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MONTHLY LETTER

Devoted to Spiritual and Philosophical Problems -- by Manly P. Hall

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Dear Friend:

DURING the last few years a great wave of mysticism has swept over the world. The heart of mankind is hungry for greater knowledge, the soul yearning for fuller understanding, has sought to tear away the veil which forever drapes the figure of Wisdom. Man has sought to learn those mystic truths so long lost to the world, and in his study and search he has found that there are strange and mysterious beings known to the world as Initiates. Among the ancient works and the mystery schools of those peoples now dead, strange ceremonies called initiations were given in some mysterious way and the popular mind has come to believe that there is a mystic rite, an initiative ceremonial, which makes man one with the immortals, and in the name of this wonderful and mystic concept terrible crimes have been committed against the spiritual and occult teachings. There is probably no word in the English language that has been so abused, so misused, so often used and so little understood, as the word "Initiation." Every dream, every phantom form, every unusual happening, has been called the initiation and all over the world temples have sprung up in the name of the Mystery Schools to initiate candidates into the Wisdom teachings, some of them without cost but in the majority of cases

a heavy fee accompanies the initiation in which for, say, \$25.00 the candidate is dubbed "Sir Somebody" or made a leading luminary in some mystic shrine.

The result of this perversion is that the sacredness, the beauty, and the true realization of the meaning of initiation has been lost to the world, for it is very true that there are none who can so damage a religion or an idea as those who claim to be its followers. How long it will take the world to learn that initiations are not ceremonials it is difficult to say, but sometime each individual must realize that swinging robes and incense burners and other trimmings do not constitute initiation, and that no one on the face of the earth could buy it for the fortune of Croesus nor in any way receive it until he himself by his life has become worthy of its mystic blessing.

There are few in this world who know what real initiation is, and there are fewer still who having discovered it really want to so live that this mystic rite may be unfolded within their souls. The true initiate is a very wondrous and mysterious being and any words that we can say concerning such a one are very poor, indeed. Those who have not already walked the path can have but a feeble idea of what an initiate really is, for such a one has unfolded within himself or herself, as the case may

To him who truly seeks the Middle Way, the Middle Way will open. One step forward is enough.

———Tsiang Samdup.

be, certain principles of which the average layman knows nothing. The powers of life and death, the powers of destruction and construction, the mystic principles of integration and disintegration, all these are in the hands of the Great Ones of God. The knowledge of life is the mystic power of the Initiate, for only those who have walked the ways of many can ever know what the laurels of initiation mean. Only when his heart is filled with love for humanity and with the great suffering and great peace of those who know, can he so express the powers within himself that he is of use in so great a plan.

The Initiate has the mindless mind of spirit which thinks only the thoughts of life, to the source of which he each day draws nearer; he is filled with the understanding of nature's plan for her children and only this knowledge holds in check a heart that would otherwise break with sorrow. He knows that strange, sweet melancholy, that mystic feeling few have ever realized, such as must have filled the soul of Jesus as He wept over Jerusalem. The true initiate is initiated by God and not by man and he will give his life, his soul, his very being, to lift suffering in the name of the Father.

It is only those who have a heart great enough to enfold all creation, a consciousness as great and broad as life itself, who are even on the road to initiation, those whose very being is a mirror of the Divine, whose every thought is to save, whose every power is expanded to raise, whose every action is a blessing, who reach out with hands ever stronger to aid suffering humanity. Those and those alone know the true meaning of initiation. Those whose eyes have never seen suffering, those whose hearts have never been broken, those who are tied by earthly ambitions, can never receive that celestial influx of life which comes to those who have prepared their vehicles in the way of the law and the great love.

The Initiate is slowly reaching out into the Great Unknown, lighting each corner of chaos with his own glory, bathing all life in the warmth of his own soul, limited only by his own unfoldment. On through the ages he is dispelling ignorance and darkness by the ever broadening sphere of his own light. It is those who have dedicated their lives

and being to feed the flame of the Eternal One that its light may shine more brightly whom we call the Initiates and, oh, how few they are! How few have given up the kingdoms of the earth! How few are ready to give up earthly desires to walk the path that leads to Divinity, holding out the little alms-dish of the Buddha for the words of wisdom and love that are given to those who seek for help that they in turn may serve. To those who seek it in any other way than this, initiation is only a terrible demon. The student may gain growth, the wisdom or so-called power of the Adept may come to him, but still if selfishness is his motive he is cursed to suffer and to go without the things of this world as well as the other, for he is cursed with knowledge, and knowledge brings with it a weight that few shoulders are strong enough to bear.

It is only when that mystic thing comes, the strange, spiritual power of initiation, that to man is given the strength to carry knowledge in the way of light. There are only a few who are ready to take up the cross and follow in the footsteps of those who have consecrated their lives to their fellowmen. There are only a few with strength enough to see the veil of the future lifted and remain sane. There are few who could see the veil of their own destiny raised and still have strength enough to walk the way, and even to those who can stand this great light there comes the still greater test of standing alone in the high places of the world without even the staff of comradeship, for the initiate is ever alone but when truly ordained of the spirit is never lonely.

For with this knowledge that no tongue can speak, no coin of man can buy, there comes something else, a still whisper, the word of eternal life that passes eternally through the soul of the saved. While the Initiate sees the bleeding hearts of his fellowman and the breaking and tearing of living things, he still sees the eternal justice of all things, to him there comes the realization that all is working for good. He sees the divine hand working through the apparent chaos of things and that behind the human discord there is the divine reason.

Can we face this Great Unknown as the Great Ones have faced it? Can we pass through with the glorious vision of Nirvana forever before us? If we can we are on the path upward that leads to

the feet of the Great Ones who look down on man with never-changing eyes of love. Very few are there in the world today who are ready to make the great renunciation which the world knows as initiation.

There comes a time to every soul when there is a parting of the ways, and there are few who will take the stony path, give up the kingdoms of earth, and ascend the rocky crags to the feet of the Liberator. Those who take that path are the true essence of the life we live. Eventually, all will take the path as the light dawns upon them.

If we would take that silent way we must renounce the selfishness of materiality and slowly and painfully meet bravely the buffets of the world and go on and on in the endless paths that leads into the Unknown. It is those who have done this, sacrificing all without a murmur, whom we know as the Initiates, and we owe them respect and love for they are in truth our Elder Brothers who have gone a little ways before, that they may come back and show us the path to tread.

A time comes when each soul after having passed the first degrees of initiation receives the greatest test of all. It is when he reaches the veil that divides him from the world. Nirvana with all its blessings shines before him while those wandering in the wilderness cry out for help from the darkness below. He stands at the parting of the ways—which path will he choose? The path of initiation is forever the path of sacrifice. No glory, no power, just a selfless willingness to serve the highest. In the robes of the mendicant the Initiate returns to wander the earth and serve others. While they are apparently imperfect and torn and slandered by the world, yet the hosts of heaven look down and bless them. Those who give up all, even the paradise well earned and the rest that is theirs and come back to walk in the muck and mire,—they are the Initiates. It is at that moment the Star of Bethlehem shines out to tell that another Son of God is born among men.

There are many on earth who have made this great renunciation. They have given up peace to walk the streets in rags, to be laughed at and ridiculed, to teach the few who would listen. They have gained great knowledge and great intellect but

still they live and speak of simple things. We only see them occasionally and we say that these great ones have been blessed but we do not know the price that they have paid, how they have bathed their souls in tears, how they have been garbed only in their own blood and crucified by their own disciples. This is the price of initiation and it is through these things great souls are born.

We have grown to think that there is only one Son of God but we are all his children, and when one really takes the path that leads to Light, the voice of the Father speaks spiritually within his soul, saying, "This is my Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." It is only then that the candidate climbs the steps that lead to immortality.

It is sad to think how few who seek the powers of the masters are willing to pay for them with love and thought. With a few paltry dollars and a few fine robes they honestly believe they can receive that for which Gods have died, which great souls have been crucified to attain and martyrs met their death in the arena. It is a pitiful thing, man's concept of the road to God. "It is sharper than a serpent's tooth to have a thankless child," and how many of them the gods have today!

What is the path that leads to the Initiates? It is the lifting of consciousness through this strange drama which we call life. Along the great road all beings are plodding slowly, old and young alike, all walking the same path, the road that leads to the feet of the Masters. There are many shrines along the way, many religions, many creeds, many little chapels where the seeker stops to pray and the weary to rest. But ever onward all must go until they reach the temple on the top of the lofty crags. In daily life we have our tests; the thought comes to our mind that we hate someone, but what have we to hate? Then thoughts of fear haunt us and sorrow bows us down. Then through the ages comes the realization that all things lead to good. Slowly we gain the great compassion, the great balance, the heart that is free of pain and pleasure. We have the vision of the great Truth and seek to enfold all living things within the cape of our love. When thoughts like these come to the student, he is learning. It is that feeling of glory that brings with it the touch of pain. Everything we do carries

with it a great responsibility. Those who wish to wear the robe of the Initiate must be willing to wear it over a broken heart.

With many people their greatest desire is to escape responsibility or to gain the glory of a great reward but so long as these thoughts fill the soul initiation is impossible. Until the aspirant is living the ritual he can never learn its mystery; until he can see in his own spiritual being the dying Christ on the cross he can never truly learn of initiation. It is bought with the gold of spirit and service. When he has so lived as to be worthy of it, then comes the Light. In the darkness of his own closet, far from his brother man, in the silence of his own soul the great mystery unfolds.

Thousands of figures gather round him and the Grand Master is there in his robe of Blue and Gold, the teachers of the ages gather round him; he is in the great hall of his own body through which he must pass to enter the inner room. There alone he passes through things no mortal tongue can speak; there he sees the reason for his being; the things that he must do; the greater works he is privileged to accomplish. And having learned much, his new responsibility is likewise great; having seen the work to be done he can no longer rest but must wander the world like a lost soul to labor in the endless cause. He lives for one brief moment with those things which are eternal and having glimpsed those wondrous beings, service means everything. He must help all living things to find the light that he has found. Just a silent soul alone, unfolding its wondrous mystery to its own being,—that is Initiation.

Having gone through these tests and removed the love of materiality he is given the privilege of knowing and realizing the true reason for at least part of the Plan. He goes on now, step by step, coming into the powers which were always his, not in heaven but in hell, for the place of the Initiate is not in the worlds above but in the worlds of darkness for he has consecrated his soul to the redemption of man.

We have among us today those who claim to have passed through great initiations, but do their lives show it? Are they willing to work unseen and unknown with the powers that never shine be-

fore the eyes of men? Do they work with the humility and simplicity which is the divine expression of the soul? All true Initiates point out the way by their own beings that others may follow the path to which they have dedicated their lives.

Everyone wants to be an Initiate but if they were the sun would soon go out forever from their lives. Like children, man is always wanting something and weeping for it like a child. The soul filled with uncertainty, selfishness, and materiality can never have the strength of purpose and the unity of balance, to carry the burdens of Initiation. It is a blessing then that many are not what they want to be. If it were not so, hearts would be broken that have not the strength to mend. If we could be initiated now it would do us no good, for each true, upward step must be hewn out of the solid rock of experience that each may take the path by removing from his life the personal things that stand between him and that which he seeks. We must take each cruel word and change it into a dove before we send it on its way.

When we go hence to enter into our Father's house, the greatest reward that can come to us is the privilege of laboring there. Not our will but the Master's should regulate the expression of our life.

If those who seek Initiation today could only know what it really means they would realize how false their concepts have been. What have we done that we have the right to join that little throng of God's chosen ones? If we would labor with them we must take upon our shoulders their burdens and be one of those who are responsible for the lives of men, and when we have raised our consciousness, our lives, our actions and our thoughts to this point, then we are Initiates in spirit and in truth, for the light of God's plan for man shines forth and envelops us in its glory and its first gleam shining upon our souls show us the end to which all Initiation leads,—a lonely cross upon a hill.

Yours sincerely,

Manly P. Hall

Some Philosophical Fragments

Supplement to Students Monthly Letter

THE MASTERY OF FEAR

(Continued from Dec. 1934)

Theologians went into real estate rather heavily. Vast edifices stood proxy for piety and various organizations became more interested in the number of their members than they were in the quality thereof. Religion compromised itself, descended from the non-commercial aloofness which was its original estate. The theological mind wandered from the contemplation of the Kingdom of God to the contemplation of the kingdoms of the earth. The humble simplicity of faith which was its strength gave place to a gaudy unsatisfying complexity, and mankind lost its spiritual preceptor.

The cry is: Back to simple things, to simple lives, to an almost mendicant existence. Men, tired of the sham and responsibility of unnecessary possessions, are beginning to question the desirability of accumulation. Religion should lead in this pilgrimage towards simplicity. Ostentation in faith is unbecoming and the pompous pedagogue is relegated to the limbo. Our world is coming to a philosophy of work, and theology should be a religion of works. As soon as man is satisfied with little, as soon as ambition no longer tempts him to excess, as soon as he regains his power of individual sufficiency, so soon he will master fear.

Mahatma Gandhi is a dramatic example of the new world trend toward simplicity. In his own life this extraordinary man achieves religion in action. This little brown ascetic challenges the involved theologies and policies of the world. He has accomplished within himself the virtues which

men have preached for ages and have failed to live even for a day. Gandhi would bring all men together in a true fellowship of intelligent action and spiritually enlightened endeavor. In his realization of the essential values of life Mahatma Gandhi has mastered fear, and would lead his brother creatures from a collapsing structure of doubt to a newer and broader dwelling of certainties. Impersonal love, sincerely applied to the common problems of mankind, cannot fail to bring about a beautiful and permanent solution.

When religion approaches the social problem not with threats of hell or hope of heaven, but with a simple handclasp of friendship, when the priest is again the shepherd of his flock, then we may hope for the dawn of a more enlightened age. The greatest preaching of Christendom was done to barefoot men along the road to Nazareth; the supreme inspiration of the Buddhist faith came from a shaven-headed mendicant seated on a hillock with no roof but the sky and no altar but the dry earth. Was Islam ever richer than when the Prophet preached the Suras in secret to a faithful few? Religions are not great because of the numbers of their followers, the vastness of their temples, nor the wealth of their orders; they are great only when their doctrine is vitally necessary to men. All this must be re-clarified if faith is once more to lead the march of progress.

The richest civilization that ever existed is bankrupt for ideals. If this Fellowship of Faiths can bring the great religions of the world to the realization of the necessity of forgetting their schisms and their discords, and uniting to the common task of preserving the idealism of the race, it can make the greatest contribution of all modern times to the preservation of society. In the face of this great

opportunity, this great responsibility, nothing else can be considered of importance.

While man is so desperately oppressed with an unfair and unreasonable economic theory of living, it is impossible for him to clarify his mind for the understanding of spiritual matters. While it is true that affliction is a great stimulant to thought, the constant pressure of a hopeless financial tyranny destroys the morale of the mass, and if protracted long enough, results in degradation and chaos. It is highly important that man should put his physical world in order before he turns his attention too completely towards spiritual concerns. Some will say that if man will first become spiritual these other things will adjust themselves, but experience has shown that a certain tranquility of environment is essential to the propagation of idealism. While a few may climb by the rocky path of adversity, the many must be led through green pastures. A man who is in constant fear for the necessities of life is not in a position to be philosophically detached. His perspective is certain to be warped by the pressure of circumstances, he is narrowed to a doctrine of utility. A mind filled with worries has little space in it for ideas. The wealthiest and most powerful nation in the world today is worried nigh unto death. In this crisis we have tested our intelligence and found it wanting. We have tried our psychologists who are supposed to be experts on all complexes, but their solutions are worse than our dilemma. Our college professors are no better. They have lived so long in the narrow environment of memorization that they have been rendered incapable of thinking by the very weight of education. As for our politicians—well, the less said the better. Our scientists, though rather successful in biological research, are poor economists. As most of their funds come from endowment and donation, they are childishly ignorant of practical matters. Our philosophers—but why bring that up? we have none.

So, all in all, when something happens which really requires thinking, there is no one left in our very cultivated world who is capable of doing it. These groups of impotent intellectuals, et cetera, are not only without solutions, they are without ideals. They pride themselves for the most part

upon their lack of vision. There is only one body in society today which even pretends to idealism and that is the religious world.

If this civilization is going to be saved it will not be saved by budgets or ballots, it will not be saved by psychoanalysis or serums. It must be saved by honest, practical idealism, and without this priceless ingredient all remedies advanced to solve the present world emergency must fail. A practical example of the spiritual factor in material action is the NRA program. The success of the National Reconstruction Act depends entirely upon one metaphysical element—namely, integrity. Our President has put his faith in the honesty of the American people, but where in the whole theory of modern education, sociology or science, is man being educated in honesty? The government issues each year hundreds of bulletins dealing with the planting of corn, the trapping of wild animals, the weaning of infants, et cetera, and yet nowhere does man receive education in integrity, honesty, truth and practical idealism. If our President, like Diogenes, is having difficulty finding his honest man, it is because economics has made such serious inroads into the spiritual life of man that the honest man is failing from the earth.

If this Fellowship of Faiths can dedicate itself to the production of honest men, if it can preserve and perpetuate those great spiritual ideals which promote honesty and truth, it shall earn for itself the undying gratitude of mankind.

Except for men, humanity has very little to fear. We have fairly well tamed the primordial forces, but we have never been able to check human greed. When people complain about this world they are really not complaining about the world at all—only the people who are in it. The earth is very abundant, a gentle and kindly mother of living things. She has her moods, but science has learned to anticipate many of them and in time may curb them all. But man on this little earth has made himself very uncomfortable. With his national spirit, he has hacked continents into small bits and fenced off acreage under various flags. Since his first appearance, man has been precocious and destructive. With uncurbable ambition and insatiable greed he has prevented the fulfillment of nearly every good

which might otherwise have come to him. A certain religious instinct was his one redeeming emotion. A certain veneration by which, through development, he became a patron of art and beauty; and, enfolding philosophy unto itself, he gradually built a somewhat impressive structure, of at least relative truth, in the midst of the desert of its deceptions. In more recent times the sciences, philosophies and arts all separated from the religious principle, each going its separate way on a program of isolated individualism. Learning thus became sacred and profane. Profane learning became very profane and finally reached the nadir of its profanity in our recent economic orgy.

The day must sometime come when all the arts, sciences, crafts and philosophies must again be united with the sacred sciences to become one undivided body of divine learning. Until all the transactions between men come to be regarded as spiritual, none of the transactions between men can be truly spiritual. Only when men are honest and gentle one with the other can fear cease. When I know that my brother's smile is from his heart and not from the scheming of his mind, I shall no longer fear. There is no fear where honesty rules, there is no fear where integrity is the basis of relationships, there is no fear where kindness is the integral element in the compound of relationships.

True religion is integrity in action. It is the DOING of honesty, and the working of truth. Religion is that constructive force which is evident in the lives of truly superior men. The seeds of religion were sown with the beginning of the race, and the full flowering of it will come only with the perfection of the race. But as civilization progresses it is essential that the religious impulse shall progress with it, tincturing and enlivening all material accomplishments and rendering them usable in the permanent structure of progress.

When our wealth, our power or our domain, increases more rapidly than our spiritual development, the result is despotism and tyranny. In the last fifty years we have concentrated our entire resource upon physical progress, suffering from the delusion that with the increase of our worldly goods would come security and happiness. We neglected our spiritual lives. Our religions became mere

forms and ceased to be vital forces. The result is a purposeless generation. We have things but not knowing how to use them wisely we have abused them fatally. WE MUST NOW PAUSE IN OUR ECONOMIC DEBACLE TO ALLOW OUR ASPIRATIONS TO CATCH UP TO OUR AMBITIONS.

Have you ever asked yourself, "where is the world going? what is civilization trying to accomplish? what is the actual reason for this terrific pressure of life?" If you ask these questions, you will get no answer. We know not where we go nor why. We are purposeless, drifting on the currents of impulse, laughing today and crying tomorrow, but absolutely without intent or reason. Tomorrow is only a vacuum into which we seek to shift the responsibilities of today. Tomorrow is no longer an opportunity; to most it is an impending fatality. Tomorrow is pregnant with the reactions of yesterday. We fear tomorrow even as we regret yesterday.

Can you not realize how greatly, how desperately this modern world needs spiritual guidance? Exploited on every hand by dishonesty and selfishness, is it a wonder that man's faith weakens under the strain of long suffering? If ever in the history of civilization we have needed an honest religion, it is now. We cannot fail this afflicted world. We must rise in new strength and with higher resolve, putting aside the small matters over which we have haggled, and rededicate our faiths and ourselves to this supreme human duty.

Fear is man's basic weakness, and it is founded upon ignorance and oppression. Courage is the supreme strength in man and is based upon wisdom and justice. A civilization which is established in fear will perish in fear, but a civilization which is established in the courage of conviction and upon the principles of justice will survive as long as the universe endures. All true progress points towards enlightenment. Enlightenment is the ultimate state of man and enlightenment is wisdom in action. The primitive barbarism in the human soul will ultimately be transmuted into a real and permanent civilization. Ideality must not only uphold this goal, it must point the way to the accomplishment of this end through practical example. The perfec-

tion of the race does not imply a final identity of purpose or action but rather a magnificent cooperation in purpose and action. We look forward to the age in which all men, performing these labors most suitable and desirable to themselves, shall unite in a common admiration for all good works.

Religion must point the way in this new era, taking its stand firmly amidst the crumbling ruins of materiality. The spiritual codes of the earth must rescue the vision of the race from the obscurity which threatens it. There is no perfection of the part separate from the perfection of the whole. There is no single department of society which can function smoothly while the rest is in chaos. Man cannot be spiritually normal and at the same time physically disorganized. He must put his whole world in order in a Fellowship of Faith and a co-ordination of effort. Let us each according to our light, but with sincerity of purpose and honesty of heart, strive to preserve and disseminate those essential truths which are indeed the hope of the world.

THE END

A LITTLE ESSAY ON BEAUTY

Beauty is an elusive power, whose presence is an invisible asset, whose absence leaves a supreme need unfulfilled. Beauty has been defined as symmetry, or the harmony of form. It is a proper adjustment of parts, a reasonable synthesis of members, an order pleasing because it is proper.

Beauty is not identical with an object nor with the grouping of objects. It is a spirit which is created by the proper bringing together of a number of parts which may not be necessarily beautiful in themselves but which produce a harmonious whole. Physical beauty is invoked by a consistent co-ordination of elements. We may ask what is the criterion of consistency and, with Plotinus, we may say that the soul which is the criterion of consistency in man, rejoicing in beholding other natures harmonious to itself, becomes the determinant of beauty. The soul of man is rational. Rationality is simply beauty upon the plane of reason. Thus the rational soul, beholding other reasonable

natures, rejoices in the similarity and hence establishes the criterion of excellence.

In addition to the beauty of form we have beauty of sound, which is HARMONY; beauty of mode or tempo, which is RHYTHM; beauty of morality, which is VIRTUE; beauty of mind, which is INTELLECT; and beauty of spirit, which is the ultimate GOOD.

The Platonic Triad is the One, the Beautiful, and the Good, and the unity or wholeness of the world was erected upon this triangle. The One was the substance of all natures and beings; the Beautiful, the perfection of all natures and beings; and the Good, the utility of all natures and beings.

Without beauty the soul of the people cannot develop itself properly and sanely. We say that a man must eat in order to live. Not only does he need physical food, but there is a metaphysical nature within him which must be fed with a superior sort of diet. The soul is fed through the eyes and the other sense perceptions. That which is grotesque or distorted is a poison to the soul; for, sensing the asymmetrical figure through the faculties, the soul suffers from the shock of the incongruity. The inner nature feeds upon environment and he who surrounds himself with beauty nourishes his aesthetic nature, without which he must fail as a rational creature.

Beauty is essential to human survival. Deprived of its influence, man speedily deteriorates into a state of crassness and degradation. Plotinus declares the most worthy profession to be the service of the beautiful and that to destroy beauty was the most heinous of all crimes. Greece produced the most beautiful civilization the world has ever known by emphasizing the necessity of aesthetics and establishing beauty as one of the pillars of the state.

One of the great needs of our civilization is a greater emphasis upon aesthetic ideals to modify the extreme utilitarianism of our age and thus permit the survival of the subtler elements of culture.

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