

## Message 5 BY: Vin

Dear Reminded,

Sorry about the small type. My email software (Netscape) does use point size, so I went from Medium to Large. Let me know if that is better.

**The misleading trap is that people think Manifestations came to establish a modernized or civilized social system.** I'm sorry I gave you the wrong impression. Baha'is don't believe that the Manifestations were sent by God for only that reason. They also came as you say **to fill the gap between man and God.** You say: **It is hard to believe that people cut the fingers of a thief because of a Godly Manifestations direct instructions.** I know it is hard to believe, but it is in the Old Testament. Let me try to explain better what I have just said in this paragraph. Baha'u'llah and Abdu'l-Baha explained that each revelation (Manifestation) has two fundamental purposes. First, each serves in a general way to increase our knowledge of God and of God's will for us, our knowledge of others, and our knowledge of ourselves. But each revelation comes at a particular time and place in social evolution, a time when humanity is confronted with particular problems (why do you think God sent Baha'u'llah to Persia at that time) and has specific needs. Thus each revelation has the secondary purpose of providing humankind with practical guidance and the knowledge necessary to meet current challenges.

Therefore, in order to fill the requirements of each new age the guidance from each Manifestation have two aspects: (1) the eternal (or essentially unchanging) and (2) the social (or temporary) which change according to the times. Abdu'l-Baha described these two aspects of religion as follows:

*" 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 (teaching) of morality and the development of human virtues, there is no difference whatsoever between the teachings of Zoroaster, Jesus and BahĀ'ı'llĀ'h. In this they agree; they are one. The second aspect of the divine religions is nonessential. It concerns human needs and undergoes change in every cycle according to the exigency (need) of the time. For example, in the time of Moses divorce was conformable to the needs and conditions; Moses, therefore, established it. But in the time of Christ, divorces were numerous and the cause of corruption; as they were not suitable for the time, he made divorce unlawful and likewise changed other laws. These are needs and conditions which have to do with the conduct of society; therefore, they undergo change according to the exigency of the time. Moses dwelt in the desert. As there were no penitentiaries, no means of restitution in the desert and wilderness, the laws of God were an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. Could this be carried out now? If a man destroys another man's eye, are you willing to destroy the eye of the offender? If a man's teeth are broken or his ear cut off, will you demand a corresponding mutilation of his assailant? This would not be conformable to conditions of humanity at the present time. If a man steals, shall his hand be cut off? This punishment was just and right in the law of Moses, but it was applicable to the desert, where there were no prisons and reformatory institutions of later and higher forms of government. Today you have government and organization, a police system, a judge and trial by jury. The punishment and penalty is now different. Therefore, the nonessentials which deal with details of community are changed according to the exigency of the time and conditions. But the essential foundation of the teachings of Moses, Zoroaster, Jesus and BahĀ'ı'llĀ'h is identical, is one; there is no difference whatsoever ."*

God is the great Physician Who alone can rightly diagnose the world's sickness and prescribe the appropriate remedy. The remedy prescribed in one age is no longer suitable in a later age, when the condition of the patient is different. You are saying that God (the physician) does not need to send anymore remedies (the Manifestations). To cling to the old remedy (Muhammad for instance) when the physician has order new treatment (Baha'u'llah) is not to show faith in the physician (God), but infidelity. It may be a shock to a Muslim that some of the remedies for the world's sickness which Muhammad ordered are now out of date and unsuitable. The Muslim may be equally shocked when asked to admit that Baha'u'llah had authority to alter the commands of Muhammad. According to the Baha'i view, true devotion to God implies reverence to all His prophets, and implicit obedience to His latest Commands, as given by the Prophet for our own age, Baha'u'llah.

To repeat once again, when each Manifestation is sent by God he puts forth two kinds of ordinances. First there are those that consist of the spiritual teachings of the Word of God, the Divine truths and essential principles (morals and ethics), that bring us closer to God. In the words of Baha'u'llah: *" The purpose of God in creating man hath been, and will ever be, to enable him to know his Creator and to attain His Presence. To this most excellent aim, this supreme objective, all the heavenly Books and the divinely-revealed and weighty Scriptures unequivocally bear witness. Whoso hath recognized the Day Spring of Divine guidance and entered His holy court hath drawn nigh unto God and attained His Presence, a Presence which is the real Paradise, and of which the loftiest mansions of heaven are but a symbol. Such a man hath attained the knowledge of the station of Him Who is "at the distance of two bows," Who standeth beyond the Sadratu'l-MuntahĀ'. Whoso hath failed to recognize Him will have condemned himself to the misery of remoteness, a remoteness which is naught but utter nothingness and the essence of the nethermost fire. Such will be his fate, though to outward seeming he may occupy the earth's loftiest seats and be established upon its most exalted throne ."*

Second, there are laws and ordinances which are temporary. These concern human transactions and relations. they are

subject to change according to the needs of the time and place. These laws regulate the transactions of the social body and everyday affairs of life are changeable and subject to repeal. According to Baha' i belief, the single most important social problem of our age is disunity. Unity is an expression of love, while disunity is a form of hatred. Abdu' -Baha has said that love is the fundamental teaching given by God to humanity and is a universal principle common to all religions. Thus the many social problems related to disunity derive, in the final analysis, from a lack of spirituality. Baha' is therefore regard many of the principles taught by Baha' u'alli (e.g., the equality of men and women) both as expressions of universal spiritual truths and also as essential factors in the solution of current social problems. The following are the social teachings of Baha' u' llah: 1) The oneness of mankind, 2) Independent investigation of the truth, 3) Elimination of religious, racial, patriotic and political prejudices 4) Equality of men and women, 5) The common foundation of all religions 6) The essential harmony of science and religion, 7) Universal compulsory education, 8) Spiritual solutions to economic problems, 9) A universal auxiliary language, 10) Universal peace upheld by a world federation.

Again, God has sent the Manifestations 1) to teach us the true principles that govern our spiritual nature. In order to grow successfully, we must turn to revealed religion and accept the teachings of the Manifestations. The result of this growth process is that the individual is able to reflect more completely the attributes of God and draw close to him. 2) At the same time, the social teachings taught by the Manifestations, if truly applied, help create a social surrounding favorable to the spiritual growth process.

On **starting a Religion**, you did mention in The Reminded Way that you were definitely not, but I must have taken, when you said, **Otherwise, I am gathering troops for my congregation or religion!** , out of context. Sorry. Because we (you and I) are capable of entering into communion (sharing of thoughts) with God and thereby becoming aware of the spirit of God, we are also capable of **inspiration**. The Baha' i writings distinguish between **inspiration** and **revelation**. **Revelation** is that infallible and direct perception of God' s creative Word that is accessible only to the Manifestations, who transmit it to humankind. **Inspiration** is the indirect and relative perception of spiritual truth which is available to every human soul. Any human is capable of being inspired by the spirit of God. But the experience of **inspiration** is available to us because the spirit of God is shown to us through the Manifestations. In short: **inspiration** depends upon **revelation** .

Baha' u' llah explained that the Divine will of God does sometimes choose ordinary people **prophets, reformers, etc.** (maybe you are in this category) and inspires them to play roles in human affairs. The prophets are still ordinary men and women whose powers of **inspiration** have been developed and used by God. **Revelation** , however, is the ability of the Manifestation alone, and it is the generating force of all human progress. Abdu' -Baha says: " *Universally, the Prophets are of two kinds. One are the independent Prophets Who are followed; the other kind are not independent and are themselves followers. The independent Prophets are the lawgivers and the founders of a new cycle. Through Their appearance the world puts on a new garment, the foundations of religion are established, and a new book is revealed. Without an intermediary They receive bounty from the Reality of the Divinity, and Their illumination is an essential illumination. They are like the sun which is luminous in itself; the light is its essential necessity; it does not receive light from any other star. These Dawning-places of the morn of Unity are the sources of bounty and the mirrors of the Essence of Reality. The other Prophets are followers and promoters, for they are branches and not independent; they receive the bounty of the independent Prophets, and they profit by the light of the Guidance of the universal Prophets. They are like the moon, which is not luminous and radiant in itself, but receives its light from the sun.*"

I am sorry that this is so long, but I wanted to make sure you understood the Baha' i point of view, because it is different than what you believe. Otherwise our beliefs are the same. The main differences are that Baha' is believe **Manifestations are needed to transmit the Word of God to humankind for both spiritual and social growth. And that our knowledge of the Manifestation is, in fact, the closest we can come to the knowledge of God.** In Baha' u' llah' s words: *Know thou of a certainty that the Unseen can in no wise incarnate His Essence and reveal it unto men. He is, and hath ever been, immensely exalted beyond all that can either be recounted or perceived. From His retreat of glory His voice is ever proclaiming: "Verily, I am God; there is none other God besides Me, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. I have manifested Myself unto men, and have sent down Him Who is the Day Spring of the signs of My Revelation. Through Him I have caused all creation to testify that there is none other God except Him, the Incomparable, the All-Informed, the All-Wise." He Who is everlastingly hidden from the eyes of men can never be known except through His Manifestation, and His Manifestation can adduce no greater proof of the truth of His Mission than the proof of His own Person.*"

You say : **Those who believe in God will be all God centered. However, people will need to be pruned from time to time.** That is true and it is what Baha' is believe we are doing right now. The coming of the Manifestation is like the coming of the Spring. It is a day of Resurrection in which the spiritually dead are raised to new life, in which the Reality of the Divine Religions is renewed and reestablished. But, in the world of nature, the spring brings about not only the growth and awakening of new life but also the destruction and removal of the old and decayed life. The same sun that makes the flowers sprout and the trees to bud, cause also the decay and disintegration of what is dead and useless, it loosens the ice and melts the snow, and sets free the flood and the storm that cleanse and purify the earth. It is the same in the spiritual world. The spiritual sunshine causes similar change. Thus the Day of Resurrection is also the Day of Judgement, in which corruptions and imitations of the truth and outworn ideas and customs are discarded and destroyed, and in which the ice and snow of prejudice and superstition, which accumulated during the season of winter,

are melted and transformed, and the energies long frozen and pent up are released to flood and renovate the world. How do you feel about Baha' u' llahs 10 social teachings or principles (equality between women and men, etc..) listed earlier? I assume you have heard the news lately from Afghanistan about its new constitution, which states that men and women have equal rights. Since Afghanistan was once part of the Persian Empire, imagine how hard it was for the Persian' s, 160 years ago during Baha' u' llah ' s ~~time~~ <sup>time</sup> to accept his social principle of equality between women and men .

I accept most of what you say in **The Reminded Way** . But with an open mind I still can not accept some of what you say, as descibed above, because of my Baha' i beliefs and what believe to be the Truth. I hope that these disagreements do not prevent us from communicating further.

In His Service --- Vin  
Wednesday, January 28, 2004 9:02 AM

**“In each single place of worship throughout the world, there should be a visible sign or symbol of all religions.” Reminded**