

Photographs of Bahá'u'lláh; William Miller

by Universal House of Justice
1980-06-26

One: [Partial] Query To the Universal House of Justice

... I have heard many reasons why the friends do not have copies of the photograph of Bahá'u'lláh, such as the friends should avoid praying to it, etc., but I have never heard an official reason. Have the Guardian or the House of Justice pronounced on this?

One final thing I have heard we should not have: The book attacking the Faith, by William Miller.

Two: Response from the Universal House of Justice

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE BAHA'I WORLD CENTRE

Department of the Secretariat

Mr. xxxx,

Dear Bahá'í 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 Bahá'u'lláh, 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 Bahá'í 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.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

For Department the Secretariat

Encs.

Photographs of Bahá'u'lláh

“Concerning the question of display of the photograph of Bahá'u'lláh, 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 Bahá'u'lláh 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 Bahá'u'lláh 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)

Excerpts from other letters

"The picture on page 83 of William Miller's book is a portrait of Bahá'u'lláh, 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 Bahá'u'lláh and the Bab."

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