

Health and Healing

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The following information is based purely on the writings of ‘Bahá’u’lláh, ‘Abdul-Bahá, and Shoghi Effendi. Most of them are authorized translations but some, compiled by the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice, are only provisional translations. Attached to this document is the handout with references for this talk.¹

Another thing I would like to mention is that a lot of the paragraphs mentioned are from “Tablet to a Physician” written by Bahá’u’lláh BUT this Tablet was addressed to a man who was a student of the old type of healing/medicine prevalent in the East, who was familiar with the terminology used in those days, so Bahá’u’lláh addresses him in the terms used by medical men of those days. These terms are quite different from those used by modern medicine so one would have to have a deep knowledge of this former school of medicine to fully understand what Bahá’u’lláh was writing. Most of the quotations mentioned are self-explanatory and the rest will be made obvious in the future.

As Bahá’ís, we accept the fact that our body consists of a physical body and a spiritual body consisting of a soul. So, what is our health? How does Bahá’u’lláh define health in relation to our body and our soul?

We know (from the Writings) that the soul of man is completely independent from the infirmities of the physical body or mind. In *Gleanings*, Bahá’u’lláh mentions that when a sick person shows sign of weakness, it is because this health or lack of health seems to interfere in the connections between his soul and his body.

He uses an example of a lamp. Even though an external object may interfere with its radiance, the light will still continue shining. In the same manner, every sickness/disease that affects our body basically prevents our soul from manifesting its inherent might and power.

As I have been searching in the Baha’i literature, I have found many references to health and the importance of healing any infirmities. There seems to be an underlying classification within these writings so one could actually classify them into 4 different themes:

¹ See Appendix at the end of this paper.

The FIRST category involves Writings that give us a general notion about health and that we have to trust in God when we are sick and that He is the only true Healer. (Please refer to quote number 1)

The SECOND group are other Writings that mention the causes of illness. In modern medicine, these are referred to as the Etiology of Disease and you can find many quotations regarding this theme especially in the Writings of ‘Abdul-Bahá.

‘Abdul-Bahá, in a discussion about healing in 1904 said, "The science of medicine is still in a condition of infancy, it has not reached maturity, but when it has reached this point, cures will be performed by things which are not repulsive to the smell and taste of men."

He goes on further to say, "...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 food, aliments, fragrant fruits and vegetables and by various waters, hot and cold in temperature." (Please refer to quotes number 2,3,4)

The THIRD category is about what to do when we are sick. Healing is possible through physical medicine, psychological treatments and spiritual means, through prayer. Of healing through prayer, ‘Abdul-Bahá mentions that they apply to physical and spiritual healings. "Recite prayers to heal both the soul and the body. If healing is right for the patient the prayer will 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!"

Bahá'ís are encouraged to apply the appropriate treatment, physical or spiritual for their illnesses. Physical healing cannot be complete and lasting unless it is reinforced by spiritual healing. And this last one can best be obtained not only through prayer but also through obedience to the laws and commandments of God as revealed to us through His Manifestations. (Please refer to quotes number 5,6,7)

The FOURTH and last category addresses doctors and other types of healers. In the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, Bahá'u'lláh counsels his followers to "consult competent physicians when ill". This portion should be of interest to medical students. Bahá'u'lláh mentions that we should cure ailments in His hallowed and dearly cherished Name. Abdul-Bahá said that every branch of learning in conjunction with the love of God is approved and worthy of praise. Bahá'u'lláh, in His Tablet to a Physician wrote that this science (medicine) of the healing arts is the nobles of all the sciences. He has put it in the forefront of all sciences and wisdoms.

But more importantly, He also mentions that this is the day for us to arise to help His Cause. Abdu'l-Bahá in a tablet to an individual believer encourages him to study medicine for it serves as the greatest instrument for the dissemination of the Cause.

Appendix: Quotes from the Bahá'í Writings on Health and Healing

- ✓ 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.
Bahá'u'lláh
- ✓ 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.
(Abdu'l-Bahá, Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Bahá, p. 152)
- ✓ ... 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, p. 152)
- ✓ 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 "Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era", p. 108)
- ✓ Whenever ye fall ill, refer to competent physicians. Verily We have not abolished recourse to material means, rather have we affirmed it...
Bahá'u'lláh.
- ✓ "Do not neglect medical treatment when it is necessary, but leave it off when health has been restored. Treat disease through diet, by preference, refrain 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 health is good, but administer them when necessary."
(Bahá'u'lláh: Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era, 1980 ed., p. 106, cited in...Aspects of Health, Healing, Nutrition and Related Subjects, op. cit.)
- ✓ ...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 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: *Compilations, Lights of Guidance*, p. 285)

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

Bahá’u’lláh

- ✓ There are two ways of healing sickness, material means and spiritual means. The first is by the use of remedies, of medicines; the second consists in praying to God and in turning to Him. Both means should be used and practised.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

- ✓ Know that there are four kinds of curing and healing without medicine. Two are due to material causes, and two to spiritual causes.

Of the two kinds of material healing, one is due to the fact that in man both health and sickness are contagious. The contagion of disease is violent and rapid, while that of health is extremely weak and slow... The strong power of a healthy body can overcome a slight weakness of a sick body, and health results. This is one kind of healing.

The other kind of healing without medicine is through the magnetic force which acts from one body on another and becomes the cause of cure. This force also has only a slight effect. Sometimes one can benefit a sick person by placing one’s hand upon his head or upon his heart. Why? Because of the effect of the magnetism, and of the mental impression made upon the sick person, which causes the disease to vanish. But this effect is also very slight and weak.

Of the two other kinds of healing which are spiritual—that is to say, where the means of cure is a spiritual power—one results from the entire concentration of the mind of a strong person upon a sick person, when the latter expects with all his concentrated faith that a cure will be effected from the spiritual power of the strong person, to such an extent that there will be a cordial connection between the strong person and the invalid...

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

(Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 254)

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

(Abdu'l-Bahá, Some Answered Questions, p. 257)

- ✓ 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, p. 258)

- ✓ “ The child must, from the day of his birth, be provided with whatever is conducive to his health; and ye know 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.”

(Compilations, Lights of Guidance, p. 294)

- ✓ 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;...

Bahá'u'lláh

- ✓ Verily the most necessary thing is contentment under all circumstances; by this one is preserved from morbid conditions and from lassitude.

Bahá'u'lláh

- ✓ There is nothing greater or more blessed than the Love of God! It gives healing to the sick, balm to the wounded, joy and consolation to the whole world, and through it alone can man attain Life Everlasting.

‘Abdu'l-Bahá.