

Covenant Breakers

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DISPLAY OF PHOTOGRAPH OF BAHA'U'LLAH AND COVENANT BREAKERS

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

BAHA'I WORLD CENTRE

Department of the Secretariat

June 26, 1980

Mr. xxxx,

Dear Baha'i Friend,

[Personal greetings deleted...]

The House of Justice requests us to reply to your questions as follows.

It is apparent in letters written on behalf of the Guardian that he did not approve the publication of any photograph of Baha'u'llah, and regarded such publication to be offensive to religious feeling. Nor did he approve that the photograph be exposed openly to the public, even in Baha'i homes. Only on special occasions did he permit the photograph to be displayed, and then he urged that it be done with the utmost reverence. The House of Justice, basing its comments on these instructions, has written a few letters to friends who have inquired about this subject and related matters, and for your guidance a compilation of extracts of these letters is enclosed.

In reply to your inquiry about the writings of Covenant-breakers and your reference to the book on the Faith by William Miller, a selection of instructions and guidelines on these subjects is also attached. The House of Justice hopes you will find the material useful.

We have been requested to assure you that prayers will be offered at the Holy Shrines as you request.

With loving Baha'i greetings,

For Department the Secretariat

Encs.

Photographs of Baha'u'llah

"Concerning the question of display of the photograph of Baha'u'llah, the Guardian's instructions were that this should be done only with the utmost reverence, and then only on special occasions. While the Guardian did not require believers to send such photographs to the Holy Land, he said that it was better to do so. However, if you have made any photographic copies or negatives of the photograph or the portrait, these should be forwarded to the Holy Land in a safe way."

(From a letter dated 1 August 17 written by the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer)

"It would be good to advise the young Persian believer who has this picture that, while we do not wish to suggest that he should remove the photograph from his book, it would be inappropriate for him to show it to others in a casual manner. As you know, the photograph of Baha'u'llah is very precious and it

should be handled with due reverence and respect."

(From a letter dated 7 February 1972 written by the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer)

"The portraits of the Bab and Baha'u'llah should be shown infrequently and on very special occasions, such as a special observance connected with an event intimately associated with the Forerunner or Founder of our Faith.

"We do not think that the regular National Convention is such a special occasion, and we feel that the privilege of displaying these very precious portraits should not be abused."

(From a letter dated 12 July 1973 written by the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Panama)

Writings of Covenant-breakers and other Enemies of the Faith

I. From 'Abdu'l-Baha

"As to Khayru'llah's book: The blessing of God will be cut off from the house in which a copy of it is found, inasmuch as it is sheer slander. Should one compare his first book with his second, one would readily discover to what extent their texts are contradictory and how much he has lied. In fact the motive behind his second book was but to deceive and mislead the people. Hence God uprooted him, humbled him to dust and reduced him to utter perdition.

(From a letter dated 2 October 1906 to an individual believer)

II. From Shoghi Effendi

"It is better not to read books by Covenant Breakers because they are haters of the Light, sufferers from a spiritual leprosy, so to speak. But books by well meaning yet unenlightened enemies of the Cause can be read so as to refute their charges."

(From a letter dated 19 March 1945 written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer)

"Regarding the pamphlets of the Covenant-breakers received in Tihiran the Guardian stated that these papers which are not worthy of any attention whatsoever were received in the Holy Land. Any further material sent in the future should be ignored, and no refutation or reply be given, because the material is regarded as baseless distortion of truth."

(From a letter dated 16 November 1947 written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of Persia--translated from the Persian)

III. From the Universal House of Justice

"To read the writings of Covenant-breakers is not forbidden to the believers and does not constitute in itself an act of Covenant-breaking. Indeed, some of the Baha'is have the unpleasant duty to read such literature as part of their responsibilities for protecting the Cause of Baha'u'llah. However, the friends are warned in the strongest terms against reading such literature because Covenant-breaking is a spiritual poison and the calumnies and distortions of the truth which the Covenant-breakers give out are such that they can undermine the faith of the believer and plant the seeds of doubt unless he is forearmed with an unshakable belief in Baha'u'llah and His Covenant and a knowledge of

the true facts."

(From a letter dated 29 October 1974 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Switzerland)

"In reply to your letter of 16 March 1976 (regarding books by William Miller) the Universal House of Justice instructs us to say that it is to be expected that books will be written against the Faith attempting to distort its teachings, to denigrate its accomplishments, to vilify its Founders and leaders and to destroy its very foundations. The friends should not be unduly exercised when these books appear and certainly no issue should be made of them. There should be no attempt made to destroy or remove such books from libraries. On the other hand there is no need at all for the friends to acquire them, and indeed, the best plan is to ignore them entirely."

(From a letter dated 30 March 1976 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Hong Kong)

"It is true that should a believer read the writings of Covenant-breakers or enemies of the Cause and permit these words to instill doubts about the truth of Baha'u'llah's Cause such a believer would then be considered as having been infected by the poison of Covenant-breaking. However, since you returned the book to your local library upon being informed of the true nature of its contents and told your District Teaching Committee and your National Spiritual Assembly about the matter, it is clear that you took the correct steps and should therefore, with complete confidence, turn to Baha'u'llah for protection and guidance, fully assured that His promise to assist those who turn to Him will be fulfilled."

(From a letter dated 29 March 1977 to an individual believer)

"The House of Justice has instructed us to say that, as you are no doubt aware, it is not prohibited for Baha'is to read the writings of Covenant-breakers, but they are warned strongly of the dangers of doing so, as the misrepresentations and calumnies in such writings can erode one's faith."

(From a letter dated 12 October 1978 to an individual believer)

Part Three: Paragraphs from two related letters

Letter One:

"The picture on page 83 of William Miller's book is a portrait of Baha'u'llah, but different from the one displayed in the International Archives."

Universal House of Justice to an individual 30 March 1980

Letter Two:

"We would like to point out to you that the National Spiritual Assembly has no documentation verifying the authenticity of the illustrations in Mr. William McElwee Miller's book, and as such they cannot be regarded as being of Baha'u'llah and the Bab."

Letter from the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States to an individual 6 February 1981