

## XXIV. HEALTH, HEALING AND NUTRITION

Compiled from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, Abdu'l

Original English



## XXIV. HEALTH, HEALING AND NUTRITION

### A. Spiritual and Physical Healing

#### 1. Consult Competent Physicians When Ill

"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: Kitab-i-Aqdas, K. 113, p. 60)

#### 1. Prayers for Spiritual and Material Healing

"...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."

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

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

#### 1. The Greatest Name Influences Both Spiritual and Physical Matters

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

(From a Tablet to an individual believer, by Abdu'l-Bahá: Selections from Bahá'í Writings on Some Aspects of Health, Healing, Nutrition and Related Matters, April 1984, p. 2)

"O maid-servant of God! Continue in healing hearts and bodies and seek healing for sick persons by turning unto the Supreme Kingdom and by setting the heart upon obtaining healing through the power of the Greatest Name and by the spirit of the love of God."

(Tablets of Abdu'l-Bahá, Vol. III, p. 629)



ORIGINAL

## 1. Two Ways of Healing Sickness

"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 practiced."

"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, [pg 227] 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 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 marvelous 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."

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

## 1. Two Processes of Healing — Prayer Alone Not Sufficient

"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."

(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)

## 1. Spiritual and Material Healing Essential and Complementary

"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."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, February 16, 1935: Selections from Bahá'í Writings on Some Aspects of Health, Healing, Nutrition and Related Matters, April 1984, p. 10)

**1. Physical Healing Must Be Reinforced by Spiritual Healing**

"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 on others. Any such cure effected, however, should [pg 278] 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."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, May 23, 1935: Extracts from the Guardian's Letters on Spiritualism, Reincarnation and Related Subjects, p. 8)

**1. Healing of Illness — There is No Such Thing as "Bahá'í Healers"**

"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...."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, June 6, 1948: Ibid., p. 8)

**1. To Associate Such Things with the Cause Ultimately Injures It**

"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."

"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."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian, September 30, 1949, to an individual believer: Ibid., p. 8)

#### **1. Not a Unique Phenomenon**

"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."

"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 [pg 279] 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."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, October 26, 1949: Ibid., pp. 8-9)

#### **1. To Be Able to Help Another Soul Who is Suffering**

"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."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, October 5, 1950: Ibid., p. 9)

#### **1. Try Not to Have the Faith Identified with Such Things**

"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."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles, June 25, 1953: Ibid., p. 9)

#### 1. **Should Not Become Healer**

"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."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, December 25, 1949: Ibid., p. 9)

#### 1. **Healing by the Holy Spirit**

"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."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, March 26, 1950: Ibid., p. 9)

#### 1. **Visiting the Sick**

"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."

(Abdu'l-Bahá: The Promulgation of Universal Peace, 1982 ed., p. 204) [pg 280]

#### 1. **However Critical and Hopeless Consult and Follow Treatment of Competent Physician**

"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."

(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)

**1. Both Spiritual and Physical Forces Needed to Secure Speedy Recovery**

"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. So you should pray for your son and also be faithful in your obedience to the directions of the physicians who are trying to restore him to health."

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

**1. Physical Ailments Have No Effect on the Soul**

"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 human organism, an absence of equilibrium in the forces essential for the normal functioning of the human body."

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

**1. Bahá'ís Must Avoid Depleting Their Forces and Suffering Breakdowns**

"...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...."

"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."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, October 25, 1949) [pg 281]

**1. The Supreme Need of the World Today is for Spiritual Healing — Bahá'ís Are the Leaven that Must Leaven the Lump**

"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."

"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 illuminating 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."

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

**1. Some Illnesses Have to Do with the Spiritual Development of the One Affected or of the Loved Ones**

"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."

"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."

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

**1. Physical Pain is Necessary to Existence and is Unavoidable — In Every Suffering One Can Find a Meaning and a Wisdom**

"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 utilised 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."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, May 29, 1935) [pg 282]

**1. Decree of Bahá'u'lláh Consult Competent Doctor**

"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."

(Abdu'l-Bahá: Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Bahá, p. 156, No. 135)

#### **1. It is the Responsibility of the Believers to Look After the Sick**

"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."

(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)



## **B. Mental Illness**

#### **1. Little is Known About the Mind and Its Workings**

"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!"

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, April 9, 1948: Extracts from the Guardian's Letters on Spiritualism, Reincarnation and Related Subjects, p. 4)

#### **1. Mental Illness Does Not Affect Our Spirit or Our Inner Relation to God**

"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."

"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."

"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!"



(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) [pg 283]

1. Disease of Two Kinds — Madness Can Be Cured Through Prayer

"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."

"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."

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

1. Some Serious Deficiencies, Physical or Mental, Can Incapacitate One to Contract Marriage

"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 meantime, 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."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, April 15, 1939: Some Aspects of Health, Healing, Nutrition and Related Matters)

1. No Objection to One Seeing a Psychiatrist

"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."

"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!"

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, March 26, 1945) [pg 284]

#### 1. Bahá'ís Should Not Become Healers<sup>1</sup>

"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."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, December 25, 1949: Some Aspects of Health, Healing, Nutrition and Related Matters, A Compilation, p. 13)

#### 1. The Mind Can Be Helped by Professionals, but the Soul is Not Aided by Psychotherapy

"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."

"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

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1. (See also: Nos. 930-934)

disposal, in accordance with our Teachings, to draw nearer to God, and to better grasp His purpose for us in this world."

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

### **1. The Science of the Mind is in Its Relative Infancy — Therapy of Mental Disorders is Advancing**

"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. [pg 285] 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."

"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."

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

### **1. Mental Illness is Not Spiritual**

"...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 (i.e., illness and outer difficulties), 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.'"

"That effort can include the counsel of wise and experienced physicians, including psychiatrists. Working for the Faith, serving others who may need you, and giving of yourself can aid you in your struggle to overcome your sufferings. One helpful activity is, of course, striving to teach the Cause in spite of personal feelings of shortcomings, thus allowing the healing words of the Cause to flood your mind with their grace and positive power."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, June 15, 1982)

## 1. Bahá'ís Should Not Take a Defeatist Attitude Toward Mental Illnesses

"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."

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

## 1. Psychiatry

"There is nothing in our teachings about Freud and his method. Psychiatric treatment <sup>pg 286</sup> 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."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles, June 15, 1950)



## C. Doctors

## 1. Physician is Blessed Who Heals in the Name of God

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

(From a Tablet of Bahá'u'lláh: Selections from Bahá'í Writings on Some Aspects of Health, Healing, Nutrition and Related Subjects, op. cit.)

## 1. To Seek Medical Treatment and Obey the Doctor is a Divine Ordinance

"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."

(Abdu'l-Bahá: Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Bahá, p. 156)

### 1. **One Must Obey Command of God and Submit to Medical Opinion**

"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 of Abdu'l-Bahá to an individual believer: Selections from Bahá'í Writings on Some Aspects of Health, Healing, Nutrition and Related Subjects, op. cit.)

### 1. **The Science of Medicine is Extremely Useful**

"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 Abha Kingdom, entreating divine confirmations."

(From a Tablet of Abdu'l-Bahá to an individual believer: Ibid.)

### 1. **The Sick Must Refer to a Skilled Doctor**

"...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 of Abdu'l-Bahá to an individual believer: Ibid.)

### 1. **The Physician Has Two Powers**

"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 <sup>pg 287</sup> 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."

(Abdu'l-Bahá: Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Bahá, pp. 150-151)

### 1. **When Giving Treatment, Turn to the Blessed Beauty, Bahá'u'lláh**

"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."

(Abdu'l-Bahá: Ibid., p. 151)

#### 1. **It is Imperative to Consult a Doctor Even if One is an Eminent Physician**

"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."

(Abdu'l-Bahá: Ibid., p. 156)

#### 1. **God Alone Has the Power to Give True Healing — Many Men Have Died of the Very Disease of Their Specialty**

"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. Avicenna 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."

(Abdu'l-Bahá: Paris Talks, 1972 ed., p. 19)

#### 1. **Service is Prayer**

"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."

(Abdu'l-Bahá: Ibid., p. 177)

#### 1. **Doctors Versed in Medical Science Can Treat Case Better Than Loving Mothers**

"...He fully sympathizes with you in this great sorrow that has afflicted you. At <sup>pg 288</sup> such occasions, the true servants of God should be resigned and try to act wisely, using at the same time all available means to help their loved one who is in distress and is suffering from illness."

"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 decisions. 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."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, April 9, 1933: Selections from Bahá'í Writings on Some Aspects of Health and Healing, pp. 5-6)

#### **1. Powers Released by Bahá'u'lláh Destined to Reveal Themselves Through Instrumentality of His Followers**

"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 confirmed researches in the domain of medicine, to be one of those instruments, is the fervent hope of our beloved Guardian."

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

#### **1. Doctors Should Not Work on 9 Holy Days**

"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."

(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)

#### **1. Corrupt Practices**

"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

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



## D. Illnesses and Medical Practices

### 1. Medical Science Will Greatly Improve with the Spiritual Awakening of Man

"Abdu'l-Bahá does often state that the medical science will much improve. With <sup>pg 289</sup> 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."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, January 14, 1932: *Selections from Bahá'í Writings on Some Aspects of Health, Healing, Nutrition and Related Matters*, April 1984, p. 10)

### 1. Surrogate Mothers and Artificial Insemination

"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:

'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.'

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

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

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

'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.'"

(From a letter dated 25 May 1979 written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Australia)



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

#### 1. **Artificial Production of Life**

"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."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, December 31, 1937: Selections From Bahá'í Writings on Some Aspects of Health, Healing, Nutrition and Related Subjects, op. cit.)

#### 1. **Conception Without Male Sperm**

"...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."

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

#### 1. **Hypnotism**

"Hypnotism hath a weak influence over bodies, but hath no result. But the <sup>pg 290</sup> power of the kingdom of God is great. If thou canst, endeavor to obtain a share of that power."

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

#### 1. **Auto-Suggestion or Hypnotism**

"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."

(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)

#### 1. **Cancer**

"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."

(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)

**1. Cancer — Not Stated It is a Spiritual Disease**

"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."

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

**1. Chiropractic**

"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."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, February 10, 1951: Some Aspects of Health, Healing, Nutrition and related Matters, April 1984, p. 14)

**1. Circumcision**

"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."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, March 27, 1954: Ibid.)

**1. Reference to Certain Aspects of Medical Profession Not Found in Sacred Writings**

"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."

"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 [pg 291] 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."

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

**1. Heart/Kidney Transplant**

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

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

"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."

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

#### 1. **Organ Donor for Parts of the Body Including the Eyes**

"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."

"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\* "

"The House of Justice does not wish at the present time to go beyond the elucidation contained in the above statements."

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

#### 1. **Euthanasia (Mercy Killing)**

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

'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.'

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

"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 [pg 292] 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:

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

"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)

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to the compiler, October 27, 1981)

### **1. When Dissecting Human Body, It Must Be Treated with Respect**

"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."

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

### **1. Life Support**

"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'."

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

### **1. Telepathy**

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

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, February 28, 1938: Spiritualism, Reincarnation and Related Subjects, p. 10)

## 1. Before Serious Operation Consult More Than One Physician

"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."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, April 8, 1954)

## 1. Protect Your Health by Sleeping Enough

"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."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to two believers, September 15, 1952) [pg 293]

## 1. Take Care of Health as a Necessary Means of Serving the Cause

"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."

"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."

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

## 1. Vaccination

"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."

(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)

## 1. Vivisection

"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."

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

**1. Torture of Animals — When the Hearts of Men Change Medical Research Will Eliminate as Much Suffering of Animals as Possible**

"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."

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

**1. During Vivisection Animal Must Be Well Anaesthetized**

"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 [pg 294] 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."

(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)

**1. Sins Are Potent Cause of Physical Ailments**

"...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."

(Abdu'l-Bahá: Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Bahá, pp. 152-153)



## E. Physical Education

### 1. Material Education

"...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."

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

### 1. The Essentiality of Taking Proper Care of Child from the Early Days of His Life

"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...."

(From a previously untranslated Tablet by Abdu'l-Bahá, Ibid., p. 1)

### 1. Give Them Advantage of Every Useful Kind of Knowledge

"While the children are yet in their infancy feed them from the breast of heavenly <sup>pg 295</sup> 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."

(Abdu'l-Bahá: Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Bahá, 1982 ed., p. 129: Ibid., p. 1)

### **1. Training and Development of Physical Body Ensures Strength and Growth**

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

(Abdu'l-Bahá: The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 330: Ibid., p. 2)

### **1. There Should Be a Program for the Development of Youth All Over the World**

"...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."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, July 9, 1931: Ibid., p. 2)

### **1. Playing Games**

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

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to a National Spiritual Assembly, December 27, 1932: Ibid., p. 2)



## **F. Diet and Nutrition**

### **1. Treat Disease Through Diet, but Do Not Neglect Medical Care**

"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."

(Abdu'l-Bahá: Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era, 1980 ed., p. 106, cited in ... Aspects of Health, Healing, Nutrition and Related Subjects, op. cit.)

### **1. One Course Meal More Pleasing in the Sight of God**



"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: Kitab-i-Badí, Ibid.)

#### 1. **Mother's Milk Normally is Best for the Child**

"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 [pg 296] agreeable and better suited to, the child, unless she should fall ill or her milk should run entirely dry."

(From a Tablet of Abdu'l-Bahá to an individual believer: Ibid.)

#### 1. **Abstinence from Eating Animal Flesh**

"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 is also 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 of Abdu'l-Bahá written to an individual believer: Ibid.)

#### 1. **The Four Canine Teeth in Man**

"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 of Abdu'l-Bahá to an individual believer: Ibid.)

### **1. The Bab Has Said that Bahá'ís Must Develop Medical Science So that Illness May Be Healed by Foods**

"...The Bab hath said that the people of Baha must develop the science of medicine to such a high degree that they will heal illnesses by means of foods. The basic reason [pg 297] 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."

"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."

(Abdu'l-Bahá: Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Bahá, pp. 152-155)

### **1. Medical Science is Only in Its Infancy**

"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."

(Abdu'l-Bahá: Ten Days in the Light of Akka, 1979 ed., pp. 8-9)

### **1. Should One Kill Animals for Food?**

"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."

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

### **1. Many Ailments that Affect Man Also Afflict Animals — Animals Heal Themselves with Food and Ailments**

"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."

"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."

(Abdu'l-Bahá: Some Answered Questions, 1982 ed., pp. 257-259, Ibid.) [pg 298]

### **1. Eating of Pork is Not Forbidden**

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

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, March 27, 1938: Ibid.)

### **1. The Body is Like a Horse that Carries the Personality and Spirit**

"...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."

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

### **1. The Prophets of God Are Not Immune from Things which Men Suffer**

"...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."

(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)

### **1. No Specific School of Nutrition or Medicine Has Been Associated with the Bahá'í Teachings**

"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 Kitab-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." [pg 299]

"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."

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, January 24, 1977)

### **1. We Have Guidelines, Indications and Principles which Experts Will Carefully Study in the Future**

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

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

**1. Believers Should Seek Help and Advice of Experts — The Teachings Say Nothing About Eating Meat or Fish**

"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.'

(From a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer, June 19, 1977) [pg 300]

