

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

DEPARTMENT OF THE SECRETARIAT

6 November 1986

[To an individual]

Dear Bahá'í Friend,

Your letter of 28 September to the Universal House of Justice has been received, and we are asked to convey its answer to your questions concerning Bahá'ís celebrating Christmas.

Questions concerning the observance of Christmas by Bahá'ís were asked of the beloved Guardian, and two extracts from letters written on his behalf will be of assistance to your understanding of the Bahá'í position.

The Bahá'ís should give up the celebrating of Christian Holy Days such as Christmas. The same applies to Bahá'ís of Jewish and Moslem extraction etc. However, this is not a thing for the Spiritual Assemblies to enforce now; but each one should conscientiously begin to do this—otherwise, people will never know we are members of a new religion, but will think we are just people believing two or three things at the same time.

(15 August 1957)

As regards the celebration of the Christian Holidays by the believers; it is surely preferable and even highly advisable that the friends should in their relation to each other discontinue observing such holidays as Christmas and New Year, and to have their festal gatherings of this nature instead during the Intercalary Days and Naw-Rúz.

(19 March 1938)

It is important to note, in the second extract, the phrase “in their relation to each other”; it is clear, therefore, that among the members of the Bahá'í community the celebrations of former religious dispensations should be abandoned. However, Bahá'ís are encouraged to “consort with the followers of all religions in a spirit of friendliness and fellowship,” and there is no harm in Bahá'ís sharing Christmas with Christian relatives or friends. Indeed, families may contain both Bahá'ís and non-Bahá'ís, and the participation by Bahá'ís at celebrations of Christmas or of other religious observances, should not be made into a source of conflict but rather be used as an opportunity for demonstrating the honor due to other religions and also as an incentive for developing the celebration of Bahá'í Holy Days and anniversaries.

The House of Justice understands the problems of individuals and families who have come into the community and who require loving support through their transition to a new way of life, new Holy Days, and ways of celebrating the events of the new Dispensation. Prayers will be offered for your own guidance in this situation, which must not become a source of difficulty in the community.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

Department of the Secretariat