

SPIRITUAL SPRING

A talk given by Horace Holley, Temple Foundation Hall, Naw-Ruz, 1956

When Spring returns to the world of nature, it produces a transformation of all living things which repeats the miracle of every previous spring. For throughout nature living things are bound within the limitations of cosmic law. Each entity revolves in the orbit of its own particular function and purpose. The rose of this season is the return of the flower which bloomed in seasons before.

But when the divine renewal quickens the world of men, a new creation is born. Man's being, unlike nature, has the power of progress ever higher from stage to stage. The expression of that progressive evolution is witnessed in the series of historic cultures which evolved from the inspiration of the Prophets of old. The men who established a higher culture can do so because they themselves have unfolded powers which could not exist before. While the Prophet restores the life of the soul and confirms the mission of the Prophet preceding Him He also reveals new teachings which carry society to a higher stage.

Why is it that so few recognize and follow the new Prophet when He appears? In the characteristic of human habit we find operating the principle of repetition which, though self-imposed, we find in the kingdom of nature. Men of rigid habit strive to live within a closed orbit of action, feeling and thought.

This principle of repetition becomes more pronounced and influential in human beings when personal trait and outlook is reinforced by a powerful tradition. Tradition spells a formula which imposes the rigidity of habit upon the spiritual forces of men. This is particularly true when the traditional formula evolves within a religion and dominates consciousness and will.

Thus, as we survey the society about us we see that religion is associated with the perpetuation of a doctrine, a church, a creed and an authority vested in minister, priest, rabbi, or mulla. Whatever corresponds to this formula is recognized to be "religious" and whatever lies outside this closed area of experience is ignored, denied or resisted.

It is because of the habit-forming nature of religious tradition and its adherence to repetition that Baha'is find it difficult to attract widespread interest in the Revelation of Baha-u-llah. It was of the tradition that Christ spoke when He said that they had ears but heard not, and eyes, but could not see. However sincere he may be in attitude toward his particular formula, his soul is confined within its limitations and he is unable to make a positive response when confronted by evidence that the Prophet has returned to mankind. It is only by the working of the spiritual power of independent investigation of truth that the individual becomes free from the restrictions of tradition and begins to live in the light of the New Day.

This condition offers a unique challenge to every Baha'i. How can we undermine or break through this wall behind which the pattern of repetition holds sway? We know that the Baha'i Revelation creates an entirely new pattern for the life of the soul and the development of society. The formula is spiritual universality: Religion dealing with the whole man and with the wholeness of human existence—religion able to offer a solution to the basic problems of life which international events and conditions impose upon all. The moral isolation of traditional religions, each on its own part claiming to be unique and supreme, has brought about the practical annulment of the laws and principles of brotherhood which every Prophet has clearly expressed. The scattering of the forces of religion has opened the

the gates of human society to the invasion of the pagan powers of revolution and war and the rejection by many of the spiritual nature of man himself, the rejection of God.

The Baha'i teacher must know more about the Prophetic Founder of a religion than the followers of that religion themselves. He must awe them by his reverence for that Prophet and his knowledge of the teachings that Prophet revealed. He must impress them with the realization that their Prophet's laws and principles are not being applied. He must be qualified to explain prophecy which associated the Prophet with the continuity of religion and the triumph of righteousness. He must attempt to unhold an appealing vision of the dynamic nature of Revelation and prove that only as the sects, creeds, denominations and faiths are unified in devotion to divine law can man escape from the abyss of fatality into which they are plunged.

The unity of the Prophets can only be conveyed when we make clear the essential purpose of religion as the establishment of justice and peace throughout the world. Whoever begins to realize that the Prophets have taught the same essential truths, each for His own age, can in time accept the principle of Progressive Revelation, fulfilled in the mission of Baha-u-llah.

Let us appreciate the fact that the purpose of the Baha'i teacher is to liberate the soul of the individual from its servitude to a close sectarian pattern and guide it into the universality which religion has become. This transformation is not mere substitution of a new fixed pattern for an ancient one. It is the resurrection of the soul from its sleep in the grave of superstition and unbelief.

The foundations of civilization are being overthrown. Human existence hangs in the balance. May we turn with new insight to the words of 'Abdul-Baha: "Let your ambition be the achievement on earth of a heavenly civilization? I ask for you the supreme blessing, that you may be so filled by spirit that you may be the cause of life to the world? The divine Sprintime has come; new life quickens within us as we turn to the Sun of Truth.