Governor Herbert H. Lehman
Executive Chambers
Albany, New York

Dear Governor Lehman:

I acknowledge your letter of September 16, 1939, referring to the date of the observation of Thanksgiving.

I am afraid that you did not read my letter with any great attention. The tone of your reply does at least indicate that you did not read it with any great understanding.

At least, however, I did bring to your mind the idea that Thanksgiving is a holiday religious in its nature.

From the tone of your letter, I gather that perhaps you and I think more nearly alike than you evidently suppose we do. In my previous letter you will recollect I began by saying that most certainly a Christian ought not to presume to interfere with the observance of a day of the Jewish religion.

To me the corollary obligation is obvious. A Jew ought not to interfere with the observance of a holiday of the Christian religion. It is indeed true that the nature of Thanksgiving is such that Jews without being inconsistent in their own religious beliefs can join with Christians in celebrating Thanksgiving.

The basic fact is that Thanksgiving is a Christian festival. Therefore, your observation that to you the particular date of Thanksgiving seems of little importance, is an irrelevant remark.
That was why I wrote you on the Jewish New Year. It might seem silly to me that the Jews observe their New Year when they do. That view is irrelevant; I am not a Jew and I am not properly entitled to hold or express any opinions as to what is or is not appropriate for members of that faith to do.

You are not a Christian, and, therefore, your opinion as to when Thanksgiving should be celebrated is one that should not be expressed. You should leave the matter alone.

I do not like to see this increase in feeling against Jews. Nonetheless it exists. Nonetheless it is definitely increasing. I think if you take sides in the matter you will increase that feeling and you will, as I wrote, give an apparent justification, to some extent, to such feelings.

I am sorry that you did not get my point of view from my first letter. I hope that this letter will be clearer to you. And I particularly hope that you will give it serious consideration. I feel very keenly that to do what you now contemplate doing will be a very serious mistake.

Yours very truly,

Frederic R. Barbour

FRS J