

# A MAD WORLD

Fear is the most prolific source of all evil. Of course if fear were understood in its full metaphysical significance, it would be understood to be the provoking cause of all evil of every sort. But even from the ordinary point of view of the world, fear when it communicates itself to numbers, is capable of causing greater disaster than any other phase of the human consciousness. The pagan philosophers realized that there was such a thing as the fear of fear, in other words, as they stated it, the fear of death was worse than death itself. Centuries later Shakespeare appropriated the idea, and put precisely the same sentiment into the mouth of Isabella, in "Measure for Measure," and indeed, anyone who knows anything at all of history knows how disease was spread upon the wings of fear in the case of that awful visitation of the Fourteenth Century known as the Black Death, and again when a pestilence of a similar nature swept London, in the Seventeenth Century.

Some day the world will come to see that what it calls contagion is a mental contagion, and that what it calls infection is the infection of one mind from another. Orthodox medical practice to-day largely recognizes this, but it draws back from the logical consequences of its own admission, and endeavors to shelter itself in a half-way-house, which is built partially out of mind and partially out of matter. Any person who has watched the ravages of such a disease as cholera in the East must know exactly what this means. The European sahib, going about doing his duty, and quite fearless of consequences, moves through the cholera camps with perfect immunity from the disease. But the native, stricken by this disease, lies down almost where he is overcome by it, whether in his house or by the roadside, convinced, in the suddenness of the shock and the confusion of his fear, that the moment has come from which it is useless for him to attempt to escape.

In such conditions it is surely obvious that the sanest treatment is to do everything possible to destroy fear. Fear in a Christian community should be self-condemned. Some nineteen centuries of reading the Johannine epistles should surely have effected this if Christendom is understanding what it reads. It is little to the point to say that fear is uncontrollable, for any person who has ever had anything to do with causes which produce fear knows that this is not the case. Probably every man who has made the sea his profession has been through periods of fear which he has had to overcome in order to gain that serenity in danger, without which he would be a liability instead of an asset on board his ship.

Practically every man who has ever been into action on land can tell you something of the sickening sensations of the first experience of battle. But as time goes on the veteran rises superior to the fears of the recruit, and daily takes his life in his hands, with a calmness which shows that he has learned something at any rate of the dominion over fear. It is surely obvious then that in an hour of great fear, when the prevailing tone of the human mind, in the midst of the conflict of Armageddon, finds expression in an epidemic, that a Christian country should rather resort to its churches to relieve itself of its fears, than close their doors so as to sound the top note of human agony in a belief that God's hand is so shortened that it cannot save.

Let any person who has been brought in contact with the conditions of to-day ask himself frankly whether it is not fear which is playing such fearful havoc in the world. Everywhere men and women are afraid. Afraid in the areas of war of a storm blast that may at any moment strike over them; afraid within the orbit of the air squadrons of the sound of the terrible engines whirring in the darkness overhead, and of hearing the bombs explode all round; boys sleeping fearfully in the trenches, waiting for the summons in the gray morning to go over the top, and men and women sleeping in towns and villages, miles and thousands of miles away, fearful of what in that very moment may be happening to those whom they love; men and women at sea, waiting as it were for the explosion of torpedoes; or even men and women in immediate physical safety, wondering what effect the war is going to have on their incomes and their lives. A great fear has stricken the world, and it is little wonder if out of this fear there have emerged pestilences and diseases which have mounted on the winds of fear, and scattered their seeds in every direction.

In such circumstances what would it be expected that a Christian community should do? Would it not, remembering the words of the Bible that "perfect love casteth out fear," be to ask itself if there were not something amiss with its understanding of love which makes love powerless to overcome fear? And should it not naturally fling wider open the doors of its churches, confident that in doing right, by worshipping God, no ill could touch it? Have Christian countries so completely come to distrust the doctrines they profess that the 91st Psalm is no longer a protection against fear and against disease, against pestilence and against war:—"He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the

shadow of the Almighty. There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling." Yet, at the very moment when the churches should be filling the minds of the people with peace, and reassuring them of the impotency of evil, it is proposed that these churches shall be shut, and that the admission shall be made that it is dangerous for men and women to congregate to worship God, for fear the Lord's arm is so shortened that He cannot contend with microbes. On the other hand if people believe that God sends pestilence into the world, for the good of the world, what right have they to protect themselves against this pestilence, and to attempt by the drinking of drugs, by methods of segregation, or by any means at all, to prevent the anger of the Lord from taking effect. The very fact that all men and women endeavor to protect themselves against disease, at all times, is the proof, to any sane person, that in its heart the world does not believe that discord proceeds from Principle, that death comes out of Life, or that reprisals are the work of Love.

"The way," writes Mrs. Eddy, in a famous sentence on page 201 of Science and Health, "to extract error from mortal mind is to pour in truth through flood-tides of Love." Now not even the natural scientist will deny that the way to overcome any condition at all, is to learn the truth about it. Until the truth has been learned a man fights with his hands tied behind him, or at the best like the boxer in the Greek games, who, Paul declared, beat the air. The Christian religion is perfectly clear on this point. Jesus of Nazareth himself declared, "Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." If the truth will not free men from microbes, it will not free them from anything at all. Now it is perfectly certain that if the truth about Christianity exists anywhere, it exists in the Bible, and that one way to learn this truth is through the churches consecrated for the purpose of promulgating it, and not by closing their doors in token of their impotency. The church which closes its doors practically proclaims its impotency, and the admission is a terrible one when it is made in the hour of a nation's need. If the arm of the Lord is so shortened that He cannot save, what is the good of the siren whistles to call people to prayer every day at midday? Is it to be supposed that the prayers for the success of Truth in the war will be more successful than the prayers in the churches for freedom from influenza? Let the sirens shriek on week days, but the churches be closed on Sunday. Surely it was a wise man who once said, "A mad world, my masters!"

*The above editorial from the Christian Science Monitor is published by Christian Scientists in the hope that by recalling to the community the power of Christian prayer to stop the ravages of disease, the tide of fear, which is the most serious factor in perpetuating the present epidemic, may be stemmed.*

*Committee on Publication For Pennsylvania.*