household to attend the 12 October greeting (. . .) and last year to the celebration of the 45th anniversary of Constitution Day.* (Public Affairs, Bahá'í Community of Spain, Madrid, 2024)

Despite the "limited immediate effects" conferred by the status of Notorio Arraigo—given that it "serves very little if not accompanied by a Cooperation Agreement" (Torres-Gutiérrez 2024, p. 30)—from the Bahá'í Community's perspective, achieving this recognition bears significance beyond these benefits and relates to the possibility of "being able to contribute more to society as a result of the new public spaces that may be opened up". The Bahá'ís consider the duty to contribute to society an "essential principle of Faith," and thus interpret the attainment of Notorio Arraigo as an opportunity to give fuller expression to this spiritual conviction" (Nieva 2024, p. 360).

Looking Ahead: The Future Needs of the Bahá'í Communities in Spain

During more than 30 years of the democratic period, neither the Bahá'í Community of Spain nor any of its groups have been particularly active in presenting demands to public institutions regarding the effective materialisation of the fundamental right to religious freedom in this country, at least not to the same extent as other confessions that academia has documented in previous decades, such as Evangelical Christianity and Islam, notably concerning religious education in public schools (Mantecón 2000; Tarrés and Rosón 2009) or the establishment of Muslim cemeteries within municipal cemeteries (Moreras 2004; Tarrés and Moreras 2013).

Instead, the Bahá'ís in Spain have spearheaded demands of a different nature, mostly related to human rights violations elsewhere in the world, and particularly to the situation experienced by their co-religionists in Iran. Among the measures involving public institutions are: the creation of an Office of External Affairs to establish relations with the Government and contribute to international campaigns defending the Bahá'ís of Iran; the declaration condemning violations of the fundamental rights of Bahá'ís in Iran by the Special Commission on Human Rights of the Senate (1982); the approval in 2006 and 2009 of respective non-legislative motions condemning these abuses by the Foreign Affairs Commission of the Congress of Deputies; alongside similar resolutions adopted at various regional levels (Asturias in 2007; and Canary Islands in 2010) and local levels (Benalmádena in 2007; Sant Quirze del Vallès-Barcelona in 2012; Barcelona in 2021), as well as various appearances by Bahá'í representatives before public bodies (National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Spain 2023, p. 46).

However, not making demands to the institutions does not imply an absence of needs or the perception of deficiencies in how these institutions effectively implement the fundamental right to religious freedom and worship. These needs do not necessarily correspond to the absence of a cooperation agreement on the horizon, since, as explained, progress can be made through other legal channels, such as the amendment of the Patronage Law which in April 2023 equalised the fiscal regime of all religious confessions with recognised established roots (Notorio Arraigo), whether or not they have signed a cooperation agreement:

> *This is much more effective than a cooperation agreement (. . .) Are we seeking a cooperation agreement? Not specifically. Are we seeking to improve certain benefits and rights that are being processed for all? Yes. We would certainly like contributions made within the Bahá'í community to be deductible; of course, we would be interested in having benefits such as reductions in property taxes; that interests us.* (Public Affairs of the Bahá'í Community of Spain, Madrid, 2024)

The primary need is therefore the revision of the fiscal regime applicable to minority confessions without a cooperation agreement with the State, as a result of the limited economic effects of the declaration of recognised established roots, since for the moment "it does not grant access to those rights or benefits reserved under our legal system for the signing of a cooperation agreement, such as tax benefits on donations in personal income

tax and corporate tax, or property tax, transfer tax and stamp duty" (Torres-Gutiérrez 2024, pp. 31–33). Other economically related needs identified include, for example, reconciling the Bahá'í financial principles (voluntary contribution) with legal requirements, ensuring transparency and compliance with regulations, in addition to other needs of various kinds directly linked to the public management of religious diversity, such as the recognition of civil effects of Bahá'í marriages, since to date, couples still hold two ceremonies, the civil and the Bahá'í, to ensure full legal recognition of their union; conscientious objection in medical and military contexts; and access to the education system, proposing alternatives to the current model through "comprehensive education based on ethical and moral principles" (Alastruey 2024, p. 355–36). The list does not end here: the Bahá'í Faith lacks ministers of religion as such, the closest equivalent being certain employed positions within the organisational structure of the Bahá'í Community of Spain. Since "there is no legal definition in the Spanish legal framework of ministers of religion for confessions that have obtained recognised established roots but lack a cooperation agreement with the State" (Herrera 2024, p. 5), the Community seeks the equalisation of the legal status of these employees with that of ministers of religion from confessions with recognised established roots: "we do not have ministers of religion, but here we have a group of people employed under the general regime without any other benefits. I suppose progress will be made in this regard".

The final set of specific needs relates to public presence and civic participation. Among the new needs of the Bahá'í Faith is visibility in the public sphere. In this regard, the implementation of cultural, educational, and social awareness activities by Bahá'í communities in the public spaces of Spanish cities provides their representatives with a platform for practices of "performative citizenship" (claiming rights and legitimising their recognition), like how religious rituals function for some religious minorities in diaspora contexts. The success of these various manifestations will depend on the public legal and institutional framework, as well as the style of representation and performative citizenship employed (Astor et al. 2023). The successful Bahá'í case is largely the result of the consolidation and institutionalisation of the community's social fabric and a progressive, albeit slow, institutional recognition. In this process, as demonstrated for other confessions such as Islam (Salguero 2024a), the Bahá'í religious thought, which also prescribes how relationships between diverse citizens and institutions should be, and its connection with the subaltern class consciousness as a religious minority, influences how spatial issues are addressed. The interviews reveal several obstacles to holding (non-worship) activities in some public facilities (civic centres, cultural centres, etc.), which contradict Bahá'í principles such as equality before the law and the abolition of all forms of prejudice and discrimination. An example is the requirement to prove a separate civil legal personality, such as that of an association distinct from the religious entity, to gain access to such spaces:

> *As a religion I want to participate in a debate space at the Town Hall where something related to societal improvement or contribution is being discussed, I cannot go because I am not 'someone', that is, I am not a public utility institution. I have to go as an association because otherwise, you do not enter the mechanisms.* (Public Affairs of the Bahá'í Community of Spain, Madrid, 2024)

The detriment is clear in this regard, as it ignores public recognition as a religious entity, whose registration, as stated in the second edition of the Manual for Municipal Management of Religious Diversity by the Pluralism and Coexistence Foundation, "is sufficient to enjoy full legal capacity and they do not need to reiterate their registration in any other registry to access on equal terms with other entities the benefits or actions that public administrations provide in relation to the activities they perform" (Alarcón et al. 2016, p. 54).

Access to public space is also sometimes limited when it comes to using such space to hold large-scale events of various kinds, as already documented in this research concerning the Romanian Orthodox Christianity and the difficulties in holding part of the nocturnal Easter liturgy in public streets (Salguero 2024b). Regarding the Bahá'í Faith, it is reported that "there are activities we would like to hold, but the bureaucracy is so cumbersome. We have tried several times". Although the Bahá'í Faith does not typically engage in large religious rituals, on occasion it has required venues larger than its own premises capable of accommodating many people, not just believers, such as the bicentenary of the passing of Bahá'u'lláh in 2017, for which permission was granted to use the Plaza del Centenario in the Madrid district of Cuatro Caminos, where several marquees and a stage were set up: "getting the permit was a real ordeal; the permit arrived the day before. It's the same old story". Other times:

> *. . . permission has been requested to use cultural centres or halls for the celebration of a holy day. Responses have varied. Some very positive, others not, because as soon as it is realised that it concerns a religious community or religious event, the doors close. When we have been facilitated it has been due to personal relationships, trust, and because the understanding of competent authority is somewhat broader.* (Public Affairs of the Bahá'í Community of Spain, Madrid, 2024)

Looking ahead to meeting these spatial needs, self-management also appears necessary, given the prolonged disinterest shown by some public administrations to date. The idea of having a large Bahá'í temple in Spain is part of the community's plans; they acquired land some years ago in El Escorial (Madrid), although this has been discarded as currently unsuitable for real needs. In other areas with significant Bahá'í presence, such as the Canary Islands, plans are also underway to have a dedicated space of this kind; however, in both cases, budgetary constraints are evident, as funding relies solely on community resources. Therefore, in the interest of greater equality of treatment among confessions, they do not rule out the possibility that in the future spaces could be granted by local administrations, as, for example, the Madrid City Council did when it ceded land to the Russian Orthodox Church (which holds the same level of recognition as the Bahá'í Community) for the construction of the Cathedral of Saint Mary Magdalene.

All in all, the immediate future that opens up for the Bahá'ís with the recognition of established roots is perceived "as a continuous journey requiring both adaptability and defence of the fundamental principles of this religious community in Spain" (Alastruey 2024, p. 356). To achieve this, it is necessary, on the one hand, "to unite efforts among the various social actors, including religious communities, to jointly seek through dialogue and collaboration proposals to address the challenges that affect, to a greater or lesser extent, all humanity" (Nieva 2024, p. 366), and, on the other, that institutions and society undertake "a review of their model of freedom of conscience" (Torres-Gutiérrez 2024, p. 42).

7. Concluding Remarks

The Bahá'í Faith, originating in nineteenth-century Islamic Persia, presents itself as a monotheistic and universalist religion that promotes global unity. Despite its minority status, it has achieved significant expansion within less than two hundred years, spreading across more than two hundred countries, which has sparked debate regarding its classification. Although the category of NRM proves useful in describing its dynamics of consolidation and establishment, it has been criticised for its imprecision. To distance itself from a concept burdened with negative connotations, the secular Bahá'í literature perceives the Faith as a world religion and independent entity, aligned with the progressive and democratic values of modernity, which has facilitated its growth and global recognition.

Throughout this process, Bahá'í principles have played an important role. These principles do not constitute a fixed list but rather a series of values that inspire the actions of Bahá'í individuals, communities, and institutions, adapting flexibly to different historical and social circumstances. The Bahá'í principles address both spiritual and social aspects, promoting values such as the unity of humanity, equality of rights, harmony between science and religion, and social justice. Moreover, these principles integrate both religious and secular values, aligning with the ideals of postsecular modernity, such as equality and peaceful coexistence. These foundations have enabled the Bahá'í Faith to establish a global presence, engaging with international organisations and promoting a peace and progress agenda.

While this presence remains subject to the legal frameworks of each country, as exemplified by the case of Iran, the Spanish context, although vastly different from that situation, has also been shaped by successive State positions on religious freedom and worship. From the early years characterised by the State's staunch Catholic confessionalism, the total absence of religious freedom, and persecution of other religions, to the more recent recognition of notable social presence, the Bahá'í Faith has managed—albeit with varying degrees of success—to navigate the circumstances of each period. It has deployed a series of strategies for visibility and institutionalisation, drawing inspiration from the practical and secular applicability of various Bahá'í principles such as loyalty and obedience to the government and non-involvement in partisan politics.

In this regard, the Bahá'í Community of Spain presents itself as a "non-conflictive" group, as it does not pose notable disagreements with the effective implementation of the right to religious freedom. Rather, it requests that authorities endorse certain matters with overwhelming social legitimacy, such as safeguarding human rights or promoting discourses on gender equality and universal education. In other words, it is a modern religion whose repertoire of practices and discourses, based on its fundamental religious principles, aligns with those of post-secular modernity, wherein religious actors also contribute to social development and cohesion.

Despite its active participation in the creation of groups and public activities, its quantitative establishment remains below that of other confessions, within a context dominated by Catholic Christianity as the majority confession, alongside Evangelical Christianity and Islam as the "major minorities". From this perspective, the elevation to the status of notable social presence represents an advance in its consolidation, although it still lacks cooperation agreements with the State, which limits immediate benefits. Nevertheless, this recognition is perceived by the Community as an opportunity to contribute to society, reflecting its spiritual conviction and gaining spaces for dialogue and visibility in the public sphere.

The absence of demands regarding the materialisation of the fundamental right to religious freedom before public institutions does not imply a lack of needs in this regard. These needs primarily include improvements in fiscal benefits and the reconciliation of its financial principles with legal requirements, as well as the recognition of civil effects for Bahá'í marriages. Additionally, similarly to other confessions, it sometimes faces obstacles in accessing public spaces for activities of various kinds. Despite these difficulties, the recognition of notable social presence is seen as an opportunity to advance in this area and, subsequently, as a space in which to review the model of religious freedom in Spanish society.

Funding: This research was funded by Ministry of Science, Innovation and Universities of the Spanish Government, grant number PID2023-146205NB-I00, in the framework of the project 'Definition of public policies on religious freedom and equality from the perspective of territorial pluralism, 2024–2027', directed by María del Mar Leal Adorna of the University of Seville.

Institutional Review Board Statement: The study was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki and approved by the Subdivisión de Programas Temáticos Científico-Técnicos. Agencia Estatal de Investigación (2235, 4 December 2024).

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement: The data used and analysed in the study are available from the authors on reasonable request.

Acknowledgments: This research acknowledges the significant contribution of the Bahá'í Community of Spain, the main subject of this investigation. The collaboration of its representatives, demonstrated through their granting of interviews, the authorization for participant observation at relevant events, and their provision of feedback on the research's progress, has been indispensable for the completion of the present study.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflicts of interest.

Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used in this manuscript:

BOE	Official State Gazette
RER	Register of Religious Entities

References

'Abdu'l-Bahá. 2009. *Selección de escritos de Abdu'l-Bahá*. Madrid: Editorial Bahá'í de España.

'Abdu'l-Bahá. 2011. *Paris Talks: Addresses Given by 'Abdu'l-Baha in 1911*, Centenary ed. Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust.

Alarcón, Ignacio, Patricia Bezunartea, José Antonio Cabanillas, Joaquín Corcobado, Puerto García, Rita Gomes, José Manuel López, Mercedes Murillo, and Juli Ponce. 2016. *Manual Para la Gestión Municipal de la Diversidad Religiosa*, 2nd ed. Madrid: Observatorio del Pluralismo Religioso en España.

Alastruey, Karlos. 2024. El notorio arraigo de la Comunidad Bahá'í en España: Historia y desafíos. In *Estatuto Jurídico de las Minorías Religiosas sin Acuerdo de Cooperación*. Edited by Alejandro Torres-Gutiérrez and Óscar Celador. Madrid: Dykinson, vol. 2, pp. 349–57.

Ančić, Branko. 2014. Bahá'í Religion as a New Religious Movement? In *The Dialectics of the Religious and the Secular*. Edited by Michael R. Ott. Leiden: Brill, pp. 194–206. [CrossRef]

Astor, Avi, Rosa Martínez-Cuadros, and Víctor Albert-Blanco. 2023. Religious representation and performative citizenship: The civic dimensions of Shia lamentation rituals in Barcelona. *Social Compass* 70: 20–37. [CrossRef]

Bahá'u'lláh. 1992. *The Kitab-I-Aqdas: The Most Holy Book*. Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust.

Barker, Eileen. 1999. New religious movements: Their incidence and significance. In *New Religious Movements: Challenge and Response*. Edited by Bryan Wilson and Jamie Cresswell. London: Routledge, pp. 15–32.

Beckford, James A. 2003. *Social Theory and Religion*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Briones, Rafael, Sol Tarrés, and Óscar Salguero. 2013. *Encuentros. Diversidad religiosa en Ceuta y en Melilla*. Barcelona: Icaria.

Briones, Rafael, Sol Tarrés, Óscar Salguero, Clara Macías, Estefanía Fernández, and Verónica Suáres. 2010. *¿Y tú de quién eres? Minorías religiosas en Andalucía*. Barcelona: Icaria.

Buades, Josep, and Fernando Vidal. 2007. *Minorías de lo Mayor. Minorías Religiosas en la Comunidad Valenciana*. Barcelona: Icaria.

Cameron, Glenn, and Wendi Momen. 1996. *A Basic Bahá'í Chronology*. Oxford: George Ronald Publisher.

Castón, Pedro, and María Mar Ramos. 2007. Historia y evolución de los conceptos de Iglesia y secta en Sociología. In *El fenómeno Religioso. Presencia de la Religión y la Religiosidad en las Sociedades Avanzadas (Ponencias de las II Jornadas de Sociología, 13 y 14 de junio de 2007)*. Edited by Eduardo Bericat. Sevilla: Centro de Estudios Andaluces, pp. 269–88.

Díaz-Salazar, Rafael. 2006. *El Factor Católico en la Política Española. Del Nacionalcatolicismo al Laicismo*. Madrid: PPC.

Díez de Velasco, Francisco. 2023. *La Diversidad Religiosa en España: Reflexiones y Ejemplos*. Madrid: Ediciones Clásicas.

Effendi, Shoghi. 1944. *God Passes By*. Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust.

Egea, Amín E. 2010. Chronicles of a Birth Part III: Early References to the Bábí and Bahá'í Religions in Spain (1873–1895). In *Lights of 'Irfán Studies in the Principal Bahá'í Beliefs. Papers Presented at the 'Irfán Colloquia and Seminars*. Book Eleven. Edited by Iraj Ayman. Darmstadt: Asr-i-Jadid Publisher, pp. 1–20.

Esslemont, John E. 2006. *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era: An Introduction to the Bahá'í Faith*. Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust.

Fischer, Michael M.J. 1999. El cambio social y los espejos de la tradición: Los bahá'ís de Yazd. In *La fe Bahá'í y el Islam*. Edited by Heshmat Moayyad. Terrassa: Editorial Bahá'í, pp. 59–91.

García-Hernández, Alfonso M. 2008. La comunidad bahá'í en Canarias. In *Religiones Entre Continentes. Minorías Religiosas en Canarias*. Edited by Francisco Díez de Velasco. Barcelona: Icaria, pp. 253–65.
Hatcher, William S., and J. Douglas Martin. 2002. *The Baha'i Faith: The Emerging Global Religion*. Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust.
Herrera, Enrique. 2024. *Código de los Ministros de Culto (Edición Actualizada a 20 de Noviembre de 2024)*. Madrid: Agencia Estatal Boletín Oficial del Estado.
Jones, Lindsay. 2005. Baha'i. In *Encyclopedia of Religion*, 2nd ed. New York: MacMillan Reference Books, vol. 2.
López, Bernabé, Ángeles Ramírez, Eva Herrero, Said Kirhlani, and María Tello. 2007. *Arraigados. Minorías religiosas en la Comunidad de Madrid*. Barcelona: Icaria.
Macías, Clara, and Óscar Salguero. 2010. La Fe Bahá'í en Andalucía: Su Implantación en Contextos de Pluralismo Religioso. *Gazeta de Antropología* 26: 21. [CrossRef]
Mantecón, Joaquín. 2000. La enseñanza religiosa de las confesiones minoritarias en los Acuerdos de cooperación de 1992. *Revista General de Derecho Canónico y Derecho Eclesiástico del Estado* 44: 421–31.
Melton, John G. 2004. An Introduction to New Religions. In *The Oxford Handbook of New Religious Movements*. Edited by James R. Lewis. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. 16–38.
Mohabbat, Navid. 1997. *Brisa en el Amanecer. Orígenes (1874–1957). La fe Bahá'í en España*. Barcelona: Editorial Bahá'í de España.
Moreras, Jordi. 2004. Morir lejos de casa: La muerte en contexto migratorio. In *Atlas 2004 de la Inmigración Marroquí en España*. Edited by Bernabé López and M. Berriane. Madrid: Ministerio de Trabajo y Asuntos Sociales, pp. 427–30.
National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Spain. 2023. *La Fe bahá'í en España. Memoria para Acreditar el Notorio Arraigo*. Madrid: Editorial Bahá'í.
Nieva, Clarisa. 2024. Religión y progreso social, ¿Obstáculo o motor?: El caso de la comunidad bahá'í de España. In *Estatuto Jurídico de las Minorías Religiosas sin Acuerdo de Cooperación*. Edited by Alejandro Torres-Gutiérrez and Óscar Celador. Madrid: Dykinson, vol. 2, pp. 359–66.
Ruiz Andrés, Rafael. 2022. De la Secularización a la Postsecularización: Hacia una Comprensión de la Secularidad Desde el Pluralismo y el Diálogo. *Cuestiones de Pluralismo* 2. [CrossRef]
Saeed, Sadia. 2016. *Sanctioned Knowledge: Religious Orthodoxy and Order in the American South.*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.
Salguero, Óscar. 2010. Necesidades de las comunidades religiosas en Andalucía. In *¿Y tú (de) Quién Eres? Minorías Religiosas en Andalucía*. Edited by Rafael Briones. Barcelona: Icaria, pp. 483–92.
Salguero, Óscar. 2013. La Fe Bahá'í en las Ciudades Autónomas de Ceuta y Melilla. In *Encuentros. Diversidad Religiosa en Ceuta y en Melilla*. Edited by Rafael Briones. Barcelona: Icaria, pp. 191–200.
Salguero, Óscar. 2024a. Islamic Thought, Funerary Space and Urban Policies: The Case of Madrid. *Journal of Muslims in Europe* 13: 352–64. [CrossRef]
Salguero, Óscar. 2024b. Espacio público y diversidad: Celebrar la Pascua ortodoxa rumana en España. *Antropología Experimental* 24: 475–86. [CrossRef]
Schaefer, Udo. 1988. *The Bahá'í Faith: Sect or Religion?* Ottawa: Association for Bahá'í Studies North America.
Siegler, Elijah. 2006. *New Religious Movements*. London: Pearson.
Stark, Rodney, and Laurence Iannaccone. 1993. Rational choice propositions about religious movements. *Religion and the Social Order* 3A: 241–61.
Tarrés, Sol, and Javier Rosón. 2009. La enseñanza de las religiones minoritarias en la escuelaanálisis del caso de Andalucía. *'Ilu. Revista de Ciencias de las Religiones* 14: 179–97.
Tarrés, Sol, and Jordi Moreras. 2013. Topografía de la otra muerte. Los cementerios musulmanes en España (siglos XX–XXI). In *Religio in Labyrintho: Encuentros y Desencuentros de Religiones en Sociedades Complejas*. Edited by José J. Caerols. Madrid: Escolar y Mayo, pp. 309–22.
Torres-Gutiérrez, Alejandro. 2024. La declaración de notorio arraigo de las confesiones religiosas en España. Reflexiones a propósito de su reconocimiento a favor de la Comunidad Bahá'í. *Revista General de Derecho Canónico y Derecho Eclesiástico del Estado* 64: 1–46.
Torres-Sospedra, Diego. 2023. *Notorio Arraigo de las Entidades Religiosas en España: Pasado, Presente y Futuro*. Valencia: Tirant lo Blanch.
Tuset, Mar. 2024. Comunidad bahá'í: De la persecución en Irán al notorio arraigo en España. In *Estatuto Jurídico de las Minorías Religiosas sin Acuerdo de Cooperación*. Edited by Alejandro Torres-Gutiérrez and Óscar Celador. Madrid: Dykinson, vol. 2, pp. 531–48.
Vaggione, Juan M. 2005. Reactive Politicization and Religious Dissidence. The Political Mutations of the Religious in Social Theory and Practice. *Social Theory and Practice* 31: 233–55. [CrossRef]