

THE MODERN SOCIAL RELIGION

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The Modern Social Religion by Horace Holley

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GIFT

TO
FRANCIS NEWMAN HOLLEY
IN LOCO PARENTIS



INTRODUCTION

UNKNOWN as yet to the many, the historical phenomenon of Christianity is repeating itself in our age. Once more, at a time when the established order, both social and spiritual, has lost its original vitalizing principle, and ordinary experience, bewildered by the clash of tradition with new tendencies, is compelled to look outside itself for the creative vision, a master personality has appeared, whose experience gathered from society all that is essential and permanent, gave it a new unity, definition, and significance, and thus restored a universal religious currency to men. The Bahai movement presents many remarkable parallels with Christianity. In place of John the Baptist, the discerning and articulate element within orthodoxy able to feel the new birth about to take place from the old body, we have Mohammed Ali, the famous "Bab," who announced the prophetic manifestation nineteen years before the event; then the tremendous figure of Baha'o'llah, centralizing and universal-

izing the movement; meanwhile the inevitable accompaniment of persecution, a marvellous outburst of pure faith; and last (this circumstance unique in the world's religious history), the propagation of Baha'o'llah's teaching by his eldest son, Abdul Baha, insuring its integrity. Originating in Persia only a generation ago, the movement has already penetrated far to the East and West, its followers numbering millions of men and women, who represent every religion, philosophy, race, class, and colour. I have devoted a chapter to this dramatic story, covering the period from the Bab's declaration down to Abdul Baha's memorable visit to Europe and America during the years 1912-13. It is with the Bahai teaching, which extends religion so as to include modern science, and morality so as to coincide with modern economic and political conditions, that I have been chiefly concerned. But I have endeavoured to present it as a system inevitable in terms of our social evolution, and therefore approached Bahatism step by step, working gradually toward it through familiar types and problems. I preferred, in short, to derive Baha'o'llah's unique relation to the modern world from the sheer logic and advantage of his teaching, rather than to derive the logic and advantage of his teaching