

THE ESSENTIAL TEACHINGS OF THE TRUE RELIGION OF GOD *

The eternal Religion of God is made up of two parts, the one being the fundamental, the spiritual, the essential teachings and ordinances, and the other being the secondary, the material, the accidental instructions and laws. This dual character of the divine Word was explained by 'Abdu'l-Baha on a number of occasions, and recorded in Utterances:18; SAQ:55-57; PUP:97-98,106,168,338-39,364-66,393,445; SW VII:17, 173. This truth was also affirmed by Shoghi Effendi in a number of his letters, including in GTT:2,118,129. In Kitab-i-Iqan (pp. 152, 176, 177-178) Baha'u'llah establishes the twofold station of the Prophets of God, a Baha'i teaching which seems to be related to this theme. Separate studies are devoted to the a)essential and the b)secondary teachings and ordinances of the Religion of God, citing examples from the extant Scriptures associated with various of the Prophets of God. Yet another study examines the secondary teachings and laws of Baha'u'llah, those which are specific to this Age and Cycle, which pertain to the outward life of humankind at this time in its evolution. This study will focus upon the essential teachings revealed in the Writings of Baha'u'llah, and the elucidations thereof by 'Abdu'l-Baha and Shoghi Effendi.

The purpose of this study is not--God forbid!--to de-emphasize the importance of the original, the new, the unique teachings of Baha'u'llah. These have been and will continue to be studied with close interest by millions in the present and billions in the future. Rather, it is the aim of this course to facilitate the investigation of those teachings which are fundamental to all religions, which can serve to bring together the followers of those religions, through the common ground of agreement. When 'Abdu'l-Baha asserted that the foundation of all religions is one and the same, He was not expressing a hope or a dream, a reverie or a fantasy--He was stating a fact. The foundation which all religions have in common is made up of the eternal, the changeless, the essential teachings of the Prophets of God. Our purpose in studying the essential teachings of religion may be regarded as threefold: first, to deepen our own personal understanding of these perennial principles; second, to consciously and deliberately apply these principles to our own lives in all of their aspects; and third, to share these principles with our human associates, especially with the followers of all religions, for this is the foundation upon which the reconciliation of religions can be established.

Baha'u'llah affirms that the first station of the Prophets of God is that of "essential unity" (KI:99-100, 103-104, 152, 176):

"The door of the knowledge of the Ancient of Days being thus closed in the face of all beings, the Source of infinite grace, according to His saying: 'His grace hath transcended all things; My grace

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hath encompassed them all" hath caused those luminous Gems of Holiness to appear out of the realm of the spirit, in the noble form of the human temple, and be made manifest unto all men, that they may impart unto the world the mysteries of the unchangeable Being, and tell of the subtleties of His imperishable Essence. These sanctified Mirrors, these Daysprings of ancient glory are one and all the Exponents on earth of Him Who is the central Orb of the universe, its Essence and ultimate Purpose. From Him proceed their knowledge and power; from Him is derived their sovereignty. The beauty of their countenance is but a reflection of His image, and their revelation a sign of His deathless glory. They are the Treasuries of divine knowledge, and the Repositories of celestial wisdom. Through them is transmitted a grace that is infinite, and by them is revealed the light that can never fade. Even as He hath said: "There is no distinction whatsoever between Thee and Them; except that they are Thy servants, and are created of Thee." This is the significance of the tradition: "I am He, Himself, and He is I, myself." (*KI:99-100*)

"And of all men, the most accomplished, the most distinguished and most excellent are the Manifestations of the Sun of Truth. Nay, all else besides these Manifestations, live by the operation of their Will, and move and have their being through the outpourings of their grace. 'But for Thee, I would have not created the heavens.' Nay, all in their holy presence fade into utter nothingness, and are a thing forgotten. Human tongue can never befittingly sing their praise, and human speech can never unfold their mystery. These Tabernacles of holiness, these primal Mirrors which reflect the light of unfading glory, are but expressions of Him Who is the Invisible of the Invisibles. By the revelation of these gems of divine virtue all the names and attributes of God, such as knowledge and power, sovereignty and dominion, mercy and wisdom, glory, bounty and grace, are made manifest.

"These attributes of God are not and have never been vouchsafed specially unto certain Prophets, and withheld from others. Nay, all the Prophets of God, His well-favoured, His holy, and chosen Messengers, are, without exception, the bearers of His names, and the embodiments of His attributes...It hath therefore become manifest and evident that within the tabernacles of these Prophets and chosen Ones of God the light of His infinite names and exalted attributes hath been reflected, even though the light of some of these attributes may or may not be outwardly revealed from these luminous Temples to the eyes of men. That a certain attribute of God hath not been outwardly manifested by these Essences of Detachment doth in no wise imply that they Who are the Daysprings of God's attributes and the Treasuries of His holy names did not actually possess it. Therefore, these illuminated Souls, these beauteous Countenances have, each and every one of them, been endowed with all the attributes of God, such as sovereignty, dominion, and the like, even thou to outward seeming they be shorn of all earthly majesty. To every discerning eye this is evident and manifest; it requireth neither proof nor evidence." (*KI:103-104*)

"Furthermore, it is evident to thee that the Bearers of the trust of are manifest unto the peoples of the earth as the Exponents of a new Cause and the Bearers of a new Message. Inasmuch as these Birds of the Celestial Throne are all sent down from the heaven of the Will of God, and as they all arise to proclaim His irresistible Faith, they therefore are regarded as one soul and the same person. For they all drink from the one Cup of the love of God, and all partake of the fruit of the same Tree of Oneness. These Manifestations of God have each a twofold station. One is the station of pure abstraction and essential unity..." (KI:152)

Baha'u'llah expands upon this theme in considerable detail in Kitab-i-Iqan (pp. 152-177 passim.)

"We have already in the foregoing pages assigned two stations unto each of the Luminaries arising from the Daysprings of eternal holiness. One of these stations, the station of essential unity, We have already explained. 'No distinction do We make between any of them.' [Qur'an 2:136]" (KI:176)

"It is because of this difference in their station and mission that the words and utterances flowing from these Wellsprings of divine knowledge appear to diverge and differ. Otherwise, in the eyes of them that are initiated into the mysteries of divine wisdom, all their utterances are in reality but the expressions of one Truth. As most of the people have failed to appreciate those stations to which We have referred, they therefore feel perplexed and dismayed at the varying utterances pronounced by Manifestations that are essentially one and the same.

"It hath ever been evident that all these divergencies of utterance are attributable to differences of station. Thus, viewed from the standpoint of their oneness and sublime detachment, the attributes of Godhead, Divinity, Supreme Singleness, and Inmost Essence, have been and are applicable to those Essences of being, inasmuch as they all abide on the throne of divine Revelation, and are established upon the seat of divine Concealment. Through their appearance the Revelation of God is made manifest, and by their countenance the Beauty of God is revealed. Thus it is that the accents of God Himself have been heard uttered by these Manifestations of the divine Being." (KI:177-178)

"Were any of the all-embracing Manifestations of God to declare: 'I am God!' He verily speaketh the truth, and no doubt attacheth thereto. For it hath been repeatedly demonstrated that through their Revelation, their attributes and names, the Revelation of God, His name and His attributes, are made manifest in the world. Thus, He hath revealed: 'Those shafts were God's, not Thine!' [Qur'an 8:17] And also He saith: 'In truth, they who plighted fealty to thee, really plighted that fealty unto God.' [Qur'an 48:10] And were any of them to voice the utterance: 'I am the Messenger of God,' He also speaketh the truth, the indubitable truth. Even as He saith:

'Muhammad is not the father of any man among you, but He is the Messenger of God.' [Qur'an 33:40] Viewed in this light, they are all but Messengers of that ideal King, that unchangeable Essence. And were they all to proclaim: 'I am the Seal of the Prophets,' they verily utter but the truth, beyond the faintest shadow of doubt. For they are all but one person, one soul, one spirit, one being, one revelation. They are all the manifestation of the 'Beginning' and the 'End,' the 'First' and the 'Last,' the 'Seen' and Hidden'--all of which pertain to Him Who is the innermost Spirit of Spirits and the eternal Essence of Essences. And were they to say: 'We are the servants of God,' this also is a manifest and indisputable fact. For they have been made manifest in the uttermost state of servitude, a servitude the like of which no man can possibly attain. Thus in moments in which these Essences of being were deeply immersed beneath the oceans of ancient and everlasting holiness, or when they soared to the loftiest summits of divine mysteries, they claimed their utterance to be the Voice of divinity, the Call of God Himself. Were the eye of discernment to be opened, it would recognize that in this very state, they have considered themselves utterly effaced and non-existent in the face of Him Who is the All-Pervading, the Incorruptible. Methinks, they have regarded themselves as utter nothingness, and deemed their mention in that Court an act of blasphemy. For the slightest whisperings of self, within such a Court, is an evidence of self-assertion and independent existence. In the eyes of them that have attained unto that Court, such a suggestion is itself a grievous transgression. How much more grievous would it be, were aught else to be mentioned in that Presence, were man's heart, his tongue, his mind, or his soul, to be busied with anyone but the Well-Beloved, were his eyes to behold any countenance other than His beauty, were his ear to be inclined to any melody but His voice, and were his feet to tread any way but His way." (*KI:178-180*)

"By virtue of this station, they have claimed for themselves the Voice of Divinity and the like, whilst by virtue of their station of Messengership, they have declared themselves the Messengers of God. In every instance they have voiced an utterance that would conform to the requirements of the occasion, and have ascribed all these declarations to Themselves, declarations rang from the realm of divine Revelation to the realm of creation, and from the domain of Divinity even unto the domain of earthly existence. Thus it is that whatsoever be their utterance, whether it pertain to the realm of Divinity, Lordship, Prophethood, Messengership, Guardianship, Apostleship or Servitude, all is true, beyond the shadow of a doubt." (*KI:181*)

'Abdu'l-Bahá affirms the unity of the Prophets of God as well:

"All the Prophets and Messengers have come from One Holy Spirit and bear the Message of God, fitted to the age in which they appear. The One Light is in them and they are One with each other." (*"Abdu'l-Bahá in London," p. 24*)

Likewise, Shoghi Effendi reiterated this fundamental Bahá'í teaching:

"The Prophets 'regarded as one and the same person' include the lesser Prophets as well, and not merely those who bring a 'Book'. Their station is different, but They are Prophets and their nature is thus different from that of ours." (*Letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, included in "Directives from the Guardian," #100, p. 57*)

Baha'u'llah emphasizes the station of "essential unity" (KI:152, 176) in various other Tablets as well. It may be appropriate to relate this station to the essential teachings of the Prophets of God, inasmuch as these teachings are reaffirmed in every Dispensation. Baha'u'llah affirms the continuity of His Revelation with that of previous Prophets of God in Kitab-i-Aqdas:

"Take heed that ye do not vacillate in your determination to embrace the truth of this Cause--a Cause through which the potentialities of the might of God have been revealed, and His sovereignty established. With faces beaming with joy, hasten ye unto Him. This is the changeless Faith of God, eternal in past, eternal in the future. Let him that seeketh it, attain it; and as to him that hath refused to seek it--verily, God is Self-Sufficient, above any need of His creatures." (*K182*)

"Beware, O believers in the Unity of God, lest ye be tempted to make any distinction between any of the Manifestations of His Cause, or to discriminate against the signs that have accompanied and proclaimed their Revelation. This indeed is the true meaning of Divine Unity, if ye be of them that apprehend and believe this truth. Be ye assured, moreover, that the works and acts of each and every one of these Manifestations of God, nay whatever pertaineth unto them, and whatsoever they may manifest in the future, are all ordained by God, and are a reflection of His Will and Purpose. Whoso maketh the slightest possible difference between their persons, their words, their messages, their acts and manners, hath disbelieved in God, hath repudiated His signs, and betrayed the Cause of His Messengers." (*Madinat al-Tawhid, GL:XXIX:59-60*)

"The first station, which is related to His innermost reality, representeth Him as One Whose voice is the voice of God Himself. To this testifieth the tradition: 'Manifold and mysterious is My relationship with God. I am He, Himself, and He is I, Myself, except that I am that I am, and He is that He Is.' And in like manner, the words: 'Arise, O Muhammad, for lo, the Lover and the Beloved are joined together and made one in Thee.' He similarly saith: "There is no distinction whatsoever between Thee and Them, except that They are Thy Servants." (*GL:XXVII:66-67*)

"In thine esteemed letter thou hadst inquired which of the Prophets of God should be regarded as superior to others. Know thou assuredly that the essence of all the Prophets of God is one and the same. Their unity is absolute. God, the Creator, saith: "There is no distinction whatsoever among the Bearers of My Message. They all have but one purpose; their secret is the

same secret. To prefer one in honor to another, to exalt certain ones above the rest, is in no wise to be permitted. Every true Prophet hath regarded His Message as fundamentally the same as the Revelation of every other Prophet gone before Him. If any man, therefore, should fail to comprehend this truth, and should consequently indulge in vain and unseemly language, no one whose sight is keen and whose understanding is enlightened would ever allow such idle talk to cause him to waver in his belief." (*GL:XXXIV:78-79*)

He also seems to refer to the essential teachings of religion in the opening preamble to the Kalimat-i-Maknuneh (Hidden Words) in Arabic:

"This is that which hath descended from the realm of glory, uttered by the tongue of power and might, and revealed unto the Prophets of old. We have taken the inner essence thereof and clothed it in the garment of brevity, as a token of grace unto the righteous, that they may stand faithful unto the Covenant of God, may fulfill in their lives His trust and in the realm of spirit obtain the gem of Divine virtue." (*BWF:155*)

'Abdu'l-Baha elucidates upon this statement, in an address given on 3 May 1912:

"Baha'u'llah has revoiced and re-established the quintessence of the teachings of all the Prophets, setting aside the accessories and purifying religion from human interpretation. He has written a book entitled the Hidden Words. The preface announces that it contains the essence of the words of the Prophets of the past, clothed in the garment of brevity, for the teaching and spiritual guidance of the people of the world. Read it that you may understand the true foundations of religion and reflect upon the inspiration of the Messengers of God." (*PUP:86*)

'Abdu'l-Baha also refers to this theme in an address given on 2 December 1912:

"My purpose is to explain to you that it is your duty to guard the religion of God so that none shall be able to assail it outwardly or inwardly. If you find harmful teachings are being set forth by some individual, no matter who that individual be, even though he should be my own son, know, verily, that I am completely severed from him. If anyone speaks against the Covenant, even though he should be my son, know that I am opposed to him. Those who speak falsehoods, who covet worldly things and seek to accumulate the riches of this earth are not of me. But when you find a person living up to the teachings of Baha'u'llah, following the precepts of the Hidden Words, know that he belongs to Baha'u'llah; and verily, I proclaim that he is of me. If, on the other hand, you see anyone whose deeds and conduct are contrary to and not in conformity with the good pleasure of the Blessed Perfection and against the spirit of the Hidden Words, let that be your standard and criterion of judgment against him, for know that I am altogether severed from him no matter who he may be. This is the truth." (*PUP:457*)

Baha'u'llah reiterates this teaching in this verse from "Kitab-i-Aqdas" (K182):

"This is the changeless Faith of God, eternal in the past, eternal in the future."

Shoghi Effendi affirms this teaching in some of his letters, including "The Faith of Baha'u'llah," "The Promised Day is Come," and "The Dispensation of Baha'u'llah," cited here from the anthology entitled "Guidance for Today and Tomorrow" (London, 1953; 1973 reprint):

"The fundamental principle enunciated by Baha'u'llah, the followers of His Faith firmly believe, is that religious truth is not absolute but relative...that all the great religions of the world are divine in origin, that their basic principles are in complete harmony, that their teachings are but facets of one truth, that their functions are complementary, that they differ only in the non-essential aspects of their doctrines..." (GTT:2)

"...Baha'u'llah inculcates the principle of the relativity of religious truth, the continuity of Divine Revelation...His aim is to widen the basis of all revealed religions and to unravel the mysteries of their scriptures. He insists on the unqualified recognition of the unity of their purpose, restates the eternal verities they enshrine, coordinates their functions, distinguishes the essential and the authentic from the non-essential and spurious in their teachings, separates the God-given truths from the priest-prompted superstitions.." (GTT:118)

"Nor does the Baha'i Revelation, claiming as it does to be the culmination of a prophetic cycle and the fulfillment of the promise of all ages, attempt, under any circumstances, to invalidate those first and everlasting principles that animate and underlie the religions that have preceded it...Its teachings do not deviate a hair-breadth from the verities they enshrine, nor does the weight of its message detract one jot or one tittle from the influence they exert or the loyalty they inspire. Far from aiming at the overthrow of the spiritual foundation of the world's religious systems, its avowed, its unalterable purpose is to widen their basis, to restate their fundamentals, to reconcile their aims, to reinvigorate their life, to demonstrate their oneness, to restore the pristine purity of their teachings, to coordinate their functions, and to assist in the realization of their highest aspirations." (GTT:129)

In many of His talks, 'Abdu'l-Baha indicates that it is the essential teachings which are the foundation of the Religion of God, and that the foundation is one:

"All the existing nations had a divine foundation of truth or reality originally, which was intended to be conducive to the unity and accord of mankind..." (*Abdu'l-Baha, Khitabat, pp. 336-342; PUP:39*)

"The foundations of the divine religions are one. If we investigate these foundations, we discover much ground for agreement...That is to say, the fundamentals are conducive to unity, but imitations are the cause of disunion and dismemberment." (*Abdu'l-Baha, Khitabat, pp. 336-342; PUP:41*)

"The different religions have one truth underlying them; therefore, their reality is one." (*PUP:106*)

"The fundamentals of the religion of God are, therefore, one in reality." (*Abdu'l-Baha, Khitabat, pp. 363-374; PUP:118*)

"Religions are many, but the reality of religion is one. The days are many, but the sun is one. The fountains are many, but the fountainhead is one. The branches are many, but the tree is one. The foundation of the divine religions is reality; were there no reality, there would be no religions. Abraham heralded reality. Moses promulgated reality. Christ established reality. Muhammad was the Messenger of reality. The Bab was the door of reality. Baha'u'llah was the splendor of reality. Reality is one; it does not admit multiplicity or division. Reality is as the sun, which shines forth from different dawning points; it is as the light, which has illumined many lanterns." (*PUP:126*)

"If we investigate the religions to discover the principles underlying their foundations, we will find they agree; for the fundamental reality of them is one and not multiple. By this means the religionists of the world will reach their point of unity and reconciliation." (*PUP:152*)

"He established harmony and agreement among the various peoples of religious beliefs, sects, denominations, and cults by freeing them from the fetters of past imitations and superstitions, leading them to the very foundation of the divine religions...there is no doubt that if the world of the Occident should abandon dogmas of the past, turn away from empty imitations and superstitions, investigate the reality of the divine religions, holding fast to the example of Jesus Christ, acting in accordance with the teachings of God and becoming unified with the Orient, an eternal happiness and felicity would be attained." (*PUP:165*)

"The religions of God have the same foundation, but the dogmas appearing later have differed

...As regards the inculcation of morality and the development of human virtues, there is no difference whatsoever between the teachings of Zoroaster, Jesus and Baha'u'llah...But the essential foundations of the teachings of Moses, Zoroaster, Jesus, and Baha'u'llah is identical, is one; there is no difference whatsoever." (*PUP:168,169*)

"Man must leave imitation and seek reality. The contemporaneous religious beliefs differ because of their allegiance to dogma. It is necessary, therefore, to abandon imitations and seek their fundamental reality." (*PUP:169*)

"Baha'u'llah promulgated the fundamental oneness of religion. He taught that reality is one and not multiple, that it underlies all divine precepts and that the foundations of the religions are, therefore, the same. Certain forms and imitations have gradually arisen. As these vary, they cause differences among religionists. If we set aside these imitations and seek the fundamental reality underlying our beliefs, we reach a basis of agreement because it is one and not multiple." (*Abdu'l-Baha, Khitabat, pp. 432-441; PUP:175*)

"For inasmuch as the teachings of the Prophets are reality, their foundations are one." (*Abdu'l-Baha, Khitabat, pp. 464-472; PUP:222*)

"We are considering the divine plan for the reconciliation of the religious systems of the world. Baha'u'llah has said that if one intelligent member be selected from each of the varying religious systems, and these representatives come together seeking to investigate the reality [haqiqat] of religion [din], they would establish an interreligious body before which all disputes and differences of belief could be presented for consideration and settlement. Such questions could then be weighed and viewed from the standpoint of reality [haqiqat] and all imitations [taqlid] be discarded. By this method and procedure all sects, denominations and systems would become one.

"Do not question the practicability of this, and be not astonished. It has been accomplished and effected in Persia. In that country the various religionists have conjoined in investigating reality [haqiqat] and have united in complete fellowship and love. No traces of discord or differences remain among them; now affection and unity are manifest instead. They live together in harmony and accord like a single family. Antagonism and strife have passed away; love and agreement have taken the place of hatred and animosity. Furthermore, those souls who have followed Baha'u'llah and attained this condition of fellowship and affiliation are Muslims, Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians, Buddhists, Nestorians, Sunnites, Shiites and others. No discord exists among them. This is a proof of the possibility of unification among the religionists of the world through practical means. Imitations [taqlid] and prejudices which have held men apart have been discarded, and the reality [haqiqat] of religion [din] envelops them in a perfect unity. When

reality [haqiqat] envelops the soul of man, love is possible. The divine purpose in religion is pure love and agreement. The Prophets of God manifested complete love for all. Each One announced the glad tidings of His successor, and each subsequent One confirmed the teachings and prophecies of the Prophet Who preceded Him. There was no disagreement or variance in the reality [haqiqat] of Their teaching and mission. Discord has arisen among Their followers, who have lost sight of reality [haqiqat] and hold fast to imitations [taqlid]. If imitations [taqlid] be done away with and the radiant shining reality [haqiqat] dawn in the souls of men, love and unity must prevail." (*PUP:233-234*)

"Reality is one; it does not admit plurality. We conclude, therefore, that the foundation of the religions of God is one foundation." (*Abdu'l-Baha, Khitabat, pp. 527-535; PUP:297*)

"According to the teachings of Baha'u'llah all religious, racial, patriotic and political prejudice must be abandoned, for these are the destroyers of the real foundation of humanity. He has announced that the religion of God [din allah] is one, for all revelations of it are based upon reality [haqiqat]. Abraham summoned the people to reality [haqiqat]; Moses proclaimed reality [haqiqat]; Christ founded reality [haqiqat]. Likewise, all the Prophets were the servants and promulgators of reality [haqiqat]. Reality [haqiqat] is one and indivisible. Therefore, the prejudices and bigotries which exist today are not justifiable, inasmuch as they are opposed to reality." (*PUP:299*)

"From time immemorial the divine teachings have been successively revealed, and the bounties of the Holy Spirit have ever been emanating. All the teachings are one reality, for reality is single and does not admit multiplicity. Therefore, the divine Prophets are one, inasmuch as They reveal the one reality, the Word of God. Abraham announced teachings founded upon reality, Moses proclaimed reality, Christ established reality and Baha'u'llah was the Messenger and Herald of reality." (*PUP:313-314*)

"Briefly, the foundation of the divine religions is one eternal foundation, but the laws for temporary conditions and exigencies are subject to change....the religionists of the world must lay aside these imitations and investigate the essential foundation or reality itself, which is not subject to change or transformation. This is the divine means of agreement and unification." (*PUP:339*)

"Blessed souls--whether Moses, Jesus, Zoroaster, Krishna, Buddha, Confucius or Muhammad--were the cause of the illumination of the world of humanity...We have investigated reality and found that these Holy Souls were all sent of God. All of them have sacrificed life, endured ordeals and tribulations in order that They might educate us. How can such love be forgotten? The light

of Christ is evident. The candle of Buddha is shining. The star of Moses is sparkling. The flame ignited by Zoroaster is still burning. How can we deny Them?" (*Abdu'l-Baha, Khitabat, p. 346; PUP:346*)

"He announced that the fundamental basis of all religions is one. He proclaimed that if the reality underlying religious teaching be investigated all religions would be unified, and the purpose of God, which is love and the blending of human hearts, would be accomplished." (*Abdu'l-Baha, Khitabat, p. 579; PUP:354*)

"Therefore, Baha'u'llah appeared from the horizon of the Orient and reestablished the essential foundation of the religious teachings of the world." (*PUP:379*)

"In reality, the foundations of the divine religions are one and the same...Abraham was the founder of reality. Moses, Christ, Muhammad were the manifestors of reality. Baha'u'llah was the glory of reality. This is not simply an assertion; it will be proved." (*PUP:403*)

"At the same time the basic foundation of the religion of God, which was ever the principle of love, unity and the fellowship of humanity, has been forsaken and cast aside...There has been no investigation of the essential underlying basis of reality...the fundamental reality..." (*PUP:443*)

"The foundation of the religion of God is one. The same basis which was laid by Christ, and later on was forgotten, has been renewed by His Holiness Baha'u'llah." (*Abdu'l-Baha, Khitabat, pp. 737-747; "Abdu'l-Baha on Divine Philosophy," chapter V*)

The first category of divine ordinances, those which are essential, spiritual, fundamental, are defined in the talks and Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Baha:

"...spiritual teachings...The spiritual teachings will never be abolished in any cycle, as they are the eternal law." (*Utterances, p. 18*)

"...the fundamental basis which comprises all spiritual things, that is to say, it refers to the spiritual virtues and divine qualities; this does not change nor alter: it is the Holy of Holies which is the essence of the Law of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Christ, Muhammad, the Bab, and Baha'u'llah, and which lasts and is established in all the prophetic cycles. It will never be abrogated, for it is spiritual and not material truth..." (*SAQ:XI:55*)

"These divine qualities, these eternal commandments, will never be abolished; nay, they will last and will be established for ever and ever. These virtues of humanity will be renewed in each of

the different cycles; for at the end of every cycle the spiritual Law of God, that is to say the human virtues, disappears, and only the form subsists...

"These foundations of the Religion of God, which are spiritual and which are the virtues of humanity, cannot be abrogated; they are irremovable and eternal, and are renewed in the cycle of every Prophet." (*SAQ:XI:56*)

"...one the essential or fundamental...The first aspect of the revealed religion of God is that which concerns the ethical development and spiritual progress of mankind...These ordinances are changeless, essential, eternal." (*PUP:97*)

"The first is those which concern spiritual susceptibilities, the development of moral principles and the quickening of the conscience of man. These are essential or fundamental, one and the same in all religions, changeless and eternal--reality not subject to transformation..." (*PUP:106*)

"The first is essential. It concerns morality and development of the virtues of the human world. This aspect is common to all. It is fundamental; it is one; there is no difference, no variation in it. As regards the inculcation of morality and the development of human virtues, there is no difference whatsoever between the teachings of Zoroaster, Jesus and Baha'u'llah. In this they agree; they are one." (*PUP:168*)

"But the essential foundation of the teachings of Moses, Zoroaster, Jesus and Baha'u'llah is identical, is one; there is no difference whatsoever." (*PUP:169*)

"The essential ordinances rest upon the firm, unchanging, eternal foundations of the Word itself...the foundation of the divine religions is one foundation...which is not subject to change or transformation. This is the divine means of agreement and unification." (*PUP:338-339*)

"One concerns the world of morality and the ethical training of human nature...This is the ideal and spiritual teaching, the essential quality of divine religion, and not subject to change or transformation. Therefore, the religions are essentially one and the same...They are ideal and necessarily permanent--expressions of one foundation and not amenable to change or transformation. Therefore, the fundamental basis of the revealed religion of God is immutable, unchanging throughout the centuries, not subject to the varying conditions of the human world." (*PUP:364,366*)

"One division concerns the world of morality and ethical institutions. These are the essential ordinances...These constitute one kind of divine law which is common to all and never subject

to change. From the dawn of the Adamic cycle to the present day this fundamental law of God has continued changeless. This is the foundation of divine religion." (*PUP:393*)

"First, there are those which constitute essential, or spiritual, teachings of the Word of God...This is the fundamental aspect of the religion of God, and this is of the highest importance...This is the essential foundation of all the divine religions, the reality itself, common to all. Abraham promulgated this; Moses proclaimed it. Christ and all the Prophets upheld this standard and aspect of divine religion." (*PUP:403,403-404*)

"The first are spiritual and essential in nature...those fundamental realities which have to do with the life of the human world, the eternal life...the one fundamental reality underlying the laws revealed by Moses and Christ..." (*PUP:445*)

"The first part is essential, and belongs to the world of morality. It is the exposition of significances and realities...This is one in all the religions, unchangeable and immutable...All the sayings of Christ deal with the knowledge of God, with the oneness of the world of humanity, the moral relations between the hearts and spiritual susceptibilities. His Holiness Baha'u'llah created these merciful sentiments in the most complete form and deposited them in the hearts of men. This is in keeping with the teachings of Christ, because it is the reality, and the reality does not change. Is it possible to say that divine unity is divisible, or the knowledge of God, the oneness of the world of humanity, universal love, and the solidarity of the human race - are they ever subject to transformation? No, I declare by God, they are immutable, for they are the reality." (*Abdu'l-Baha, Khitabat, pp. 737-747; "Abdu'l-Baha on Divine Philosophy," Chapter V*)

"There are two general and principal classes of divine teachings. One is spiritual, and pertains to the moralities. This is the fundamental basis of the divine law, unchangeable and unalterable, which has been reiterated and renewed in the cycle of every prophet. Its commands refer to justice, truthfulness, compassion, faith, love of God, self devotion, self sacrifice, steadfastness, including all divine and merciful attributes. This is the unchanging and unmoving law of God.

"The second class of divine teachings is material and deals with behaviour, such as divorce, the commandments, the way of worshipping. All these conditions have changed in the cycle of every prophet. The character of divine sovereignty has no change or transformation, but the organization and administration change continually. This is why Jesus Christ said: "I came not to destroy the law, but to fulfill it." [Gospel of Matthew, 5:17] At the same time there are conditions that are changeable." (*Abdu'l-Baha, article published in The International Psychic Gazette, July 1914; excerpted in SW VII:17, p. 173.*)

Shoghi Effendi affirms this teaching in some of his letters, including "The Faith of Baha'u'llah," "The Promised Day is Come," and "The Dispensation of Baha'u'llah," cited here from the anthology entitled "Guidance for Today and Tomorrow" (London, 1953; 1973 reprint):

"The fundamental principle enunciated by Baha'u'llah, the followers of His Faith firmly believe, is that religious truth is not absolute but relative...that all the great religions of the world are divine in origin, that their basic principles are in complete harmony, that their teachings are but facets of one truth, that their functions are complementary, that they differ only in the non-essential aspects of their doctrines..." (GTT:2)

"...Baha'u'llah inculcates the principle of the relativity of religious truth, the continuity of Divine Revelation...His aim is to widen the basis of all revealed religions and to unravel the mysteries of their scriptures. He insists on the unqualified recognition of the unity of their purpose, restates the eternal verities they enshrine, coordinates their functions, distinguishes the essential and the authentic from the non-essential and spurious in their teachings, separates the God-given truths from the priest-prompted superstitions..." (GTT:118)

"Nor does the Baha'i Revelation, claiming as it does to be the culmination of a prophetic cycle and the fulfillment of the promise of all ages, attempt, under any circumstances, to invalidate those first and everlasting principles that animate and underlie the religions that have preceded it...Its teachings do not deviate a hair-breadth from the verities they enshrine, nor does the weight of its message detract one jot or one tittle from the influence they exert or the loyalty they inspire. Far from aiming at the overthrow of the spiritual foundation of the world's religious systems, its avowed, its unalterable purpose is to widen their basis, to restate their fundamentals, to reconcile their aims, to reinvigorate their life, to demonstrate their oneness, to restore the pristine purity of their teachings, to coordinate their functions, and to assist in the realization of their highest aspirations." (GTT:129)

We will now attempt to compile a short list of those eternal principles as found in in the above-cited sources:

"Spiritual teachings pertain to MORALITY and CHARACTER which are the breezes of the Holy Spirit, the life of the soul. The spiritual teachings will never be abolished in any cycle, as they are the eternal law. One of the commandments is the LOVE OF GOD, and is the virtue that crowns the heads of the believers. This is the original and principal teaching that Jesus Christ spread in the world...the spiritual teachings of Jesus Christ were spread throughout the whole world." (Utterances, p. 18)

"it is the Holy of Holies which is the essence of the Law of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Christ, Muhammad, the Bab, and Baha'u'llah, and which lasts and is established in all the prophetic cycles. It will never be abrogated, for it is spiritual and not material truth; it is FAITH, KNOWLEDGE, CERTITUDE, JUSTICE, PIETY, RIGHTEOUSNESS, TRUSTWORTHINESS, LOVE OF GOD, INWARD PEACE, PURITY, DETACHMENT, HUMILITY, MEEKNESS, PATIENCE, ,and CONSTANCY. It SHOWS MERCY TO THE POOR, DEFENDS THE OPPRESSED, GIVES TO THE WRETCHED, and UPLIFTS THE FALLEN." (SAQ:XI:55-56)

"The first aspect of the revealed religion of God is that which concerns the ETHICAL DEVELOPMENT and SPIRITUAL PROGRESS of MANKIND, the AWAKENING OF POTENTIAL HUMAN SUSCEPTIBILITIES and the DESCENT OF DIVINE BESTOWALS." (PUP:97-98)

"The first is those which concern SPIRITUAL SUSCEPTIBILITIES, the DEVELOPMENT OF MORAL PRINCIPLES and the QUICKENING OF THE CONSCIENCE OF MAN." (PUP:106)

"They will ascertain the truth that the purpose of religion is the ACQUISITION OF PRAISEWORTHY VIRTUES, the BETTERMENT OF MORALS, the SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT OF MANKIND, the real life and DIVINE BESTOWALS. All the Prophets have been the promoters of these principles...They have united people in the LOVE OF GOD, invited them to the religions of the UNITY OF MANKIND and exhorted them to AMITY and AGREEMENT." (PUP:152)

"From this foundation shines forth the radiance of spirituality, which is UNITY, the LOVE OF GOD, the KNOWLEDGE OF GOD, PRAISEWORTHY MORALS and the VIRTUES OF THE HUMAN WORLD." (PUP:165)

"It concerns MORALITY and DEVELOPMENT OF THE VIRTUES OF THE HUMAN WORLD...the INCULCATION OF MORALITY and the DEVELOPMENT OF HUMAN VIRTUES..." (PUP:168)

"They concern SPIRITUALITIES, seek to STABILIZE MORALS, AWAKEN INTUITIVE SUSCEPTIBILITIES, REVEAL THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD and INCULCATE THE LOVE OF ALL MANKIND...the FUNDAMENTAL REALITIES OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD and THE HOLY MANIFESTATIONS, the PURIFICATION OF MORALS, the AWAKENING OF SPIRITUAL SUSCEPTIBILITIES...The purpose of all the divine religions is the ESTABLISHMENT OF THE BONDS OF LOVE AND FELLOWSHIP AMONG MEN, and the heavenly phenomena of the Word of God are intended to be a SOURCE OF KNOWLEDGE and ILLUMINATION TO HUMANITY." (PUP:338-339)

"One concerns the world of MORALITY and the ETHICAL TRAINING of human nature. It is directed to the advancement of the world of humanity in general; it reveals and inculcates the KNOWLEDGE OF GOD and makes possible the DISCOVERY OF THE VERITIES OF LIFE...The essential ordinances established by a Manifestation of God are spiritual: they concern MORALITIES, the ETHICAL DEVELOPMENT OF MAN and FAITH IN GOD." (PUP:364-365,366)

"One division concerns the world of MORALITY and ETHICAL INSTITUTIONS...They instill and AWAKEN THE KNOWLEDGE and LOVE OF GOD, LOVE FOR HUMANITY, the VIRTUES OF THE WORLD OF MANKIND, the ATTRIBUTES OF THE DIVINE KINGDOM, REBIRTH and RESURRECTION from the kingdom of nature." (PUP:393)

"These are FAITH IN GOD, the acquirement of the VIRTUES WHICH CHARACTERIZE PERFECT MANHOOD, PRAISEWORTHY MORALITIES, the acquisition of the BESTOWALS and BOUNTIES emanating from the divine effulgences--in brief, the ordinances which concern the realm of MORALS and ETHICS...KNOWLEDGE OF GOD is the fundamental requirement of man. Man must COMPREHEND THE ONENESS OF DIVINITY. He must come to KNOW AND ACKNOWLEDGE THE PRECEPTS GOD and REALIZE FOR A CERTAINTY THAT THE ETHICAL DEVELOPMENT OF HUMANITY IS DEPENDENT UPON RELIGION. He must GET RID OF ALL DEFECTS and seek the ATTAINMENT OF HEAVENLY VIRTUES in order that he may prove to be the image and likeness of God." (PUP:403)

"The first are spiritual and essential in nature--such as FAITH IN GOD, FAITH IN CHRIST, FAITH IN MOSES, FAITH IN ABRAHAM, FAITH IN MUHAMMAD, THE LOVE OF GOD and the ONENESS OF THE WORLD OF HUMANITY...such as the LOVE OF GOD, FAITH IN GOD, PHILANTHROPY, KNOWLEDGE, SPIRITUAL PERCEPTION, DIVINE GUIDANCE..." (PUP:445)

"It is the expression of the LOVE OF GOD, the KNOWLEDGE OF GOD... the KNOWLEDGE OF GOD, with the ONENESS OF THE WORLD OF HUMANITY, the MORAL RELATIONS between the hearts and SPIRITUAL SUSCEPTIBILITIES...DIVINE UNITY...the KNOWLEDGE OF GOD, the ONENESS OF THE WORLD OF HUMANITY, UNIVERSAL LOVE, and the SOLIDARITY OF THE HUMAN RACE..." (*Abdu'l-Baha, Khitabat, pp. 737-646; "Abdu'l-Baha on Divine Philosophy," Chapter V*)

A summary list of "the essential teachings of religion" cited above would include the following principles (conveniently numbered so that they may be compared with the many principles which Baha'u'llah Himself has articulated in His Writings, a survey of which follows):

(31)character (Utterances:18)

- (7)certitude (SAQ:XI:55-56)
- (12)constancy (Ibid.)
- (81)defending the oppressed (Ibid.)
- (17)detachment (Ibid.)
- (22)faith
- (23)fellowship
- (4)(84)giving to the wretched (SAQ:XI:55-56)
- (39)humility (Ibid.)
- (1)(6)inward peace (Ibid.)
- (44)justice
- (46)knowledge
- (47)knowledge of God
- (50)love of God
- (51)love of all humanity
- (52)meekness (SAQ:XI:55-56)
- (53)merciful to the poor (Ibid.)
- (56)patience (Ibid.)
- (8)philanthropy (PUP:445)
- (57)piety (SAQ:XI:55-56)
- (63)purity (Ibid.)
- (69)righteousness (Ibid.)
- (79)spiritual perception
- (77)trustworthiness (SAQ:XI:55-56)
- (34)uplifting the fallen (Ibid.)
- (83)virtue, morality, ethics

If we now turn to the Writings of Baha'u'llah, we will find that all of the teachings included here by 'Abdu'l-Baha are discussed in detail, and most of them in multiple sources. In "Lazh-i-Ibn-i-Dhi'b" (Epistle to the Son of the Wolf), written towards the conclusion of His earthly life, Baha'u'llah quoted passages from a number of His previous Tablets and Books. Hence, this work (ESW) represents a compendium of His teachings, including many passages which refer to the subjects cited above. We will begin with this book, inasmuch as it represents the most complete collection of the Blessed Perfection's essential teachings, including the following topics (the enumeration of these principles reflects the alphabetical listing of those teachings in all of the sources consulted):

- (1)abandon treasures of the earth to those whose affections are set upon them (56,124)
- (2)acquiescence (SEE: GLEANINGS)
- (3)admonisher to the rich (93)

- (4) answerer to cry of the needy (93)
- (5) balm to the suffering (93)
- (6) calm (74)
- (7) certitude (162)
- (8) charity (SEE: TABLETS OF BAHA'U'LLAH; GL)
- (9) chastity (124)
- (10) cleansed and sanctified from animosity and hatred (26,94)
- (11) conceal sins of others that God may conceal your sin (55)
- (12) constancy (SEE: TB; GL)
- (13) consume not the substance of others wrongfully (25,54)
- (14) contention and conflict forbidden (24,55,56,135)
- (15) contentment (74)
- (16) courtesy (50)
- (17) detachment (74)
- (18) do not treat poor disdainfully (55)
- (19) equity (13,28,76)
- (20) eyes to the blind (93)
- (21) fairness (74,76,93)
- (22) faith (116,162)
- (23) faithfulness (93)
- (24) fear of God (23,26,27,28,29,74,135,136)
- (25) fellowship (14,15)
- (26) fidelity (93)
- (27) follow not every accursed prattler (25)
- (28) forbearance (26,74,75)
- (29) forbidden to commit disorders in the land (54)
- (30) friendliness (93)
- (31) generous in prosperity (93)
- (32) goodly character (24,26,27,29,135,136)
- (33) guarded in speech (93)
- (34) guiding light unto feet of the erring (93)
- (35) haven for the distressed (93)
- (36) holy deeds (SEE: TB)
- (37) home for stranger (93)
- (38) honesty (23)
- (39) honor (SEE: GL)
- (40) humility (30,93)
- (41) independent investigation of truth (SEE: TB)

- (42)integrity (93
- (43)joy to sorrowful (93
- (44)justice (13,28,30,54,75,76,93
- (45)kindliness (26
- (46)knowledge (26,93
- (47)knowledge of God (3,27,37,48,71,80,83,98,107,111,119, 129,131,140,141,150,175
- (48)lamp to those who walk in darkness (93
- (49)lay fast on what will profit you and humanity (24,29,30
- (50)love of God (SEE: TB; GL)
- (51)love of humanity (26
- (52)meekness to all men (93
- (53)mercy (29
- (54)moderation (SEE: TB; GL)
- (55)obedience (SEE: GL)
- (56)patience (24,74
- (57)piety (23,29,135
- (58)praiseworthy deeds (24,26,27,29,74,76,135,136
- (59)preserver of the sanctity of thy pledge (93
- (60)protected from heat of jealousy (94
- (61)prudence (SEE: TB)
- (62)purge your hearts from love of the world (54,74
- (63)purity (23
- (64)radiance (SEE: TB)
- (65)reliance on God (76
- (66)renunciation (74
- (67)resignation (75,76
- (68)revile not (24,54
- (69)righteousness (93
- (70)serenity (75
- (71)shedding of blood forbidden (25,54
- (72)steadfastness (SEE: TB; GL)
- (73)submissiveness (SEE: GL)
- (74)thankful in adversity (93
- (75)tolerance (SEE: TB)
- (76)tower of strength for the fugitive (93
- (77)trustworthiness (29,54,93,135,136
- (78)truthfulness (93
- (79)understanding (76

- (80)unity and concord (76)
- (81)upholder and defender of the victim of oppression (93)
- (82)uprightness (93)
- (83)virtue (93)
- (84)vision (35)
- (85)wisdom (24,55,93)
- (86)withhold not from poor things given you (55,93)

A second list of essential teachings has been compiled from a collection of the "Tablets of Baha'u'llah revealed after the "Kitab-i-Aqdas" (TB), including the "Lawh-i-Karmil," "Lawh-i-Aqdas," Bisharat," "Tarazat," "Tajalliyat," "Kalimat-i-Firdawsiyyih," "Lawh-i-Dunya," "Ishraqat," "Lawh-i-Hikmat," "Asl-i-Kullu'l-Khayr," "Lawh-i-Maqsud," "Suriy-i-Vafa," "Lawh-i-Siyyid-i-Mihdiy-i-Dahaji," "Lawh-i-Burhan," "Kitab-i-'Ahd," and "Lawh-i-Ard-i-Ba":

- (1)abandon material things (78,232,266)
- (2)acquiescence (SEE: GLEANINGS)
- (3)admonisher to the rich (SEE: ESW; GL)
- (4)answerer to the cry of the needy (SEE: ESW; GL)
- (5)balm to the suffering (SEE: ESW; GL)
- (6)calm (SEE: ESW)
- (7)certitude (42)
- (8)charity (71,94,156)
- (9)chastity (SEE: ESW; GL)
- (10)cleansed and sanctified from animosity and hatred (SEE: ESW)
- (11)conceal sins of others that God may conceal your sin (SEE: ESW)
- (12)constancy (51,76,80,88,239,247)
- (13)consume not the substance of others wrongfully (SEE: ESW)
- (14)contention and conflict forbidden (221)
- (15)contentment (SEE: ESW)
- (16)courtesy (88)
- (17)detachment (57,58,59,59,74,116,155,182,253,255)
- (18)do not treat poor disdainfully (SEE: ESW)
- (19)equity (39,42,43,57,78,84,93,125,170)
- (20)eyes to the blind (SEE: ESW; GL)
- (21)fairness (36,62,85,130,134,170)
- (22)faith (SEE: GL)
- (23)faithfulness (36)
- (24)fear of God (63,93,120,121,126,155,196,219,222,245)

- (25)fellowship (22,35-36,44,67,87,90,91,162,168
- (26)fidelity (181,200
- (27)follow not every accursed prattler (SEE: ESW)
- (28)forbearance (SEE: ESW)
- (29)forbidden to commit disorders in the land (SEE: ESW)
- (30)friendliness (87
- (31)generosity (138,177
- (32)goodly character (36,57,68,86,88,120,126,222,256,257
- (33)guarded in speech (40,57,85
- (34)guiding light unto feet of the erring (SEE: ESW; GL)
- (35)haven for the distressed (SEE: ESW; GL)
- (36)holy deeds (86
- (37)home for the stranger (SEE: ESW; GL)
- (38)honesty (57,78
- (39)honor (SEE: GL)
- (40)humility (64
- (41)independent investigation of truth (37,130,157,188,211,236
- (42)integrity (SEE: ESW)
- (43)joy (36,71,79,139,246
- (44)justice(27,36-37,39,43,57,62,64,65,67,78,84,120,124, 128-129,130,132,134,137,139,157, 164-165,166,170,215-216
- (45)kindliness (36,90
- (46)knowledge (39,67,68,78,96,144-152,212,256
- (47)knowledge of God (50,150,268
- (48)lamp to those who walk in darkness (SEE: ESW; GL)
- (49)lay fast on what will profit you and humanity (SEE: ESW)
- (50)love of God (172,176
- (51)love of mankind (138
- (52)meekness to all men (SEE: ESW; GL)
- (53)mercy (36,78,85,134,139
- (54)moderation (69,169,172,198-199
- (55)obedience (SEE: GL)
- (56)patience (119,138,177
- (57)piety (37,78,120,253
- (58)praiseworthy deeds (57,68,86,88,120,126,
- (59)preserver of the sanctity of thy pledge (SEE: ESW; GL)
- (60)protected from the heat of jealousy (SEE: ESW)
- (61)prudence (85

- (62)purge your hearts from the love of the world (SEE: ESW)
- (63)pure deeds (86)
- (64)radiance (36)
- (65)reliance on God (SEE: ESW)
- (66)renunciation (SEE: ESW)
- (67)resignation (SEE: ESW; GL)
- (68)revile not (SEE: ESW)
- (69)righteousness (36,57,59,86,170,220)
- (70)serenity (SEE: ESW)
- (71)shedding of blood forbidden (SEE: ESW)
- (72)steadfastness (16,51,91,117,123,132,191,200,220,262,268)
- (73)submissiveness (SEE: GL)
- (74)thankful in adversity (SEE: ESW)
- (75)tolerance (36,170)
- (76)tower of strength for the fugitive (SEE: ESW; GL)
- (77)trustworthiness (36-37,120,121-122)
- (78)truthfulness (40,220)
- (79)understanding (35,41,57,106,132,155-156,166,170)
- (80)unity and love (220)
- (81)upholder and defender of the victim of oppression (SEE: ESW; GL)
- (82)uprightness (36,37,57,88)
- (83)virtue (57,120)
- (84)vision (35,131,138,147,258)
- (85)wisdom (66,68,256)
- (86)withhold not from poor things given you (SEE: ESW)

Working in inverse order of revelation, the next compendium of Writings of Baha'u'llah to be surveyed was "Gleanings," (GL) which contains excerpts from the following Tablets, among others: "Kitab-i-Iqan," "Kitab-i-Aqdas," "Lawh-i-Maqsud," "Kalimat-i-Maknuneh Farsi," "Lawh-i-Karmil," "Ridvan al-'Adl," "Lawh-i-Ridvan," "Madinat al-Tawhid," "Lawh-i-Tawhid," "Surat al-'Abad," "Lawh-i-Rida," "Surat al-Dam," "Lawh-i-Dunya," "Lawh-i-Ashraf," "Lawh-i-Nasir," "Lawh-i-Ard-Ta," "Lawh-i-Haj," "Lawh al-Sahab," "Surat al-Muluk," "Lawh al-Amr," "Lawh-i-Hadi," "Lawh-i-'Abdu'l-Razaq," "Tafsir Surat wa'l-Shamas," "Lawh-i-Tafsir Bayt Sa'adi," "Lawh-i-'Ali," "Lawh-i-Manekji," "Lawh-i-Melek Paris," "Lawh-i-Ittihad," "Lawh-i-Thabyah," "Lawh-i-Malkah," "Surat al-Bayan," "Lawh-i-Shaykh," "Lawh-i-Sayam," "Lawh-i-Salman," "Lawh-i-Ahmad Farsi," and "Lawh-i-Shaykh Fana". The list compiled from these varied texts, excluding those which have already been cited ("Lawh-i-Shaykh" is ESW, and some of these Tablets are found translated in full in TB), is much shorter, but contains some principles not articulated in the older works:

- (1)abandon the treasures of the earth to those whose affections are set upon them (118)
- (2)acquiescence (133,290,299)
- (3)admonisher to the rich (285)
- (4)answerer to the cry of the needy (285)
- (5)balm to the suffering (285)
- (6)calm (SEE: ESW; TB)
- (7)certitude (267-270)
- (8)charity (278,285)
- (9)chastity (117,118)
- (10)cleansed and sanctified from animosity and hatred (SEE: ESW)
- (11)conceal sins of others that God may conceal your sin (SEE: ESW)
- (12)constancy (SEE: ESW; TB)
- (13)consume not the substance of others wrongfully (SEE: ESW)
- (14)contention and conflict forbidden (9,277,279,296,304)
- (15)contentment (SEE: ESW)
- (16)courtesy (305)
- (17)detachment (34,40,84,100,118,139,149,157,161, 180, 202, 205, 241, 242, 257,264,272, 275,276,294,304,306,314, 316,319,325,326,334,339)
- (18)do not treat poor disdainfully (SEE: ESW)
- (19)equity (92,203,204,236)
- (20)eyes to the blind (285)
- (21)fairness (SEE: ESW; TB)
- (22)faith (141,170,171,180,205,217,293,338)
- (23)faithfulness (91,161,333)
- (24)fear of God (38,98,104,126,128,272,275,277,291,314,323,346)
- (25)fellowship (7,95,184,196,260,288,289,315,316,333-334)
- (26)fidelity (SEE: ESW; TB)
- (27)follow not every accursed prattler (SEE: ESW)
- (28)forbearance (SEE: ESW)
- (29)forbidden to commit disorders in the land (SEE: ESW)
- (30)friendliness (SEE: ESW; TB)
- (31)generosity (278,285,297)
- (32)goodly character (7,8,13,87,100,118,242,264,268,271,272,279,285,287, 289,290,296,297,298,299,304, 305,307,315,323,338)
- (33)guarded in speech (176)
- (34)guiding light unto feet of the erring (285)
- (35)haven for the distressed (285)

- (36)holy deeds (SEE: TB)
- (37)home for stranger (285)
- (38)honesty (297-299)
- (39)honor (202,235,305,306)
- (40)humility (7,8,9)
- (41)independent investigation of truth (SEE: TB)
- (42)integrity (SEE: ESW)
- (43)joy to sorrowful (285)
- (44)justice (81,92,98,124,128,175,204,218,219,222,230, 232-237, 242, 247, 250, 251,254,278,285,305,306,342)
- (45)kindliness (8,33,279,289,299,315,334)
- (46)knowledge (285)
- (47)knowledge of God (5,84,85,177,199,204,264,291)
- (48)lamp to those who walk in darkness (285)
- (49)lay fast on what will profit you and humanity (SEE: ESW)
- (50)love of God (261,288,304,325)
- (51)love of humanity (7,95,250,260,288,316,334)
- (52)meekness to all men (285)
- (53)mercy (SEE: ESW; TB)
- (54)moderation (216,235,251,342,343)
- (55)obedience (5,87,123,129,240,289,290,307,330-333,336,337)
- (56)patience (8,129,202,239,265,290,296)
- (57)piety (SEE: ESW; TB)
- (58)praiseworthy deeds (7,94,240,243,271,272,275,277,278,287, 296,305,307,315,316,343)
- (59)preserver of the sanctity of thy pledge (285)
- (60)protected from the heat of jealousy (SEE: ESW)
- (61)prudence (SEE: TB)
- (62)purge your hearts from love of the world (SEE: ESW)
- (63)purity (SEE: ESW; TB)
- (64)radiance (SEE: TB)
- (65)reliance on God (SEE: ESW)
- (66)renunciation (SEE: ESW)
- (67)resignation (129,322)
- (68)revile not (SEE: ESW)
- (69)righteousness (287,306,315,323)
- (70)serenity (SEE: ESW)
- (71)shedding of blood forbidden (SEE: ESW)
- (72)steadfastness(13,75,76,129,167,170,202,245,246,253,289,290,291,312,319,323,325,330,

- 338,339
 (73)submissiveness (7,8,9,322
 (74)thankful in adversity (285
 (75)tolerance (SEE: TB)
 (76)tower of strength for the fugitive (285
 (77)trustworthiness (232,233,266,278,285,290,299
 (78)truthfulness (232,271,290,297,299,305
 (79)understanding (132,194
 (80)unity and concord (6,9,11,95,96,140,196,203,215,217,218,249,254,288,315,334,338
 (81)upholder and defender of the victim of oppression (285
 (82)uprightness (SEE: ESW; TB)
 (83)virtue (SEE: ESW; TB)
 (84)vision (164,194,195,340
 (85)wisdom (176
 (86)withhold not from poor things given you (202,236,253,278,285,314

A list of lists is a good beginning, but now, in order for us to determine what these "essential teachings" are, we must organize them into categories. The following is an attempt to discover the categories implied in the quotations cited above:

1)MORAL EDUCATION:

- "spiritual teachings" which "pertain to morality and character" (Utterances:18);
 "ethical development and spiritual progress of mankind" (PUP:97-98);
 "development of moral principles and the quickening of the conscience of man" (PUP:106);
 "morality and development of the virtues of the human world...inculcation of morality and the development of human virtues" (PUP:168);
 "seek to stabilize morals" (PUP:338);
 "purification of morals" (PUP:339);
 "the world of morality and the ethical training of human nature" (PUP:364);
 "moralities, the ethical development of man" (PUP:366);
 "the world of morality and ethical institutions" (PUP:393);
 "the virtues of the world of mankind" (PUP:393);
 "the acquirement of the virtues which characterize perfect manhood, praiseworthy moralities...seek the attainment of heavenly virtues" (PUP:403)
 "essence of the Law" (SAQ:XI:55);
 "eternal commandments" (SAQ:XI:57);

"essential ordinances" (PUP:365);

"the ordinances which concern the realm of morals and ethics" (PUP:403)

"moral relations between the hearts" (ABDP:V)

Among the moral qualities cited above we find multiple references to spiritual love; but we have allotted love a category to itself, inasmuch as it is so funda-mental to human life, physical and spiritual, individual and collective. The following are some of the references to the "love of God" and the "love of humanity" which were located: (50)love of God, (51)love of all humanity.

2)SPIRITUAL LOVE:

"love of God" (Utterances, p. 18; SAQ:XI:55-56; PUP:393; 445; ABDP:V)

"love of all mankind" (PUP:338)

"establishment of the bonds of love and fellowship among men" (PUP:339);

"love for humanity" (PUP:393)

"universal love" (ABDP:V)

"solidarity of the human race" (ABDP:V)

3)SPIRITUAL AWAKENING:

"awakening of potential human susceptibilities" (PUP:97-98);

"spiritual susceptibilities" (PUP:106);

"awaken intuitive susceptibilities" (PUP:338)

"awaken spiritual susceptibilities" (PUP:339);

"spiritual perception" (PUP:445)

"rebirth and resurrection from the kingdom of nature" (PUP:393)

"spiritual susceptibilities" (ABDP:V)

4)FAITH:

"faith" (SAQ:XI:55-56)

"faith in God" (PUP:366; 403; 445)

"faith in Christ, faith in Moses, faith in Abraham, faith in Muhammad" (PUP:445)

"faith in...the oneness of the world of humanity" (PUP:445)

5)PROGRESS OF MANKIND:

"the advancement of the world of humanity in general" (PUP:364-365)

6)DESCENT OF THE HOLY SPIRIT:

- "descent of the breezes of the Holy Spirit" (Utterances, p. 18);
- "the descent of divine bestowals" (PUP:97-98);
- "the attributes of the divine Kingdom" (PUP:393);
- "the acquisition of the bestowals and bounties emanating from the divine effulgences" (PUP:403);
- "divine guidance" (PUP:445)

7)KNOWLEDGE:

- "makes possible the discovery of the verities of life" (PUP:364-65)
- "knowledge" (SAQ:XI:55-56; PUP:445)
- "the knowledge of God" (PUP:338; 364; 393; 403; ABDP:V)
- "the fundamental realities of the knowledge of God and the holy Manifestations" (PUP:339)

It may be found that one or more of the teachings listed above is, in fact, secondary and non-essential rather than primary and essential. It will be removed from the list. Also, other essential teachings will certainly be discovered and added to this list. Sources have been cited for these essential teachings in the Writings of Baha'u'llah. Other sources will be found in the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha. Inasmuch as this is "the changeless Faith of God" articulated by all of the Prophets of God, there are sources for these eternal principles in the Scriptures of many living religions, including Hinduism, Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam.

The purpose in providing these quotations and lists is to empower the student to look up the passages pertaining to these essential teachings for himself and to facilitate comparison of the relevant texts. Often subject-centered compilations are rather short-handed in their citation of texts, so that the reader may be left wondering what a particular passage meant in context, and if it was really related to the other passages in the collection in overall meaning as well as in its employment of similar or even identical vocabulary. The same vocabulary may have different shades of meaning, depending on its usage by an author. Furthermore, our task is complicated through our study of these passages in translation and without reference to the original words. Nevertheless, a careful study of parallel texts can certainly yield an enrichment of personal understanding, and this is the purpose of our immersion "in the ocean" of God's Word, that we may "unravel its secrets, and discover all the pearls of wisdom that lie hid in its depths." (KA:#182)

Note (2018): This document was completed in 2005 and revised in 2007, by Peter Terry.