

Bahá'í Teachings  
on  
Health  
Healing  
and  
Nutrition

A compilation of compilations  
from on line sources  
arranged by subject.

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# 1 CAUSES OF HEALTH



## 1.1 TABLET TO A PHYSICIAN (LAWH-I-TIBB)

1. O God! The Supreme Knower! The Ancient Tongue speaks that which will satisfy the wise in the absence of doctors.
2. O People, do not eat except when you are hungry. Do not drink after you have retired to sleep.
3. Exercise is good when the stomach is empty; it strengthens the muscles. When the stomach is full it is very harmful.
4. Do not neglect medical treatment, when it is necessary, but leave it off when the body is in good condition.
5. Do not take nourishment except when (the process of) digestion is completed. Do not swallow until you have thoroughly masticated your food.
6. Treat disease first of all through diet, and refrain from medicine. If you can find what you need for healing in a single herb do not use a compound medicine. Leave off medicine when the health is good, and use it in case of necessity.
7. If two diametrically opposite foods are put on the table do not mix them. Be content with one of them. Take first the liquid food before partaking of solid food. The taking of food before that which you have already eaten is digested is dangerous....
8. When you have eaten walk a little that the food may settle.
9. That which is difficult to masticate is forbidden by the wise. Thus the Supreme Pen commands you.
10. A light meal in the morning is as a light to the body.
11. Avoid all harmful habits: they cause unhappiness in the world.
12. Search for the causes of disease. This saying is the conclusion of this utterance.

1) (Bahá'u'lláh, Star of the West, vol. 13, no. 9, December 1922, p. 252)

13. In God must be our trust. There is no God but Him, the Healer, the Knower, the Helper.... Nothing in earth or heaven is outside the grasp of God.
14. O doctor! In treating the sick, first mention the name of God, the Possessor of the Day of Judgment, and then use what God hath destined for the healing of His creatures. By My Life! The doctor who has drunk from the Wine of My Love, his visit is healing, and his breath is mercy and hope. Cling to him for the welfare of the constitution. He is confirmed by God in his treatment.

1) (Bahá'u'lláh, Star of the West, vol. 21, no. 5, August 1930, p. 160)

## 1.2 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ ON HEALTH

15. O thou who art attracted to the fragrant breathings of God! I have read thy letter

addressed to Mrs. Lua Getsinger. Thou hast indeed examined with great care the reasons for the incursion of disease into the human body. It is certainly the case that sins are a potent cause of physical ailments. If humankind were free from the defilements of sin and waywardness, and lived according to a natural, inborn equilibrium, without following wherever their passions led, it is undeniable that diseases would no longer take the ascendant, nor diversify with such intensity.

16. But man hath perversely continued to serve his lustful appetites, and he would not content himself with simple foods. Rather, he prepared for himself food that was compounded of many ingredients, of substances differing one from the other. With this, and with the perpetrating of vile and ignoble acts, his attention was engrossed, and he abandoned the temperance and moderation of a natural way of life. The result was the engendering of diseases both violent and diverse.
17. For the animal, as to its body, is made up of the same constituent elements as man. Since, however, the animal contenteth itself with simple foods and striveth not to indulge its importunate urges to any great degree, and committeth no sins, its ailments relative to man's are few. We see clearly, therefore, how powerful are sin and contumacy as pathogenic factors. And once engendered these diseases become compounded, multiply, and are transmitted to others. Such are the spiritual, inner causes of sickness.
18. The outer, physical causal factor in disease, however, is a disturbance in the balance, the proportionate equilibrium of all those elements of which the human body is composed. To illustrate: the body of man is a compound of many constituent substances, each component being present in a prescribed amount, contributing to the essential equilibrium of the whole. So long as these constituents remain in their due proportion, according to the natural balance of the whole — that is, no component suffereth a change in its natural proportionate degree and balance, no component being either augmented or decreased — there will be no physical cause for the incursion of disease.
19. For example, the starch component must be present to a given amount, and the sugar to a given amount. So long as each remaineth in its natural proportion to the whole, there will be no cause for the onset of disease. When, however, these constituents vary as to their natural and due amounts — that is, when they are augmented or diminished — it is certain that this will provide for the inroads of disease.
20. This question requireth the most careful investigation. The Báb hath said that the people of Bahá must develop the science of medicine to such a high degree that they will heal illnesses by means of foods. The basic reason for this is that if, in some component substance of the human body, an imbalance should occur, altering its correct, relative proportion to the whole, this fact will inevitably result in the onset of disease. If, for example, the starch component should be unduly augmented, or the sugar component decreased, an illness will take control. It is the function of a skilled physician to determine which constituent of his patient's body hath suffered diminution, which hath been augmented. Once he hath discovered this, he must prescribe a food containing the diminished element in considerable amounts, to re-establish the body's essential equilibrium. The patient, once his constitution is again in balance, will be rid of his disease.
21. The proof of this is that while other animals have never studied medical science, nor

carried on researches into diseases or medicines, treatments or cures — even so, when one of them falleth a prey to sickness, nature leadeth it, in fields or desert places, to the very plant which, once eaten, will rid the animal of its disease. The explanation is that if, as an example, the sugar component in the animal's body hath decreased, according to a natural law the animal hankereth after a herb that is rich in sugar. Then, by a natural urge, which is the appetite, among a thousand different varieties of plants across the field, the animal will discover and consume that herb which containeth a sugar component in large amounts. Thus the essential balance of the substances composing its body is re-established, and the animal is rid of its disease.

22. This question requireth the most careful investigation. When highly-skilled physicians shall fully examine this matter, thoroughly and perseveringly, it will be clearly seen that the incursion of disease is due to a disturbance in the relative amounts of the body's component substances, and that treatment consisteth in adjusting these relative amounts, and that this can be apprehended and made possible by means of foods.
23. It is certain that in this wonderful new age the development of medical science will lead to the doctors' healing their patients with foods. For the sense of sight, the sense of hearing, of taste, of smell, of touch — all these are discriminative faculties, their purpose being to separate the beneficial from whatever causeth harm. Now, is it possible that man's sense of smell, the sense that differentiates odours, should find some odour repugnant, and that odour be beneficial to the human body? Absurd! Impossible! In the same way, could the human body, through the faculty of sight — the differentiator among things visible — benefit from gazing upon a revolting mass of excrement? Never! Again, if the sense of taste, likewise a faculty that selecteth and rejecteth, be offended by something, that thing is certainly not beneficial; and if, at the outset, it may yield some advantage, in the long run its harmfulness will be established.
24. And likewise, when the constitution is in a state of equilibrium, there is no doubt that whatever is relished will be beneficial to health. Observe how an animal will graze in a field where there are a hundred thousand kinds of herbs and grasses, and how, with its sense of smell, it snuffeth up the odours of the plants, and tasteth them with its sense of taste; then it consumeth whatever herb is pleasurable to these senses, and benefitteth therefrom. Were it not for this power of selectivity, the animals would all be dead in a single day; for there are a great many poisonous plants, and animals know nothing of the pharmacopoeia. And yet, observe what a reliable set of scales they have, by means of which to differentiate the good from the injurious. Whatever constituent of their body hath decreased, they can rehabilitate by seeking out and consuming some plant that hath an abundant store of that diminished element; and thus the equilibrium of their bodily components is re-established, and they are rid of their disease.
25. At whatever time highly-skilled physicians shall have developed the healing of illnesses by means of foods, and shall make provision for simple foods, and shall prohibit humankind from living as slaves to their lustful appetites, it is certain that the incidence of chronic and diversified illnesses will abate, and the general health of all mankind will be much improved. This is destined to come about. In the same way, in the character, the conduct and the manners of men, universal modifications will be made.

2) ("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá", sec. 134, pp. 152-156

### **1.3 AVOID ADDICTIONS**

26. O ye, God's loved ones! Experience hath shown how greatly the renouncing of smoking, of intoxicating drink, and of opium, conduceth to health and vigour, to the expansion and keenness of the mind and to bodily strength. There is today a people\* who strictly avoid tobacco, intoxicating liquor and opium. This people is far and away superior to the others, for strength and physical courage, for health, beauty and comeliness. A single one of their men can stand up to ten men of another tribe. This hath proved true of the entire people: that is, member for member, each individual of this community is in every respect superior to the individuals of other communities. \*[note: Possibly 'Abdu'l-Bahá was referring to the Sikhs; the description appears to apply to them.]
27. Make ye then a mighty effort, that the purity and sanctity which, above all else, are cherished by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, shall distinguish the people of Bahá; that in every kind of excellence the people of God shall surpass all other human beings; that both outwardly and inwardly they shall prove superior to the rest; that for purity, immaculacy, refinement, and the preservation of health, they shall be leaders in the vanguard of those who know. And that by their freedom from enslavement, their knowledge, their self-control, they shall be first among the pure, the free and the wise.

2) ("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá", sec. 129, p. 150)

### **1.4 CONTENTMENT**

28. Verily the most necessary thing is contentment under all circumstances; by this one is preserved from morbid conditions and from lassitude. Yield not to grief and sorrow: they cause the greatest misery. Jealousy consumeth the body and anger doth burn the liver: avoid these two as you would a lion.

2) (Bahá'u'lláh, cited in "Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era", p. 108)

### **1.5 MODERATION**

29. In all circumstances they should conduct themselves with moderation; if the meal be only one course this is more pleasing in the sight of God; however, according to their means, they should seek to have this single dish be of good quality.

2) (Bahá'u'lláh, "Kitáb-i-Badí" - translated from the Persian)

### **1.6 NATURAL DIET**

30. "What will be the food of the future?" Fruit and grains. The time will come when meat will no longer be eaten. Medical science is only in its infancy, yet it has shown that our natural diet is that which grows out of the ground. The people will gradually develop up

to the condition of this natural food.

2) ('Abdu'l-Bahá, cited in Julia M. Grundy. "Ten Days in the Light of 'Akka", rev. ed. (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1979), pp. 8-9)

## 1.7 SLEEP

31. Regarding your question: there are very few people who can get along without eight hours sleep. If you are not one of those, you should protect your health by sleeping enough. The Guardian himself finds that it impairs his working capacity if he does not try and get a minimum of seven or eight hours.

2) (In a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 15 September 1951 to two believers)

## 2 CAUSES OF DISEASE



### 2.1 BODY AND SPIRIT

32. Know thou that the soul of man is exalted above, and is independent of all infirmities of body or mind. That a sick person showeth signs of weakness is due to the hindrances that interpose themselves between his soul and his body, for the soul itself remaineth unaffected by any bodily ailments. Consider the light of the lamp. Though an external object may interfere with its radiance, the light itself continueth to shine with undiminished power. In like manner, every malady afflicting the body of man is an impediment that preventeth the soul from manifesting its inherent might and power. When it leaveth the body, however, it will evince such ascendancy, and reveal such influence as no force on earth can equal. Every pure, every refined and sanctified soul will be endowed with tremendous power, and shall rejoice with exceeding gladness.

2) ("Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh", rev. ed. (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1983), sec. 80, pp. 153-54)

33. Therefore, it is evident that this spirit is different from the body, and that the bird is different from the cage, and that the power and penetration of the spirit is stronger without the intermediary of the body. Now, if the instrument is abandoned, the possessor of the instrument continues to act. For example, if the pen is abandoned or broken, the writer remains living and present; if a house is ruined, the owner is alive and existing. This is one of the logical evidences for the immortality of the soul
34. There is another: this body becomes weak or heavy or sick, or it finds health; it becomes tired or rested; sometimes the hand or leg is amputated, or its physical power is crippled; it becomes blind or deaf or dumb; its limbs may become paralyzed; briefly, the body may have all the imperfections. Nevertheless, the spirit in its original state, in its own spiritual perception, will be eternal and perpetual; it neither finds any imperfection, nor will it become crippled. But when the body is wholly subjected to disease and misfortune, it is deprived of the bounty of the spirit, like a mirror which, when it

becomes broken or dirty or dusty, cannot reflect the rays of the sun nor any longer show its bounties.

35. We have already explained that the spirit of man is not in the body because it is freed and sanctified from entrance and exit, which are bodily conditions. The connection of the spirit with the body is like that of the sun with the mirror. Briefly, the human spirit is in one condition. It neither becomes ill from the diseases of the body nor cured by its health; it does not become sick, nor weak, nor miserable, nor poor, nor light, nor small — that is to say, it will not be injured because of the infirmities of the body, and no effect will be visible even if the body becomes weak, or if the hands and feet and tongue be cut off, or if it loses the power of hearing or sight. Therefore, it is evident and certain that the spirit is different from the body, and that its duration is independent of that of the body; on the contrary, the spirit with the utmost greatness rules in the world of the body; and its power and influence, like the bounty of the sun in the mirror, are apparent and visible. But when the mirror becomes dusty or breaks, it will cease to reflect the rays of the sun.

2) ('Abdu'l-Bahá, "Some Answered Questions", pp. 228-29)

36. Regarding your questions concerning the condition of the soul during illness: The passages in the "Gleanings" make it quite clear that physical ailments, no matter how severe, cannot bring any change in the inherent condition of the soul. As Bahá'u'lláh says: "The spirit is permanent and steadfast in its station".\* The veil or hindrance that interposes between soul and body during physical disease is sickness itself. Sickness reveals a lack of balance in the human organism, an absence of equilibrium in the forces essential for the normal functioning of the human body. \*[note: The words quoted here are from a translation appearing in Bahá'í Scriptures p. 228. The passage as translated by Shoghi Effendi appears in Gleanings, section LXXX, as follows: "...the soul itself remaineth unaffected by any bodily ailments."]

2) (In a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 8 March 1936 to an individual believer)

## **2.2 DISEASE IS OF TWO KINDS**

37. Disease is of two kinds: material and spiritual. Take for instance, a cut hand; if you pray for the cut to be healed and do not stop its bleeding, you will not do much good; a material remedy is needed.
38. Sometimes if the nervous system is paralysed through fear, a spiritual remedy is necessary. Madness, incurable otherwise, can be cured through prayer. It often happens that sorrow makes one ill; this can be cured by spiritual means.

3) (Abdu'l-Bahá in London, Addresses and Notes of Conversations, 1982 ed., p. 65)

39. All true healing comes from God! There are two causes for sickness, one is material, the other spiritual. If the sickness is of the body, a material remedy is needed, if of the soul, a spiritual remedy.

40. If the heavenly benediction be upon us while we are being healed then only can we be made whole, for medicine is but the outward and visible means through which we obtain the heavenly healing. Unless the spirit be healed, the cure of the body is worth nothing. All is in the hands of God, and without Him there can be no health in us!
41. There have been many men who have died at last of the very disease of which they have made a special study. Aristotle, for instance, who made a special study of the digestion, died of a gastronomic malady. Aviseu was a specialist of the heart, but he died of heart disease. God is the great compassionate Physician who alone has the power to give true healing.

2) ("Paris Talks: Addresses given by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Paris in 1911-1912", 11th ed. (London: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1979), p. 19)

## **3 WHEN DISEASED**



### **3.1 DIET AND NUTRITION**

42. 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.
43. 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.
44. 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:
45. "...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."

2) (19 June 1977, written by the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer)

### **3.2 EATING MEAT**

46. O concourse of priests and monks! Eat ye of that which God hath made lawful unto you and do not shun meat. God hath, as a token of His grace, granted you leave to

partake thereof save during a brief period.

5) Bahá'u'lláh, The Summons of the Lord of Hosts: Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, § 154, p. 80

47. Regarding the eating of animal flesh and abstinence therefrom, know thou of a certainty that, in the beginning of creation, God determined the food of every living being, and to eat contrary to that determination is not approved. For instance, beasts of prey, such as the wolf, lion and leopard, are endowed with ferocious, tearing instruments, such as hooked talons and claws. From this it is evident that the food of such beasts is meat. If they were to attempt to graze, their teeth would not cut the grass, neither could they chew the cud, for they do not have molars. Likewise, God hath given to the four-footed grazing animals such teeth as reap the grass like a sickle, and from this we understand that the food of these species of animal is vegetable. They cannot chase and hunt down other animals. The falcon hath a hooked beak and sharp talons; the hooked beak preventeth him from grazing, therefore his food also is meat.
48. But now coming to man, we see he hath neither hooked teeth nor sharp nails or claws, nor teeth like iron sickles. From this it becometh evident and manifest that the food of man is cereals and fruit. Some of the teeth of man are like millstones to grind the grain, and some are sharp to cut the fruit. Therefore he is not in need of meat, nor is he obliged to eat it. Even without eating meat he would live with the utmost vigour and energy. For example, the community of the Brahmins in India do not eat meat; notwithstanding this they are not inferior to other nations in strength, power, vigour, outward senses or intellectual virtues. Truly, the killing of animals and the eating of their meat is somewhat contrary to pity and compassion, and if one can content oneself with cereals, fruit, oil and nuts, such as pistachios, almonds and so on, it would undoubtedly be better and more pleasing.

2) ('Abdu'l-Bahá, from a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

49. Thou hast written regarding the four canine teeth in man, saying that these teeth, two in the upper jaw and two in the lower, are for the purpose of eating meat. Know thou that these four teeth are not created for meat-eating, although one can eat meat with them. All the teeth of man are made for eating fruit, cereals and vegetables. These four teeth, however, are designed for breaking hard shells, such as those of almonds. But eating meat is not forbidden or unlawful, nay, the point is this, that it is possible for man to live without eating meat and still be strong. Meat is nourishing and containeth the elements of herbs, seeds and fruits; therefore sometimes it is essential for the sick and for the rehabilitation of health. There is no objection in the Law of God to the eating of meat if it is required. So if thy constitution is rather weak and thou findest meat useful, thou mayest eat it.

2) ('Abdu'l-Bahá, from a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

50. As humanity progresses, meat will be used less and less, for the teeth of man are not carnivorous. For example, the lion is endowed with carnivorous teeth, which are intended for meat, and if meat be not found, the lion starves. The lion cannot graze; its

teeth are of different shape. The digestive system of the lion is such that it cannot receive nourishment save through meat. The eagle has a crooked beak, the lower part shorter than the upper. It cannot pick up grain; it cannot graze; therefore, it is compelled to partake of meat. The domestic animals have herbivorous teeth formed to cut grass, which is their fodder. The human teeth, the molars, are formed to grind grain. The front teeth, the incisors, are for fruits, etc. It is, therefore, quite apparent according to the implements for eating that man's food is intended to be grain and not meat. When mankind is more fully developed, the eating of meat will gradually cease.

5) 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 170

51. In regard to the question as to whether people ought to kill animals for food or not, there is no explicit statement in the Bahá'í Sacred Scriptures (as far as I know) in favour or against it. It is certain, however, that if man can live on a purely vegetarian diet and thus avoid killing animals, it would be much preferable. This is, however, a very controversial question and the Bahá'ís are free to express their views on it.

2) (In a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 9 July 1931 to an individual believer)

52. The eating of pork is not forbidden in the Bahá'í Teachings.

2) (In a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 27 March 1938 to an individual believer)

53. As in so many other areas, the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh in this regard follow the golden mean: kindness toward animals is definitely upheld, vegetarianism is encouraged, hunting is regulated, but certain latitude is left to individual conscience and in practical regard to the diversity of circumstances under which human beings live. For example, the indigenous peoples of the Arctic would be hard-pressed to subsist without recourse to animal products.

5) Letter from the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, June 29, 1995

### **3.3 HEALING PRAYER**

54. Thou hast written concerning the Tablet of Baka Ya Ali—Baka Ya Vafi (Tablet of Protection). This Tablet is for the healing of ailments. Whenever one is anxious about the recovery of an ill one, he may read this prayer with a melodious voice while in a state of the utmost attention and concentration. ('Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá* v2, p. 469)
55. "In His Name, the Exalted, the All-Highest, the Most Sublime! Glorified art Thou, O Lord my God! O Thou Who art my God, and my Master, and my Lord, and my Support, and my Hope, and my Refuge, and my Light. I ask of Thee, by Thine Hidden and Treasured Name, that none knoweth save Thine own Self, to protect the bearer of this Tablet from every calamity and pestilence, and from every wicked man and woman; from the evil of the evil-doers, and from the scheming of the unbelievers. Preserve him, moreover, O my God, from every pain and vexation, O Thou Who holdest in Thy hand the empire of all things. Thou, truly, art powerful over all things. Thou doest as Thou

willest, and ordainest as Thou pleasest. O Thou King of Kings! O Thou kind Lord! O Thou Source of ancient bounty, of grace, of generosity and bestowal! O Thou Healer of sicknesses! O Thou Sufficer of needs! O Thou Light of Light! O Thou Light above all Lights! O Thou Revealer of every Manifestation! O Thou the Compassionate! O Thou the Merciful! Do Thou have mercy upon the bearer of this Tablet, through Thy most great mercy and Thine abundant grace, O Thou the Gracious, Thou the Bounteous. Guard him, moreover, through Thy protection, from whatsoever his heart and mind may find repugnant. Of those endued with power, Thou, verily, art the most powerful. The Glory of God rest upon thee, O thou rising sun! Do thou testify unto that which God hath testified of His own Self, that there is none other God besides Him, the Almighty, the Best-Beloved.”

4) (Bahá'u'lláh, from a recently translated tablet from Arabic at the Bahá'í World Centre)

### **3.4 MATCH REMEDY TO ILLNESS**

56. Different maladies occur which each have a special remedy. The skillful physician does not give the same medicine to cure each disease and each malady, but he changes remedies and medicines according to the different necessities of the diseases and constitutions.

4) ('Abdu'l-Bahá. Some Answered Questions, p 108)

57. When an illness is slight a small remedy will suffice to heal it, but when the slight illness becomes a terrible disease, then a very strong remedy must be used by the Divine Healer....

2) ("Paris Talks: Addresses given by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Paris in 1911-1912" p. 27)

### **3.5 PARTIAL HEALING**

58. And if at one time, through the care of an able physician, a member of that body was healed, the rest remained afflicted as before.

4) (Bahá'u'lláh, Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, p. 60)

### **3.6 REFER TO DOCTORS - PHYSICIANS**

59. Resort ye, in times of sickness, to competent physicians; We have not set aside the use of material means, rather have We confirmed it through this Pen, which God hath made to be the Dawning-place of His shining and glorious Cause. [note: A newer translation of this passage has been substituted for the translation originally included.]

2) (Bahá'u'lláh, The Kitáb-i-Aqdas, p. 60)

60. Whatever competent physicians or surgeons prescribe for a patient should be accepted

and complied with, provided that they are adorned with the ornament of justice. If they were to be endowed with divine understanding, that would certainly be preferable and more desirable.

2) (Bahá'u'lláh, from a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

61. Thou hast written about thy poor sight. According to the explicit divine text the sick must refer to the doctor. This decree is decisive and everyone is bound to observe it. While thou art there thou shouldst consult the most skilled and the most famed eye specialist.

2) ('Abdu'l-Bahá, from a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

62. According to the explicit decree of Bahá'u'lláh one must not turn aside from the advice of a competent doctor. It is imperative to consult one even if the patient himself be a well-known and eminent physician. In short, the point is that you should maintain your health by consulting a highly-skilled physician.

2) ("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá", sec 135, p. 156)

63. It is incumbent upon everyone to seek medical treatment and to follow the doctor's instructions, for this is in compliance with the divine ordinance, but, in reality, He Who giveth healing is God.

2) ("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá", sec 136, p. 156)

64. I ever pray on her behalf and beg from God His divine remedy and healing. As in this Dispensation consultation with expert doctors is highly advisable and acting in accordance with their prescriptions obligatory, it is well for her to undergo an operation if deemed necessary by such doctors.

2) ('Abdu'l-Bahá, cited in "Star of the West", vol. 12, no. 7 July 1921), p. 134)

65. Bahá'u'lláh tells us that in case of disease we should pray but at the same time refer to competent physicians, and abide by their considered decision. Shoghi Effendi wishes you therefore to find whether your son has really become ill, and if he is, then follow the directions of the doctor. Being versed in the medical sciences they can treat better than even a loving mother can. You can render your assistance by praying for him and at the same time helping the physicians to treat him.

2) (In a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 9 April 1933 to an individual believer)

66. In the "Book of Aqdas" Bahá'u'lláh urges us that when we obtain any physical ailment we should refer to the doctor and abide by his decision. Physical and spiritual forces have both to be used to secure the speedy recovery of the patients; no partial treatment is sufficient....

2) (In a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 1 June 1933 to an individual believer)

67. He was sorry to hear you have been ill, and urges you to cooperate fully with your doctors in order to regain your health as soon as possible and be free to serve the Cause.

2) (In a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 19 July 1953 to an individual believer)

68. He is pleased to see that you are feeling better, and will certainly pray for your full recovery. Before having any serious operation, you should consult more than one qualified physician.

2) (In a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 8 April 1954 to an individual believer)

69. As you know Bahá'u'lláh has ordained that in case of illness we should always consult the most competent physicians. And this is exactly what the Guardian strongly advises you to do. For prayer alone is not sufficient. To render it more effective we have to make use of all the physical and material advantages which God has given us. Healing through purely spiritual forces is undoubtedly as inadequate as that which materialist physicians and thinkers vainly seek to obtain by resorting entirely to mechanical devices and methods. The best result can be obtained by combining the two processes, spiritual and physical.

3) (From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, March 12, 1934: Extracts from the Guardian's Letters on Spiritualism, Reincarnation and Related Subjects, p. 9)

70. As regards Miss ... Shoghi Effendi feels unspeakably grateful for all the kind assistance you have been continually extending to her father in this assuredly heart-rending, nay indeed calamitous situation facing him. You did certainly well, however critical and hopeless his daughter's case may have been considered by the doctors, to advise him to take her to a hospital, and give her the best treatment medical science could possibly offer. In doing so you have acted in full conformity with the counsel so tenderly and repeatedly given by Bahá'u'lláh that in case of illness one should invariably consult and follow the treatment of competent and conscientious physicians.

3) (From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, June 18, 1939: Selections from Bahá'í Writings on Some Aspects of Health and Healing, June 1974, p. 7)

71. You should always bear in mind Bahá'u'lláh's counsel that we should take the utmost care of our health, surely not because it is an end in itself, but as a necessary means of serving His Cause. In case of illness, He emphatically tells us, we should refer to the most competent physicians.

72. Now your father has taken you to the best nerve specialists in ..., and they all recommend that you should suspend all your activities until you are fully recovered. It is now your duty as a Bahá'í, and specially as a young believer who has still great services to render the Faith, to make every effort to recover your health, and to be confident that by making such an effort you will be attracting the confirmations of Bahá'u'lláh, without

which no true and lasting healing is possible.

3) (From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, July 17, 1937)

73. 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.

2) (24 January 1977, written by the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer)

74. The basic instruction in the Writings to one who is ill is to find a doctor in whom confidence can be placed, to follow his advice and to put one's trust in God through prayer.

4) (Universal House of Justice, dated May 10, 1990, to an individual believer)

### **3.7 TWO WAYS OF HEALING**

75. There are two ways of healing sickness, material means and spiritual means. The first is by the treatment of physicians; the second consisteth in prayers offered by the spiritual ones to God and in turning to Him. Both means should be used and practised.
76. Illnesses which occur by reason of physical causes should be treated by doctors with medical remedies; those which are due to spiritual causes disappear through spiritual means. Thus an illness caused by affliction, fear, nervous impressions, will be healed more effectively by spiritual rather than by physical treatment. Hence, both kinds of treatment should be followed; they are not contradictory. Therefore thou shouldst also accept physical remedies inasmuch as these too have come from the mercy and favour of God, Who hath revealed and made manifest medical science so that His servants may profit from this kind of treatment also. Thou shouldst give equal attention to spiritual treatments, for they produce marvellous effects.
77. Now, if thou wishest to know the true remedy which will heal man from all sickness and will give him the health of the divine kingdom, know that it is the precepts and teachings of God. Focus thine attention upon them."

3) (Abdu'l-Bahá: Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Bahá, pp. 151-152)

78. Question: - Some people heal the sick by spiritual means — that is to say, without medicine. How is this?
79. Answer: - Know that there are four kinds of curing and healing without medicine. Two are due to material causes, and two to spiritual causes.
80. Of the two kinds of material healing, one is due to the fact that in man both health and sickness are contagious. The contagion of disease is violent and rapid, while that of health is extremely weak and slow. If two bodies are brought into contact with each other, it is certain that microbic particles will pass from one to the other. In the same way that disease is transferred from one body to another with rapid and strong contagion, it may be that the strong health of a healthy man will alleviate a very slight malady in a sick person. That is to say, the contagion of disease is violent and has a rapid effect, while that of health is very slow and has a small effect, and it is only in very slight diseases that it has even this small effect. The strong power of a healthy body can overcome a slight weakness of a sick body, and health results. This is one kind of healing.
81. The other kind of healing without medicine is through the magnetic force which acts from one body on another and becomes the cause of cure. This force also has only a slight effect. Sometimes one can benefit a sick person by placing one's hand upon his head or upon his heart. Why? Because of the effect of the magnetism, and of the mental impression made upon the sick person, which causes the disease to vanish. But this effect is also very slight and weak.
82. Of the two other kinds of healing which are spiritual — that is to say, where the means of cure is a spiritual power — one results from the entire concentration of the mind of a strong person upon a sick person, when the latter expects with all his concentrated faith that a cure will be effected from the spiritual power of the strong person, to such an extent that there will be a cordial connection between the strong person and the invalid. The strong person makes every effort to cure the sick patient, and the sick patient is then sure of receiving a cure. From the effect of these mental impressions an excitement of the nerves is produced, and this impression and this excitement of the nerves will become the cause of the recovery of the sick person. So when a sick person has a strong desire and intense hope for something and hears suddenly the tidings of its realization, a nervous excitement is produced which will make the malady entirely disappear. In the same way, if a cause of terror suddenly occurs, perhaps an excitement may be produced in the nerves of a strong person which will immediately cause a malady. The cause of the sickness will be no material thing, for that person has not eaten anything, and nothing harmful has touched him; the excitement of the nerves is then the only cause of the illness. In the same way the sudden realization of a chief desire will give such joy that the nerves will be excited by it, and this excitement may produce health.
83. To conclude, the complete and perfect connection between the spiritual doctor and the sick person — that is, a connection of such a kind that the spiritual doctor entirely concentrates himself, and all the attention of the sick person is given to the spiritual doctor from whom he expects to realize health — causes an excitement of the nerves, and health is produced. But all this has effect only to a certain extent, and that not always. For if someone is afflicted with a very violent disease, or is wounded, these means will not remove the disease nor close and heal the wound — that is to say, these means have

no power in severe maladies, unless the constitution helps, because a strong constitution often overcomes disease. This is the third kind of healing.

84. But the fourth kind of healing is produced through the power of the Holy Spirit. This does not depend on contact, nor on sight, nor upon presence; it is not dependent upon any condition. Whether the disease be light or severe, whether there be a contact of bodies or not, whether a personal connection be established between the sick person and the healer or not, this healing takes place through the power of the Holy Spirit.

2) ('Abdu'l-Bahá, "Some Answered Questions", pp. 254-256)

85. O thou distinguished physician! ... Praise be to God that thou hast two powers: one to undertake physical healing and the other spiritual healing. Matters related to man's spirit have a great effect on his bodily condition. For instance, thou shouldst impart gladness to thy patient, give him comfort and joy, and bring him to ecstasy and exultation. How often hath it occurred that this hath caused early recovery. Therefore, treat thou the sick with both powers. Spiritual feelings have a surprising effect on healing nervous ailments.

2) ("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá", sec. 130, pp. 150-151)

86. O handmaid of God! The prayers which were revealed to ask for healing apply both to physical and spiritual healing. Recite them, then, to heal both the soul and the body. If healing is right for the patient, it will certainly be granted; but for some ailing persons, healing would only be the cause of other ills, and therefore wisdom doth not permit an affirmative answer to the prayer.

87. O handmaid of God! The power of the Holy Spirit healeth both physical and spiritual ailments.

2) ("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá", sec 139, pp. 161-162)

88. There is but one power which heals-that is God. The state or condition through which the healing takes place is the confidence of the heart. By some this state is reached through pills, powders and physicians. By others through hygiene, fasting, and prayer; by others through direct perception.

4) ('Abdu'l-Bahá, 'Abdu'l-Bahá in London, p. 95)

89. ...The prayers which were written for the purpose of healing are both for the spiritual and material healing. Therefore chant them for the spiritual and material healing. If healing is best for the patient surely it will be granted. For some who are sick, healing for them shall be the cause of other ills. Thus it is that wisdom does not decree the answer to some prayers.

90. O maid-servant of God. The Power of the Holy Spirit heals both material and spiritual ills.

3) (Abdu'l-Bahá: Tablet to Ella Goodall Cooper: Daily Lessons Received at Akka, 1976 ed., p. 86)

91. Healing through purely spiritual forces is undoubtedly as inadequate as that which materialist physicians and thinkers vainly seek to obtain by resorting entirely to mechanical devices and methods. The best result can be obtained by combining the two processes: spiritual and physical.

2) (In a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 12 March 1934 to an individual believer)

92. With regard to your question concerning spiritual healing: Such a healing constitutes, indeed, one of the most effective methods of relieving a person from either his mental or physical pains and sufferings. 'Abdu'l-Bahá has in His "Paris Talks" emphasized its importance by stating that it should be used as an essential means for effecting a complete physical cure. Spiritual healing, however, is not and cannot be a substitute for material healing, but it is a most valuable adjunct to it. Both are, indeed, essential and complementary.

2) (In a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 16 February 1935 to an individual believer)

93. With reference to your question concerning spiritual healing: Its importance, as you surely know, has been greatly emphasized by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Who considered it, indeed, as an essential part of physical processes of healing. Physical healing cannot be complete and lasting unless it is reinforced by spiritual healing. And this last one can be best obtained through obedience to the laws and commandments of God as revealed to us through His Manifestations. Individual believers, however, can also help by imparting healing to others. But the success of their efforts depends entirely on their strict adherence to the Teachings, and also on the manner in which they impart them to others. According to Bahá'u'lláh man cannot obtain full guidance directly from God. He must rather seek it through His Prophets. Provided this principle is clearly understood and explained, the Guardian sees no harm that the friends should try to effect spiritual healing in others. Any such cure effected, however, should be done in the name of Bahá'u'lláh and in accordance with His teachings. For God, and God alone, is the Supreme and Almighty Physician, and all else are but instruments in His hands.

2) (In a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 23 May 1935 to an individual believer)

### **3.7.1 MATERIAL HEALING**

94. Yesterday at table we spoke of curative treatment and spiritual healing, which consists in treating maladies through the spiritual powers.

95. Now let us speak of material healing. The science of medicine is still in a condition of infancy; it has not reached maturity. But when it has reached this point, cures will be performed by things which are not repulsive to the smell and taste of man — that is to say, by aliments, fruits and vegetables which are agreeable to the taste and have an agreeable smell. For the provoking cause of disease — that is to say, the cause of the entrance of disease into the human body — is either a physical one or is the effect of excitement of the nerves.

96. But the principal causes of disease are physical, for the human body is composed of

numerous elements, but in the measure of an especial equilibrium. As long as this equilibrium is maintained, man is preserved from disease; but if this essential balance, which is the pivot of the constitution, is disturbed, the constitution is disordered, and disease will supervene.

97. For instance, there is a decrease in one of the constituent ingredients of the body of man, and in another there is an increase; so the proportion of the equilibrium is disturbed, and disease occurs. For example, one ingredient must be one thousand grams in weight, and another five grams, in order that the equilibrium be maintained. The part which is one thousand grams diminishes to seven hundred grams, and that which is five grams augments until the measure of the equilibrium is disturbed; then disease occurs. When by remedies and treatments the equilibrium is reestablished, the disease is banished. So if the sugar constituent increases, the health is impaired; and when the doctor forbids sweet and starchy foods, the sugar constituent diminishes, the equilibrium is reestablished, and the disease is driven off. Now the readjustment of these constituents of the human body is obtained by two means — either by medicines or by aliments; and when the constitution has recovered its equilibrium, disease is banished. All the elements that are combined in man exist also in vegetables; therefore, if one of the constituents which compose the body of man diminishes, and he partakes of foods in which there is much of that diminished constituent, then the equilibrium will be established, and a cure will be obtained. So long as the aim is the readjustment of the constituents of the body, it can be effected either by medicine or by food.
98. The majority of the diseases which overtake man also overtake the animal, but the animal is not cured by drugs. In the mountains, as in the wilderness, the animal's physician is the power of taste and smell. The sick animal smells the plants that grow in the wilderness; he eats those that are sweet and fragrant to his smell and taste, and is cured. The cause of his healing is this. When the sugar ingredient has become diminished in his constitution, he begins to long for sweet things; therefore, he eats an herb with a sweet taste, for nature urges and guides him; its smell and taste please him, and he eats it. The sugar ingredient in his nature will be increased, and health will be restored.
99. It is, therefore, evident that it is possible to cure by foods, aliments and fruits; but as today the science of medicine is imperfect, this fact is not yet fully grasped. When the science of medicine reaches perfection, treatment will be given by foods, aliments, fragrant fruits and vegetables, and by various waters, hot and cold in temperature.
100. This discourse is brief; but, if God wills, at another time, when the occasion is suitable, this question will be more fully explained.

2) ('Abdu'l-Bahá, "Some Answered Questions", pp. 257-59)

### **3.7.2 SPIRITUAL HEALING**

101. O Befriended Stranger!

The candle of thine heart is lighted by the hand of My power, quench it not with the contrary winds of self and passion. The healer of all thine ills is remembrance of Me, forget it not. Make My love thy treasure and cherish it even as thy very sight and life.

2) ("The Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh", Persian no. 32, rev. ed. Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1985), p. 43

102. Well is it with the physician who cureth ailments in My hallowed and dearly-cherished Name.

2) (Bahá'u'lláh, from a Tablet - translated from the Arabic)

103. In God must be our trust. There is no God but Him, the Healer, the Knower, the Helper. ... Nothing in earth or heaven is outside the grasp of God.

4) (Dr. J.E. Esslemont, Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era, p. 111)

104. That the Most Great Name exerciseth influence over both physical and spiritual matters is sure and certain.

2) ('Abdu'l-Bahá, from a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

105. When thou wishest to treat nervous pains turn thy whole being to the realm on high with thine heart detached from aught else besides Him and thy soul enraptured by the love of God. Then seek confirmation of the Holy Spirit from the Abhá Kingdom, while touching the affected part with utmost love, tenderness and attraction to God. When all these things are combined, be assured that healing will take place.

2) ('Abdu'l-Bahá, from a Tablet - translated from the Arabic)

106. If we are sick and in distress let us implore God's healing, and He will answer our prayer.

4) ('Abdu'l-Bahá, Paris Talks, p. 110)

107. The healing that is by the power of the Holy Spirit needs no special concentration or contact. It is through the wish or desire and the prayer of the holy person. The one who is sick may be in the East and the healer in the West, and they may not have been acquainted with each other, but as soon as that holy person turns his heart to God and begins to pray, the sick one is healed. This is a gift belonging to the Holy Manifestations and those who are in the highest station.

2) ('Abdu'l-Bahá, cited in "Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era" p. 109)

108. If thou wishest the divine knowledge and recognition, purify thy heart from all beside God, be wholly attracted to the ideal, beloved One; search for and choose Him and apply thyself to rational and authoritative arguments. For arguments are a guide to the path and by this the heart will be turned unto the Sun of Truth. And when the heart is turned unto the Sun, then the eye will be opened and will recognize the Sun through the Sun itself. Then man will be in no need of arguments (or proofs), for the Sun is altogether independent, and absolute independence is in need of nothing, and proofs are one of the things of which absolute independence has no need. Be not like Thomas; be thou like

Peter. I hope you will be healed physically, mentally and spiritually.

4) ('Abdu'l-Bahá, Bahá'í World Faith, p. 383)

109. We have no reason to believe that the healing of the Holy Spirit cannot be attracted by ordinary human beings. But this is rare, a mystery, and a gift of God.

2) (In a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 26 March 1950 to an individual believer)

110. Such hindrances, no matter how severe and insuperable they may at first seem, can and should be effectively overcome through the combined and sustained power of prayer and of determined and continued effort....

2) (In a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 6 February 1939 to an individual believer)

## 4 MISCELLANEOUS SUBJECTS



### 4.1 ANIMAL CRUELTY

111. The Guardian fully sympathizes with your repulsion against any torture to animals. However, he feels that as there are human beings being tortured much worse than animals all over the world, often physically, and more often mentally, that it is more important for the Bahá'ís to concentrate on what will free man from the cruelty and injustice which oppress him, rather than animals. Once we change human hearts, there will be no more cruelty to animals, and medical research will be carried out in a way which will eliminate as much suffering in experiments as possible.

3) (From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, December 27, 1952)

### 4.2 ANIMAL VIVISECTION

112. As regards the question the Auckland Assembly has asked about vivisection, there is nothing on this subject in the Bahá'í teachings. At a future date such matters will no doubt be taken up by the International House of Justice.

3) (Letters from the Guardian to Australia and New Zealand, 1923-1957, p. 130)

113. 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.'

114. 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.

115. 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.

2, 3) (From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Italy, March 9, 1978: Some Aspects of Health, Healing, Nutrition and Related Matters, April 1984, p. 16)

### **4.3 ARTIFICIAL CREATION OF LIFE**

116. As to your question regarding the possibility of an artificial production of life by means of an incubator: this is essentially a matter that concerns science, and as such should be investigated and studied by scientists.

2) (In a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 31 December 1937 to an individual believer)

117. As to the possibility of conception without the presence of a male sperm in the future: this is a question which lies entirely within the province of science, and which future scientists will have to investigate.

2) (In a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 27 February 1938 to an individual believer)

### **4.4 ARTIFICIAL INSEMINATION**

118. Regarding surrogate mothers and artificial insemination, you will find the following extracts from statements made by the Universal House of Justice relevant to your questions:

119. 'The beloved Guardian, in a letter written on his behalf to an individual believer who enquired on the same subject, said "...there is nothing in our teachings about this, therefore there is no objection to having a baby by means of artificial insemination as long as your husband is the father of it.'

120. 'Artificial insemination is, therefore, permissible to a Bahá'í wife provided her husband is the donor.'

3) (From a letter dated 11 July 1978 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer)

121. Also, after quoting the above statement of the Guardian, the following comment was made in another letter:

122. 'In view of this, the House of Justice has stated that it would not be proper for a Bahá'í to donate semen to a hospital for the artificial insemination of a woman other than his wife.'

123. (From a letter dated 25 May 1979 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice

to the National Spiritual Assembly of Australia)

3) (From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the compiler of this compilation [Helen Hornby], October 27, 1981)

## **4.5 BEQUEATH BODY PARTS**

124. There is nothing in the teachings which would forbid a Bahá'í to bequeath his eyes to another person or for a Hospital; on the contrary it seems a noble thing to do.

2) (In a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 6 September 1946 to an individual believer)

125. Regarding various matters raised in your letters: There is nothing in the Teachings to prevent a Bahá'í from willing his body for medical research after death. However, it should be made clear that the remains must be buried eventually and not cremated, as this is according to Bahá'í law.

2) (In a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 26 June 1956 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada)

126. There is nothing in the Teachings against leaving our bodies to medical science. The only thing we should stipulate is that we do not wish to be cremated, as it is against our Bahá'í Laws.

127. As many people make arrangements to leave their bodies to medical science for investigation, he suggests that you inquire, either through some lawyer friend or through some hospital, how you could do this, and then make the necessary provision in your will, stipulating that you wish your body be of service to mankind in death, and that, being a Bahá'í, you request that your remains not be cremated and not be taken more than an hour's journey from the place you die.

128. The spirit has no more connection with the body after it departs, but, as the body was once the temple of the spirit, we Bahá'ís are taught that it must be treated with respect.

2) (In a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 22 March 1957 to an individual believer)

129. We have your letter of September 13, 1968, making inquiry about instructions which may apply to organ transplants such as the heart or kidney.

130. On 18 September, 1968, we wrote to the National Spiritual Assembly of Argentina as follows:

131. "We have not come across anything specific in the writings on transplants of hearts and other organs or regarding the time of death, and the Universal House of Justice does not wish to make any statements on these points at this time."

3) (From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States, September 23, 1968)

132. In reply to your letter of October 1st inquiring about organ transplants and Bahá'ís

acting as donors for parts of the body, we refer you first of all to our letter of March 3rd 1967 in which we quoted to you a passage from one of the beloved Guardian's letters on this subject.

133. We are also able to give you the following from a letter of the beloved Guardian by his secretary: 'There is nothing in the teachings which would forbid a Bahá'í to bequeath his eyes to another person or for a hospital; on the contrary it seems a noble thing to do.' This passage is from a letter dated September 6th 1946.
134. The House of Justice does not wish at the present time to go beyond the elucidation contained in the above statements."

3) (From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles, October 16, 1969)

## **4.6 BODY DISSECTION**

135. To your fourth question, a Bahá'í, when dissecting a human body for the purposes of medical study, should keep in mind that since the body was once the temple of the spirit it must be treated with respect even though there is no further connection between the two.

3) (From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, March 18, 1975)

## **4.7 CANCER**

136. There is no authority for the statement which is alleged to have been said by Abdu'l-Bahá to the effect that cancer is a spiritual disease. The saying is quite unauthoritative, and should not be circulated.

3) (From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, July 10, 1939)

137. Cancer is such a terrible scourge in the world today! But when the believers are called upon to go through such bitter ordeals they have the Faith to sustain them, the love of their Bahá'í friends to comfort them, and the glorious words of Bahá'u'lláh regarding immortality to give them confidence and courage. Blessed are we, indeed, even, in the midst of our greatest trials.

3) (From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, September 5, 1949: Bahá'í News, No. 231, p. 1, May 1950)

## **4.8 CHILDREN**

138. The child must, from the day of his birth, be provided with whatever is conducive to his health; and know ye this: so far as possible, the mother's milk is best for, more agreeable and better suited to the child, unless she should fall ill or her milk should run entirely dry....

2) ('Abdu'l-Bahá, from a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

139. While the children are yet in their infancy feed them from the breast of heavenly grace, foster them in the cradle of all excellence, rear them in the embrace of bounty. Give them the advantage of every useful kind of knowledge. Let them share in every new and rare and wondrous craft and art. Bring them up to work and strive, and accustom them to hardship.

3) (Abdu'l-Bahá: Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Bahá, 1982 ed., p. 129: cited in A Compilation of Extracts on Physical Education, p. 1, World Centre)

140. Unless the child, in his earliest years, be carefully tended, whether in a material or a spiritual sense, whether as to his physical health or his education, it will prove extremely difficult to effect any changes later on. For example, if a child is not properly cared for at the beginning of life, so that he doth not develop a sound body and his constitution doth not flourish as it ought, his body will remain feeble, and whatever is done afterward will take little effect. This matter of protecting the health of the child is essential, for sound health leadeth to insights and sense perceptions, and then the child, as he learneth sciences, arts, skills, and the civilities of life, will duly develop his powers....

3) (From a previously untranslated Tablet by Abdu'l-Bahá, cited in A Compilation of Extracts on Physical Education, p. 1, World Centre )

141. Playing games is not in the least forbidden. It should in fact be encouraged if they are of an athletic nature.

3) (From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to a National Spiritual Assembly, December 27, 1932: cited in A Compilation of Extracts on Physical Education, p. 2, World Centre)

## **4.9 CHIROPRACTIC**

142. He feels you should certainly think of your future and earning your living, and if chiropractic is the work you wish to go in for, you should continue your education; when you are finished it would be highly meritorious to enter the pioneer field, as for many years to come Bahá'í teachers will be needed in distant lands.

2) (In a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 31 March 1947 to an individual believer)

143. There is nothing in the Teachings about chiropractic as a method of healing. People are free to turn to it if they please and find help through it.

2) (In a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 10 February 1951 to an individual believer)

## **4.10 CIRCUMCISION**

144. Also with regard to the practice of circumcision; the Teachings bear no reference to this matter, and it is therefore not enjoined upon the believers.

2) (In a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 14 December 1940 to the National Spiritual Assembly of India and Burma)

145. The beloved Guardian says that the question of circumcision has nothing to do with the Bahá'í Teachings; and the believers are free to do as they please in the matter.

2) (In a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 27 March 1954 to an individual believer)

#### **4.11 CONSOLING PATIENT**

146. ...if a doctor consoles a sick man by saying, "Thank God you are better, and there is hope of your recovery," though these words are contrary to the truth, yet they may become the consolation of the patient and the turning point of the illness. This is not blameworthy.

2) ('Abdu'l-Bahá, "Some Answered Questions", 1st pocket-sized ed. Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1984), pp. 215-16)

#### **4.12 CORRUPT PRACTICES**

147. The Guardian feels that your attitude towards the corrupt practice of accepting commissions from fellow physicians and pharmacists is most admirable. The more upright and noble the Bahá'ís are in their conduct, the more they will impress the public with the spiritual vitality of the Faith they believe in.

3) (From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, October 20, 1953: *Living the Life*, p. 18)

#### **4.13 DIANETICS**

148. So you see he cannot possibly pronounce on the merits of Dianetics. The believers are free to investigate new things, and use them if they prove of real value and no harm.

2) (In a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 30 August 1952 to an individual believer)

#### **4.14 EDUCATION**

149. ...education is of various kinds. There is a training and development of the physical body which ensures strength and growth.

3) (Abdu'l-Bahá: *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 330: cited in *A Compilation of Extracts on Physical Education*, p. 2, World Centre)

150. ...education is of three kinds: material, human and spiritual. Material education is concerned with the progress and development of the body, through gaining its sustenance, its material comfort and ease.

3) (Abdu'l-Bahá: *Some Answered Questions*, 1981 ed., p. 8; cited in *A Compilation of Extracts on Physical Education*, p. 1, World Centre)

151. ...Bahá'u'lláh considered education as one of the most fundamental factors of a true civilization. This education, however, in order to be adequate and fruitful, should be comprehensive in nature and should take into consideration not only the physical and the intellectual side of man but also his spiritual and ethical aspects. This should be the program of the Bahá'í youth all over the world.

3) (From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, July 9, 1931: cited in A Compilation of Extracts on Physical Education, p. 2, World Centre)

## **4.15 EUTHANASIA**

152. As to the questions relating to euthanasia ... the House of Justice has asked us to share with you these two statements...

153. 'As to the Bahá'í viewpoint on the removal or withholding of life support in medical cases where intervention prolongs life in disabling illnesses, nothing has been found in the Sacred Text specifically on this matter. In such cases decisions must be left to those responsible, including the patient.'

3) (From a letter dated 31st May 1979 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer)

154. We have received your letter of March 18, 1974 in which you ask for the Bahá'í viewpoint on euthanasia and on the removal of life support in medical cases where physiological interventions prolong life in disabling illnesses. In general our teachings indicate that God, the Giver of life, can alone dispose of it as He deems best, and we have found nothing in the Sacred Text on these matters specifically but in a letter to an individual written on behalf of the beloved Guardian by his secretary regarding mercy killings, or legalized euthanasia, it is stated:

155. ...this is also a matter which the Universal House of Justice will have to legislate.

156. Until such time as the Universal House of Justice considers legislation on euthanasia, decisions in the matters to which you refer must be left to the consciences of those responsible. (From a letter dated 17 May 1974 from the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Alaska)

3) (From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the compiler [Helen Hornby], October 27, 1981)

## **4.16 HEALING OF HUMANITY**

157. In the hearts of men no real love is found, and the condition is such that, unless their susceptibilities are quickened by some power so that unity, love and accord may develop within them, there can be no healing.

4) ('Abdu'l-Bahá, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 171)

158. When the material world and the divine world are well co-related, when the hearts

become heavenly and the aspirations grow pure and divine, perfect connection shall take place. Then shall this power produce a perfect manifestation. Physical and spiritual diseases will then receive absolute healing.

4) ('Abdu'l-Bahá, Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá v2, p. 309)

159. What is the benefit of prayer that man should stand or kneel three or five times a day and read or chant certain words? ..the ordinances and precepts of God are for the purpose of promoting humanity to a higher station. Therefore, the benefit of praying must be something which elevates man to a lofty and spiritual station, and to set him free from the prison of this immortal world of nature. These Divine ordinances are like the remedies and medicines, which the skillful doctor gives to the patient (the sick). Consequently, it is better for the patient to simply obey the physician, use the medicine, in order to recover from his sickness. Now, the Divine Doctor, God, knows the sicknesses of the spirit of humanity, which is imprisoned in this material body. The ordinances and precepts [given through His Mouthpieces and Prophets] are the remedies for the sicknesses and one of the ordinances is -"to pray".

4) ('Abdu'l-Bahá, Star of the West - 3, p. 301)

160. In this new year new fruits must be forthcoming, for that is the provision and intention of spiritual reformation. The renewal of the leaf is fruitless. From the reformation of bark or branch no fruit will come forth. The renewal of verdure produces nothing. If there be no renewal of fruit from the tree, of what avail is the reformation of bark, blossom, branch and trunk? For a fruitless tree is of no special value. Similarly, of what avail is the reformation of physical conditions unless they are concomitant with spiritual reformations? For the essential reality is the spirit, the foundation is the spirit, the life of man is due to the spirit; the happiness, the animus, the radiance, the glory of man—all are due to the spirit; and if in the spirit no reformation takes place, there will be no result to human existence.

4) ('Abdu'l-Bahá, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 278)

161. Knowledge of human conditions and the needed remedy for them is not the cause of their betterment. To admit that health is good does not constitute health. A skilled physician is needed to remedy existing human conditions. As a physician is required to have complete knowledge of pathology, diagnosis, therapeutics and treatment, so this World Physician must be wise, skillful and capable before health will result. His mere knowledge is not health; it must be applied and the remedy carried out.

4) ('Abdu'l-Bahá, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 156)

162. Knowledge of human conditions and the needed remedy for them is not the cause of their betterment. To admit that health is good does not constitute health. A skilled physician is needed to remedy existing human conditions. As a physician is required to have complete knowledge of pathology, diagnosis, therapeutics and treatment, so this

World Physician must be wise, skillful and capable before health will result. His mere knowledge is not health; it must be applied and the remedy carried out.

4) ('Abdu'l-Bahá, Foundations of World Unity, p. 100)

163. Naturally, new spiritual thoughts and inclinations must also become manifest. If spirituality be not renewed, what fruits come from mere physical reformation? For instance, the body of man may improve, the quality of bone and sinew may advance, the hand may develop, other limbs and members may increase in excellence, but if the mind fails to develop, of what use is the rest? The important factor in human improvement is the mind. In the world of the mind there must needs be development and improvement. There must be reformation in the kingdom of the human spirit; otherwise, no result will be attained from betterment of the mere physical structure.

4) ('Abdu'l-Bahá, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 277)

164. However much the need may be for physical healing, the supreme need of the world today is for spiritual healing. Life in this world is so relatively short--and at present it is fraught with a thousand difficulties and dangers; whereas life in the true sense is eternal, and for this eternal life people need some preparation in these turbulent times.

165. Your work to improve the health of people is a meritorious way of serving mankind, but it can never be compared with the work of illumining the souls and minds of men with the Light of Bahá'u'lláh. The people of the world are teeming millions, the Bahá'ís only a handful, yet they are the precious leaven that must leaven the lump.

3) (From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, May 8, 1942)

166. The greatest form of healing which the Bahá'ís can practice is to heal the spiritually sick souls of men by giving this greatest of all Messages to them. We can also try to help them, both physically and spiritually, through prayer.

2) (In a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 25 March 1946 to an individual believer)

167. The generality of mankind, blind and enslaved, is wholly unaware of the healing power with which this community has been endowed, nor can it as yet suspect the role which this same community is destined to play in its redemption.

4) (Shoghi Effendi, Lights of Guidance, p. 135)

## **4.17 HOMEOPATHY**

168. 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.)

169. 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.

2) (12 November 1975, written by the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer)

#### **4.18 HYPNOTISM**

170. Hypnotism hath a weak influence over bodies, but hath no result. But the power of the kingdom of God is great. If thou canst, endeavor to obtain a share of that power.

3) (Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá, Vol. I, p. 169)

171. What comes under the healing of psychic practices Abdu'l-Bahá has warned us against; but any form of auto-suggestion or hypnotism which is used by medical science and by properly qualified physicians we are free to take advantage of, if we feel that the doctor using such practices is qualified and will not abuse his rights.

3) (From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, February 15, 1957: *Spiritualism and Psychic Phenomena*, February 14, 1974, p. 2)

#### **4.19 ILL HEALTH UNAVOIDABLE**

172. Although ill health is one of the unavoidable conditions of man, truly it is hard to bear. The bounty of good health is the greatest of all gifts.

2) ("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá", sec. 132, p. 151)

#### **4.20 LIFE SUPPORT**

173. With reference to your letter of 1 July 1985, we are asked to say that, in general, our Teachings indicate that God, the Giver of life, can alone dispose of it as He deems best. The Universal House of Justice has found nothing in the Sacred Text about the matter of withholding or removing life support in disabling or terminal illnesses where intervention prolongs life. Therefore, until such time as the House of Justice considers legislation on these matters, it is left to the conscience of the individual concerned whether or not to subscribe to a 'living will'.

3) (From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to a Local Spiritual Assembly, July 23, 1985)

#### **4.21 MEANING OF SUFFERING**

As to your question concerning the meaning of physical suffering and its relation to mental and spiritual healing: Physical pain is a necessary accompaniment of all human existence, and as such is unavoidable. As long as there will be life on earth,

there will be also suffering, in various forms and degrees. But suffering, although an inescapable reality, can nevertheless be utilized as a means for the attainment of happiness. This is the interpretation given to it by all the Prophets and saints, who, in the midst of severe tests and trials, felt happy and joyous and experienced what is best and holiest in life. Suffering is both a reminder and a guide. It stimulates us to better adapt ourselves to our environmental conditions, and thus leads the way to self-improvement. In every suffering one can find a meaning and a wisdom. But it is not always easy to find the secret of that wisdom. It is sometimes only when all our suffering has passed that we become aware of its usefulness. What man considers to be evil turns often to be a cause of infinite blessings. And this is due to his desire to know more than he can. God's wisdom is, indeed, inscrutable to us all, and it is no use pushing too far trying to discover that which shall always remain a mystery to our mind.

2) (In a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 29 May 1935 to an individual believer)

174. The Beloved Guardian has asked me to assure you and the parents of the dear baby of his prayers for his healing, both material and spiritual.

175. It is difficult for us to understand these calamities when they come to us. Those who are firm in the Faith, know that the Hand of God protects them, and if something of this nature comes upon them, it is for some reason, which may have to do with the spiritual development of the one affected, or the spiritual development and welfare of the loved ones; or even for the melting of the hearts of non-Bahá'ís, who will be affected by the Divine Spirit, through the manner in which the Bahá'í meets such an ordeal.

3) (From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, July 23, 1953)

176. ...as we suffer these misfortunes we must remember that the Prophets of God Themselves were not immune from these things which men suffer. They knew sorrow, illness and pain too. They rose above these things through Their spirits, and that is what we must try and do too, when afflicted. The troubles of this world pass, and what we have left is what we have made of our souls, so it is to this we must look to becoming more spiritual, drawing nearer to God, no matter what our human minds and bodies go through.

3) (From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, August 5, 1949: Bahá'í News, No. 231, May 1950, p. 1)

## **4.22 MEDICAL SCIENCE**

177. 'Abdu'l-Bahá does often state that the medical science will much improve. With the appearance of every Revelation a new insight is created in man and this in turn expresses itself in the growth of science. This has happened in past dispensations and we find its earliest fruits in our present day. What we see however is only the beginning. With the spiritual awakening of man this force will develop and marvelous results will become

manifest.

2) (In a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 14 January 1932 to two believers)

178. Every day medical science is progressing, and it is quite possible that some new form of treatment or some new doctor may be able to get you on your feet. He will certainly pray that this may be so.

2) (In a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 24 February 1952 to an individual believer)

## **4.23 MENTAL ILLNESS**

179. ...mental illness is not spiritual, although its effects may indeed hinder and be a burden in one's striving toward spiritual progress. In a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to a believer there is this further passage: Such hindrances, no matter how severe and insuperable they may at first seem, can and should be effectively overcome through the combined and sustained power of prayer and of determined and continued effort....

3) (In a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 6 February 1939 to an individual believer)

180. Very little is as yet known about the mind and its workings. But one thing is certain: Bahá'ís can and do receive a very remarkable help and protection in this world, one which often surprises their doctors very much!

2) (In a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 9 April 1948 to an individual believer)

181. It is very hard to be subject to any illness, particularly a mental one. However, we must always remember these illnesses have nothing to do with our spirit or our inner relation to God. It is a great pity that as yet so little is really known of the mind, its workings and illnesses that afflict it; no doubt, as the world becomes more spiritually minded and scientists understand the true nature of man, more humane and permanent cures for mental diseases will be found.

182. The Guardian, much as his heart goes out to you in your fear and suffering, cannot tell you whether electric shock treatments should or should not be used, as this is a purely medical question, and there is no reference to such details in our Scriptures. The best scientists must pass upon such methods, not laymen.

183. You must always remember, no matter how much you or others may be afflicted with mental troubles and the crushing environment of these State Institutions, that your spirit is healthy, near to our Beloved, and will in the next world enjoy a happy and normal state of soul. Let us hope in the meantime scientists will find better and permanent cures for the mentally afflicted. But in this world such illness is truly a heavy burden to bear!"

3) (From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, April 12, 1948: Selections from Bahá'í Writings on Some Aspects of Health and Healing, A Compilation of the Universal House of Justice, June 1974)

184. In the Bahá'í Teachings it is made quite clear that when one is ill, one should seek the best available medical advice. This naturally leaves a person free to choose what they consider good in medical opinion. If you and ...'s mother feel that she is improving under the care of your own doctor, and ... is willing to wait and be patient and see if she goes on making progress, there can surely be no objection to her doing this. There are a great many as you know mental diseases and troubles at present, and the one thing Bahá'ís must not do is take a defeatist attitude toward them. The power in the Faith is such that it can sustain us on a much higher level in spite of whatever our ailments might be, than other people who are denied it. This however does not mean that we should ignore medical opinion and treatment. On the contrary, we should do our best to procure the opinion of specialists and competent doctors.

3) (From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, January 12, 1957)

185. With reference to the broad aspects of your problem of psychological difficulty, the House of Justice has asked us to quote the following passages from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh: 'Know thou that the soul of man is exalted above, and is independent of all infirmities of body or mind.... When it (the soul) leaveth the body, however, it will evince such ascendancy, and reveal such influence as no force on earth can equal'. In a letter written on behalf of the beloved Guardian we also find the following passage: 'You must always remember, no matter how much you and others are afflicted with mental troubles ..., that your spirit is healthy, near to your Beloved, and will in the next world enjoy a happy and normal state of soul.' Thus it is that the soul is not aided by psychotherapy. On the other hand, in your understanding of the mental phenomena which distress you, and in your efforts to overcome your problem it is perfectly proper to consult professional experts, as your National Assembly ... advised. In another letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi by his secretary, we read the following: 'As Bahá'u'lláh has urged us to avail ourselves of the help of good physicians, Bahá'ís certainly are not only free to turn to psychiatry for assistance but should, when available, do so.' The mind, then, with all its aberrancies, may often favourably be influenced by scientifically trained persons.

186. The Universal House of Justice suggests that through daily prayer, and specially by observing the daily obligatory prayers, through study of the Writings, through active participation in teaching efforts and in the activities of the community, and through constant effort to sacrifice for the Faith you love so well, you will provide a spiritual counterpart to the professional help you will receive from the experts. You should also endeavour to engage in some useful occupation, or by training yourself to have such an occupation, as work is itself another means at our disposal, in accordance with our Teachings, to draw nearer to God, and to better grasp His purpose for us in this world.

3) (From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, April 6, 1976)

187. It is not easy to be burdened with long years of mental illness such as you describe. And plainly you have sought aid from many persons of scientific and non-scientific training backgrounds, apparently to little avail over the years of your prolonged illness.

188. Possibly you should consider, if it is feasible, consulting the best specialists in a medical centre in one of the major cities, where the most advanced diagnosis and

treatment can be obtained. The science of the mind, of normality and of the disabilities from which it may suffer, is in its relative infancy, but much may be possible to aid you to minimize your suffering and make possible an active life. The last ten years in the therapy of mental disorders has seen important advances from which you may well benefit.

189. Your discovery of the Faith, of its healing Writings and its great purposes for the individual and for all mankind, have indeed brought to you a powerful force toward a healthy life which will sustain you on a higher level, whatever your ailment may be. The best results for the healing process are to combine the spiritual with the physical, for it should be possible for you to overcome your illness through the combined and sustained power of prayer and of determined effort.

3) (From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, July 23, 1984)

## **4.24 NO BAHÁ'Í HEALERS**

190. There is no such thing as Bahá'í healers or a Bahá'í type of healing. In His Most Holy Book Bahá'u'lláh says to consult the best physicians...He never gave us to believe He Himself would heal us through 'healers', but rather through prayer and the assistance of medicine and approved treatments.

4) (Shoghi Effendi, Lights of Guidance, p. 277)

191. As to your question about healing: although there is no objection to your helping others to regain their health, he does not feel you should associate the name Bahá'í with your work, as it gives a wrong impression; we have no "Bahá'í healers" as Christian Science and various other sects have. You are a Bahá'í and a healer, and that is quite different.

2) (In a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 13 December 1945 to an individual believer)

192. The Guardian knows nothing about your kind of healing, nor would he care to go into the question in detail, as he has no time for such matters. But he can lay down for your guidance certain broad principles: there is no such thing as Bahá'í healers or a Bahá'í type of healing. In His Most Holy Book (the Aqdas) Bahá'u'lláh says to consult the best physicians, in other words doctors who have studied a scientific system of medicine; He never gave us to believe He Himself would heal us through 'healers', but rather through prayer and the assistance of medicine and approved treatments.

193. Now, as long as your healing is in no opposition to these principles, as long as you do not try and take the place of a regular doctor in trying to heal others, but only give them your kind of help through constructive suggestion — or whatever it may be — and do not associate this help with being a channel of the direct grace of Bahá'u'lláh, the Guardian sees no harm in your continuing your assistance to others. But you must conscientiously decide whether in view of the above you are really justified in continuing. He will pray for your guidance and happiness.

2) (In a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 8 June 1948 to an individual believer)

194. He feels the attitude taken by you and the Assembly of Caracas towards the remarkable healing powers exhibited by ... has been the right one. To associate such things with the Cause directly would be only to ultimately injure its reputation and misrepresent it, as her powers--which are certainly very hard to find any logical explanation for--are not common to Bahá'ís, but rather a phenomenon seen among individuals, (rarely) of religious backgrounds.

195. As to its being direct inspiration of Bahá'u'lláh, we certainly cannot say this. We can only be grateful that she has actually been able to help people who direly needed it. She herself being a devoted Bahá'í, there is no reason why she should not be known as one. But certainly it should in no way be connected with her healing powers.

3) (From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian, September 30, 1949, to an individual believer: Extracts from the Guardian's Letters on Spiritualism, Reincarnation and Related Subjects,, p. 8)

196. The Guardian has already heard about ...'s seemingly remarkable powers of healing and he wrote the friends who communicated with him that he feels that she is naturally free to use this power, so far beyond our understanding, but not a unique phenomenon in history by any means, for the good of others, but that it is better not to directly associate it with the Faith.

197. In other words this dear soul is a Bahá'í, and we are all proud that she is one. But she should not give the impression she is a Bahá'í healer, for we have no such thing, but rather that she is a Bahá'í by faith, whom God seems to have blessed with this precious bounty individually of being able to often heal others.

3) (From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, October 26, 1949: Extracts from the Guardian's Letters on Spiritualism, Reincarnation and Related Subjects,, pp. 8-9)

198. He does not feel that you should try to do anything special about the capacity you feel to help people when they are ill. This does not mean you should not use it, when the occasion arises, such as it did recently. But he means you should not become a "healer" such as the Christian Scientists have, and we Bahá'ís do not have.

2) (In a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 25 December 1949 to an individual believer)

199. The Guardian sees no reason why you should not continue to help sick people. As he wrote to some of the believers regarding this matter previously, as long as you do not say you are healing them as a Bahá'í, or because you are a Bahá'í (because we have no 'healers' in the Cause as such) there can be certainly no objection to your doing it. On the contrary to be able to help another soul who is in suffering is a great bounty from God

3) (From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, October 5, 1950: Extracts from the Guardian's Letters on Spiritualism, Reincarnation and Related Subjects,, p. 9)

200. He thinks your Assembly's decision regarding spiritual healing being demonstrated at

a Bahá'í meeting was quite sound. We should try not to have the Faith identified with such things in the eyes of the public officially. What the believers do privately, which in no way contravenes the Teachings, is their own affair.

3) (From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles, June 25, 1953: Extracts from the Guardian's Letters on Spiritualism, Reincarnation and Related Subjects,, p. 9)

## **4.25 NO SPONSORING OF TREATMENTS**

201. ...as we are a religion and not qualified to pass on scientific matters we cannot sponsor different treatments. We are certainly free to pass on what we have found beneficial to others.

2) (In a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 30 September 1950 to an individual believer)

202. 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....

2) (24 January 1977, written by the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer)

203. 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 in correctly understand.

2) (11 July 1978, written by the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer)

204. What the friends must try and grasp, however, is that the Bahá'í Faith at this stage in its evolution cannot place its seal of approval on any one of the plethora of healing techniques. In the rising Bahá'í society of the future, it may then be possible to make definitive judgment or to evolve practices more directly predicated on the Bahá'í Writings. However, there is at present enough development in the medical field and a wide record of experience to enable a person after reasonable investigation to choose a

suitable doctor or medical institution to deal with a case of illness.

4) (Universal House of Justice, dated May 10, 1990, to an individual believer)

## **4.26 PRAY – THEN GIVE MEDICAL TREATMENT**

205. When giving medical treatment turn to the Blessed Beauty, then follow the dictates of thy heart. Remedy the sick by means of heavenly joy and spiritual exultation, cure the sorely afflicted by imparting to them blissful glad tidings and heal the wounded through His resplendent bestowals. When at the bedside of a patient, cheer and gladden his heart and enrapture his spirit through celestial power. Indeed, such a heavenly breath quickeneth every mouldering bone and reviveth the spirit of every sick and ailing one.

2) ("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá" sec. 131, p. 151)

206. ...every branch of learning, conjoined with the love of God, is approved and worthy of praise; but bereft of His love, learning is barren — indeed, it bringeth on madness. Every kind of knowledge, every science, is as a tree: if the fruit of it be the love of God, then is it a blessed tree, but if not, that tree is but dried-up wood, and shall only feed the fire.

207. O thou loyal servant of God and thou spiritual healer of man! Whensoever thou dost attend a patient, turn thy face toward the Lord of the heavenly Kingdom, ask the Holy Spirit to come to thine aid, then heal thou the sickness.

2) ("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá", sec 154, p. 181)

## **4.27 PSYCHIATRY**

208. As regards your seeing a psychiatrist: There is no objection to your trying this form of treatment if your physician recommends it, and any intelligent doctor would never be prejudiced against the Faith through the difficulties incurred by a patient due to illness.

209. There is no object in over-taxing your will power and strength by forcing yourself to do things for the Cause. You should let your mind rest in the thought of the infinite love, mercy and forgiveness of Bahá'u'lláh, and cease to fret about whether you are or are not doing your share until you fully recover your health--and evidently you already are on the road to recovery!

3) (From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, March 26, 1945)

210. There is nothing in our teachings about Freud and his method. Psychiatric treatment in general is no doubt an important contribution to medicine, but we must believe it is still a growing rather than a perfected science. As Bahá'u'lláh has urged us to avail ourselves of the help of good physicians Bahá'ís are certainly not only free to turn to psychiatry for assistance but should, when advisable, do so. This does not mean psychiatrists are always wise or always right, it means we are free to avail ourselves of the best medicine has to offer us.

2) (In a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 15 June 1950  
to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles)

## 4.28 SERVING THE CAUSE

211. Thou shouldst continue thy profession and at the same time try to serve the Kingdom of God.

2) ('Abdu'l-Bahá, from a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

212. If the health and well-being of the body be expended in the path of the Kingdom, this is very acceptable and praiseworthy; and if it be expended to the benefit of the human world in general — even though it be to their material benefit — and be a means of doing good, that is also acceptable. But if the health and welfare of man be spent in sensual desires, in a life on the animal plane, and in devilish pursuits — then disease were better than such health; nay, death itself were preferable to such a life. If thou art desirous of health, wish thou health for serving the Kingdom. I hope that thou mayest attain perfect insight, inflexible resolution, complete health, and spiritual and physical strength in order that thou mayest drink from the fountain of eternal life and be assisted by the spirit of divine confirmation.

2) ('Abdu'l-Bahá, cited in "Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era", pp. 114-115)

213. Looking after one's health is done with two intentions. Man may take good care of his body for the purpose of satisfying his personal wishes. Or, he may look after his health with the good intention of serving humanity and of living long enough to perform his duty toward mankind. The latter is most commendable.

5) 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Star of the West, Vol. VIII, No. 18, p. 230; The Throne of the Inner Temple, p. 19

214. I am deeply sorry to hear of your continued ill health and wish you to concentrate for the present on the ways and means that enable you to recover fully and speedily and resume your valued labours for the spread of the Cause.

4) (Shoghi Effendi, Messages to the Indian Subcontinent, p. 112-113)

215. You should always bear in mind Bahá'u'lláh's counsel that we should take the utmost care of our health, surely not because it is an end in itself, but as a necessary means of serving His Cause.

5) From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer July 17, 1937;  
in Lights of Guidance, p. 291

216. ...you should not neglect your health, but consider it the means which enables you to serve. It — the body — is like a horse which carries the personality and spirit, and as such should be well cared for so it can do its work! You should certainly safeguard your

nerves, and force yourself to take time, and not only for prayer and meditation, but for real rest and relaxation....

2) (In a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 23 November 1947 to an individual believer)

217. ...The Bahá'ís, in spite of their self-sacrificing desire to give the last drop of their strength to serving the Cause, must guard against utterly depleting their forces and having breakdowns. For this can sometimes do more harm than good, because they are so bound up in the lives of others....

218. There is no doubt that there is vicarious atonement for others, and our sufferings sometimes can be in the nature of a sacrifice accepted for others. But where to draw the line is a mystery. If you take better care of your own health, and build up your reserves, it would certainly be better for you and for your work. Then your sensitive, yearning heart, although you may still often suffer for and with others, will be better able to withstand its trials, and you will not get so exhausted, which is certainly no asset to your work for the Cause.

3) (From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, October 25, 1949)

219. Thy letter was received. I hope that thou mayest be protected and assisted under the providence of the True One, be occupied always in mentioning the Lord and display effort to complete thy profession. Thou must endeavour greatly so that thou mayest become unique in thy profession and famous in those parts, because attaining perfection in one's profession in this merciful period is considered to be worship of God. And whilst thou art occupied with thy profession, thou canst remember the True One.

2) ("Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá" [rev. ed.],  
(Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1982), sec. 128, pp. 145-46)

220. The Tablet to a Physician was addressed to a man who was a student of the old type of healing prevalent in the East and familiar with the terminology used in those days, and He addresses him in terms used by the medical men of those days. These terms are quite different from those used by modern medicine, and one would have to have a deep knowledge of this former school of medicine to understand the questions Bahá'u'lláh was elucidating.

221. The Guardian never goes into technical matters, as this is not his work. Bahá'u'lláh has recommended that people seek the help and advice of experts and doctors; He does not say which school they should belong to.

222. Likewise 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.

223. Bahá'u'lláh says teaching is the greatest of all services, but He does not mean one should give up medicine to teach.

2) (In a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 18 December 1945 to an individual believer)

## **4.29 SOCIALIZED MEDICINE**

224. There is nothing in the teachings about Socialized Medicine. All these details are for the House of Justice to decide.

2) (In a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 18 February 1951 to an individual believer)

## **4.30 STUDY MEDICINE**

225. Thou shouldst endeavour to study the science of medicine. It is extremely useful and serveth as the greatest instrument for the dissemination of the Cause. It is absolutely imperative that thou acquire this bounty. Strive day and night that thou mayest become highly qualified in this science. And when thou wishest to dispense treatment set thy heart toward the Abhá Kingdom, entreating divine confirmations.

2) ('Abdu'l-Bahá, from a Tablet - translated from the Persian)

226. These investigations you have so painstakingly pursued in the field of medical science, and on a subject which is still puzzling the minds of all the leading scientists in the world, cannot but be of a captivating interest and of a great value to all medical research workers.

227. It is significant that you as a believer should have undertaken a work of this nature, as we all know that the powers released by the Manifestation of Bahá'u'lláh in this day are destined in the course of time to reveal themselves through the instrumentality of His followers, and in every conceivable field of human endeavour.

228. That you should increasingly prove, through your continued researches in the domain of medicine, to be one of those instruments is the fervent hope of our beloved Guardian....

2) (In a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 29 November 1938 to an individual believer)

229. We were impressed by the spirit of your letter of 15 Sultan seeking guidance concerning certain aspects of the medical profession. Your desire to avoid doing anything in your study of medicine which would be contrary to the Bahá'í Teachings is most commendable.

230. As you have keenly observed, the Universal House of Justice may consider it untimely to make definitive rulings on certain matters to which no direct reference can be found in the Sacred Text. Among these are euthanasia and certain aspects of birth control and abortion, and until such time as rulings are made, these matters are left to the consciences of those concerned who must weigh the medical advice on the case in the light of general guidance given in the Teachings. Your National Spiritual Assembly has specific references regarding birth control and abortion which might be useful to you.

3) (From a letter of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, March 18, 1975)

### **4.31 STUDY SCIENCES**

231. We have permitted you to read such sciences as are profitable unto you, not such as end in idle disputation; better is this for you, if ye be of them that comprehend. [note: A newer translation of this passage has been substituted for the translation originally included.]

2) (Bahá'u'lláh, The Kitáb-i-Aqdas, p. 48)

### **4.32 SERVICE IS WORSHIP**

232. This is worship: to serve mankind and to minister to the needs of the people. Service is prayer. A physician ministering to the sick, gently, tenderly, free from prejudice and believing in the solidarity of the human race, he is giving praise.

2) ("Paris Talks: Addresses given by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Paris in 1911-1912", p. 177)

### **4.33 SYMPATHETIC NERVE**

233. The powers of the sympathetic nerve are neither entirely physical nor material, but are between the two (systems). The nerve is connected with both. Its phenomena shall be perfect when its spiritual and physical relations are normal. (1. Answer to a question of a physician regarding the sympathetic nervous system of the human organism.) When the material world and the divine world are well co-related, when the hearts become heavenly and the aspirations become pure and divine, perfect connect shall take place. Then shall this power produce a perfect manifestation. Physical and spiritual diseases will then receive absolute healing. The exposition is brief. Ponder and thou shalt understand the meaning. Although, on account of lack of time, the answer is short, by close reflection it shall be made long.

4) ('Abdu'l-Bahá, Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá v2 p.309)

### **4.34 TELEPATHY**

234. The Teachings bear no reference to the question of telepathy. It is a matter that concerns psychology.

2) (In a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 28 February 1938 to an individual believer)

### **4.35 UNABLE TO MARRY**

235. The Bahá'í Teachings do not only encourage marital life, considering it the natural and normal way of existence for every sane, healthy and socially-conscious and responsible person, but raise marriage to the status of a divine institution, its chief and sacred purpose being the perpetuation of the human race — which is the very flower of the entire creation — and its elevation to the true station destined for it by God.

236. That there should be, however, certain individuals who by reason of some serious deficiency, physical or mental, would be incapacitated to contract marriage and enjoy the blessings of an enduring and successful marital life is only too evident, but these constitute only a very small section of humanity, and are therefore merely an exception, and their condition cannot possibly invalidate what an all-wise and loving Providence has decreed to be the normal way to a fruitful and constructive social existence.
237. The exact conditions and circumstances under which such incapacitated individuals should be advised or even prevented perhaps from entering into any sort of marital existence have not been specified in the Bahá'í Writings, but will have to be defined later on by the Universal House of Justice. In the mean time, those believers who consider themselves as falling into the above category would do well, before taking any final decision themselves, to consult medical experts, who are both conscientious and competent, and to abide by their recommendation.

2) (In a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 15 April 1939 to an individual believer)

#### **4.36 VACCINATION**

238. Regarding your question about vaccination: these are technical matters which have not been specifically mentioned in the teachings, and consequently the Guardian cannot make any statement about them. No doubt medical science will progress tremendously as time goes by, and the treatment of disease become more perfect.

3) (From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, December 24, 1943: Bahá'í News, No. 173, p. 3, February 1945)

#### **4.37 VISIT THE SICK**

239. O thou servant of God! To look after the sick is one of the greatest duties. For every soul who becomes sick, the other friends should certainly offer their lives (in service) with the utmost kindness.

3) (Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá, Volume I, p. 149: cited in Selections from Bahá'í Writings on Some Aspects of Health and Healing, p. 1)

240. We should all visit the sick. When they are in sorrow and suffering, it is a real help and benefit to have a friend come. Happiness is a great healer to those who are ill. In the East it is the custom to call upon the patient often and meet him individually. The people in the East show the utmost kindness and compassion to the sick and suffering. This has greater effect than the remedy itself. You must always have this thought of love and affection when you visit the ailing and afflicted.

2) ("The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by 'Abdu'l-Bahá during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912" 2nd. ed. (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1982), p. 204)

## 4.38 WORKING ON HOLY DAYS

241. He thinks it is better for Bahá'í doctors not to work on our 9 Holy Days--but, of course, that does not mean they should not attend to very sick people and emergencies on these days.

3) (From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of India, August 2, 1946: Dawn of a New Day, p. 116)

## 5 NOTES



This compilation of compilations is from on line sources (2017) using reference 2) as a base, with additional references added and arranged loosely by subject and sorted within subject by author and date.

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1) Tablet to a Physician (Lawh-i-Tibb)  
by / on behalf of Universal House of Justice  
2000-04-20

[http://bahai-library.com/uhj\\_lawh\\_tibb](http://bahai-library.com/uhj_lawh_tibb)

Your email of 14 December 1999, inquiring about a translation of Bahá'u'lláh's Tablet to a Physician subsequent to the one found in Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era, was received by the Universal House of Justice and referred to our Department for reply.

Excerpts from Bahá'u'lláh's Tablet to a Physician appeared in Star of the West, volume 13, page 252, as well as in many and various Bahá'í newsletters and compilations, as an early translation of a portion of the Tablet entitled "Lawh-i-Tibb", revealed by Bahá'u'lláh in honour of Mirza Muhammad Rida Yazdi, a physician. However, until such time as conditions are propitious for the Tablet to be translated, only portions of it have an authorized translation. For your convenience, we are enclosing the text of the early, partial translation of the Tablet to a Physician which was published in Star of the West, as cited above, along with a related exhortation from Bahá'u'lláh taken from Star of the West, volume 21, number 5, page 160. Furthermore, it may interest you to know that the prayer starting with the words, "Thy Name is my healing ..." is also found in this Tablet.

Enclosure:

## Physical Healing

Some rules for health, from a Tablet revealed by Bahá'u'lláh.

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### 2) Health, Healing, and Nutrition

by Bahá'u'lláh, Abdu'l-Bahá, Shoghi Effendi, and Universal House of Justice  
published in Compilation of Compilations, Volume 1, pages 459-488  
1991.

[http://bahai-library.com/compilation\\_health\\_healing\\_nutrition](http://bahai-library.com/compilation_health_healing_nutrition)

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3) Lights of Guidance: A Bahá'í Reference File, by Bahá'u'lláh, Abdu'l-Bahá,  
Shoghi Effendi, and Universal House of Justice, compiled by Helen Hornby.

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### 4) Baha'i Quotes.com

<http://www.bahaiquotes.com/quotepage.php?Quotes%2FHealing>

This website is owned by Susan Grammage.

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### 5) Compilation on Food and Nutrition

This compilation is based on a selection of references to food and nutrition in the  
Bahá'í Writings originally prepared by Margaret Tash, with subsequent additions.

<http://iefworld.org/cmpfood.html>