

Statements on Various Subjects

Shoghi Effendi

Original English



Part VI

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These statements extracted from letters to individuals are not found elsewhere in this compilation and are taken from letters written by the Guardian's secretaries at his specific direction. The arrangement is according to subject matter.



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Alcohol

You had asked in connection with the subject of prohibition. Of course in every country one must take into consideration the exact conditions as to whether by force of legislation people can be stopped from drinking, but as a principle the Bahá'í teachings are quite against drinking intoxicating liquors and from the Bahá'í point of view every thing that helps to stop drinking is welcome.

(Extract, letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, December 30th, 1925)



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Evolution

We cannot prove man was always man for this is a fundamental doctrine, but it is based on the assertion that nothing can exceed its own potentialities, that everything, a stone, a tree, an animal and a human being existed in plan, potentially, from the very "beginning" of creation. We don't believe man has always had the form of man, but rather that from the outset he was going to evolve into the human form and species and not be a haphazard branch of the ape family. You see our whole approach to each matter is based on the belief that God sends us divinely inspired Educators; what they tell us is fundamentally true, what science tells us today is true; tomorrow may be entirely changed to better explain a new set of facts. When 'Abdu'l-Bahá says



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man breaks the laws of nature, He means we shape nature to meet our own needs, as no animal does. Animals adapt themselves to better fit in with and benefit from their environment. But men both surmount and change environment. Likewise when He says nature is devoid of memory He means memory as we have it, not the strange memory of inherited habits which animals so strikingly possess. These various statements must be taken in conjunction with all the Bahá'í teachings; we cannot get a correct picture by concentrating on just one phrase.

(Extract, letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, June 7th, 1946)



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“Herald of the South” - Persevere

I shall pray from all my heart for the steady development and the growing influence of the “Herald of the South”. May its voice grow in strength and power, and may its pages increasingly reflect the dynamic spirit of the Faith and mirror forth the ever-expanding activities of the friends in Australasia as well as in distant lands. Persevere in your efforts, let not obstacles damp your zeal and determination and rest assured that the Power of God which is reinforcing your efforts will in the end triumph and enable you to fulfil your cherished desire.

(Extract, undated letter by Shoghi Effendi)



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“Herald of the South” - Effective teaching medium.

...Regarding the “Herald of the South” magazine, Shoghi Effendi very much appreciates the fact that in spite of the many difficulties that your Assembly had to overcome this review is being regularly published, and that its standard is gradually improving. He would call upon all the English-speaking friends to contribute, as often as they can, such articles for publication in that magazine as would serve to make it a more direct and effective teaching medium for the spread of the Cause throughout Australia and New-Zealand. He is advising the American N. S. A. to specially ask the cooperation of the American believers for that purpose, and hopes that the response they will make to this call will be such as to further encourage you in your splendid efforts for the publication of this national organ of the Faith....

(Extract from “Letters from the Guardian to Australia and New Zealand 1923-1957”. pp. 12, 13, dated April 15th, 1936)



“Herald of the South” - Difficulties.

...The Guardian, while fully aware of the difficulties, both financial and otherwise which your N. S. A.¹ is facing in connection with the publication of the “Herald of the South”, feels nevertheless the urge to advise you to continue with this magazine and not to feel in the least discouraged if your efforts for meeting the expenses incurred for its printing and circulation, and for raising its literary standard, do not bring the expected results. He very deeply values the self-sacrificing and sustained efforts exerted by your Assembly in this connection. May Bahá'u'lláh richly reward you for all your meritorious endeavours....

(Extract from “Letters from the Guardian to Australia and New Zealand 1923-1957”. p. 16, dated September 23rd, 1936)



“Herald of the South” - Psychic practices.

...In connection with the article published in the October number of the “Herald of the South” entitled “Above the Mists”; the Guardian wishes the believers to disregard such subjects as psychic practices and phenomena, for these besides not being authenticated by the Writings of the Founders of the Faith, pertain mostly to the domain of conjectures. The magazines of the “Herald of the South” should be devoted to the study and presentation of those subjects that reflect the spirit of the Teachings, and which as such are worthy of consideration by the believers. As the national organ of the Australian and New-Zealand friends its main function is to assist in disseminating the knowledge of the Cause, and thus develop into an effective teaching medium. This is the goal which the editors should have constantly in mind, and which they should endeavour to attain through the best possible means they can devise at present....

(Extract from “Letters from the Guardian to Australia and New Zealand 1923-1957”. pp. 25, 26, dated March 30th, 1938)



Philosophers

We must not take many of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s statements as dogmatic finalities, for there are other points which when added to them round out the picture. For instance, when He calls Aristotle

1. The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá’ís of Australia and New Zealand

and Plato Philosophers of the East, He is obviously placing them in that category because He believes they belong more correctly to Eastern culture than to Central European and the New World cultures of the West. When He calls the philosophers of the West materialistic this does not for a moment mean He includes all Western philosophers for, as you truly point out, many of them have been very spiritual in their concepts.... Historians cannot be sure Socrates did not visit the Holy Land. But believing as we do that 'Abdu'l-Bahá had an intuitive knowledge quite different from our own, we accept His authority on this matter.... The Guardian hopes this will better enable you to understand our wonderful Faith — for a living religion it is, and not merely a philosophy!

(Extract, letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, June 7th, 1946)



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Scouting

As to the Scout movement, they afford a great disciplinary lesson to the young boys and girls provided they are not prepared directly for the army. In some towns here we have in some of the schools Scout troops who are also students of the Colleges and it has proved to be a great educational scheme for helping the development of the children but they are never taught to carry arms or even the use of firearms. And furthermore they are often taught the evils of war rather than encourage them to become in future active soldiers with imperialistic designs. This of course is my own personal view.

(Extract, letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, December 30th, 1925)



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Soul, Mind and Spirit

When studying at present, in English, the available Bahá'í writings on the subject of body, soul and spirit, one is handicapped by a certain lack of clarity because not all were translated by the same person, and also there are, as you know, still many Bahá'í writings untranslated. But there is no doubt that spirit and soul seem to have been interchanged in meaning sometimes; soul and mind have, likewise, been interchanged in meaning, no doubt due to difficulties arising from different translations. What the Bahá'ís do believe though is that we have three aspects of our humanness, so to speak, a body, a mind and an immortal identity — soul or spirit. We believe the mind forms a link between the soul and the body, and the two interact on each other.

(Extract, letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, June 7th, 1946)

