

# Some Philosophical Fragments

## Supplement to Students Monthly Letter

### THE MASTERY OF FEAR

THIS LECTURE WAS GIVEN BY MR. HALL AT THE WORLD CONGRESS OF RELIGIONS, AT THE CENTURY OF PROGRESS EXPOSITION, CHICAGO, 1933.

*The true purpose of civilization is to insure the security of man, individual and collective. We must measure progress in terms of human security. We must regard as progressive every contribution to security and we must regard as retrogressive every action or measure which hazards this security. Aboriginal mankind dwelt in a condition of physical and spiritual insecurity. Ignorance and superstition impoverished his courage leaving him a victim of countless fears and terrors. There was evil in the lightning and disaster rode upon the wings of the storm. Primitive man feared nature, but modern man fears man. With education we have dispelled the tribal ghosts of ancient days, we have laid low the demons which haunted the aboriginal world; with medical science we have combatted the plagues; with engineering feats we have turned the floods. The prodigious effort of evolving man has reaped its reward in terms of increasing human security. With our present knowledge, and with reasonable anticipation of further development in the several fields of learning, we may say with confidence that within the next five hundred years man will have so mastered the elements, which previously so offended him, that life will cease to be*

*hazardous, and with reasonable precaution the majority of mankind can survive triumphantly the ordinary vicissitudes of nature.*

*Along the shore of Lake Michigan unfolds the panorama of Chicago's Century of Progress. This great Exposition is dedicated primarily to the glorification of the intensive mechanistic productiveness of the last hundred years. Numerous grotesquely shaped buildings house fantastic arrays of devices and improvements, adjutants, etc., by the development and use of which our civilization has come to what it is today. We should be justly proud of the ingenuity by which these mechanistic miracles have come to pass, but at the same time it is not amiss to question certain unemphasized aspects of what we please to term progress.*

*Where in all this Exposition is to be found exhibited one single evidence of ethical, moral or aesthetic progress? Where is the proof that the humanity of today is happier, wiser or intrinsically better, than the humanity of a hundred years ago? Where are the proofs of increasing individual or collective security? In other words, where is the evidence of real CIVILIZATION in this Century of Progress?*

*True we have added greatly to our conveniences, multiplied our industries, compounded our economics and heaped up fortunes that even Croesus might have envied. But where is brotherhood, where is well-founded faith, where is vision, and where that fraternity of effort and ideal without which all so-called progress is but an illusion?*

*"There is only one ambition that is good, and that is: so to live NOW that none may weary of life's emptiness and none may have to do the task we leave undone." —Tsiang Samdup.*

Strange creatures from strange parts have been brought to this Fair to edify gaping tourists from the outlying districts, yet nowhere on exhibition in this Century of Progress is to be found a happy man, a wise man, or one who can face the future with security and understanding. We wonder if what we call a Century of Progress has not really been a century of complications, in which all simple and direct values have been lost sight of. We live lives on tangents in environments of complexity.

All true progress must be measured in the well-being of man, and in its ruthless course of exploitation industry is not only indifferent to man's well-being but has reduced him to an insignificant and almost unnecessary factor in the onward rumble of economic empire.

As we study into the motives of men, as these motives are objectified in their cultural systems, it becomes increasingly evident that civilization is only an appearance, a shallow surfacing beneath which still rage the aboriginal emotions of the prehistoric world. We are haunted by the sinister ghosts of our past selves. We would be kind but there is cruelty in our blood, we would be honest but there is craftiness in our marrow. On our lips are words of forgiveness but our souls mumble the ancient law: An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth.

We must be forgiven then if we fear our fellow-man a little, we must be excused if we reason in our hearts that he is no better than ourselves. If we behold beneath the fair aspect of this great civilization a cold, glittering cruelty we have just reason for some apprehension. We know that, all to the contrary notwithstanding, with a few exceptions mankind is not civilized. He has grown skilful, but he has not grown good; he has grown old, but he has not grown up; he has grown wealthy, but he has not grown generous; he has grown powerful, but he has not grown kind; he has gained knowledge, but he has not grown wise.

Our modern civilization is ruled by the law of the jungle—the survival of the fittest—spoils to the strong, misery to the weak. At the end of the ages stands TODAY and in the today stands man's great economic empire; an empire dominated by ignor-

ance, superstition and fear, where nothing is secure, where no one is safe, where virtue, honesty and truth are words, and where treasons, stratagems and spoils ravish the earth. When a man shudders today and says, "I am afraid," his is not a blind and senseless terror of some benighted Bushman; his is a well grounded fear, a fear of things seen and known, not of ghosts. Civilization has weakened man and left him a victim of luxury; civilization has deprived man of resourcefulness, snuffed out his sense of individual sufficiency, and left him an absolute weakling dependent utterly upon the commodities and luxuries of his social plan. The average man can no longer build his own house, kill his own game, weave his own cloth, defend his own hearth, nor gaze out at life with some realization of his personal strength. No matter how rich or how poor he may be today, he is a slave, a serf, utterly dependent upon things and things and things. His security is not in his own keeping. He depends almost entirely upon factors beyond his control, and as his fortunes ebb and flow he must sit impotently by and hope and fear.

The civilized man is a civilization addict. He is doped with our modern industrial psychology. He knows that he is miserable, that there is no probability of his ever being anything else, yet he will fight to defend the very evils which destroy him. He is afraid and he obeys unquestioningly the despotic edicts of his fear masters. Millions of men and women, living, working, dying—always afraid. Afraid to live, afraid to think, afraid to speak, yes even afraid to hope. The proletarians of the world are afraid of their jobs, living in constant terror that the next pay day will be the last. Mothers and fathers afraid for their children. The old, in which both fear and hope are dead, and the young in which hope and fear are strong. Men might learn to love one another a little if they did not have to fear one another so much. But where fear is love cannot be, for terror cannot dwell with understanding. Those who have fear, lest they shall lose; those who have not, fear lest they shall not gain. The great fear for their lives, and the humble are afraid of the great. Nations are afraid of one another's armaments. Great nations are hated for their power and little nations are envied even for

the little which they do possess. Each year an all-fearing world spends billions in armaments. The nations of today live by Napoleon's code that God is on the side of the heaviest artillery. An hundred civilized nations plotting war, scheming schemes of wealth, cheating and conniving, stealing and plundering by a code that forgives the victor all his sins and exterminates the vanquished.

Fear is not all an illusion then, although the things men fear are for the most part unreal. Fear was bred in the swamps and fens of the first jungle. Terror roamed the primordial wild and though ages have passed and many changes have come to this old world, fear still comes with the night and terror lurks in the smoke of industry.

While men warred and pillaged upon the earth, their gods warred and pillaged in the heavens. Theology was once but the instituted tyranny of the invisible. The priests of old used fear as an instrument to control their wandering and nomadic peoples, and if man has grown virtuous it is only fair to say that in some cases he was frightened out of his vices. There are many law-abiding men and women to every virtuous one, for laws were made to keep us from destroying ourselves. In the course of several milleniums, the religions of the world became greatly complicated. The medicine man and the witch-doctor were gradually metamorphosed into the clergy. Sects and creeds divided, over painfully insignificant issues, until through little understanding humanity had the burden of ecclesiastical dissension added to its already heavy burden of woes. Religions, like humanity itself, had so many things in common and so few differences; and yet, like humanity, they ignored these many things in common and so magnified the few differences that theology became a ghastly travesty of religion. Nearly three hundred sects of Christianity alone have remembered the Fatherhood of God, but forgotten the Brotherhood of Man. So faith, which should have multiplied human certainties has for the most part only increased its fears.

At this time we are gathered here in a Fellowship of Faiths. We come here, as friends, from far thoughts and distant places. We are here because we believe that the beliefs and ideals of the

race are so intrinsically identical that they greatly overbalance any small differences which may seem to exist. We are of several races and a score of nations. As races we have persecuted one another, as nations we have warred against one another; each has feared and hated the other and yet in this assemblage the evident sincerity of purpose and the overwhelming humanity which is the motive for this assemblage binds us together far more closely than any other differences may separate us. But unfortunately we gather here not as nations or as races, but, if the matter be sincerely stated, as individuals. We are really expressing personal convictions, or at the most convictions of small groups existing within greater bodies of peoples which do not possess similar convictions. Let us face the fact truthfully. The various religious doctrines of the world are not liberal; they are creed-bound and heavy with fear. But through each of these creeds there rise isolated individuals who, having come to sense the more real values of life, interpret into their creeds a broadness which is really their own.

It is far from desirable that the various religions of the world should give up their own identities to be merged into some common indefiniteness, which is neither understandable nor acceptable to the numerous followers. It is, however, just and reasonable, and well within the province of religious premise, that the numerous sects which unite in the adoration of the common Father should occasionally unite on earth for the more practical purpose of furthering that Father's work among the peoples of the world. The majority of the inhabitants of the earth are nominally addicted to some religion, and the majority of the inhabitants of the earth show little evidence of any application of their religious addictions. If perchance we were to examine the great evils which have descended upon the earth, we should discover that most of them arise among nominally religious people, are perpetuated by nominally religious people, with small glory to God and less good to man.

FROM THE WEAKNESS OF WORDS WE MUST RISE TO THE STRENGTH OF ACTION. Religion has failed as long as man must remain afraid of man. The men we fear are seldom infidels; they are of our own faiths and be-

liefs. **THEY PRAY BESIDE US ON SUNDAY AND THEY PREY UPON US ON MONDAY.** The purpose of religion is not only to convince one man that there is a God within his brother; it is necessary that the brother himself be sufficiently convinced of this indwelling divinity that his relationship with other men may be tinctured by this belief.

At the end of this Congress of Religions, we shall each go again our own way, some returning to distant lands, most of us to continue some ministry of spiritual or philosophical education. Within a twelvemonth, some of the nations may be at war and your peoples will be praying to the god of armies for victory. You return as sheep among wolves, you go to serve a world which does not understand brotherhood or love or peace. There is not one among us who dares to hope that in our short years the evils which infect the race may be removed. In all ages prophets and patriarchs of heroic vision have taught and loved, suffered and died in the service of an unbelieving world. Yet all of these great teachers, and the faiths which they have established, are agreed in one thing, that the Universal Father, by whatsoever name He may be known, is ever watchful over the destiny of His creation. There is law in the universe and according to the law all creatures must work out their own salvations with diligence.

The last few years have witnessed the collapse of man's industrial-economic civilization. A cultural system built up in defiance of all spiritual and ethical law has demonstrated its inadequacy and unfitness to survive. This emergency is religion's opportunity. This is no time for jarring sects and little isms seeking grandeur. This is a supreme opportunity for the idealists of the world to turn from their contentions over pots and tittles and unite in practical spiritual service, and practical religious education. The first task which confronts us is the consolidation of our own fraternity. If the leaders cannot be united, the followers cannot be brought together. Remember, this would not be an absorption of religions but a brotherhood of religions. If each faith sincerely rejoices in the good works of other faiths with a camaraderie of pur-

pose, it will lay the foundation for a better civilization to come.

If the religions of the world fail to rise to this great emergency in the soul experience of the race, it is unlikely that organized theology will survive the present century. Either spiritual idealism must rescue the race or else vanish away with the civilization which it has failed.

The first step in the re-education of man must be the reframing of the code of human values. The Rule of Gold must give place to the Golden Rule. Men must be taught that true wealth is only possible when society is functioning on a spiritual and not a physical foundation. Wealth is not a matter of money. True wealth is measured in terms of wisdom, peace, happiness and well-being. Ambition is the deadly enemy of well-being and causes man to live in constant apprehension, hazard and uncertainty. It forces him inevitably along a course of destructive procedure which can end only in disaster and death.

If twenty-five per cent of the religious people of the world would LIVE their religion, heaven would exist right here on earth. The question must naturally arise: How can a person actually belong to a religious body and in no matter of importance act consistently with the doctrines of that body? This is a real problem for theologians. Is it possible that theology has failed to throw proper emphasis upon the APPLICATION of spiritual principles to terrestrial affairs? Have the various religions demanded certain standards of living from their members? In this age of success, just closed, we all grew a little lax.

(To be continued)

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