

THE ESSENTIAL TEACHINGS OF THE RELIGION OF GOD

The essential teachings of the Religion of God are referred to in a number of passages of the Baha'i writings and utterances, many of which will be cited in this document. Separate studies are devoted to a)the two kinds of teachings of the Religion of God; b)the secondary teachings of that Religion; c)the human teachings that have been added to and in many cases have eclipsed the original divine teachings of that Religion; d)the various historical scriptural references to the two kinds of teachings of that Religion; e)the correlation of the station of unity of the Manifestation and the Covenant of God with the essential teachings of religion; and f)the comparison of divine philosophy with essential teachings. In addition to these topics, another document will identify 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.

Baha'u'llah affirms the existence of the essential and perennial teachings of Religion in the opening preamble to the Hidden Words of Baha'u'llah, revealed in 1858, 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. (Arabic Hidden Words)

Baha'u'llah's appointed interpreter, called "mubayyin" in Arabic, meaning "one who clarifies", was His eldest son, Who asked that He be known as 'Abdu'l-Baha, the "servant of Baha'u'llah". 'Abdu'l-Baha elucidates upon the Hidden Words in an address given on 5 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, 5 May 1912)

'Abdu'l-Baha also refers to this book 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, 2 December 1912)

There are 71 individual "Hidden Words" in Arabic and 82 in Persian. Each of these gems is one of the essential teachings of the Manifestations of God.

Baha'u'llah also wrote about the essential teachings of the Religion of God in His most important doctrinal work, Kitab-i-Iqan, revealed in 1862:

In another sense, by the terms "sun," "moon," and "stars" are meant such laws and teachings as have been established and proclaimed in every Dispensation, such as the laws of prayer and fasting. (*Baha'u'llah, Kitab-i-Iqan, paragraph 38*)

The traditions established the fact that in all Dispensations the law of prayer hath constituted a fundamental element of the Revelation of all the Prophets of God... (*Baha'u'llah, Kitab-i-Iqan, paragraph 39*)

Likewise, we find verses that identify essential teachings of religion in the Kitab-i-Aqdas, revealed in 1873:

Recite ye the verses of God every morn and eventide. Whoso faileth to recite them hath not been faithful to the Covenant of God and His Testament, and whoso turneth away from these holy verses in this Day is of those who throughout eternity have turned away from God. (*Baha'u'llah, Kitab-i-Aqdas, paragraph 149*)

This is the changeless Faith of God, eternal in the past, eternal in the future. Let him that seeketh, attain it; and as to him that hath refused to seek it—verily, God is Self-Sufficient, above any need of His creatures. (*Baha'u'llah, Kitab-i-Aqdas, paragraph 182*)

He is God, exalted be He, the Lord of majesty and power! The Prophets and Chosen Ones have all been commissioned by the One True God, magnified be His glory, to nurture the trees of human existence with the living waters of uprightness and understanding, that there may appear from them that which God hath deposited within their inmost selves. As may be readily observed, each tree yieldeth a certain fruit, and a barren tree is but fit for fire. The purpose of these Educators, in all they said and taught, was to preserve man's exalted station. Well is it with him who in the Day of God hath laid fast hold upon His precepts and hath not deviated from His true and fundamental Law. **The fruits that best befit the tree of human life are trustworthiness and godliness, truthfulness and sincerity; but greater than all, after**

recognition of the unity of God, praised and glorified be He, is regard for the rights that are due to one's parents. This teaching hath been mentioned in all the Books of God, and reaffirmed by the Most Exalted Pen. Consider that which the Merciful Lord hath revealed in the Qur'án, exalted are His words: "Worship ye God, join with Him no peer or likeness; and show forth kindness and charity towards your parents..." Observe how loving-kindness to one's parents hath been linked to recognition of the one true God! Happy they who are endued with true wisdom and understanding, who see and perceive, who read and understand, and who observe that which God hath revealed in the Holy Books of old, and in this incomparable and wondrous Tablet. (*Baha'u'llah, Kitab-i-Aqdas, Questions and Answers, #106*)

In the years 1904-1906, Laura Clifford Barney, a prominent American Baha'i, visited 'Abdu'l-Baha in the Holy Land. She asked Him many questions, carefully transcribed His answers, and, after submitting these notes for His correction, published the collection, simultaneously in Persian and in English translation, under the title Some Answered Questions, henceforth SAQ. In one of those talks, 'Abdu'l-Baha, a commentary on the eleventh chapter of the Book of Revelation, elaborates upon this subject:

The religion of God consists of two parts: One is the very foundation and belongs to the spiritual realm; that is, it pertains to spiritual virtues and divine qualities. This part suffers neither change nor alteration: It is the Holy of Holies, which constitutes the essence of the religion of Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Christ, Muḥammad, the Báb, and Bahá'u'lláh, and which will endure throughout all the prophetic Dispensations. It will never be abrogated, for it consists in spiritual rather than material truth. It is faith, knowledge, certitude, justice, piety, high-mindedness, trustworthiness, love of God, and charity. It is mercy to the poor, assistance to the oppressed, generosity to the needy, and upliftment of the fallen. It is purity, detachment, humility, forbearance, patience, and constancy. These are divine qualities. These commandments will never be abrogated, but will remain in force and effect for all eternity. These human virtues are renewed in every Dispensation; for at the close of each Dispensation the spiritual law of God, which consists in the human virtues, vanishes in substance and persists only in form. (*SAQ, chapter XI, paragraph 7*)

Those foundations of the religion of God, however, which are spiritual and consist in human virtues, are never subject to abrogation but are eternal and everlasting, and are renewed in every prophetic Dispensation. (*SAQ, chapter XI, paragraph 9*)

Briefly, what is meant by the term "Holy of Holies" is that spiritual law which can never be changed or abrogated... (*SAQ, chapter XI, paragraph 11*)

"And the temple of God was opened in heaven." (Revelation 11:19) This means that the divine Jerusalem has appeared and the Holy of Holies has become manifest. **Among the people of true knowledge, the Holy of Holies refers to the essence of the religion of God and His true**

teachings, which have remained unchanged throughout all the prophetic Dispensations, as was explained previously... (SAQ, chapter XI, paragraph 42)

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, chapter XI, paragraph 9)

One of the essential teachings of the Religion of God is identified in another chapter of this collection of talks:

The Prophets, however, hold that there are the world of God, the world of the Kingdom, and the world of creation: three things. The first emanation is the outpouring grace of the Kingdom, which has emanated from God and has appeared in the realities of all things, even as the rays emanating from the sun are reflected in all things. And that grace—the rays—appears in infinite forms in the realities of all things, and is specified and individuated according to their capacity, receptivity, and essence. (SAQ, chapter LXXXII, paragraph 17)

‘Abdu’l-Baha gave a number of other talks which referred to the essential teachings of the Religion of God, which were not corrected and published in the original Persian, but only in English translations. They are not as word for word accurate as the talk cited above. Nevertheless, they reiterate the same principles. ‘Abdu’l-Baha also often indicated that the cause of unity among those of different religious heritages is for them to emphasize the essential and perennial teachings, not those which differ from Prophet to Prophet, from Dispensation to Dispensation.

The earliest of these talks that was translated into English and published is dated 24 November 1901, in which ‘Abdu’l-Baha explained to two pilgrims to the Holy Land:

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... (Utterances of Abdul Beha Abbas to two young men, American pilgrims to Acre, 1901; New York: The Board of Counsel, 1902, p. 18–19)

‘Abdu’l-Baha spoke of this theme in Paris in 1911:

The spiritual part never changes. All the Manifestations of God and His Prophets have taught the same truths and given the same spiritual law. They all teach the one code of morality. There is no division in the truth. The Sun has sent forth many rays to illumine human

intelligence, the light is always the same. (*Abdu'l-Baha, Paris Talks, 12 November 1911, Paris, France*)

'Abdu'l-Baha spoke several times about this theme during His travels around Canada and the United States, which are cited here:

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. These ordinances are changeless, essential, eternal...The essential ordinances of religion were the same during the time of Abraham, the day of Moses and the cycle of Jesus, but the accidental or material laws were abrogated and superseded according to the exigency and requirement of each succeeding age. (*PUP:97-98; 5 May 1912*)

Each of the divine religions embodies two kinds of ordinances. 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. Abraham heralded this reality, Moses promulgated it, and Jesus Christ established it in the world of mankind. All the divine Prophets and Messengers were the instruments and channels of this same eternal, essential truth...

In brief, every one of the divine religions contains essential ordinances, which are not subject to change...But the people of the world have forsaken the divine teachings and followed forms and imitations of the truth. Inasmuch as these human interpretations and superstitions differ, dissensions and bigotry have arisen, and strife and warfare have prevailed. By investigating the truth or foundation of reality underlying their own and other beliefs, all would be united and agreed, for this reality is one; it is not multiple and not divisible. (*PUP:106; 7 May 1912*)

Each of the divine religions has two aspects. 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...the essential foundation of the teachings of Moses, Zoroaster, Jesus and Baha'u'llah is identical, is one; there is no difference whatsoever... (*PUP:168,169; 2 June 1912*)

Each one of the divine religions has established two kinds of ordinances: the essential and the accidental. The essential ordinances rest upon the firm, unchanging, eternal foundations of the Word itself. They concern spiritualities, seek to stabilize morals, awaken intuitive susceptibilities, reveal the knowledge of God and inculcate the love of all mankind. The accidental laws concern the administration of outer human actions and relations, establishing rules and regulations requisite for the world of bodies and their control. These

are ever subject to change and supersedure according to the exigencies of time, place and condition...the fundamental realities of the knowledge of God and the holy Manifestations, the purification of morals, the awakening of spiritual susceptibilities--eternal principles in which there is no change or transformation. Briefly, the foundation of the divine religions is one eternal foundation...Therefore, the religionists of the world must...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:338-339; 25 September 1912*)

But when we speak of religion, we mean the essential foundation or reality of religion...allegiance to the essential foundation of the divine religions is ever the cause of development and progress... (*Khitabat:610-621/PUP:363; 12 October 1912*)

Furthermore, we wish to establish the point that the foundations of the religions of God are one foundation. This foundation is not multiple, for it is reality itself. Reality does not admit of multiplicity, although each of the divine religions is separable into two divisions. 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. This is ideal and spiritual teaching, the essential quality of divine religion, and not subject to change or transformation. It is the one foundation of all the religions of God. Therefore, the religions are essentially one and the same...

The essential ordinances established by a Manifestation of God are spiritual; they concern moralities, the ethical development of man and faith in God. They are ideal and necessarily permanent--expressions of the 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. (*Khitabat:610-621/PUP:364-365, 365-366; 12 October 1912*)

If we investigate the foundations of the divine religions, we find them to be one, absolutely changeless and never subject to transformation. For example, each of the divine religions contains two kinds of laws or ordinances. One division concerns the world of morality and ethical institutions. These are the essential ordinances. 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. 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:393-394; 6 November 1912*)

The divine religions embody two kinds of ordinances. First, there are those which constitute essential, or spiritual, teachings of the Word of God. 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. This is the fundamental aspect of the religion of God, and this is of the highest importance because knowledge of God is the fundamental requirement of man...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...

It has been shown conclusively, that the foundation of the religion of God remains permanent and unchanging. It is that fixed foundation which ensures the progress and stability of the body politic and the illumination of humanity. It has ever been the cause of love and justice amongst men. It works for the true fellowship and unification of all mankind, for it never changes and is not subject to supersedure. (PUP:403, 404,404-405; 8 November 1912)

The teachings and ordinances of the divine religions are of two kinds. 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. These divine principles shall be spread throughout the world. Strife and enmity shall disappear, ignorance, hatred and hostility cease and all the human race be bound together. The second kind of ordinances and teachings concern the outer conditions and transactions of the world of mankind. They are the nonessential, accidental or temporary laws of human affairs which are subject to change and transformation according to the exigencies of time and place...

But the followers of the divine religions have turned away from the principles and ordinances which are essential and unchanging in the Word of God, forsaking those fundamental realities which have to do with the life of the human world, the eternal life--such as the love of God, faith in God, philanthropy, knowledge, spiritual perception, divine guidance--holding these to be contingent and nonessential while wrangling and disagreeing over such questions as whether divorce is lawful or unlawful, or whether this or that observance of a minor law is orthodox and true. The Jews consider divorce lawful; the Catholic Christians deem it unlawful; the outcome is discord and hostility between them. If they would investigate the one fundamental reality underlying the laws revealed by Moses and Christ, this condition of hatred and misunderstanding would be dispelled and divine unity prevail...Investigation of the one fundamental reality and allegiance to the essential unchanging principles of the Word of God can alone establish unity and love in human hearts. (PUP:445, 446; 18 November 1912)

'Abdu'l-Baha continued to refer to this theme in 1913, in Europe and in Egypt, including this talk:

Each divine revelation is divided into two parts. The first part is essential, and belongs to the world of morality. It is the exposition of significances and realities. It is the expression of the love of God, the knowledge of God. This is one in all the religions, unchangeable and immutable. (Abdu'l-Baha, *Khitabat*, pp. 737-747; "Abdu'l-Baha on Divine Philosophy," chapter V)

'Abdu'l-Baha's teachings on this theme were published in a journal in 1914:

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 unmovable law of God.** (*Abdu'l-Baha, article published in The International Psychic Gazette, July 1914; excerpted in SW VII:17, p. 173.*)

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 this 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, but the light of that reality gradually became obscured. (*Abdu'l-Baha, Khitabat, pp. 336-342; PUP:39; 21 April 1912*)

The foundations of the divine religions are one. If we investigate these foundations, we discover much ground for agreement, but if we consider the imitations of forms and ancestral beliefs, we find points of disagreement and division; for these imitations differ, while the sources and foundations are one and the same. That is to say, the fundamentals are conducive to unity, but imitations are the cause of disunion and dismemberment. Whosoever is lacking in love for humanity or manifests hatred and bigotry toward any part of it violates the foundation and source of his own belief and is holding to forms and imitations. Jesus Christ declares that the sun rises upon the evil and the good, and the rain descends upon the just and the unjust—upon all humanity alike. Christ was a divine mercy which shone upon all mankind, the medium for the descent of the bounty of God, and the bounty of God is transcendent, unrestricted, universal. (*Abdu'l-Baha, Khitabat, pp. 336-342; PUP:41; 21 April 1912*)

The different religions have one truth underlying them; therefore, their reality is one. (*PUP:106; 7 May 1912*)

Religion is reality, and reality is one. The fundamentals of the religion of God are, therefore, one in reality. There is neither difference nor change in the fundamentals...If the religions of the world would forsake these causes of difficulty and seek the fundamentals, all would agree, and strife and dissension would pass away; for religion and reality are one and not multiple. (*Abdu'l-Baha, Khitabat, pp. 363-374; PUP:118; 12 May 1912*)

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.

Muḥammad was the Messenger of reality. The Báb was the door of reality. Bahá'u'lláh 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.

Therefore, if the religions investigate reality and seek the essential truth of their own foundations, they will agree and no difference will be found...If the clouds disperse, the Sun of Reality shines upon all, and no difference of vision will exist. The religions will then agree, for fundamentally they are the same. The subject is one, but predicates are many. (PUP:126; 19 May 1912)

Likewise, the divine religions of the holy Manifestations of God are in reality one, though in name and nomenclature they differ. Man must be a lover of the light, no matter from what dayspring it may appear. He must be a lover of the rose, no matter in what soil it may be growing. He must be a seeker of the truth, no matter from what source it come. Attachment to the lantern is not loving the light. Attachment to the earth is not befitting, but enjoyment of the rose which develops from the soil is worthy. Devotion to the tree is profitless, but partaking of the fruit is beneficial. Luscious fruits, no matter upon what tree they grow or where they may be found, must be enjoyed. The word of truth, no matter which tongue utters it, must be sanctioned. Absolute verities, no matter in what book they be recorded, must be accepted. If we harbor prejudice, it will be the cause of deprivation and ignorance. The strife between religions, nations and races arises from misunderstanding. 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. 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; none of Them has been the promoter of corruption, vice or evil. They have summoned mankind to all good. 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. For example, we mention Abraham and Moses. By this mention we do not mean the limitation implied in the mere names but intend the virtues which these names embody. When we say Abraham, we mean thereby a manifestation of divine guidance, a center of human virtues, a source of heavenly bestowals to mankind, a dawning point of divine inspiration and perfections. These perfections and graces are not limited to names and boundaries. When we find these virtues, qualities and attributes in any personality, we recognize the same reality shining from within and bow in acknowledgment of the Abrahamic perfections. Similarly, we acknowledge and adore the beauty of Moses. Some souls were lovers of the name Abraham, loving the lantern instead of the light, and when they saw this same light shining from another lantern, they were so attached to the former lantern that they did not recognize its later appearance and illumination. Therefore, those who were attached and held tenaciously to the name Abraham were deprived when the Abrahamic virtues reappeared in Moses. Similarly, the Jews were believers in Moses, awaiting the coming of the Messiah. The virtues and perfections of Moses became apparent in Jesus Christ most effulgently, but the Jews held to the name

Moses, not adoring the virtues and perfections manifest in Him. Had they been adoring these virtues and seeking these perfections, they would assuredly have believed in Jesus Christ when the same virtues and perfections shone in Him. If we are lovers of the light, we adore it in whatever lamp it may become manifest, but if we love the lamp itself and the light is transferred to another lamp, we will neither accept nor sanction it. Therefore, we must follow and adore the virtues revealed in the Messengers of God—whether in Abraham, Moses, Jesus or other Prophets—but we must not adhere to and adore the lamp. We must recognize the sun, no matter from what dawning point it may shine forth, be it Mosaic, Abrahamic or any personal point of orientation whatever, for we are lovers of sunlight and not of orientation. We are lovers of illumination and not of lamps and candles. We are seekers for water, no matter from what rock it may gush forth. We are in need of fruit in whatsoever orchard it may be ripened. We long for rain; it matters not which cloud pours it down. We must not be fettered. If we renounce these fetters, we shall agree, for all are seekers of reality. The counterfeit or imitation of true religion has adulterated human belief, and the foundations have been lost sight of. The variance of these imitations has produced enmity and strife, war and bloodshed. Now the glorious and brilliant twentieth century has dawned, and the divine bounty is radiating universally. The Sun of Truth is shining forth in intense enkindlement. This is, verily, the century when these imitations must be forsaken, superstitions abandoned and God alone worshiped. We must look at the reality of the Prophets and Their teachings in order that we may agree. (*PUP:152; 28 May 1912*)

He established harmony and agreement among the various peoples of religious beliefs, denominations, sects and cults by freeing them from the fetters of past imitations and superstitions, leading them to the very foundation of the divine religions. 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; 2 June 1912*)

The religions of God have the same foundation...Each of the divine religions has two aspects. 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 Bahá'u'lláh. In this they agree; they are one. (*PUP:168,169; 2 June 1912*)

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; 2 June 1912*)

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; 9 June 1912)

For inasmuch as the teachings of the Prophets are reality, Their foundations are one. The enmity and strife of nations, therefore, are due to religious imitations and not to the reality which underlies the teachings of the Prophets. (Abdu'l-Baha, *Khitabat*, pp. 464-472; PUP:222; 5 July 1912)

The Prophets of God have been the servants of reality; Their teachings constitute the science of reality. Reality is one; it does not admit plurality. We conclude, therefore, that the foundation of the religions of God is one foundation. Notwithstanding this, certain forms and imitations have been persistently adhered to which have nothing to do with the foundation of the teachings of the Prophets of God. (Abdu'l-Baha, *Khitabat*, pp. 527-535; PUP:297; 1 September 1912)

According to the teachings of Baha'u'llah...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; 1 September 1912)

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; 5 September 1912)

Briefly, the foundation of the divine religions is one eternal foundation...the religionists of the world must...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; 19 May 1912)

Fifty years ago Bahá'u'lláh declared the necessity of peace among the nations and the reality of reconciliation between the religions of the world. He announced that the fundamental basis of all religion is one, that the essence of religion is human fellowship and that the differences in belief which exist are due to dogmatic interpretation and blind imitations which are at variance with the foundations established by the Prophets of God. 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. According to His teachings if religious belief proves to be the cause of discord and

dissension, its absence would be preferable; for religion was intended to be the divine remedy and panacea for the ailments of humanity, the healing balm for the wounds of mankind. If its misapprehension and defilement have brought about warfare and bloodshed instead of remedy and cure, the world would be better under irreligious conditions. (*Abdu'l-Baha, Khitabat, p. 579; PUP:354; 8 October 1912*)

Therefore, Bahá'u'lláh appeared from the horizon of the Orient and reestablished the essential foundation of the religious teachings of the world. The worn-out traditional beliefs current among men were removed. He caused fellowship and agreement to exist between the representatives of varying denominations so that love became manifest among the contending religions. He created a condition of harmony among hostile sects and upheld the banner of the oneness of the world of humanity. He established the foundation for international peace, caused the hearts of nations to be cemented together and conferred new life upon the various peoples of the East. Among those who have followed the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh no one says, "I am a Persian," "I am a Turk," "I am a Frenchman," or "I am an Englishman." No one says, "I am a Muslim, upholding the only true religion," "I am a Christian, loyal to my traditional and inherited beliefs," "I am a Jew, following talmudic interpretations," or "I am a Zoroastrian and opposed to all other religions." On the contrary, all have been rescued from religious, racial, political and patriotic prejudices and are now associating in fellowship and love to the extent that if you should attend one of their meetings you would be unable to observe any distinction between Christian and Muslim, Jew and Zoroastrian, Persian and Turk, Arab and European; for their meetings are based upon the essential foundations of religion, and real unity has been established among them. Former antagonisms have passed away; the centuries of sectarian hatred are ended; the period of aversion has gone by; the medieval conditions of ignorance have ceased to exist. (*PUP:379; 26 October 1912*)

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; 8 November 1912*)

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; 18 November 1912*)

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*)

Baha'u'llah called for the religious leaders of the world to join together for adjudication of all disputes and differences of belief:

Our hope is that the world's religious leaders and the rulers thereof will unitedly arise for the reformation of this age and the rehabilitation of its fortunes. Let them, after meditating on its needs, take counsel together and, through anxious and full deliberation, administer to a diseased and sorely afflicted world the remedy it requireth. (*Baha'u'llah, Lawh-i-Maqsud, in Tablets of Baha'u'llah revealed after the Kitab-i-Aqdas*)

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 [taqalid] 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 [taqalid]. If imitations [taqalid] be done away with and the radiant shining reality [haqiqat] dawn in the souls of men, love and unity must prevail. (*PUP:233-234; 14 July 1912*)

Shoghi Effendi, grandson of 'Abdu'l-Baha, and appointed by Him to be the first Guardian of the Baha'i Faith, wrote regarding the essential teachings of the Religion of God in a number of his letters, including the ones excerpted here:

The Revelation proclaimed by Baha'u'llah [affirms] that the Founders of all past religions, though differing in the non-essential aspects of their teachings, "abide in the same Tabernacle, soar in the same heaven, are seated upon the same throne, utter the same speech and proclaim the same Faith." (*Shoghi Effendi, in a letter to the High Commissioner for Palestine,*

entitled "The World Religion of Baha'u'llah: A Summary of Its Aims, Teachings and History," June 1933)

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...Far from aiming at the overthrow of the spiritual foundation of the world's religious systems, its avowed, its unalterable purpose is...to restate their fundamentals...to demonstrate their oneness, to restore the pristine purity of their teachings... (Shoghi Effendi, letter addressed to the Western believers, 8 February 1934, entitled, "The Dispensation of Baha'u'llah," reprinted in "The World Order of Baha'u'llah," pp. 114,115; reprinted in GTT:129,131)

The Faith standing identified with the name of Baha'u'llah disclaims any intention to belittle any of the Prophets gone before Him, to whittle down any of their teachings, to obscure, however slightly, the radiance of their Revelations, to oust them from the hearts of their followers, to abrogate the fundamentals of their doctrines, to discard any of their revealed Books...He insists on the unqualified recognition of the unity of their purpose, restates the eternal verities they enshrine...distinguishes the essential and the authentic from the non-essential and spurious in their teachings...and on this as a basis proclaims the possibility, and even prophesies the inevitability, of their unification... (Shoghi Effendi, letter dated 28 March, 1941, entitled, "The Promised Day is Come," p. 112; reprinted in GTT:118)

The fundamental principle enunciated by Baha'u'llah, followers of His Faith firmly believe, is...that all the great religions on the world are divine in origin, that their basic principles are in complete harmony, that their aims and purposes are one and the same, that their teachings are but facets of one truth...that they differ only in the nonessential aspects of their doctrines...His purpose, far from belittling the station of the Prophets gone before Him or of whittling down their teachings, is to restate the basic truths which these teachings enshrine... (Shoghi Effendi, in a letter to the United Nations Special Commission on Palestine, entitled "The Faith of Baha'u'llah," 14 July 1947; reprinted in "The Promised Day is Come," Foreword, p. v, 1961; reprinted also in GTT:2,3)

LISTS OF ESSENTIAL TEACHINGS OF BAHÁ'U'LLAH

The essential teachings referred to in the Writings of Baha'u'llah are numerous and we have attempted to categorize them by listing them alphabetically and assigning each one a number. We will begin with a listing of the essential teachings found in "Lawh-i-Ibn-i-Dhi'b" (Epistle to the Son of the Wolf), probably the last volume authored by Baha'u'llah, in 1891. Here Baha'u'llah quoted passages from a number of His Tablets and Books, written over the course of nearly 60 years. This work (ESW) represents a compendium of His teachings, and it includes many passages that refer to the essential teachings. This epistle may be 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 BAHU'ULLAH;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

We will now attempt to compile a list of those essential teachings that are found in the utterances of 'Abdu'l-Baha cited in this document, which have been correlated with the essential teachings found in the Writings of Baha'u'llah:

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, chapter XI, pp. 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 (numbered so that they may be compared with the many principles which Baha'u'llah Himself has articulated in His Writings):

- (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

A list of lists constitutes only a 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 fundamental 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. If this will be reported to me, it will be removed from the list. Also, other essential teachings will certainly be discovered, and they will be added to this list. Other source documents with references to the essential teachings will be found in the Writings of Baha'u'llah and the Writings and Utterances 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 has been complicated because all of these passages have been identified and categorized in English translations and generally without reference to the original words, in Arabic and Persian. 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: This document was completed in 2005, and revised in 2007 and 2023, by Peter Terry. Please contact Peter at peterry19@gmail.com.