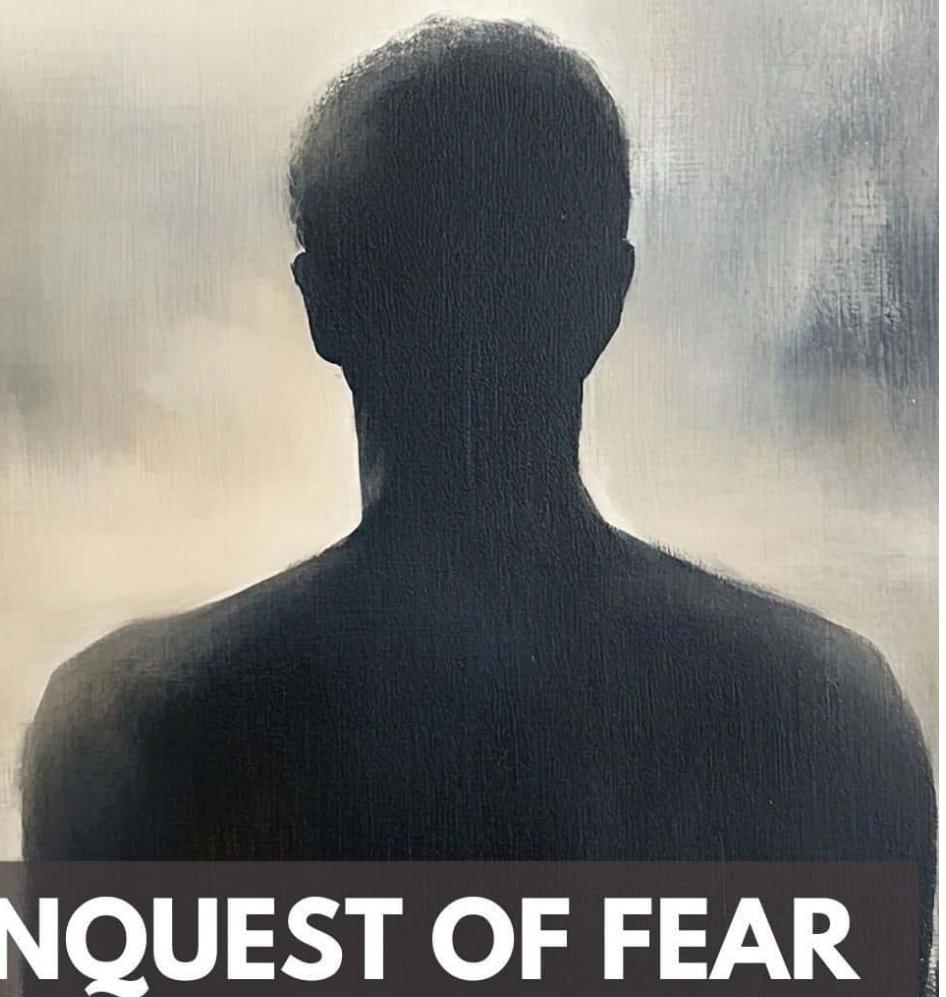


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# **THE CONQUEST OF FEAR**

**Basil King**

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## **BASIL KING**



The Conquest of Fear by Basil King.

First published in 1921.

This ebook edition was published by Global Grey on the 17th March 2025.

This book can be found on the site here:

[globalgreybooks.com/conquest-of-fear-ebook.html](https://globalgreybooks.com/conquest-of-fear-ebook.html)

Global Grey 2025

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# Introduction

by Henry C. Link, Ph.D.

*Author of The Rediscovery Of Man, The Return To Religion, etc.*

There are many books which give some help to many people. There are books which give a set of rules, or even one master rule, by which to meet the problems of life. This is not such a book. It suggests no simple recipe for the conquest of fear. Instead, it presents, what all too few of us to-day possess, a philosophy of life.

Moreover, in contrast to the dominant thinking of our age, which is materialistic, King's philosophy is spiritual and religious. Indeed, the ideas in this book are so profoundly different from the commonly accepted ideas of our times that they will come as a shock to many readers. One purpose of this introduction is to prepare the reader for such a shock.

I have said that the dominant thinking of our age is materialistic, and by that I mean also physical. Let me illustrate this broad statement with reference to the subject of fears alone. The conquest of fear has gone on year after year chiefly through physical means. Physical pain has always been one of the great sources of fear. Now ether and other anaesthetics have eliminated the chief pains of major operations. Older people can still remember their fear of the dentist, when killing a nerve or pulling a tooth caused excruciating pain. Now local anaesthetics even in minor troubles have made dentistry almost painless. We have not conquered these fears of pain—rather their cause has been removed.

Twilight sleep, the artificial sleep to alleviate the pains of childbirth, is the perfect expression of the scientific and materialistic elimination of fear. By a chemical blackout of the mind, a dimming of the conscious self, the person is enabled to escape the necessity of facing and conquering fear through his own resources.

I am not condemning the physical alleviation of pain or the progress of physical science. I am only describing a trend, and that is the growing emphasis on the elimination of fears by science rather than on their conquest by the individual.

Illness has always been a great source of fear, and still is. The dread of cancer is one of the terrifying fears of our time and fortunes are spent in cancer research and education. **The Conquest of Fear** was written as a result of the author's threatened total blindness. He faced a fact for which there seemed no physical remedy—hence his great need for a spiritual conquest of this great fear.

And yet, year by year, physical science has been eliminating or reducing the dangers of sickness. Vaccines for the prevention of the dread disease, small-pox, are now a matter of course. Vaccines and specifics against the deadly tetanus, against typhoid fever, diphtheria, syphilis, and other fearful diseases have become commonplace. The fear of pneumonia has been almost eliminated through the discoveries of the miraculous sulpha drugs. Science has done wonders toward the elimination of such fears. A man need hardly conquer the fear of any particular sickness—there is left for his conquest chiefly the fear of dying.

In addition to physical disease, our civilization has now developed mental ailments of all kinds. These include a large category of fears called phobias—claustrophobia, agoraphobia, photophobia, altaphobia, phonophobia, etc.

Three fields or professions, other than religion and philosophy, have sought to deal with these fears, the psychiatric, the psychoanalytic, and the psychological. The medical psychiatric

profession has naturally emphasized physical remedies beginning with sedatives and bromides to induce artificial relaxation and ending up with lobectomy or the complete cutting off of the frontal lobes of the brain, the centers of man's highest thought processes. Between these two extremes are the shock treatments in which an injection of insulin or metrazol into the blood stream causes the person to fall into a sort of epileptic fit during which he loses consciousness. Through a series of such shock treatments some of the higher nerve centers or nerve pathways are destroyed. By this process a person's fears may also be eliminated and he may be permanently or temporarily cured. In short, the person does not conquer the fears in his mind; the psychiatrist or neurologist, by physically destroying a part of the person's brain, destroys also the fears.

How strongly this physical approach has taken hold of people was made plain to me through an article of mine on how to conquer fears. The emphasis in this article was on how people could overcome their fears and worries through their own efforts. To illustrate the opposite extreme, I mentioned the brain operations and shock treatments by which psychiatry now often deals with fears. Among the many people who wrote to me as a result of this article, *the majority inquired where they could obtain such an operation!* To such extremes have many people gone in their desire to eliminate fear by physical means rather than conquer it through their own spiritual powers.

The psychoanalyst deals with a person's phobias through what seems like an intellectual or rational process. According to psychoanalysis, phobias or fears are due to some buried or subconscious complex. By daily or frequent talks with a psychoanalyst for a period of six months or a year, a person's subconscious disturbance *may* be brought to light, and if so, the fear is supposed automatically to disappear. Even if true, this process is a highly materialistic one, at least in the sense that only people who can spend thousands of dollars can afford such treatments.

The psychologist, as well as some psychiatrists who have studied normal psychology, regard many fears as normal experiences which the individual can cope with largely through his own resources and with very little help in the way of visits or treatment. The trouble arises in the case of those people who have no personal resources to draw on. Their lives are so lacking in spiritual power, or so full of intellectual scepticism and distrust, that they cannot help themselves. They have no religious convictions or certainties by which to obtain leverage in their struggles. They have no firm philosophy of life on which they or those who would help them can lay hold. They are putty in the hands of the fears and forces that beset them from without.

The psychologist and the psychiatrist both find it difficult to do much to help such a person. And yet, this is the kind of person our civilization and education tends increasingly to produce. By the physical elimination of the causes of fear we have gradually undermined man's inner resources for the conquest of fear.

This materialistic trend has received a new impetus from the fields of political science, economics, and sociology. A dozen years ago economic disaster threatened to stampede the nation. Millions who had lost their jobs began to fear penury and want. Millions who still had jobs feared that they would lose them. Other millions began to fear the loss of their money and possessions. Rich and poor, becoming afraid that the country was going to pieces, rushed to the banks to withdraw their savings and brought on the nation-wide bank closings. Those were days when everyone knew paralyzing fears.

History will record the fact that these fears were met, not by conquest, not by drawing on the moral resources and inner fortitude of the American citizen, but by a collection of wholesale