

THE TABLET OF MEDICINE (LAWH-I ṬIBB) OF BAHĀ'U'LLĀH: A PROVISIONAL TRANSLATION WITH OCCASIONAL NOTES.

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The Arabic - Persian text of Bahá'u'lláh's *Tablet of Medicine (Lawh-i ṭibb)*¹ is to be dated to the early 'Akkā' period of his ministry (early 1870's?). It was addressed to a Bahā'ī named Mīrzā Muḥammad Ridā'-yi Ṭabīb-i Yazdī, a physician of the traditional school. The text is translated and selectively annotated below. Our tentative translation is highly provisional. The notes are designed to clarify what is a sometimes difficult text which could, at certain points, have been translated in quite a number of different ways. Only a few of the verses or terms contained within the *Lawh-i ṭibb* are commented upon. It is hoped that the translation and notes will be of interest to Bahā'īs in general and to those who are practitioners of modern medicine. Doubtless, in the future, scholars expert in both Bahā'ī doctrine and in the history of science / medicine will write learned and comprehensive commentaries upon this important Tablet.

As indicated, not all of the numerous Bahā'ī texts which might have an expository bearing on the *Tablet of Medicine* can be cited below. The following letter of Shoghi Effendi makes some centrally important points:

"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. 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."²

¹ The *Lawh-i ṭibb* was first published in *Majmū'at al-wāḥ-i mubāraka* (Cairo 1920, Reprint Wilmette, Illinois: BPT 1981 pages 222-226 [reproduced below]).

² From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, December 18, 1945 cited UHJ:1984. See also the letter printed in BSB 4:3-4 (April 1990) p.58.

As indicated by Shoghi Effendi in a letter dated 14th January 1932, the first few Arabic paragraphs of the *Tablet of Medicine* contain useful advice for the maintenance of good health (see II:1ff).³ They echo those medical maxims and pieces of useful advice (*fawā'id*) found in a variety of Greek and Islāmic literatures -- generally speaking, a considerable proportion of Islāmic medicine has Greek roots. Ullmann has written in the introduction to his *Islamic Medicine*, "'Islamic medicine' did not grow up on Arab soil. Rather it is the medicine of later Greek antiquity which was formulated in the Arabic language in the south and west of the Mediterranean from the ninth century A.D." (p.xi). While the Qur'ān contains little or no explicit medicine -- neither the word doctor/physician nor medicine are mentioned (cf. Ullmann, p.4; Dols, review of Rahman p.417) -- this is more than made up for in the Sunnī and Shī'ī ḥadīth literatures.

From the early Islāmic centuries compilations of medical wisdom attributed to the Prophet Muhammad were made by Sunnī and Shī'ī writers (see the various *Tibb al-nabī/ Tibb al-nabawī* works).⁴ Such major Sunnī canonical collections of *ḥadīth* as that of al-Bukhārī

³ Part of this letter of Shoghi Effendi reads, "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. Among other phases of human learning the medical science will have a place. There is a Tablet of Medicine that Bahá'u'lláh has revealed and which is translated into English. That does not contain much of scientific informations [sic.] but has some interesting advices for keeping healthy." (cited LDG 2:21)

⁴ Refer, for example, Cyril Elgood, *Tibb al-Nabī or Medicine of the Prophet, Being a Translation of Two Works of the same Name*. The *Tibb-ul-Nabbi* [= *Tibb al-Nabī*] of Al-Suyūtī, II. The *Tibb-ul-Nabbi* of Mahmūd bin Moḥammad al-Chaghghaynī [= the scientist-astronomer Mahmūd Ibn 'Umar Chaghmīnī] in *Osiris* Vol. 14 (1962) pp. 33-192. With respect to the al-Chaghmīnī's medical tract Elgood writes, "Next is the version by Mahmūd bin 'Umar Jaghmīnī [= Chaghmīnī] of which I also present a translation as a contrast to the much longer version of al-Suyūtī and as a specimen of the aphoristic form of writing which was once so popular in Persia. This is written in Arabic. Mahmūd also wrote in Persian a book called *Qānūnchi fī al-tibb*, being an extract from the Canon of Avicenna. The edition that I used for my translation is a small book lithographed in Teheran in 1888/89 and is in my private collection." (p.43). On page 40 of the aforementioned article Elgood writes, "A reference to the Encyclopaedia of Hājjī Khalīfa [written 1658 CE] shows that he devotes a special section in his work to what he calls 'Ilm al-Tibb al-Nabbawī or The Science of Prophetic Medicine. Here he mentions seven different works on this subject which were existing in his day and were known to him. The authors whom he names as having made these collections are Nu'aym Ahmad of Ispahan [948-1038 CE], Abu al-'Abbās Ja'far Mustaghfirī, Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūtī [1445-1505 CE], Abu Hassan 'Alī al-Riḍā [the 8th Imām, Imām Riḍā' see below], Ḥabīb Nishāpūrī, Ḥabīb al-Thānī, and 'Abd al-Malik bin Ḥabīb." (transliteration altered). In books of the 'Prophetic Medicine' (*Tibb al-nabawī*) innumerable inauthentic traditions were attributed to the Prophet Muhammad. Ibn Khaldūn (1332-1406) as noted by Ullmann "alone has said clearly that essentially this is bedouin medicine and can have no claim to be divine revelation and therefore cannot be obligatory under religious law." (p.5).

(810-870 CE) contain their own *Book of Medicine (Kitāb al-tibb)*. Many medical or quasi-medical traditions were attributed to the Prophet Muḥammad. It is nonetheless the case that "The *hadīth* directly related to medicine are relatively few, usually late, and frequently contradictory."⁵

The medical wisdom of the Twelver Shī'ī Imāms (*tibb al- a'immah*) was likewise *assiduously compiled* (see Āghā Buzurg al-Ṭīhrānī, *al-Dharī'a ilā taṣānīf al-shī'a* 25 Vols Tehran / Najaf 1355/1936>, 15:135-144).⁶ A great many statements are attributed to the Twelver Imāms that, in one way or another, have to do with medical matters or with bodily health. To the eighth Imām 'Alī al-Ridā' (c.768-818 CE) is attributed *The Golden Treatise*. (*al-Risāla al-dhahabīya / al-mudhahhaba fī 'l-tibb*); a treatise on medical cures and good health written for and at the request of the 'Abbasid Caliph al-Mansūr (text in Majlisī, *Bihar al-anwār* LXII: 308-328). Commentaries are said to have been written on this Arabic treatise which have been translated into Persian and Urdu (see W. Malelung, *Alī al-Rezā*, Elr. 2:877-8).⁷ There exists furthermore, a treatise in the Jābirean corpus -- writings attributed to Jābir ibn Ḥayyān (c.103/721-c.200/815) certain of which Bahā'u'llāh drew upon -- entitled *The Book of Prophetic Medicine according to the view of the Household of the Prophet (Kitāb al-tibb al-nabawī 'alā ahl al-bayt)*.

⁵ M.W. Dols, Review of Rahman in Hist.Sci., xxvi (1988), p.417.

⁶ The recently published Batool Ispahany (trans.) & Andrew J. Newman (Ed.), *Islamic Medical Wisdom, The Tibb al-A'immah* [= Medicine of the Imams] London: The Muhammadi Trust 1991) is a collection of statements of certain Twelver Imāms compiled by Abū 'Atāb 'Abd Allāh and al-Husayn, the sons of Bistām b. Sābūr -- Bistām was a companion of the sixth Imām Abū Abd Allāh Ja'far b. Muḥammad al-Ṣādiq (d. 148/765) and the seventh Imām Abū al-Hasan Mūsā b. Ja'far al-Kāzim (d. 183/799) (cf. *al-Dharī'a* 15:139-140). In the preface to this work A.J. Newman writes, "There is no dearth of Twelver Shī'ī medical texts. Āghā Buzurg al-Ṭīhrānī (d. 1389/1970) in his massive bibliography of Twelver texts [see above] devoted several pages to listing texts on medicine completed from the earliest years following the disappearance of the Twelfth Imam up to the last century." See for further details *Ibid* p. xxxiv ff.

⁷ See also Muḥammad 'Alī al-Bār, *al-Imām 'Alī al-Ridā wa risālat fī al-tibb al-nabawī, al-risāla al-dhahabīya, awwal risāla fī al-tibb al-nabawī*, (Beirut: Dar al-manāhil, 1412/1991). This volume commences with material highlighting the glories of the "people of the House of the Prophet" (Pt.I pp.11-68) followed by an hagiographical biography of 'Alī al-Ridā' (Pt.II 69-110); the text of Imām Ridā's "Golden Treatise" (Pt.III pp. 111-126) and two further sections; a prolegomenon to the understanding of ancient medical books and books of the medicine of the Prophet (Pt.IV pp. 127-137) the *Risāla dhahabīya* and an exposition and glosses on some of its terms (Pt. V pp. 139-183).

A multitude of other Shī'ī works, which cannot possibly be even listed here, are relevant to the study of the background to the *Lawh-i tībb*. The *Lawh-i tībb* cannot be fully or adequately commented upon without some reference to its (Shī'ī) Islāmic background; not forgetting its pre-Islāmic antecedents which will only at certain points in the notes below be cursorily indicated.

Sources known to the present writer only allow the *sitz im leben* ("setting in life") of the *Lawh-i tībb* to be inadequately sketched. In volume three of his *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh* (Oxford: George Ronald 1983) Adib Taherzadeh gives something of a summary of key points of the *Tablet of Medicine* (see 3: 358-360). He translates a passage from Hājī Muḥammad Tāhir-i Mālmīrī's memoirs, the *Khātirāt-i-Mālamīrī*, about Āqā Mīrzā Muḥammad-Ridā' (the recipient of the *Lawh-i tībb*):

"One of the early believers who embraced the Faith when Siyyid Yahyá-i-Dárábí, known as Vahíd, came to Yazd, was Āqá Mīrzá Muḥammad-Ridáy-i Tabīb. He was a skilled and distinguished physician, and an embodiment of grace and steadfastness. The Pen of the Most High revealed the *Lawh-i-Tībb* in his honour. In that exalted Tablet, Bahá'u'lláh states that the mere visit of a physician who has drunk deep of the wine of His love will cure the patient. Mīrzá Muḥammad-Ridá was truly the fulfilment of these words of Bahá'u'lláh. He used to cure the patient by administering very simple remedies. Truly, he possessed wonderful qualities which made him a very special person in the community of the Most Great Name. Owing to his intense piety he became highly disturbed when Mīrzá Yahyá broke the Covenant. As a result he was bewildered and stunned; he even became hesitant in the Cause for a short time. Then it was as though Divine Providence sent Mullá Zaynu'l-'Ābidín, a native of Najafábád (he was entitled by Bahá'u'lláh as Zaynu'l-Muqarríbín) to Yazd in order to calm his agitation and dispel his doubts. Zaynu'l-Muqarríbín at first stayed in the house of this servant in the district of Malamír, but when he learned of the intense anguish and distress that Mīrzá Muḥammad-Ridá was subjected to, he changed his residence and stayed in his home instead. Consequently, Mīrzá Muḥammad-Ridá became fully aware of the circumstances of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh. He later received many Tablets from the Pen of the Most High, and served the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh with devotion and love till the end of his life. He was about eighty years old when he passed away."⁸

⁸ See *Khātirāt-i-Mālamīrī*, Hofheim-Langenhain: Bahá'ī-Verlag 149 BE/1992, pp.58-59, cited in translation in A. Taherzadeh, *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh* Vol. 3 (Oxford: George Ronald 1983), p. 359.

PROVISIONAL TRANSLATION⁹

I Revealed unto a Physician, upon him be the Glory of God!

He is God, the One Who is Most Knowing

The Tongue of the Ancient of Days uttereth that which shall be a sufficient Treasure for the wise ones in the absence of physicians.

II ^[1] Say: O People! Eat not except after having hungered and drink not after retiring to sleep (*al-hujūʿ*). ^[2] How beneficial is exercise when one[ʼs stomach] is empty for through it the limbs become strengthened; and how dark a calamity is exercise when one[ʼs stomach] is full! ^[3] Do not avoid medical treatment (*al-ʾilāj*) when thou hast need of it but abandon it when thy constitution hath been restored (*istiqāmat*). ^[4] Do not commence a meal except after full digestion [of the previous meal] and swallow not save after the completion of chewing. ^[5] Treat an illness firstly with nutrients (or foods, aliments, *aghdhiya*) and proceed not [immediately] unto medications (*adwiyat*). ^[6] If that which thou desirest resulteth from elemental nutrients (*al-mufradāt*) refrain from the compound treatments (*al-murakkabāt*). ^[7] Abandon medication (*al-dawāʾ*) when thou art healthy but take hold of it when thou hast need thereof. ^[8] If foods of opposing disposition (*diddān*) are available at table, do not mix them; under such circumstances content thyself with but one of them. ^[9] Commence first with the light food (*al-raqīq*) before moving on to the heavier one (*al-ghalīz*) and with the liquid before the solid. ^[10] To intake one food which becomes superimposed upon another (*idkhāl al-taʾām ʾalā taʾām*) is dangerous; be warned of this matter.

III ^[1] When thou wouldst commence eating, start by mentioning My Most Glorious Name (*al-abhā*) and finish it with the Name of Thy Lord, the Possessor of the Throne above and of the earth below. ^[2] And when thou hast finished eating, walk a little to settle thy meal. ^[3] That [foodstuff] which is hard to chew; the same is forbidden unto those possessed of intelligence. Thus doth the Supreme Pen command thee. ^[4] Eat a little in the morning for this is as a lamp to the body. ^[5] Eschew harmful habits [i.e. addictive substances *al-ʾāda al-mudirra*] for they

⁹ The versification in this provisional translation largely follows the sentence structure indicated in the Arabic printing referred to above. It is for the convenience of present and future commentary that this (provisional) versification is indicated.

truly, are a calamity for created beings. ^[6] Counter disease by utilizing established means (*bī'l-
asbāb*). This utterance is the decisive command in this discourse.

IV ^[1] Most necessary to thy well-being is contentment (*al-qanā'at*) under all circumstances for through it will the soul be saved from sloth and ill-being. ^[2] Eschew anxiety (*al-hamma*) and depression (*al-ghamm*) for through these twain will transpire a darksome affliction (*balā' adhām*).

V ^[1] Say: Envy (*al-hasad*) consumeth the body and rage [or anger, wrath, *al-ghayz*] burneth the liver: avoid these two as ye would a fierce lion (*al-asad*). ^[2] Purification of the bowels (*tanqiyat al-fudūl*) constitutes a pillar [of health, *al-'umdat*] when accomplished in the temperate seasons (*al-fusūl al-mu'tadila*). ^[3] He whose eating hath been excessive, his malady will be heightened. ^[4] We, assuredly, have decreed a cause (*sabab^{an}*) for all things and vouchsafed everything with an effect (*al-athar*). All of this is by virtue of the effulgence of My Name, the Efficacious [the 'Producer of Effects' *al-mu'aththir*] upon existing things. Verily, thy Lord is the One Who exerciseth command over all that He willeth.

VI ^[1] Say: Through all that which We have expounded the [equilibrium of the] four humours (*al-akhlāt*) will not exceed their moderate balance (*al-i'tidāl*), neither will their measures deviate from their mean conditions. ^[2] The [human constitutional] foundation (*al-asl*) will remain in its purity and the "sixth part" and the "sixth of the sixth part" (*wa'l-suds wa suds al-suds*) in their stable condition. ^[3] The twin active forces (*fā'ilān*) and the twin passive realities (*munfā'ilān*) will be rendered whole. And upon God is all our trust. There is no God but Him, the true Healer, the Omniscient, the One Whose succour is sought by all. ^[4] My Supreme Pen hath not moved over such words as the above save out of My love for thee, that thou mayest know that sorrows have not overtaken the Ancient Beauty and He is not saddened by that which hath befallen Him from the nations. ^[5] Sorrow is for that one who loseth a thing, and from My Grasp is not lost all that is in the heavens and the earth.

VII ^[1] O Physician! Firstly, heal thou the sick ones with the Remembrance of thy Lord (*bi-dhikr rabbika*), the Lord of the Day of Mutual Invocation (*yawm al-tanād*) and afterwards by that which We have ordained for the health of the constitutions of the servants. ^[2] By My life! Merely attaining the presence of the physician who hath drunk of the Wine of My Love conferreth healing and his mere breath bringeth mercy and hope. ^[3] Say: Adhere to him for the restoration of the body's well-being. ^[4] Verily such a physician is assisted by God for the treatment of ills. ^[5] Say: The science of healing is the most noble of all the sciences. ^[6] Verily, it is the greatest instrument given by God, the Quickener of mouldering bones, for the preservation of the bodies of peoples. God hath given it precedence over all sciences and branches of wisdom. ^[7] But this Day is the Day wherein thou shouldst arise to bring about My Victory, detached from all the worlds.

VIII Say: *"Thy Name is My healing, O my God, and remembrance of Thee is my remedy. Nearness to Thee is my hope and love for Thee my companion. Thy mercy to me is my healing (tabīb) and my succour in both this world and the world to come. Thou, verily, art the All-Bountiful, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise."*

IX ¹⁰ ^[1] Give the salutations of God to all the Friends. ^[2] Say: In this Day two decrees (*du amr*) are beloved and to be desired. The first is wisdom and utterance. ^[3] The second is steadfastness in the Cause of thy Lord, the Most Compassionate. ^[4] Every one that attaineth unto these twin commands is accounted and mentioned, in the sight of God, as among the dwellers of the City of Immortality (*madīnah-i baqā'*). ^[5] For it is through the instrumentality of these twin decrees that the Cause of God hath been and will continue to be established amongst God's servants. ^[6] This inasmuch as, were it not for wisdom and utterance, all will become sorely tried. Were such to be the case none would remain to guide the people unto the Religion of the One True God. ^[7] Furthermore, if it were not for steadfastness, the words of the teacher [lit. narrator, reminder, *dhākir*] shall not be effective.

¹⁰ The remainder of the Tablet is in Persian.

X ^[1] Say: O Friends! Apprehensiveness and agitation pertaineth unto women. ^[2] And should the beloved of God reflect briefly upon the world and its manifest vicissitudes, the dominance of those who hath been tyrants will not frighten them. ^[3] Then shall they take their flight on the wings of yearning desire unto the One Who is at the centre of the Luminous Horizons [of the next World?] (*nayyir al-āfāq*) ^[4] This servant hath wished for Himself that which He hath wished for all the servants of God. ^[5] The reason that wisdom (*hikmat*) and the protection of the friends hath been and shall be commanded is that those who remember Me should remain in the world and occupy themselves with the mention of the Lord of all the worlds. ^[6] Thus it is binding and necessary that all may protect themselves and their brethren for the sake of the Cause of God. ^[7] If the beloved of God had performed that which they were commanded, the majority of the people of the world at this time would have been adorned with the garment of faith. ^[8] Great is the blessedness of him who leadeth another soul to the Immortal Faith of God and guideth him to life everlasting. ^[9] This is an act of supreme importance in the presence of thy Lord, the Mighty, the Most Exalted.

May the Spirit be upon thee! And may the Glory be upon thee also!

THE TEXT OF THE *LAWH-I TIBB* AS PUBLISHED IN *MAJMŪ‘A-YI ALWĀḤ-I MUBĀRAKA* (Cairo 1920, Reprint Wilmette, Illinois: BPT., 1981 pages 222-226)

﴿ قد نزل لأحد من الاطباء عليه بهاء الله ﴾

﴿ هو الله الاعلم ﴾

إِسَانُ الْقَدَمِ يَنْطِقُ بِمَا يَكُونُ غُنِيَّةَ الْأَبَاءِ عِنْدَ
غُنِيَّةِ الْأَطْبَاءِ * قَلْ يَا قَوْمُ لَا تَأْكُلُوا إِلَّا بَعْدَ الْجُوعِ
وَلَا تَشْرَبُوا بَعْدَ الْهَجُوعِ * نَعَمْ الرِّيَاضَةُ عَلَى الْخَلَاءِ بِهَا
تَقْوَى الْأَعْضَاءِ وَعِنْدَ الْاِمْتَلَاءِ دَاهِيَةٌ دَهْمَاءُ * لَا تَتْرُكْ

العلاج عند الاحتياج ودعه عند استقامة المزاج
لا تبأشر الغذاء إلا بعد الهضم ولا تزدرد إلا بعد أن
يكمل القضم * علاج العلة أولاً بالأغذية ولا تجاوز
إلى الأدوية * إن حصل لك ما أردت من المفردات
لا تعدل إلى المركبات * دعه الدواء عند السلامة وخذ
عند الحاجة * إذا اجتمع الضدان على الخوان لا تخلطهما
فأقنع بواحد منهما * بادر أولاً بالرقيق قبل الغليظ
وبالمائع قبل الجامد * إدخال الطعام على الطعام خطر
كن منه على حذر * وإذا شرعت في الأكل فأبتدي
باسمى الأبهى ثم اختم باسم ربك مالك العرش والثرى
وإذا أكلت فامش قليلاً لاستقرار الغذاء وما عسر
قضمه منهي عنه عند أولى النهي كذلك يأمرك القلم
الأعلى * أكل القليل في الصباح أنه للبدن مصباح
واترك المادة المضرّة فإنها باية للبرية * قابل الأمراض
بالأسباب وهذا القول في هذا الباب فصل الخطاب
أن الزم القناعة في كل الأحوال بها تسلم النفس
من الكسالة وسوء الحال * أن اجتنب الهم والغم

بهما يحدتُ بلاءُ أدهم * قل الحسد يأكل الجسد والغيظُ
يحرِق الكبدَ أنِ اجتنبا منها كما تجتنبون من الأسد *
تنقية الفضول هي العمدة والكنز في الفصول الممتدة
والذي تجاوزاً كَلهُ تفاقم سقمه * قد قدرنا لكل شئ
سبباً وأعطينا له أثراً كل ذلك من تجلّى اسمي المؤثر على
الأشياء إن ربك هو الحاكم على ما يشاء * قل بما
ينبأه لا يتجاوز الأخلاط عن الاعتدال ولا مقاديرها
عن الأحوال * يبقى الأصل على صفائه * والسدس
وسدس السدس على حاله * ويسلم الفاعلان والمنفعلان
وعلى الله التكلان * لا إله إلا هو الشافي العليم
المستعان * ما جرى القلم الأعلى على مثل تلك الكلمات
الالهي إياك لتعلم بأنّ اللهم ما أخذ جمال القدم ولم
يحزّن عما ورد عليه من الأمم * والحزن لمن يفوت منه
شئ ولا يفوت عن قبضته من في السموات والأرضين *
يا طبيب امش في المرضي أولاً بذكر ربك مالك يوم
التناديم بما قدرنا أصحّة أمزجة العباد * لعمرى الطبيب
الذي شرب خمر حبي لقاءه شفاءً ونفسه رحمة ورجاء *

قل تمسكوا به لاستقامة المزاج إنه مؤيد من الله
 للعلاج * قل هذا العلم أشرف العلوم كلها إنه السبب
 الأعظم من الله محيي الرمم لحفظ أجساد الأمم
 وقدمه على العلوم والحكم والكن اليوم اليوم الذي
 تقوم على نصرتي منقطعاً عن العالمين * قل يا الهى
 اسمك شفى وذكرك دوائى وقربك رجائى وحبك
 مؤنس ورحمتك طبيبى ومعينى فى الدنيا والآخرة
 وانك أنت المعطي المليم الحكيم *

جميع أحببنا من قبل الله تكبير برسائيد * بكو
 اليوم دو أمر محبوب وه طلب است * يكي حكمت
 وبيان * وثانى الاستقامة على أمر ربكم الرحمن * هر
 نفسى باين دو أمر فائز شد عند الله از أهل مدينة بقا
 محسوب ومذکور چه كه باين دو امر الهى ما بين عباد
 ثابت شده وخواهد شد چه اكر حكمت وبيان
 نباشد كل مبتلا خواهند شد * در اينصورت نفسى
 باقى نه تاناس را بشرية احدى هدايت نمايد * واكر
 استقامت نباشد نفس ذاكر مؤثر نخواهد بود *

بگوای دوستان خوف واضطراب شأن نسوان است
 وا کر أحبای الهی فی الجملة تفکر نمایند در دنیا
 واختلافات ظاهره در او لا تخوفهم سقوطه الذین
 ظلموا ویطیرن بأجنحة الاستیاق الی نیر الآفاق *
 این عبد آنچه از برای خود خواسته ام از برای کل
 دوستان حق خواسته ام * واینکه بحکمت و حفظ
 امر شده و میشود مقصود این است که ذا کرین
 در أرض بمانند تا بد کر رب العالمین مشغول شوند *
 لذا بر کل حفظ نفس خود و اخوان لأمیر الله واجب
 و لازم است * واکر أحبباء عامل بودند با آنچه ما، و رند
 حال اکثر من علی الأرض بردای ایمان مزین
 بودند * طوبی از برای نفسی که نفسی را بشریعة
 بانیه کشاند و بحیاة ابدیه دلالت نماید *
 هذا من أعظم الأعمال عند ربك
 العزيز المتعال * والروح عليك
 والبهاء عليك *

NOTES ON SELECTED PASSAGES OF THE TABLET OF MEDICINE

I

It is clear that at the beginning of the *Tablet of Medicine* Bahá'u'lláh alludes to his power of revelation as that of the "Tongue of the Ancient of Days" (*lisān al-qidam*). He indicates that he has summed up basic, existing medical advice of use when physicians are unavailable. Shoghi Effendi often translated the Arabic *al-qidam* (= "ancient") when referring to Bahá'u'lláh by the Danielic Biblical English (Authorized/King James Version) phrase "Ancient of Days" (see Daniel 7:9,13,22). e.g. see Gl: CXV, 242 where the original *qalam al-qidam* in a Tablet to Dhabīh is translated "Pen of the Ancient of Days".

The expression *ulū al-albāb* trans. "wise ones" (alternatively, "men possessed of minds" [Arberry]; "men of understanding" [Pickthall, Abdullah Yusuf Ali], "men of insight" [Bell]) is Qur'ānic; occurring 16 times in the Islāmic Holy Book (see Q. 2:179[5], 197[3] etc., see Kassis, *Concordance*: 732-3).

II.

Some seventy years ago a translation of the opening lines (II:1ff) of the *Lawh-i tibb* was published in the *Star of the West* magazine and in other sources (See Appendix 2). These lines contain some general guidelines for the maintenance of good health. They would be meaningful to a practitioner of traditional Islamic medicine and often have striking parallels in Islamic and pre-Islamic sources; in the *Tibb al-nabī/nabawī* and related sources (see below). A few such parallels have been indicated in the paragraphs to follow.

It has been pointed out that the opening lines (II:1ff) of the *Lawh-i tibb* are echoed in many Graeco-Islamic works. The *Mikhlat* (= "Nose-bag") of Bahā' al-Dīn al-'Āmilī (= Shaykh Bahā'ī 1527-1621 CE.) for example, contains some "moral prescriptions" (*fawā'id*), "most of which are concerned with man's physical health and well-being" :i.e. "One should have lunch early in the morning [cf. III:4] and not have dinner too late in the evening; nor should one allow a meal to follow on immediately after another [see II:10] or drink before breakfast [cf. II:1b]... and one should visit the privy on each occasion before going to sleep. Let him induce vomiting once a week, and let him beware of wind and cold wind and cold air after coming out from the bath.

God is all-sufficient!"¹ Similar *fawā'id* are "often attributed to such classical authorities as Galen...For the hints on hygiene and health, the ancients, from Galen and Hippocrates onwards, are naturally quoted..On p. 296 [of the *Mikhlāt*], similar counsels are attributed to Ishāq b. Hunayn [b. Ishāq (9th cent. CE.)]"²

II:1 "Say: O People! Eat not except after having hungered and drink not after retiring to sleep (*al-hujū'*)." ^c

The Arabic noun *jū'* is a word signifying "hunger" (the verb *ja'a* = 'to hunger') which sometimes has connotations of extreme hunger or starvation -- for the Qur'ānic references [verb once, noun 4 times] see Kassis, *Concordance*:610-611. According to the *Lisān al-Arab* *hujū'* indicates 'the breaking of hunger without having completely satisfied one's appetite' (*Haj'a ju'uhu wa lam yashba'u ba'ad*). Hence, Bahā'u'llāh probably means, 'Do not eat unless it is really necessary'; eating unnecessarily or out of greed is not wise.

The exact sense of *hujū'* (above tr. = "retiring to sleep") is uncertain. The imperfect active form of the verb -- form I *haja'a* = 'to slumber' (see Kassis: 489) -- occurs in Qur'ān 51:17 (and only here) in the context of a description of the righteous : "[15] Surely the godfearing shall be among gardens and fountains [16] taking whatsoever their Lord has given them; they were good-doers before that. [17] Little of the night would they slumber (*yahja'ūna*), [18] and in the mornings they would ask for forgiveness..." (Arberry, 543). Pickthall translates 51:17, "They used to sleep but little of the night" Similarly, the Al-Azhar authorized translation (1984) of M. M. Khatib has, "Little of the night did they sleep." (London: Macmillan Press 1985, p.693). The Qur'ān commentaries give details about the significance of the word *hujū'*.³ *Lisān al-'arab* III:775 has it that *hujū'* signifies "a light sleep in the beginning of the night (*nawmat khafīf min awwal al-Hayl*).

¹ *Mikhlāt* (Ed. Cairo 1377 A.H./1957 CE.) p.20 trans. C.E. Bosworth, 1989: 18. The *Mikhlāt* is an earlier amorphous collection of miscellany, superseded by the well-known *Kashkūl* ("Dervish's Beggars Bowl") of Shaykh Bahā'ī.

² Bosworth, 1989:18 fn.50. A few further parallel passages will be cited in the pages which follow.

³ See for example, Tabarī, *Jāmi' al-Bayān* 16: 196f (on 51:17); Zamaksharī, *al-Kashāf*4:397 (on 51:17). See further Dihkhudā, *Lughat-nāmeḥ* entry *hujū'* (p. 152) where it is stated that it signifies 'going to sleep at night'.

There is a great deal of advice regarding diet and eating in Graeco-Islamic medical literatures. Suyūṭī cites Hippocrates as follows, "The continuation of good health depends upon moderate labour and the avoidance of a surfeit of eating & drinking. He also said: A little of what is harmful is better than a lot of what is good." (p.54) The Prophet Muhammad and certain of the Twelver Imāms had a good deal to say on these subjects. It is recorded that the Prophet said, "Eat when thou hast a desire to but withhold thyself from eating whilst thou still desirest" (cited Mustaghfirī, BA 62:290). Suyūṭī in Section II (Practical Rules of Medicine; Elgood, 53) of one of his works on Prophetic Medicine records the words,

"Know then that food is taken when required for the continuation of health. ... Prolonged abstention from food is wearisome to the body and causes a drying up of it and a burning of its constitution. Similarly the taking of food when not required, engenders stupidity and sloth and is one of the causes of the generation of disease.."

... It is expedient to stop eating while you still have an appetite for more. But to keep on abstaining makes the body weak & thin. Nay rather, abstention in health is like mixing many different foods in disease. Always choose the best food unless a bad habit has been formed. In this case it must be given up gradually. He who is accustomed to take improper food, let him not cease altogether, but let him avoid taking food that causes fermentation in the stomach and rotten fruit.." (Suyūṭī:53).. Be it known that eating to satiety is something bad which arose after the first century of Islam. The Prophet used to say: The Believer puts food into a single stomach, the Unbeliever into seven. Wisdom will not go into a stomach filled with food. The less a man eats, the less will he drink...If a man is satisfied before satiety, then the better nourished will his body be and the better will be the state of himself and of his heart. But the man who is filled with food his body will be ill nourished, the state of himself will be bad, and his heart will grow hard. Avoid therefore excess of food, for it poisons the heart, slows the members of the body from the obedience due to God and closes the ears to His admonishments..."

The Prophet Muḥammad is also reckoned to have stated,

"2...So eat when you desire and refrain when you desire. 3. The stomach is the house of every disease and abstinence the head of every remedy... 18. Excess of food is a misfortune. 23. Less food, less sin. 43. He who is accustomed to much food and drink, verily his heart is hard. (Chaghmīnī).

Imām 'Alī is recorded as having said to his son al-Ḥasan [b. 'Alī b. Abu Ṭālib (d. 49/669)],

"'Shall I teach you four general principles so that you may have no need of medicine?' Al-Ḥasan replied: 'Yes indeed, O Amīr al-Mu'minīn.' He said: 'Do not eat unless you are hungry, cease eating while you still have a desire to eat, chew your food well, and, after you awaken from sleep, relieve yourself. If you practise these measures, you will not require medicine.'" ⁴ The first Imām is also credited with the following words, "The Qur'ān contains a verse which sums up all

⁴ The Arabic text of this tradition is contained in Majlisi, BA 62:267.

medicine: "Eat and drink but do not be prodigal." (Qur'ān 7:31).⁵ He also said: "There is no healthiness with gluttony." (IMW: xxv - xxvi). Similarly, the sixth Imām Ja'far al-Sādiq (d. 148/765) gave the following advice: "If people eat moderately, their bodies will be healthy." (cited ibid). The seventh Imām al-Kāzīm (d. 183/799) said, "Abstaining from certain foods (*al-lahmiyya*) is the chief medication. The abdomen (*al-ma'ida*) is the house of illness. Accustom [the body] to what you are used to." (ibid:xxvii).

A.J. Newman, commenting on the above and other centrally important traditions of the Imāms dealing with the fundamentals of good health, writes, "Cautioning against gluttony is the basis of treatment, moderation in eating according to the needs and soundness of the body, the requirement for rest and calm after suffering from an illness, abstaining from certain foods, accustoming the body to routine, cautioning against using medications without need and more than is necessary, explaining the natural constituents and elements of the body and, in fact, even pointing to artificial respiration, etc., is all general medical advice and does not apply to a particular individual or country, or to a particular era." (IMW:xxviii).

It could also be that at II:1b Bahā'u'llāh suggests that sporadic drinking during or throughout the night is inadvisable. That passage from the *Mikhlāt* of Shaykh Bahā'ī cited above, it is worth noting, contains the advice not to "drink before breakfast..." (trans. C.E. Bosworth, 1989: 18). Alternatively (?), one should not partake of fluids shortly after allaying one's hunger. cf. Suyūṭī "And go not to sleep immediately after food, for this will harden your bowels. This tradition is told by Abu Nu'aim." (p.56)

II:2 "How beneficial is exercise when one[s stomach] is empty for through it the limbs become strengthened; and how dark a calamity is exercise when one[s stomach] is full!"

Exercising after a meal is advised against in Suyūṭī:53,

"The partaking of one meal upon another is harmful [see II:10]. So is exercise after a meal. But exercise before a meal is best of all, just as when taken after it is the worst of all...(56) And take not violent exercise after food, for this does harm to it...(58) Know then that moderate exercise is a most potent means of preserving health. It warms the organs and dissolves waste products and renders the body light and active. The time for this is after the descent of the food from the stomach. It accomplishes this in five or six hours, more or less according to the constitution of the individual and of the food. By moderate exercise is meant exercise which makes the skin red and glow. When sweating begins, then it is proper to cease. That which increases the sweat is called violent exercise. Every organ is strengthened and enlivened by much exercise. The same is true of the internal faculties."

⁵ Note also the following saying of 'Alī ibn al-Husayn ibn Wāfid: "God has collected all Medicine into half a verse when He said: Eat & drink but not to excess" [Qur'ān 7:31; Suyūṭī:54].

A number of Bahā'ī sources also underline the importance of physical exercise. 'Abdu'l-Bahā spoke of three kinds of education. He defined the first kind, "material education", in the following manner, "Material education is concerned with the progress and development of the body, through gaining its sustenance, its material comfort and ease." ('Abdu'l-Bahā: SAQ:1981 ed., p. 8). On another occasion he stated, "...education is of various kinds. There is a training and development of the physical body which ensures strength and growth." (PUP: 330).

II:3 *"Do not avoid medical treatment (al-'ilāj) when thou hast need of it but abandon it when thy constitution hath been restored (istiqāmat)."*

In a Shī'ī source it is recorded that the seventh Imām Al-Kāzīm (d. 183/799) said: 'Stay away from the treatment of physicians (*al-atibbā'*) as long as you are well, for it is similar to building -- a little of it leads to much.' (IMW:xxvii). The eighth Imām, Al-Ridā' (d. 203/818) also said, "They, peace be upon them, said: 'Avoid medications as long as your body can bear the illness. When it cannot bear the illness, then take medications.'" (ibid).

Not only did Bahā'u'llāh recommend consulting medical practitioners but, in his *Most Holy Book (Kitāb-i aqdas)* 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." (trans. cited LG:923). There are numerous passages in the writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahā and Shoghi Effendi which repeat and comment on this directive (for some details see Appendix 2).

II:4 *"Do not commence a meal except after full digestion [of the previous meal] and swallow not save after the completion of chewing."*

Imām 'Alī, according to the tradition cited above (section on II:1), advised his son, the Imam Hasan to chew his food well. Suyūṭī records that Avicenna said, "Never take one meal until the one before it is digested" (p.55). See further on II:10.

II:5 *"Treat an illness firstly with nutrients [or foods, aliments, aghdhiya] and proceed not [immediately] unto medications (adwiyat)."*

The following few selected Bahā'ī texts bear upon the theme of II:5,

"... 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."

"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, SWAB:152-155).

"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, SAQ :257-259)

"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, cited LG:1016)

"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 peoples 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, cited LG:1017)

II:6 "If that which thou desirest resulteth from elemental nutrients (*al-mufradāt*) refrain from the compound treatments (*al-murakkabāt*)."

In the *Tibb al-nabawī* of Suyūṭī relating to compound drugs (119) we read,

"Doctors say that they prefer Simples to Compound Drugs if they find that they suffice. So they make use of Compound Drugs either for the correction of the properties of Simples or to cover their unpleasant taste or to render them more potent...Again, If a disease is a compound disease, the remedy for it must be compound too. Or, if the violence of the disease and its strength are constant or because of the humours of the temperament of the patient, no single drug can be found which opposes all adverse actions, then a compound drug must be sought." In the same source it is also stated, "Whenever it is possible to use a light drug, do not make use of something other. Go from the weak to the stronger, if the weak proves of no use. Do not content yourself with a single drug in your treatment. For the constitution of the patient will grow accustomed to it and the benefit will become less. If you are in doubt about the diagnosis, do not attack the disease with any medicine at all until the whole matter is clear. When a dietary regime alone is sufficient, do not resort to drugs." (Suyūṭī:66).

II:8 "If foods of opposing disposition (*diddān*) are available at table, do not mix them; under such circumstances content thyself with but one of them."

Something of the Islamic attitude to eating various combinations of foods may be gathered from the following passage from Suyūṭī,

"The Prophet forbade to have at the same meal milk & fish or vinegar & milk or fruit & milk or lettuce & fish or garlic & onions or dried meat & fresh meat or things sour & things acid or sumach & vinegar or vinegar & rice or grapes & excessive eating of brinjals or pomegranites & meat pudding or two cold dishes or two hot dishes or two windproducing dishes...Whoever eats fish & eggs together will become paralysed, and for this blame no one but yourself.." (54).

During the Edime (Adrianople) period of his ministry, in his *Kitāb-i Badī'*, Bahā'u'llāh exhorted his followers to moderation: "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." (Bahā'u'llāh, *Kitāb-i Badī'*, cited UHJ:1970).

On the subject of mixing foods of opposite temperament or disposition we have this explanation from 'Abdu'l-Bahā,

"You have asked about the verse: 'Do not mix [two] foods of opposing disposition' [cf. II:8]'. Know that what is meant by opposing foods (*ta'ām-i mutadādd*) are those foods and nourishments which do not agree with each other; but He [Bahā'u'llāh] has not indicated whether this is the case with respect to either ancient or modern medicine. So the intention is this: If two foods of opposing temperament and nature are present simultaneously at table it is not permitted to partake of both. This is because of the human constitution and the weakness of the powers of the stomach.. Thus,

in a weak constitution it is not possible to reconcile the effects of two heavy and rich foods or two cold foods or two hot foods. Again the nature of someone may not bear the effects of two specific foods or two foods which, when mixed, would add to each other's richness and heaviness. The mixing of all of these is not permitted. The exact description of these is referable to the physicians.. So any two foods whose combination doctors would describe as *diddān*, "opposers" for a particular person are such indeed...." Ishrāq Khāvarī (Ed.), *Māida-yi Āsmānī* (First Indian edition, New Delhi: BPT., 1984) Vol. II: 550-1 (= Vol. 9:142-3).

II:9 *"Commence first with the light food (al-raqīq) before moving on to the heavier one (al-ghalīz) and with the liquid before the solid."*

The Arabic word *raqīq* can signify a flat loaf of bread (see Wehr⁴, 408) though the meaning here may not be quite so specific -- indicating a food that is "delicate / soft / tender" (*raqīq*) or easily digestible. It is here rendered "light" to follow the common English usage; "light" and "heavy" meals, foodstuffs. When applied to food the word *ghalīz* can mean "solid, stringy, tough" (see Wehr,⁴ 979). As noted, it is here translated "heavy".

II:10 *"To intake one food which becomes superimposed upon another (idkhāl al-ta'ām 'alā ta'ām) is dangerous; be warned of this matter."*

II:10a has various exact parallels in Islamic medicine. A tradition recorded, for example, in Majlisī's *Bihār al-anwār* reads,

"The Arab physician al-Hārith Ibn Kaladah [a companion of the Prophet Muḥammad and his physician who had allegedly studied at Jūndī-Shāpūr] was asked about the intake of one food superimposed upon another food (*idkhāl al-ta'ām 'alā al-ta'ām*). He said in reply, "This practise is what has caused the destruction of the created sphere (*barīya* = mankind's health?) and likewise the destruction of the wild beasts in the created sphere (*al-sibā' fī-barīya*). He [the Prophet] has made the intake of one food superimposed upon another (*idkhāl al-ta'ām alā al-ta'ām*) which has not been fully digested in the stomach and which has not left that organ, a devastating disease (*dā' mahīk*). This is in accordance with a widespread disposition which God, exalted be He, has put into effect. The reason is this: what is thrown over that which is already being digested penetrates [badly] the inflamed and fiery constituents of the stomach [which are involved in the digestive process]. All this is dependent upon the power of God -- glorified be His greatness." (*Bihār*,62:71).

Similarly, it is recorded in al-Suyūtī, "The partaking of one meal upon another is harmful" (53). This piece of advice is immediately followed by words about exercise virtually paralleling II:2 (cited above). A little later we read, "Hārith bin Kalada, the physician of the Arabs, was once asked: What is the best medicine? He replied: Necessity, that is Hunger. When asked: What is disease? He replied: The entry of food upon food." (*Suyūtī*:55)

III.

III:1 *"When thou wouldst commence eating, start by mentioning My Most Glorious Name (al-abhā) and complete it with the Name of Thy Lord, the Possessor of the Throne above and of the earth below."*

III:1a is reminiscent of Qur'ān 6:119f (trans. Arberry) -- "Eat of that over which God's name has been mentioned...And eat not of that over which God's name has not been mentioned; it is ungodliness". There are various circumstances in Islam in which the mentioning of the name of God (Allāh, the *basmalla*, etc.) is related to the slaughter of food, foodstuffs, and eating. The following tradition (*ḥadīth*), for example, is cited in the *Mishkāt al-Maṣābīḥ* of Walī al-Dīn al-Tabrizī, "Mention God's name, eat with your right hand, and eat from what is next to you" (Bukhārī and Muslim; Robson, *Mishkāt* II:886). Further directives relating eating and the recitation of the name of God / prayer can be found in Islamic texts. It is related, for example, that the Prophet said "Masticate your food with the name of God and with prayer." (Suyūtī 56). A tradition about reciting the protective Name of God over food deriving from Imām 'Alī reads, "I fully guarantee that one who eats food and says Allah, the Exalted's, Name, will not be harmed by it..." (IMW:70)..

At III:1 Bahā'u'llāh states that at the commencement of a meal, the superlative form of the word *bahā'* (the greatest name) namely, *al-abhā'* (= the All-Glorious) should be uttered. At its end "the Name of Thy Lord (*rabbika*), the Possessor of the Throne above and of the earth below (*mālik al-'arsh wa'l-tharā*)."¹⁰ It may be that the same word *abhā'* is also to be recited at the end of the meal. Perhaps, alternatively, the meal should be completed with the utterance of the name Bahā'u'llāh or some other name of God. The recital of the greatest name could thus be viewed as the alpha and the omega of eating; the essence of both senses of the word grace. Other forms of grace (= the recitation of a short prayer before or after a meal) are found within the Bahā'ī writings. 'Abdul-Bahā', it should be noted, wrote prayers to be recited at table both before and after a meal.¹⁰

¹⁰ □ To be recited before eating, "My Lord and my Hope. Praise be to Thee that Thou hast sent down upon us this spiritual table, this divine bounty, this heavenly blessing. O our Lord, enable us to eat of this food of the kingdom that its subtle essences may pervade the corners of our spiritual being and that there may be produced from that

III:2 "And when thou hast finished eating, walk a little to settle thy meal."

It is a time-honoured practise to walk after completing a meal as an aid to good digestion. In the context of digestion Suyūtī cites the Prophet Muhammad as having said, "Walking after dinner is beneficial. [If you cannot] Prayer will replace it, for then food will rest in the pit of the stomach and digestion will be better." (Suyūtī:55).

III:4 "Eat a little in the morning for this is as a lamp to the body."

The importance of a breakfast is indicated in such sayings as that in the *Tibb al-nabī* of Mustaghfirī, "Breakfast ye! for in breakfast [during Ramadān, the month of fasting? *al-sahūr*] there is a blessing." (Majlisī, BA 62:292).

III:5 "Eschew harmful habits [i.e. addictive substances *al-i'āda al-mudirra*] for they truly, are a calamity for created beings."

By "harmful habits" (*al-i'āda al-mudirra*) which should be avoided, the partaking (as indicated) of addictive substances is probably intended; such 'substances' as can, from the Bahā'ī and ethico-religious perspective, be viewed as calamitous for human beings. From this point of view it is important to note that the following verse (372) of the *Most Holy Book (al-Kitāb al-aqdas)* in which Bahā'u'llāh forbids gambling (*maysir*) and the taking of opium, he states, "Beware lest you make use of that which will result in the sluggishness of your human temples and will damage (*yaduru*) your bodies..". The Arabic verb used here is an imperfect form of *darra* (form I = to harm, hurt, injure). It is the active participle (at III:5) from the same root *mudirra* which is thus translated "harmful habits". Addictions such as the taking of opium (twice

heavenly strength for the service of Thy cause, the spread of Thy revelation, and the adorning of Thy garden with lofty trees bearing branches near at hand, perfumed with fresh breezes. Thou, verily, art the generous. Thou art the possessor of mighty grace. Thou art the Merciful, the Compassionate." (Amr 3:69 trans. MacEoin, Ritual 98 App. Eight) □ **To be recited after eating.** "My Lord and my Hope. Thanks be to Thee for these bestowals and bounties. Lord, Lord, raise us up unto Thy Kingdom and seat us at the tables of Thy realm on high. Give us to eat of the food of Thy presence and give us to taste of the sweetness of beholding Thy beauty – this, in truth, is our highest wish and Thy greatest bestowal and most mighty bounty. Lord, Lord, make this easy for us. Verily, Thou art the Generous, the Bountiful, and Thou art the Giver, the Mighty, the Compassionate. Upon Thee be greetings and praise." (Amr 3:70 trans. MacEoin, Ritual 98 App. Eight).

interdicted in the Most Holy Book, see Ishrāq Khāvarī, *Ganj*, 343) are most probably indicated. 'Abdu'l-Bahā and Shoghi Effendi and the Universal House of Justice have forbidden to Bahā'īs (except under qualified medical prescription) all manner of addictive, hallucinogenic or habit-forming drugs: including (in addition to opium and alcohol) hashhish, marijuana, cannabis and LSD. Tobacco smoking is likewise strongly discouraged. (For further details see *Ganj*.443ff; SWAB:148-149 LG Nos. 717-719 2nd Ed. Nos. 1183-1188).

III:6 *"Counter disease by utilizing established means (bi'l-asbāb). This utterance is the decisive command in this discourse."*

Bahā'u'llāh may here mean that disease should be cured or prevented through well-tested, proven methods. It could be implied that properly qualified physicians should be consulted (see above on II: 3 and Appendix). In the 19th century middle east, medical cures were often little more than superstitious practises. Especially in villages, sometimes extremely superstitious or folkloric cures were widely indulged in. Within the largely inauthentic "Prophetic Medicine" (*Tibb al-nabī*) "numerous incantations for the prevention and treatment of the evil eye, demons and sorcery" (Dols review of Rahman p.418) may be found (see also Mahmoud Omidisalar, *Charms* Elr 5:386-7). The eccentric uses of charms, magical incantations, and blood or camel urine in traditional or folk-medicine, is probably directly or indirectly warned against by Bahā'u'llāh at various points in the **Tablet of Medicine**. Using sensible, established methods of healing -- communicated by "qualified physicians" -- was ultimately authoritatively set down (see Appendix Two).

IV.

IV:1f *"Most necessary to thy well-being is contentment (al-qanā'at) under all circumstances for through it will the soul be saved from sloth and ill-being. ²² Eschew anxiety (al-hamma) and depression (al-ghamm) for through these twain will transpire a darksome affliction (balā' adhām)."*

Psychological or spiritual states of mind as well as environmental factors are among the 'six necessities' (*sittah darūriyyah*) which, in Islamic medicine, must be taken account of relative to the maintenance of good health, i.e. "emotional rest (including the question of which emotional states help or harm health)" (see Nasr, *Islamic Science*, 162). Bahā'u'llāh likewise

presupposes an all-embracing or holistic medicine. The whole psycho-spiritual state of the human being is centrally important.

Fundamental to much oriental medicine is a spiritual psychology. In *Suyūṭī*, for example, we read, "But as for Apprehension and Sorrow, they are the commencement of the Sleeping Fevers. The Prophet used to fly to God for refuge from apprehension and sorrow. Tradition says that he who has much of these, his body becomes sick. This is related by Abu Nu'aim." (64). The central importance of contentment (*al-qanā'at*) for psychological-spiritual health is here presupposed. This is also the case in other writings of Bahā'u'llāh. In the *Words of Wisdom* (*Ash-i kull" al-khayr*) the "source of all glory" (*asī al-'izzat*) is reckoned to be "acceptance of whatsoever the Lord hath bestowed, and contentment (*al-qanā'at*) with what God hath ordained." (MAM:33/TB:155). This dynamic, spiritual "contentment" is not at all an idle self-satisfaction. Rather, it should perhaps be viewed as a spiritual state of being, revolving around loving contentment with the Will of God. True contentment with life and with God's revelation results in that spiritual happiness which leaves no room for anxiety and depression; negative states of mind which have disastrous consequences for health. 'Abdu'l-Bahā has stated that, "A happy state brings special blessings. When the mind is depressed, the blessings are not received" ('Abdu'l-Bahā: SW:XIII, No. 5, p. 102.) and explained, "You must be happy always. You must be counted among the people of joy and happiness and must be adorned with divine morals. In a large measure happiness keeps our health while depression of spirit begets disease." (cited Zohoori, p.23) The following passages are also expressive of the Bahā'ī viewpoint, "You must live in the utmost happiness. If any trouble or vicissitude comes into your lives, if your heart is depressed on account of health, livelihood or vocation, let not these things affect you. They should not cause unhappiness, for Bahā'u'llāh has brought you divine happiness. He has prepared heavenly food for you: He has destined eternal bounty for you..." ('Abdu'l-Bahā: PUP:183 cited ibid 23); "Happiness has a connection with health preservation, and from sorrow, diseases are born." ('Abdu'l-Bahā: SW XIX:254); "... Still, as the believers of God are turning to the limitless world, they do not become very depressed and sad by disastrous calamities--there is something to console them..." TAB 2: 263-4)

V:1 "Say: Envy (*al-ḥasad*) consumeth the body and rage (or anger, wrath, *al-ghayz*) bumeth the liver: avoid these two as ye would a fierce lion (*al-asad*)."

Bahā'u'llāh's warning about the negative physical or bodily consequences of envy (*al-ḥasad*), is paralleled with respect to its devastating spiritual consequences in the *Hidden Words (Kalimāt-i makhūnih)*:

"O Son of Earth!

Know, verily, the heart wherein the least remnant of envy (*ḥasad*) yet lingers, shall never attain My everlasting dominion, nor inhale the sweet savours of holiness breathing from my kingdom of sanctity." (Persian No 6; tr. 25 text MAM:373).

Mīrzā Yahyā was, according to various Bahā'ī sources, consumed with *ḥasad*. In his *Centennial Tablet (Lawḥ-i qam)* Shoghi Effendi reckons that all the peoples of the world would fail in their attempt to compute the extent of the "envy" (*ḥasad*) and "hatred" (*baghd*) exemplified in the person of the Judas of Bābī-Bahā'ī history and the half-brother of Bahā'u'llāh (see *Lawḥ-i qam*: 38). At one point in his *God Passes By*, the Guardian of the Bahā'ī Faith refers to Bahā'u'llāh's stigmatization of Sayyid Muḥammad Isfahānī (who had led Mīrzā Yahyā astray) as "the source of envy and the quintessence of mischief" (underlining supplied, GPB:112). Envy is a negative quality which can fuel disobedience to the covenant of God.

The importance of controlling human anger is widely affirmed in religious ethics. Many passages could be cited from the world's sacred scriptures in illustration of this fact. It must suffice to cite a few passages from Suyūṭī's *Tibb al-nabī*, section on 'The Emotions' which commences with the subject of anger,

"With regard to Anger, it warms the body and dries it up. Anger is forbidden by the Prophet. Al-Bukhārī relates that a man once said to the Prophet: Pray give me some advice. And he replied: Never be angry. The meaning of this traditional saying is that a man should never act from motives of anger. A proof of this is the further saying of the Prophet: Do not reckon as one of you those in a fit of anger... And we said: Is there any man who does not suffer from fits of anger? And he replied: No, there is not. But men there are who master themselves when angry and being bad tempered train themselves so that anger will not overcome them and that they will not act under its influence. And this is the meaning of the saying of the Almighty: Those who restrain their anger. It confirms the fact of their anger and praises them for their restraint. When the Prophet was angry, it was evident in his face. He once said: Anger is from the Devil... Abu Dāwūd relates this..." (63)

From antiquity correlations have been made between psychological states and organs of the body. In his *Tales of the Prophets (Qisas al-anbiyā')* al-Kisā'ī records that Wahb ibn-Munabbih (34-110?/ fl.732 CE?), an early Muslim expert on Judaeo-Christian lore, discoursing upon the creation of Adam's body said,

"..In the liver is compassion, in the spleen is mirth, in the kidneys are guile and deceit; the lungs are a fan and the stomach a storehouse.." (Ullmann, 5)

Ullmann, furthermore, records that this same authority had "certain ideas about human physiology as taught by the Greeks. He speaks of the four primary qualities and the four humours related to them and of the balance of temperament which signifies health. He located the mental powers in particular organs: intellect in the brain, greed in the kidneys, **anger in the liver**, courage in the heart, fear in the lungs, laughter in the spleen, sadness and joy in the face. Man was thought to have 360 members. He claimed to have found all this information in the Old Testament where they were said to be quoted in connection with the creation of Adam." (Ullmann 5-6).

The history of the medico-psychological correlation between anger and the liver invites further research.

V:2 "Purification of the bowels (*tanqiyat al-fudūl*) constitutes a pillar (of health, *al-'umdat*) when accomplished in the temperate seasons (*al-fusūl al-mu'tadila*)."

With regard to the intimate relationship between disease/health, diet and the seasons according to ancient medicine we read, for example, at selected points in Section III of the *Aphorisms* attributed to Hippocrates of Cos (Arabic Buqrāt, c.470-c.370 BCE),

"I. It is chiefly the changes of the seasons which produce diseases, and in the seasons the great changes from cold or heat, and so on according to this same rule. II. Of constitutions some are well or ill adapted to summer, others are well or ill adapted to winter. III. Certain diseases and certain ages are well or ill adapted to certain seasons, districts, and kinds of regimen [diet]... XVI. The diseases which generally arise in rainy weather are protracted fevers, fluxes of the bowels [etc.].. XIX. All diseases occur at all seasons [of the year], but some diseases are more apt to occur and to be aggravated at certain seasons...". (Tr. W.H.S. Jones, [Loeb Classical Library] Hippocrates IV: 123, 127, 129; cf. Adams, *Hippocratic Writings*, 134-5).

Among other possibly relevant background passages we read at Section IV: 12,

"It is bad [thing] to purge upwards [cleanse the bowels through inducing vomiting?] in winter those [persons] whose bowels are in a state of lientery [i.e. liquid evacuation of undigested food]." (ibid IV:137 cf. Adams 135; see also *Airs, Waters, Places* I in Loeb I:71ff; Adams,ibid.,pp. 9-19).

Many of the principles contained in the so-called 'Hippocratic corpus' (including the *Aphorisms* [early translated into Arabic] and many other writings) markedly influenced the medical and other teachings deriving from Galen of Pergamum (Arabic Jālīnūs, 129-c.200 CE). The Galenic corpus was highly influential in Islām. Galenism was a chief cornerstone of Islamic medicine. Galen's works were systematized within the Islamic world by, among others, 'Alī ibn al-'Abbas al-Majūsī (= Haly Abbas d.994 CE) author of *The Perfection of the Art/The Royal Book (Kāmil al-ṣinā'ah/ Kitāb al-malikī* = Latin. *Liber regius*) and Abū 'Alī ibn Sīnā (= Avicenna 980-1037 CE) author of *The Canon of Medicine (Qānūn fī'l-ṭibb*; for some details see Ullmann, Index, Galen [131]).

The *Golden Treatise (Risāla dhahābiyya)* of Imām Ridā' includes a section relating health and the seasons of the year (*dhikr fuṣūl al-sana*; see Majlisī, BA 62:312f). Summing up aspects of the medicine of the Imāms, Newman writes,

"The medical treatments related from the Imams in this book of ours, and others, contain medical preparations and prescriptions of specific proportions and particular qualities. They sometimes deal with particular cases, observation of the condition of the patient, the climate (*al-taqs*) of his province and the soil (*al-turba*) of the place where he lives. The answer of one of the Imams in reply to the patient's question, and the medication, may have been given after considering the above-mentioned points. This is a matter which should be taken into account, since variations in the climate and seasons of different countries require specific treatments for certain patients. For example, it would not be correct to use a medical treatment of the same proportion and quality for a hot country as for a cold country, and vice versa." (IMW:xxviii)

V:3 *"He whose eating hath been excessive, his malady will be heightened."*

See comments on II:1.

V:4 *"We, assuredly, have decreed a cause (sabab^m) for all things and vouchsafed everything with an effect (al-athar). All of this is by virtue of the effulgence of My Name, the Efficacious [the 'Producer of Effects' al-mu'aththir] upon existing things. Verily, thy Lord is the One Who exerciseth command over all that He willeth."*

The accusative *sabab*^{an} (tr. "cause") here indicates that everything has a means, reason or cause for its realization. *Athar*^{an}, has a wide range of meanings but is translated "effect" (listed in *Wehr*⁴, 5) as the natural complement of the preceding *sabab*^{an}.

VI

VI:1 *"Say: Through all that which We have expounded the [equilibrium of the] four humours (al-akhlāt) will not exceed their moderate balance (al-ḥidāl), neither will their measures deviate from their mean conditions."*

The entry *humours* in the MDHS by Vivian Nutton contains a useful and succinct paragraph about the origins of the theory of the humours,

"In the earliest extant Greek medical texts (450-400 BC), bile and phlegm are viewed as the two humours most responsible for disease in the individual, and blood as the provider of life. An excess of phlegm in the brain causes epilepsy, of bile frenzy. However, perhaps under the influence of the philosopher Empedocles (c492-c432 BC), who posited a universe composed of four *elements (Earth, Air, Fire, Water), a fourth major humour, black bile or 'melancholy', was added. There is considerable doubt whether this mysterious substance was at that time isolated empirically, but Galen (AD 129-c200) ascribed definite physical properties to it, such as boiling and hissing upon touching the ground. The Hippocratic treatise 'On the nature of Man' (c390 BC) identified the four humours with the four elements and developed a complex theory relating them to sensory qualities and assigning the potential preponderance of each humour to one of the four seasons, the four ages of man, and the four major organs of the body, heart, brain, liver and spleen. The perfect balance, mixture or temperament of the humours is constantly in danger, and any imbalance is unhealthy and possibly fatal. Preventive and corrective treatments were not difficult."

The theory of the humours became central within Islamic medicine which inherited Galenism (see below). Newman writes at one point in *Islamic Medical Wisdom*,

"Briefly and broadly speaking, the essence of the Galenic medical system was humoral pathology: equilibrium of the four humours (*al-akhlāt*) – blood, phlegm, yellow bile, and black bile produced well-being, while disequilibrium produced illness, the specificity of which depended on the affected humour. Together with the doctrines of the elements, temperaments, qualities, and faculties, the Galenic medical system presupposed a system of therapy aimed at maintaining or restoring equilibrium in the body by changes in diet, environment, activity, and by use of external medications." (Newman, IMW:vii-viii).

In his chapter on Avicenna in his *Medicine in Persia* Elgood at one point writes,

"There is yet another feature of Avicenna's physiology and pathology which is quite unknown in modern medicine, but which has left its mark in the speech of today. The human body was built

up, as has already been said, from the four elements. Corresponding to these four elements and depending upon them for their relative proportions were four Humors, generated from the food taken by the mouth. These are called Blood, Bile, Phlegm, and Black Bile or Spleen. These in no way resemble their modern synonyms. If these four are perfectly balanced, the temperament of that man was in perfect harmony. But such a state of affairs rarely, if ever, was found. One of the Humors would be in excess, which thereby gave to a man a bias or tendency in a certain direction. If Air was in excess in the original make-up, the temperament of that man would be sanguinous or show excess of blood or be hot and wet, to express the same fact in different ways. If, on the other hand, Earth was in excess, the temperament would be the exact opposite, splenic or cold and dry. One of the most fruitful causes of disease was an error in these Humors: excess, improper functioning, or even putrefaction. Fever was usually, though not always, due to putrefaction of one or more of these Humors. It was thus possible to classify sickness also into hot or cold and damp or dry diseases, depending upon the temperament of the Humor that was attacked or the organ that was diseased. For the theory was carried so far that not only did the individual have his own characteristic constitution, but every organ in the body also had its own peculiar temperament. Of all organs the brain was the coldest." (Elgood, *Medicine in Persia*: 49-50).¹¹

Without going into details (see further Appendix 3), Bahā'u'llāh at VI:1f explains how the medical advice which he has earlier given will maintain and safeguard the equilibrium of the four humours. In one of his Tablets 'Abdul-Bahā explains the Bahā'ī position with respect to the cause of human disease and touches upon that bodily equilibrium which is essential to good health,

¹¹ Many further details could have been added to this all too brief reproduction of passages bearing upon the roots and Islamic understanding of humoral pathology. In addition to Appendix 3 the following passages are worth noting a) *Paradise of Wisdom (Firdaws al-hikmah)*, (c. 850 CE; ed. M. Z. Siddiqi [Berlin, 1928], p. 40.) of 'Alī b. Rabban al-Tabarī "Man derives his nourishment from the four natures, since he inhales *air*, drinks *water*, eats food like meat, grain [corn] and fruit, which are transformations of *earth*, and all these contain particles of *fire* as well. The foods which derive from water, become *phlegm*, those that derive from air, *blood*, those that derive from fire, *yellow bile* and those from the earth, *black bile*. (Rosenthal, CHI : 187) b) Suyūṭī: "Next among the seven components of the Constitution come the Four Humours. Of these the most excellent is Blood, which is damp & hot. Its property is to feed the body. Normal blood is sweet and without smell. Next comes Phlegm and this is wet & cold. Its property is to convert blood whenever the body lacks food, to keep the organs damp and to prevent drying up due to movement. Normal phlegm is phlegm that is near to changing into blood. Abnormal phlegm is salt or somewhat warm or sour. It tends to be ripe and insipid. It is unmixed cold.

The third humour is Bile, which is hot & dry. It is stored in the Gall Bladder. It renders the blood subtle and helps it to pass through the very narrow channels. Part of it is carried to the bowels and produces the characteristic colour of the faeces. Normal bile is slightly red. Abnormal bile may be coloured like the yoke of an egg or coloured like leeks or verdigris or be inflamed. Rusty bile is more powerful than leek-coloured and it is a warning of Death. Bile is sometimes known as Yellow Bile. Finally, there is Spleen. This is cold & dry. It thickens the blood and feeds the spleen and the bones: Part of it passes to the mouth of the stomach and sets up a desire for food and causes an acidity. Normal spleen forms the dregs of the blood. Abnormal spleen is described as inflamed that is, impure. Spleen is sometimes called Black Bile." (p.50). (See further Ullmann's useful summary and translation of passages from 'Alī Ibn al-'Abbas al-Majūsī's *Kitāb al-Malakī* in chapter four of his *Islamic Medicine* (pp.55-71).

"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 ... 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 proportional degree and balance, no component being either augmented or decreased – there will be no physical cause for the incursion of disease ... 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 ... And likewise, when the constitution is in a state of equilibrium, there is no doubt that whatever is relished will be beneficial to health..." (SWAB: 152-156).

VI:2 "The [human constitutional] foundation (al-asl) will remain in its purity and the "sixth part" and the "sixth of the sixth part" (wa'l-suds wa suds al-suds) in their stable condition."

In addition to the information quoted above which throws some light on the roots and significance of the humoral pathology presupposed in VI:1ff (full details cannot be gone into here), it is important to note that Bahā'u'llāh, in answer to a question posed by his apostle Zayn al-Muqarrabīn about the "sixth part and the sixth of the sixth part" (VI:2), wrote,

"On the meaning of "sixth part and the sixth of the sixth part". We intended by this the measures and portions of the humours (*akhlāl*) in the human body when it is in a balanced condition as accords with the belief of the people. Know thou that the phlegm (plasma, *balgham*) is the sixth of blood, and bile is derived of the sixth portion of the phlegm. And black bile, "melancholia", is three quarters of the bile. And We have other explanations. Verily thy Lord is All-informed, All-knowing." (MA 1:8).

VI:3 "The twin active forces (fā'ilān) and the twin passive realities (munfā'ilān) will be rendered whole. And upon God is all our trust. There is no God but He, the true Healer, the Omniscient, the One Whose succour is sought by all."

The exact medical, human microcosmic (?) significance of the "twin active forces (*fā'ilān*) and the twin passive realities (*munfā'ilān*)" requires further research. Details cannot be gone into here. It is worth noting however, that in his *Tablet of Wisdom (Lawḥ-i hikmat)* Bahā'u'llāh uses similar Arabic dual terms *fā'ilayn* (lit. "twin active forces") and *munfā'ilayn* ("twin passive realities") in a cosmological context:

"As regards thine assertions about the beginning of creation, this is a matter on which conceptions vary by reason of the divergences in men's thoughts and opinions... The world of existence came into being through the heat generated from the interaction between the [twin] active force[s] (*fā'ilayn*) and that which is its recipient (*munfā'ilayn*). These two are the same, yet they are different. Thus doth the Great Announcement [Bahā'u'llāh] inform thee about this glorious structure. Such as communicate the generating influence and such as receive its impact are indeed created through the irresistible Word of God which is the Cause of the entire creation, while all else besides His Word are but the creatures and the effects thereof. Verily thy Lord is the Expounder, the All-Wise. (MAM:40-41 tr. TB:140).¹²

VII.

VII:1 *"O Physician! Firstly, heal thou the sick ones with the Remembrance of thy Lord (bi-dhikr rabbika), the Lord of the Day of Mutual Invocation (yawm al-tanād, see Qur'ān 40:32 [34]) and afterwards by that which We have ordained for the health of the constitutions of the servants."*

Here the physician is directed to first pray to God or invoke His Names; to indulge in the "Remembrance of thy Lord". There are a large number of prayers and invocations for the sick in Bābī and Bahā'ī scripture (see for example PM Nos. 64-67). In one of his Tablets Bahā'u'llāh says, "Well is it with the physician who cureth ailments in My hallowed and dearly cherished Name [presumably the "greatest name" *bahā'/ Allāh al-Abhā'*." (From a Tablet of Bahā'u'llāh, cited UHJ:1970). 'Abdu'l-Bahā taught, "That the Most Great Name [= Bahā'/ Bahā'u'llāh] exerciseth influence over both physical and spiritual matters is sure and certain." (UHJ:1984, p.2) The following brief passage from a Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahā is instructive,

"O maidservant 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." (TAB III:629).

On one occasion it was written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi,

"... Any such cure effected, however, should be done in the name of Bahā'u'llāh 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 cited UHJ:1970, p.8)

¹² Cf. the Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahā to Shaykh 'Alī Akbar Qūchānī touching upon this part of the *Laws-i Hikmat* in MA 2:68-70 [Indian Edition II:72-5] and see Keven Brown, 'A Bahā'ī Perspective on the Origin of Matter' in JBS 2:3,(1989-90) p. 28f.

Bahá'í scriptural texts and their authoritative interpretation recognize that true healing is of two kinds; namely, physical healing and spiritual healing. Both these dimensions of healing are presupposed in the attainment of holistic, abiding health. Consider the following selected passages,

"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 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 Shoghi Effendi, April 9, 1933: cited UHJ:1970, 5-6)

"O thou distinguished physician! ... Praise be to God that thou hast two powers: one to undertake physical healing and the other spiritual healing. Matters related to man's spirit have a great effect on his bodily condition. For instance, thou shouldst impart gladness to thy patient, give him comfort and joy, and bring him to ecstasy and exaltation. 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, SWAB:150-151)

"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 be done in the name of Bahá'u'llah 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: UHJ:1970, p. 8)

VII:2 By My life! Merely attaining the presence of the physician who hath drunk of the Wine of My Love conferreth healing and his mere breath bringeth mercy and hope. [3] Say: Adhere to him for the restoration of the body's well-being. [4] Verily such a physician is assisted by God for the treatment of ills.

The therapeutic effect of a truly spiritual physician is fully recognized here. Among the passages relating to this theme are the following words from Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá,

"He who is filled with the love of Bahá, and forgets all things, the Holy Spirit will be heard from his lips and the spirit of life will fill his heart.... Words will issue from his lips in strands of pearls, and all sickness and disease will be healed by the laying on of the hands." (cited in SW VIII: 233).

"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 SWAB:151)

VII:5f *"Say: The science of healing (hadha al-'ilm) is the most noble of all the sciences (ashraf al-'ulūm kullihā). [6] Verily, it is the greatest instrument (sabab al-a'zam) given by God, the Quickener of mouldering bones (muhyī al-rimam), for the preservation of the bodies of peoples (al-umam). God hath given it precedence over all sciences (al-'ulūm) and branches of wisdom (al-hikam)"*.

Speaking with the voice of God Bahā'u'llāh proclaims the greatness of medical science. Indeed, its superlative importance is underlined. VI:5a has many echoes and parallels in the history of Graeco-Islamic medicine. At the beginning of *The Law (Nomos)* of Hippocrates we read, "Medicine is of all the Arts the most noble.." (Adams & Brock:144). This maxim was variously translated in Arabic and countless times repeated and commented upon in certain Islāmic literatures. In the *'Uyūn al-anbā'* (I.26) of Ibn Abī Uṣaiba'ah [1203-1270] we read, "Medicine is the most noble of all the sciences." (cited Rosenthal, CHI:184). Suyūṭī in his *Tibb al-nabī* states in the section headed, *Encouragement to the Study of Medicine*,

"The Imām Shāfi'ī [150-205/767-820] said: After the Science which distinguishes between what is lawful and what is unlawful, I know of no Science which is more noble than that of Medicine. He was grieved to see how much Moslems had lost of this Science. Often he used to say: They have lost one-third of human knowledge and have allowed themselves to be replaced by Jews and Christians. He also used to say: Verily the people of the Book have now conquered and surpassed us in this sublime Art. Now Shāfi'ī besides his immense superiority in the Science of Law, besides his transcending merit in the Arabic language, was a skilled doctor." (128-9).

Parallels to VII:5 could be greatly multiplied. Bahā'u'llāh's elevation of the science of medicine reflects Islāmic estimates of the importance of this branch of learning. In illustrating this, reference may be made to the opening paragraph of the excellent chapter, 'Arabic Medical Literature' in the volume *Religion, Learning and Science in the 'Abbasid Period* (see bib. CHAL.),

"None of the sciences received more patronage among the Arabs than that of medicine - a discipline which they acquired from the Greeks and in which they excelled most. The Arabic adage states: *'al-'ilm 'ilmān, 'ilm yanfa', wa-'ilm yanfa', fa-l-rāfi' al-dīn wa-l-nāfi' al-tibb'* ("science is

twofold, that which exalts and that which is useful - that which exalts is religion, and that which is useful is medicine"). Islam not only put medicine on a high level but also conferred the title of *hakīm* (wise) on medical practitioners, a term used by Muslims up to the present day in many areas. The association of medicine with religious learning is noteworthy, and is a pleasing feature of Muslim life; for according to a Tradition of the Prophet: "*al-'ilm 'ilmān, 'ilm al-fiqh li-'l-adyān wa-'ilm al-tibb li-'l-abdān*" ("science is twofold, theology and medicine")." (p.342)

'Abdu'l-Bahā advised a Bahā'ī in the following manner,

"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 of 'Abdu'l-Bahā to an individual believer, cited UHJ:1970)

The reference to God / Bahā'u'llāh as the "Reviver of mouldering bones (*muhyī al-rimam*)" is rooted in the Qur'ān. Therein the adjective *ramīm* = rotten, decayed, occurs twice; once in the rhetorical question "...who shall quicken the bones when they are decayed" (36:78) and once as "stuff decayed"; the material left after a "withering wind" was loosed by God against Ad (51:42).

It is also the case that in the *Sūrah of the Greeks (Sūrat al-rūm)* God is referred to as the "Quickener of the dead" (*muhyī al-mawta*) for it is His "Mercy" (*al-rahman*) that is the "quickener of earth after its death" (see 30:50).¹³ In various of his Tablets Bahā'u'llāh refers to himself as the "Reviver/Quickener of mouldering bones (*muhyī/musawwir al-rimam*)" (refer, for example, AA 4: 38 and cf. Ishrāq Khāvarī *Rahīq-i makhtūm* 2: 480-1). In one of Bahā'u'llāh's meditations the devotee addresses God in the following manner, "I beseech Thee, O Thou Shaper of all the nations and the Quickener of every mouldering bone (*asaluka yā khāliq al-umam wa muhyī al-rimam* .. PM* 135/PM:153)". In another meditation we read, "Great is the blessedness of him who hath acknowledged Thy most excellent majesty, and whom the veils that have shut out the nations from Thee have not hindered from directing his

¹³ It is also usually the case that the name of God "the Quickener" (*al-Muhyī*) is counted among the 99 "Most Beautiful Names of God" (No. 71 in some listings). Note that in the *Kitāb-i Īqān* Bahā'u'llāh at one point interprets "earth" as the sphere of the human "heart" which is capable of "change" or spiritual "resurrection". In various of his prayers/meditations Bahā'u'llāh refers to God/himself as the "Quickener of the entire creation (*muhyī al-'ālamīn*)" (PM*:75 / PM:79).

eyes towards Thee, O Thou who art the King of Eternity and the Quickener of every mouldering bone (*musawwir al-rimam*)!" (PM*:41/PM:41) Shoghi Effendi counted "Reviver of mouldering bones" (*muhyī al-rimam*) a title of Bahā'u'llāh in his *Centennial Tablet (Lawh-i qam; p.77)*.

VIII.

"Say: *Thy Name is My healing, O my God, and remembrance of Thee is my remedy. Nearness to Thee is my hope and love for Thee my companion. Thy mercy to me is my healing (tabīb) and my succour in both this world and the world to come. Thou, verily, art the All-Bountiful, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.*"

The 'Healing Prayer' (pre-Shoghi Effendi trans.) and a few further lines are found in John Esslemont's *Bahā'u'llāh and the New Era* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd. 1923) chapter VII (see Appendix 6). The translation of the 'Healing Prayer' occurring in the latter half of the *Tablet of Medicine* is that of Shoghi Effendi, printed in *Prayers and Meditations* ([first printed in 1938] London: BPT 1957) No. 170 (p.200) -- also printed in numerous Bahā'ī Prayer Books and other compilations of Bahā'ī scripture.

X.

[1] *"Say: O Friends! Apprehensiveness and agitation pertaineth unto women. [2] And should the beloved of God reflect briefly upon the world and its manifest vicissitudes, the dominance of those who hath been tyrants will not frighten them. [3] Then shall they take their flight on the wings of yearning desire unto the One Who is at the centre of the Luminous Horizons (nayyir al-āfāq) [4] This servant hath wished for Himself that which He hath wished for all the servants of God. [5] The reason that wisdom (hikmat) and the protection of the friends hath been and shall be commanded is that those who remember Me should remain in the world and occupy themselves with the mention of the Lord of all the worlds. [6] Thus it is binding and necessary that all may protect themselves and their brethren for the sake of the Cause of God. [7] If the beloved of God had performed that which they were commanded, the majority of the people of the world at this time would have been adorned with the garment of faith. [8] Great is the blessedness of him who leadeth another soul to the Immortal Faith of God and guideth him to life everlasting. [9] This is an act of supreme importance in the presence of thy Lord, the Mighty, the Most Exalted.*

May the Spirit be upon thee! And may the Glory be upon thee also!

X:1ff At the beginning of this paragraph Bahā'u'llāh may be addressing the Bahā'ī friends (*dūstān*) of Yazd. He acknowledges that "Apprehensiveness (or 'fear', *khawf*) and agitation (or perturbation, upset, nervousness, etc., *idtirāb* = *verbal noun of VIII*) pertaineth unto women (or 'females', Ar. *niswān*). It is possible that this pertains to Yazdī Bahā'ī women at some stage during the early 1870's -- when the *Lawh-i tibb* was written. Perhaps, in other words, there is reference to the situation within the much persecuted Bahā'ī community of Yazd; a centre of Muslim anti-Bahā'ī persecutions and sporadic Bahā'ī martyrdoms (1891 CE).

X:1f need not be read as an overtly sexist statement but might pertain to a period of terrorization precipitated in Yazd by tyrannical and frightening authorities (see X:2f). Possible impending martyrdoms may be alluded to; a *Sitz im Leben* ("setting in life") that is, in which the Bahā'ī women were naturally afraid. Zealous Bahā'ī men may have sought martyrdom; leaving the Bahā'ī women understandably fearful and agitated. This agitation is lovingly acknowledged and understood by Bahā'u'llāh.

X:3 could be taken to refer to the life after death transition following martyrdom: "flight" unto the "One Who is the Luminous Horizons" of the next or spiritual World (?) (*nayyir al-āfāq* = Bahā'u'llāh). Most probably rooted in Qur'ān 41:53 -- "We shall show them Our signs in the *horizons (āfāq)* and in themselves, till it is clear to them that it is the truth" (trans. Arberry; cf. AA 1:154) -- *nayyir al-āfāq* is among the titles of Bahā'u'llāh listed towards the beginning of the *Lawh-i qam* [p.76]. Bahā'u'llāh himself wished for martyrdom; life in the worlds beyond. At one stage in his ministry he enjoined it upon others (e.g. *Hidden Words*, Arabic Nos. 45-47) as implied in X:4. Later, as here, he emphasised "wisdom" (*hikmat* cf. the Islāmic *taqiyya*) or prudence in the face of martyrdom, "thus it is necessary that all may protect themselves and their brethren for the sake of the [Bahā'ī] Cause (X:6). Those that live for their Faith and proclaim it with "wisdom" ("living martyrs") are blessed. Mass conversion results from living the Bahā'ī life. Such is one possible way of understanding X:6ff.

APPENDIX ONE: EARLY TRANSLATIONS OF PORTIONS OF THE 'TABLET TO A PHYSICIAN' [= TABLET OF MEDICINE]

Unapproved or provisional English translations of passages from the *Tablet of Medicine* have been around since the time of the ministry of 'Abdu'l-Bahā. Among the translations which may be noted are the following-:

□ From J.E.Esslemont, *Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era* Ch.VII 'Health and Healing'(1st Ed. 1923) pp. 98,99,103 [5th Ed. 1980/90 pp. 106, 108, 112].¹

"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." (106)

"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." (108)

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

"O physician! In treating the sick, first mention the name of Thy God, the Possessor of the Day of Judgment, and then use what God hath destined for the healing of His creatures. By My Life ! The physician who has drunk from the Wine of My Love, his visit is healing, and his breath is mercy and hope. Cling to him for the welfare of the constitution. He is confirmed by God in his treatment.

"This knowledge is the most important of all the sciences, for it is the greatest means from God, the Life-giver to the dust, for preserving the bodies of all people, and He has put it in the forefront of all sciences and wisdoms. For this is the day when you must arise for My Victory.

"Thy name is my healing, O my God, and remembrance of Thee is my remedy. Nearness to Thee is my hope, and love for Thee is my companion. Thy mercy to me is my healing and my succour in both this world and the world to come. Thou verily, art the All-Bountiful, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise." (112)

□ *Star of the West* (Vol. 13 No.9 [December 1922] Vol. 8 [of the reprint] George Ronald: Oxford 1978) p.252 -- the translator is not named.

Some rules for health, from a Tablet revealed by Baha'Ullah.

"O God ! The Supreme Knower ! The Ancient Tongue speaks that which will satisfy the wise in the absence of doctors.

O People, do not eat except when you are hungry. Do not drink after you have retired to sleep. Exercise is good when the stomach is empty; it strengthens the muscles. When the stomach is full it is very harmful. Do not neglect medical treatment when it is necessary, but leave it off when the body is in good condition.

Do not take nourishment except when (the process of) digestion is completed. Do not swallow until you have thoroughly masticated your food.

¹ The translations from this tablet printed in the first edition of BNE were slightly revised in later editions. It is the slightly revised passages from the 5th Ed.(1980 rep.1990) which are reproduced above.

Treat disease first of all through diet and, refrain from medicine. If you can find what you need for healing in a single herb do not use a compound medicine. Leave off medicine when the health is good, and use it in case of necessity.

If two diametrically opposite foods are put on the table do not mix them. Be content with one of them. Take first the liquid food before partaking of solid food. The taking of food before that which you have already eaten is digested is dangerous....

When you have eaten walk a little that the food may settle.

That which is difficult to masticate is forbidden by the wise. Thus the Supreme Pen commands you.

A light meal in the morning is as a light to the body.

Avoid all harmful habits: they cause unhappiness in the world.

Search for the causes of disease. This saying is the conclusion of this utterance."

Another and slightly different English translation -- not available to the present writers -- was published in the Australian Bahā'ī magazine, *Herald of the South* 2:4 (October-November 1927). See also letter of the Universal House of Justice, 8 June 1988, which appeared in the *Australian Bahá'í Bulletin* (September 1989) p.4. and in BSB 4:3-4 (April 1990), p.58.

In William Collins' *Bibliography of English Language Works on the Bábí and Bahá'í Faiths 1844-1985* (Oxford: George Ronald 1990, p.1) there is reference to another published partial (? single page) translation, Bahá'u'lláh's Letter to a Physician. Mokelumne Hill, Calif.: Health Research, n.d. [197-?].

APPENDIX TWO: REFERRING TO COMPETENT PHYSICIANS ²

The following are a number of passages from Bahā'ī sources which are directly or indirectly related to that verse of the *Kitāb-i Aqdas* in which Bahá'u'lláh advises that the sick refer (or be referred) to competent physicians.

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

² A proportion of these passages are collected in Zohoori, 1985.

"Whatever the competent physicians or surgeons prescribe for a patient should be accepted and complied with."
(Bahá'u'lláh, cited UHJ:1984, 1)

"..Therefore thou shouldst also accept physical remedies inasmuch as these two 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." (SWAB:151-2).

"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, SWAB: 156)

"... 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, cited UHJ:1970)

"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, cited UHJ:1970)

"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 SWAB:156)

".. He fully sympathizes with you in this great sorrow that has afflicted you. At 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 cited UHJ:1970, pp. 5-6).

"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."

"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 cited LG:939)

"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..."

(cited LG: 930 From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, June 8, 1948: [Ibid. p. 811 Bahá'í News, No. 237, p. 2, November 1950)

"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 cited LG:989)

"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..." (From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, July 17, 1937, cited LG:991)

"Whatever the skilled physicians prescribe is pleasing and acceptable." (From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, June 10, 1928, cited UNJ:1970, 5)

"You should always bear in mind Bahá'u'lláh's instruction to the effect that in case of any illness, no matter how slight, we should always seek the help and advice of the most competent physicians." (From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, April 17, 1937, cited *ibid*, 6)

".. follow the advice which Bahá'u'lláh has so repeatedly given in His Tablets namely, that in case of sickness we should invariably consult the most competent physicians, follow their instructions and leave the rest in God's hands." (From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, June 29, 1938, cited *ibid*., 7)

"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 cited UHJ:1970, 4)

"He was very sorry to hear that you have been so afflicted by disease; and he assures you that he will supplicate for your healing in the Holy Tomb.

"He also urges you to consult first-class doctors, and see if perhaps modern medicine has not found a remedy for this malady which is afflicting you so sorely.

"He urges you in spite of your disability to persevere in spreading the Message of Bahá'u'lláh, for this will attract to you the divine blessings."

(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, April 1, 1951, cited *ibid*., 8)

"He was very sorry indeed to hear of your serious affliction, but he feels very strongly that you should not despair of your condition but on the contrary put yourself in the hands of the best specialists you can find and combat this disease both spiritually and physically." (From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, January 6, 1945, *ibid*)

"As already urged by cable, he should continue the treatment. He should not be in a hurry but must comply with the instructions of a skillful physician and not go against what the doctor may prescribe or advise." (From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, January 20, 1938 *ibid*., 7)

"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 Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, June 18, 1939: *ibid*)

"He was very sorry to hear of the condition of your sister-in-law... He has already assured her that he will pray for her in the Holy Shrines, and advised her not to passively submit to her disease but to take the very best care of herself under the guidance of the best physicians available." (From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, January 17, 1945: *ibid*)

APPENDIX THREE : THE FOUR HUMOURS ¹

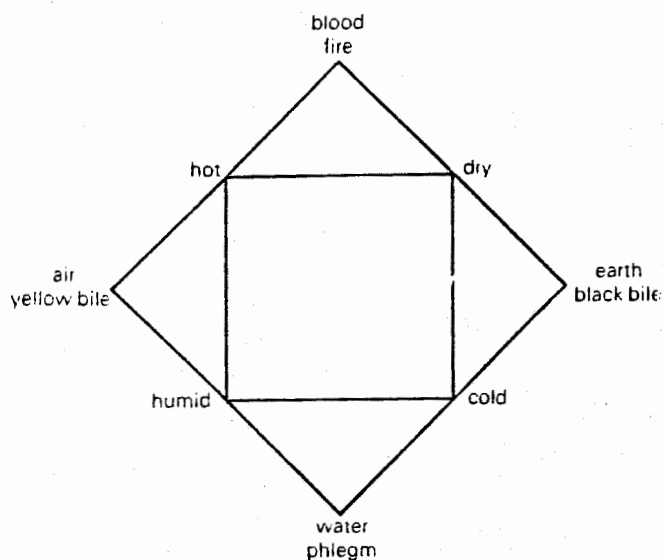


Figure 75a. The four natures and humours.

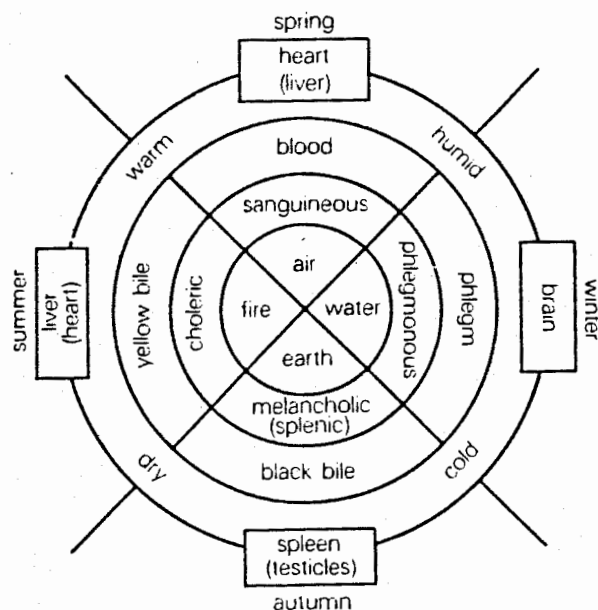


Figure 75b. The basic organs of the body in relation to the humours, qualities, natures and seasons according to the Jābirean corpus.

"The four humours, that is blood, phlegm, yellow bile and black bile are composed of the elements and natures according to the above diagram (Figure 75a). Each humour is related to two natures and two elements and possesses qualities which are at once the same and different from other humours. The humours form the foundation of animal activity and the body of all animals including man is comprised of them. They mix together to form the temperament of each individual. In fact each person possesses a unique temperament as do the organs of his body based upon the particular combination of the humours comprising his constitution. Moreover, the harmony of the humours tends in each case towards a particular type of imbalance; hence some tend to be phlegmatic, others melancholic, etc. Also, each temperament possesses its own heat in addition to the innate heat which everything possesses.

¹ An extract from Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islamic Science – An Illustrated Study* (World of Islam Festival Publishing Company Ltd 1976), pp.160-161.

But neither the humours nor their mixture is the cause of life. They are only the vehicle which make possible the manifestation of life. The Muslim physicians believe in the spirit (*rūh*)² which descends upon this mixture of the humours and which is the subtle body standing intermediate between the physical body comprised of the humours and the force of life which comes from the world above. It is worth drawing attention to the similarity between the words *rūh* and *rīh* (the wind or air) in Arabic and to the Galenic doctrine that through the air breathed by the organism the life-force enters the body. It is also of significance to note that in Arabic as in many other languages the words for breath (*nafas*) and soul (*nafs*) are related. Therein lies a profound cosmological principle which is also related to the invocation of the Name of God (*dhikr*) as the central technique of Sufism for spiritual realization.

The spirit or *rūh* in its medical sense is, according to Muslim physiologists, and following Galen, of three kinds:

1. The vital spirit which is hot and dry, has its centre in the left ventricle of the heart, preserves life, causes the body to grow, move and reproduce, and travels within the arteries.
2. The psychic spirit which is cold and wet, has its centre in the brain, causes sensation and movement and moves within the nerves.
3. The natural spirit which is hot and wet, has its centre in the liver, is concerned with the reception of food, growth and reproduction and travels within the veins.

Each of the spirits produces a series of faculties which carry out its functions. For example, each physical sense has its faculty, the heartbeat its faculty, etc.

In addition to these factors, there operate of course within man the three souls, namely the vegetable, animal and rational, all of which descend from the world above and each of which possesses its own faculties.³ The more refined the mixture of the humours the greater the perfection and the more complete and perfect the possibility of receiving the soul. Moreover, in each man, health means the harmony of the humours and illness the disruption of the balance of the constitution.⁴ Of course the harmony is never perfect in any person,⁵ but relative to his

² The medical use of the term *rūh* must not be confused with the metaphysical and theological use of this term as the spirit which stands above the soul and belongs to the purely angelic world.

³ This is the subject of the well-known 'faculty psychology' developed by so many Muslim philosophers and physicians such as Ibn Sinā.

⁴ Modern medicine cannot define the meaning of health in its own terms, whereas for traditional Greek and Islamic medicine the definition of both health and sickness is quite clear.

own constitution, health means the re-establishment of the balance of the humours. Diagnosis for such disorders as fever are in fact based on searching for the way in which the balance of the humours has been upset. But for diseases which show overt signs, the most notable sign or signs are made use of for diagnostic purposes and often the disease receives the name of the leading sign connected with it. Even in English to this day people speak of having a fit or a stroke.

APPENDIX FOUR: PHYSICAL & SPIRITUAL HEALING [See VII:1ff]

"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: PT [1972 ed.], 19)

"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 helped 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." ([TAB: III: 587] SWAB:151-152)

"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 the 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." (LG:927 From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, March 12, 1934: cited UHJ:1970, 9)

⁵ Many traditional sources believed that only the Prophet of Islam as the most perfect of God's creatures possessed a perfectly balanced temperament, both medically and psychologically.

"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, cited UHJ: 1984, 10)

"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. (From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, May 23, 1935, cited UHJ:1970, 8)

"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 on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer, June 18, 1939 cited UHJ:1970 , 7)

"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.,9)

"... 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: Daily Lessons Received at 'Akká, 1976 ed., p. 86 [LG:924])

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