
HEALTH, HEALING & NUTRITION

Extracts *from*
the Bahá'í Writings

COMPILATION

HEALTH, HEALING & NUTRITION

A Compilation of Extracts from the Writings
of Bahá'u'lláh, the Báb and 'Abdu'l-Bahá and the Letters
of Shoghi Effendi, and the Universal House of Justice

Prepared by the Research Department
of the Universal House of Justice

Health, Healing and Nutrition

Copyright © Bahá'í International Community
Prepared by the Research Department of
the Universal House of Justice
Compiled 1991
All Rights Reserved

Copyright © Bahá'í Publications Australia
Revised translations inserted
Published August 2022, version 1.1
ISBN 978-1-925320-21-3

Distributed by
Bahá'í Distribution Services
173 Mona Vale Road
Ingleside NSW 2101

bds@bahai.org.au
www.bahaibooks.com.au

Extracts from the Writings

From the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh

- 1 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.

Bahá'u'lláh, The Kitáb-i-Aqdas, par. 113

- 2 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.

Bahá'u'lláh, The Kitáb-i-Aqdas, par. 77

- 3 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 endued with divine understanding, that would certainly be preferable and more desirable.

Bahá'u'lláh, from a Tablet

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

Bahá'u'lláh, from a Tablet

- 5 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.

Bahá'u'lláh, "Kitáb-i-Badí'"

- 6 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 pre-
venteth the soul from manifesting its inherent might
and power. When it leaveth the body, however, it will
evinced 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.

Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, sec. LXXX

7 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.

The Hidden Words of Bahá'u'lláh, Persian no. 32

8 Do not neglect medical treatment when it is necessary, but leave it off when health has been restored ... Treat disease through diet, by preference, refraining from the use of drugs; and if you find what is required in a single herb, do not resort to a compounded medicament. Abstain from drugs when the health is good, but administer them when necessary.

Cited in J. E. Esslemont, Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era

9 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.

Cited in J. E. Esslemont, Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era

*From the Writings and Utterances
of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*

- 10 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.

From a Tablet

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

From a Tablet

- 12 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.

From a Tablet

- 13 One must obey the command of God and submit to medical opinion. Thou hast undertaken this journey to comply with His command and not for the sake of healing, since healing is in the hand of God, not in the hand of doctors.

From a Tablet

- 14 That the Most Great Name exerciseth influence over both physical and spiritual matters is sure and certain.
From a Tablet
- 15 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..
From a Tablet
- 16 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.
From a Tablet
- 17 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.

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.

From a Tablet

- 18 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.

From a Tablet

- 19 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.

Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, sec.128

- 20 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 peopleⁱ 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.

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.

Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, sec. 129

- 21 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

i Possibly ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was referring to the Sikhs; the description appears to apply to them.

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.

Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, sec. 130

- 22 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.

Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, sec. 132

- 23 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.

Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, sec. 131

- 24 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.

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.

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.

Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, sec. 133

- 25 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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, sec. 134

- 26 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.

Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, sec. 135

- 27 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.

Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, sec. 136

- 28 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.

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

Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, sec. 139

- 29 ...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.

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.

Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, sec. 154

- 30 ...should a physician console a patient and say, “Thank God, you are doing better and there is hope for your recovery”, although these words may be contrary to the truth, yet sometimes they will ease the patient’s mind and become the means of curing the illness. And this is not blameworthy.

Some Answered Questions, no. 57

- 31 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.

Cited in J. E. Esslemont, Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era

- 32 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.

Cited in Star of the West, vol. 12, no. 7 (July 1921), p. 134

- 33 It is therefore evident that the spirit is different from the body, that the bird is different from the cage, and that the power and influence of the spirit is more pronounced without the intermediary of the body. Now, if the instrument becomes idle, its wielder continues

to exist. For example, if the pen is abandoned or broken, the writer remains alive and well; if a house is destroyed, its owner lives on. This is one of the rational arguments proving the immortality of the soul.

Another proof is this: Man's body may become weak or robust, sick or healthy, tired or rested; it may suffer the loss of a hand or leg; it may decline in material powers; it may become blind, deaf, dumb, or paralysed—in short, it may become gravely impaired. And yet, despite this, the spirit maintains its original condition and spiritual perceptions, suffering no impairment or disruption. But when the body is afflicted with a major illness or calamity, it is deprived of the grace of the spirit, like a mirror that is broken or covered with dust, and that can no longer reflect the light of the sun or manifest its bounty.

We have already explained that the spirit of man is not contained within the body, for it is freed and sanctified from ingress and egress, which are among the properties of material bodies. Rather, the connection of the spirit with the body is like that of the sun with the mirror. Briefly, the human spirit is always in one condition. It neither falls ill with the illness of the body nor is made healthy by the latter's health; it does not become weak or incapacitated, wretched or downtrodden, diminished or lessened—that is, it suffers no harm or ill effect on account of the infirmities of the body, even if the body were to waste away, or if the hands, feet, and tongue were to be cut off, or if the powers of sight and hearing were to be disrupted. It is therefore evident and established that the spirit

is different from the body and that its immortality is not conditioned upon the latter's, but that the spirit rules supreme in the world of the body, and that its power and influence are as plain and visible as the bounty of the sun in a mirror. But when the mirror is covered with dust or broken, it will be deprived of the rays of the sun.

Some Answered Questions, no. 61

34 **Question:** Some heal the sick by spiritual means—that is, without medicine. How is this?

Answer: A detailed explanation of this matter was provided earlier. If you have not fully grasped it, we will repeat it so that you may. Know that there are four kinds of treatment and healing without medicine. Two are due to material causes and two to spiritual ones.

As to the two material kinds, one is due to the fact that in reality both health and sickness are contagious. The contagiousness of disease is rapid and violent, whereas that of health is exceedingly slow and weak. If two bodies are brought into contact with each other, it is certain that microbial particles will be transmitted from one to the other. In the same way that disease is rapidly and violently transmitted from one body to another, the strong health of a healthy person may also alleviate a very slight condition in a sick person. Our meaning is that the contagiousness of disease is rapid and violent, while that of health is very slow and of limited effect, and it is only in minor ills that this modest effect can be felt. In such cases,

the strength of the healthy body overcomes the slight weakness of the sick body and brings about its health. This is one kind of healing.

Another kind of healing is through the force of bodily magnetism, where the magnetic force of one body affects another body and brings about the cure. This force, too, has only a slight effect. Thus someone may lay his hand upon the head or stomach of a patient and perchance the latter will benefit from this. Why? Because the effect of the magnetism, and the impression made upon the psyche of the patient, may dispel the disease. But this effect is also very slight and weak.

The two other kinds are spiritual; that is, the means of healing is a spiritual power. One is when a healthy person focuses his whole attention upon a sick person, and the latter in turn fully expects to be healed through the spiritual power of the former and is wholly convinced thereof, to such an extent that a strong connection is created between their hearts. Should the healthy individual then bend every effort to heal the sick one, and should the latter have full faith that health will be attained, an excitement may be produced in his nerves from these soul-to-soul influences and bring about the cure. So, for example, when a sick person is suddenly given the good news that his most ardent wish and desire has been realized, a nervous excitement may result that will entirely dispel the ailment. In the same way, when a terrifying event suddenly comes to pass, such an excitement may be produced in the nerves

of a healthy person that he immediately falls ill. The cause of the illness is not a material thing, for that person has not ingested or come into contact with anything: The nervous excitement alone has brought about the illness. Likewise, the sudden realization of a most cherished desire may impart such joy as to excite the nerves and restore health.

In brief, a complete and perfect connection between the spiritual physician and the patient—that is, one where the physician concentrates his entire attention on the patient and where the patient likewise concentrates all his attention on the spiritual physician and anticipates healing—causes a nervous excitement whereby health is regained. But this is effective only to a point and not in all cases. For instance, should someone contract a grave illness or be physically injured, these means will neither dispel the illness nor soothe and heal the injury—that is, these means have no sway over grave illnesses unless assisted by the constitution of the patient, for a strong constitution will often ward off an illness. This is the third kind of healing.

But the fourth kind is when healing is brought about through the power of the Holy Spirit. This depends neither upon physical contact, nor upon sight, nor even upon presence: It is not dependent upon any condition. Whether the disease be mild or severe, whether there be contact between the bodies or not, whether a connection be established between patient and physician or not, whether the patient be

present or not, this healing takes place through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Some Answered Questions, no. 72

- 35 We mentioned, in connection with the question of spiritual medicine and healing, how illnesses can be cured through spiritual powers.

Now we will speak of material healing. The science of medicine is still in its infancy and has not yet reached maturity. But when it reaches that stage, treatments will be administered with things that are not repulsive to the senses of taste and smell, that is, through foods, fruits, and plants that have an agreeable taste and a pleasant smell. For the cause of the intrusion of illness into the human body is either a physical agent or a nervous excitement and stimulation.

As to physical agents, which are the primary cause of illness, their effect is due to the following: The human body is composed of numerous elements according to a particular state of equilibrium. So long as this equilibrium is maintained, man is preserved from sickness, but should this fundamental balance, which is the central requirement of a sound constitution, be upset, the constitution will be disrupted and illnesses will supervene.

For instance, if there is a deficiency in one of the component parts of the body and a surfeit of another, the state of equilibrium is disturbed and illness occurs. So, for example, equilibrium may require one component to be a thousand grams and another

to be five grams. Should the former fall to seven hundred grams and the latter increase in such wise that the state of equilibrium is disturbed, then illness will supervene; and should equilibrium be restored through medicines and treatments, the illness will be overcome. Thus if the sugar component becomes excessive, the health is impaired; and when the physician forbids sweet and starchy foods, the sugar component diminishes, equilibrium is restored, and the illness is banished.

Now, the equilibration of these bodily components can be accomplished by one of two means, either through medicines or with foods, and when the constitution has recovered its equilibrium, the illness is banished. Since all the constituent elements of the human body are also found in plants, if one of these components were to become deficient, and if one were to partake of foods that are rich in that component, then equilibrium would be restored and the cure realized. So long as the aim is the equilibration of the component parts of the body, this can be equally effected through medicines or various foods.

The majority of the illnesses that afflict man also afflict animals, but the animal does not treat them through medicines. The animal's physician in the mountains and the wilderness is its powers of taste and smell. The sick animal smells the plants that grow in the wilderness, eats those that its smell and taste find to be sweet and fragrant, and is cured. The reason is this: When, for example, the sugar component in its body becomes deficient, it craves

sweet things and thus eats of sweet-tasting plants, for nature so urges and guides it. Thus, as the animal eats things that are pleasing to its smell and taste, the sugar component increases and it regains its health.

It is therefore evident that it is possible to cure illnesses by means of fruits and other foods. But as the science of medicine has not yet been perfected, this fact has not been fully understood. When this science reaches perfection, treatments will be administered with fragrant fruits and plants as well as with other foods, and with hot and cold waters of various temperatures.

This is only a brief explanation. God willing, and the occasion permitting, we will provide a more detailed explanation another time.

Some Answered Questions, no. 73

- 36 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.

The Promulgation of Universal Peace, no. 72

- 37 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.

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!

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.

Paris Talks, no. 3

- 38 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...

Paris Talks, no. 5

- 39 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.

Paris Talks, no. 55

- 40 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.

Cited in J. E. Esslemont, Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era

- 41 “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.”

Cited in Julia M. Grundy, Ten Days in the Light of 'Akka, pp. 8-9

From letters on behalf of Shoghi Effendi

- 42 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.

9 July 1931

- 43 ‘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.

14 January 1932

- 44 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.

9 April 1933

- 45 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...

1 June 1933

- 46 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.

12 March 1934

- 47 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.

16 February 1935

- 48 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.

23 May 1935

- 49 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.

29 May 1935

- 50 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".ⁱⁱ 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.

8 March 1936

- 51 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.

31 December 1937

- 52 As to the possibility of conception without the presence of a male sperm in the future: this is a question which

ii 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."

lies entirely within the province of science, and which future scientists will have to investigate.

27 February 1938

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

28 February 1938

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

27 March 1938

- 55 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.

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.

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...

29 November 1938

- 56 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...

6 February 1939

- 57 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.

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.

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.

15 April 1939

- 58 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.

14 December 1940

- 59 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.

22 January 1944

- 60 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.

13 December 1945

- 61 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.

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.

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.

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

18 December 1945

- 62 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.

25 March 1946

63 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.
6 September 1946

64 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.

31 March 1947

65 ...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...

23 November 1947

66 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!

9 April 1948

67 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.

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.

8 June 1948

- 68 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.

25 December 1949

- 69 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.
26 March 1950
- 70 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.
15 June 1950
- 71 ...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.
30 September 1950
- 72 The Guardian sees no reason why you should not continue to help sick people. As he wrote 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.

5 October 1950

- 73 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.

10 February 1951

- 74 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.

15 September 1951

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

18 February 1951

- 76 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.

24 February 1952

- 77 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.

30 August 1952

- 78 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.

19 July 1953

- 79 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.

27 March 1954

- 80 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.

8 April 1954

- 81 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.

26 June 1956

- 82 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.

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.

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.

22 March 1957

From letters by or on behalf of the Universal House of Justice

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

The 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.

12 November 1975

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

In the Kitáb-i-Aqdas Bahá'u'lláh has stated: "Whenever ye fall ill, refer to competent physicians. Verily, We have not abolished recourse to material means, rather have We affirmed it through this Pen which God hath made the Dawning Place of His luminous and resplendent Cause." The secretaries of the Guardian have conveyed his guidance on this point in many letters to individual believers in passages such as these: "...refer to competent physicians, and

abide by their considered decisions”; “...invariably consult and follow the treatment of competent and conscientious physicians...” and “...consult the best physicians ... doctors who have studied a scientific system of medicine.” Thus the obligation to consult physicians and to distinguish between doctors who are well trained in medical sciences and those who are not is clear, but the Faith should not be associated with any particular school of medical theory or practice. It is left to each believer to decide for himself which doctors he should consult, bearing in mind the principles enunciated above.

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

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

24 January 1977

- 85 In matters of health, particularly regarding diet and nutrition, the House of Justice advises the friends to seek the help and advice of experts and doctors. This

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

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

19 June 1977

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

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

In this connection the House of Justice instructs us to say that in a Tablet in which He stresses the

need for kindness to animals, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá states that it would be permissible to perform an operation on a living animal for the purposes of research even if the animal were killed thereby, but that the animal must be well anaesthetized and that the utmost care must be exercised that it does not suffer.

9 March 1978

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

11 July 1978

