

Spiritual Aspiration in the West

'Abdu'l-Bahá

Original English



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Spiritual Aspiration in the West

You are very welcome! From Eastern lands I have come to the West to sojourn awhile among you. In the East it is often said that the people of the West are without spirituality, but I have not found it thus. Thank God, I see and feel that there is much spiritual aspiration among the Western peoples, and that in some cases their spiritual perception is even keener than among their Eastern brothers. If the teaching given in the East had been conscientiously spread in the West the world today would be a more enlightened place.[pg 71]

Although in the past all the great Spiritual Teachers have arisen in the East, there are still many men there who are quite devoid of spirituality. With regard to the things of the spirit they are as lifeless as a stone; nor do they wish to be otherwise, for they consider that man is only a higher form of animal and that the things of God concern him not.

But man's ambition should soar above this — he should ever look higher than himself, ever upward and onward, until through the Mercy of God he may come to the Kingdom of Heaven. Again, there are men whose eyes are only open to physical progress and to the evolution in the world of matter. These men prefer to study the resemblance between their own physical body and that of the ape, rather than to contemplate the glorious affiliation between their spirit and that of God. This is indeed strange, for it is only physically that man resembles the lower creation, with regard to his intellect he is totally unlike it.

Man is always progressing. His circle of knowledge is ever widening, and his mental activity flows through many and varied channels. Look what man has accomplished in the field of science, consider his many discoveries and countless inventions and his profound understanding of natural law.



ORIGINAL



AUDIO

In the world of art it is just the same, and this wonderful development of man's faculties becomes more and more rapid as time goes on. If the discoveries, inventions and material accomplishments of the last fifteen hundred years could be put together, you would see that there has been greater advancement during the [pg 72] last hundred years than in the previous fourteen centuries. For the rapidity with which man is progressing increases century by century.

The power of the intellect is one of God's greatest gifts to men, it is the power that makes him a higher creature than the animal. For whereas, century by century and age by age man's intelligence grows and becomes keener, that of the animal remains the same. They are no more intelligent today than they were a thousand years ago! Is there a greater proof than this needed to show man's dissimilarity to the animal creation? It is surely as clear as day.

As for the spiritual perfections they are man's birthright and belong to him alone of all creation. Man is, in reality, a spiritual being, and only when he lives in the spirit is he truly happy. This spiritual longing and perception belongs to all men alike, and it is my firm conviction that the Western people possess great spiritual aspiration.

It is my fervent prayer that the star of the East will shed its brilliant rays on the Western world, and that the people of the West may arise in strength, earnestness, and courage, to help their brethren in the East.

