

THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE  
DEPARTMENT OF THE SECRETARIAT

28 June 1987

The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of New Zealand

Dear Bahá'í Friends,

Your letter of 25 May 1987 concerning Mr... has been received by the Universal House of Justice, which has directed us to reply as follows.

In considering the status of believers such as Mr... , it is necessary to review the requirements for membership in the Bahá'í community. The basic considerations are set out by the Guardian in his statement:

... I would only venture to state very briefly and as adequately as present circumstances permit the principal factors that must be taken into consideration before deciding whether a person may be regarded a true believer or not. Full recognition of the station of the Forerunner, the Author, and the True Exemplar of the Bahá'í Cause, as set forth in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Testament; unreserved acceptance of, and submission to, whatsoever has been revealed by their Pen; loyal and steadfast adherence to every clause of our Beloved's sacred Will; and close association with the spirit as well as the form of the present day Bahá'í administration throughout the world—these I conceive to be the fundamental and primary considerations that must be fairly, discreetly and thoughtfully ascertained before reaching such a vital decision....

(*Bahá'í Administration*, p. 90, October 24, 1925)

This specification was restated by the Universal House of Justice in addressing the issue of acceptance of new believers, when it wrote:

Those who declare themselves as Bahá'ís should become enchanted with the beauty of the teachings, and touched by the love of Bahá'u'lláh. The declarants need not know all the proofs, history, laws, and principles of the Faith, but in the process of declaring themselves they must, in addition to catching the spark of faith, become basically informed about the Central Figures of the Faith, as well as the existence of laws they must follow and an administration they must obey.

(From a letter to all National Spiritual Assemblies, 13 July 1964)

It follows that individuals who do not satisfy these requirements cannot be regarded as members of the Bahá'í community, irrespective of whatever statements they might make concerning the nature of their belief in Bahá'u'lláh. Such a situation arises, in some instances, when a person claims to accept the station of Bahá'u'lláh but does not accept the authority of the Administrative Institutions. The Guardian clarified this matter in a letter written on his behalf, stating:

... To accept the Cause without the administration is like to accept the teachings without acknowledging the divine station of Bahá'u'lláh. To be a Bahá'í is to accept the Cause in its entirety. To take exception to one basic principle is to deny the authority and sovereignty of Bahá'u'lláh, and therefore is to deny the Cause....

(Letter to a National Spiritual Assembly, 30 May 1930)

If you feel that Mr... does not accept "the authority and sovereignty of Bahá'u'lláh" as explained above, despite the statements he might make asserting his acceptance of the Bahá'í

Faith, you should remove his name from the list of members and regard him as being a non-Bahá'í.

If you feel that the continued association of the Bahá'ís with Mr... is potentially damaging to their belief or is detrimental to the unity of the community, you could well consider advising the believers to avoid association with him.

The House of Justice advises you to deal with this matter in a straightforward way, avoiding any actions which might serve to increase Mr...’s sense of his own importance or which might needlessly antagonize him and hence provoke him into active opposition of the Institutions.

The House of Justice will offer its prayers at the Sacred Threshold for your guidance in resolving this matter.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

Department of the Secretariat