

Extracts of Letters Written on Behalf of the Universal...

Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Shoghi Effendi

Original English



Extracts of Letters Written on Behalf of the Universal House of Justice

— 83 —

One of the friends of Persia wrote to Shoghi Effendi and asked this question: "Is it true that 'Abdu'l-Bahá has said that biochemical homeopathy, which is a form of food medicine, is in conformity with the Bahá'í medical concept?" The beloved Guardian's reply to this question in a letter dated 25th November, 1944 was as follows: "This statement is true, and the truth thereof will be revealed in the future." (The question and answer are translated from the Persian.)

The Universal House of Justice has also asked us to inform you that it does not wish the above statement to be circulated in isolation from the many and varied other texts in the Writings on medicine. However, you may share it with any of your friends who are interested.

On behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, 12 November 1975

— 84 —

No specific school of nutrition or medicine has been associated with the Bahá'í teachings. What we have are certain guidelines, indications and principles which will be carefully studied by experts and will, in the years ahead, undoubtedly prove to be invaluable sources of guidance and inspiration in the development of these medical sciences. Moreover, in this connection the Guardian's secretary has stated on his behalf that "It is premature to try and elaborate on the few general references to health and medicine made in our Holy Scriptures." The believers must guard against seizing upon any particular text which may appeal to them and which they may only partially or even incorrectly understand...

In the Kitáb-i-Aqdas Bahá'u'lláh has stated: "Whenever ye fall ill, refer to competent physicians. Verily, We have not abolished recourse to material means, rather have We affirmed it through this Pen which God hath made the Dawning Place of His luminous and resplendent Cause." The secretaries of the Guardian have conveyed his guidance on this point in many letters to individual believers in passages such as these: "...refer to competent physicians, and abide by their considered decisions"; "...invariably consult and follow the treatment of competent and conscientious physicians..." and "...consult the best physicians ... doctors who have studied a scientific system of medicine." Thus the obligation to consult physicians and to distinguish



between doctors who are well trained in medical sciences and those who are not is clear, but the Faith should not be associated with any particular school of medical theory or practice. It is left to each believer to decide for himself which doctors he should consult, bearing in mind the principles enunciated above.

In matters of diet, as in medicine, the Universal House of Justice feels that the believers should be aware that a huge body of scientific knowledge has been accumulated as a guide to our habits and practices. Here too, as in all other things, the believers should be conscious of the two principles of moderation and courtesy in the way they express their opinions and in deciding whether they should refuse food offered to them or request special foods.

There are, of course, instances where a believer would be fully justified in abstaining from or eating only certain foods for some medical reason, but this is a different matter and would be understood by any reasonable person.

On behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, 24 January 1977

— 85 —

In matters of health, particularly regarding diet and nutrition, the House of Justice advises the friends to seek the help and advice of experts and doctors. This is what Bahá'u'lláh has recommended and He does not indicate which school of thought or practice they should belong to. However, as you particularly ask about references in the Old Testament as they relate to meat and fish, the House of Justice has asked us to quote for you the following excerpt taken from a letter written on behalf of the beloved Guardian by his secretary to an individual believer:

“...there is nothing in the teachings about whether people should eat their food cooked or raw; exercise or not exercise; resort to specific therapies or not; nor is it forbidden to eat meat.”

On behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, 19 June 1977

— 86 —

The Universal House of Justice has received your letter of 19th January 1978 enquiring the Bahá'í point of view on the vivisection of animals. The beloved Guardian was asked a similar question to which his secretary replied on his behalf, on 29 November 1955: “As there is no definite and conclusive statement on Vivisection in the Bahá'í Teachings, this is a matter which the International House of Justice will have to pass upon in the future.”

The House of Justice does not wish to legislate upon this matter at the present time. It is left to the consciences of the individual friends, who should make their decisions in light of the teachings concerning animals and their treatment.

In this connection the House of Justice instructs us to say that in a Tablet in which He stresses the need for kindness to animals, 'Abdu'l-Bahá states that it would be permissible to perform an operation on a living animal for the purposes of research even if the animal were killed thereby,

but that the animal must be well anaesthetized and that the utmost care must be exercised that it does not suffer.

On behalf of the Universal House of Justice, 9 March 1978 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Italy

— 87 —

In matters of diet, as in medicine, the Universal House of Justice feels that the believers should be aware that a huge body of scientific knowledge has been accumulated as a guide to our habits and practices. But it must be clearly understood that no specific school of nutrition or medicine has been associated with the Bahá'í teachings. What we have are certain guidelines, indications and principles which will be carefully studied by experts and will, in the years ahead, undoubtedly prove to be invaluable sources of guidance and inspiration in the development of these medical sciences. Moreover, in this connection the Guardian's secretary has stated on his behalf that "It is premature to try and elaborate on the few general references to health and medicine made in our Holy Scriptures." The believers must guard against seizing upon any particular text which may appeal to them and which they may only partially or even incorrectly understand.

On behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, 11 July 1978

