

# WHAT IS TOLERANCE?

## *Forum Definitions — Twelfth Series*

**I**F we may judge by the interest which this particular term has aroused, the subject of Tolerance is a very live issue in America to-day. Not only were present doubts presented in a variety of forms, but the past was ransacked both for parallels and for wisdom. Many were the excursions into history with which competitors endeavored to divert us. "Was it not King Alfred the Great of England who said, 'Let us love the man but hate his sins'?" asks Mr. George W. Lyon (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania). Voltaire's "I do not agree with what you say, but I shall fight to the death for your right to say it," was cited by Mr. Henry Flury, amongst others. As the immediate cause of this particular word having been selected for definition, he is entitled to be heard with sympathy when he characterizes Tolerance as "a virtue which strongly marked the founders of the American Republic, but which is conspicuous by its absence in present day discussions."

Sweet reasonableness, however, is implied by the Bishop of Wheeling's "Tolerance is the recognition of truth and goodness wherever you come in contact with it". Wherefore fie on Miss Alvene Donaldson (Chicago, Illinois) for whom "Tolerance is a vice". A majority, she thinks is never right; if the minority is tolerant it is lax, "and we should avoid people that are lax."

Of the many voices raised against Tolerance that of Amanda D. Parker (San Diego, California) was, however, the loudest. For her it is "a will-o'-the-wisp leading to destruction. It keeps weaklings and imbeciles alive amid filth and disease to poison the blood of the human race, while strong men are killing each other in wars they did not start." But if, as is hinted by Julia Nott Waugh (San Antonio, Texas), "there is a germ of right in every point of view," then it is equally malicious of Dr. Charles Platt (Ardmore, Pennsylvania) to insist that we are solely concerned with "an indifference, good-natured or cynical, to that which one knows to be wrong." At any rate, the Rev. Louis Guzzardi (Trenton, New Jersey) has the majority with him when he declares that we are tolerant "solely for the sake of the progress and peaceful

welfare of humanity, the nation, and the community in which we live."

A "willingness to let the tares grow" (Mary Willard Keyes, Chelmsford, Massachusetts) is regarded as a form of "suppressed contempt" by L. A. Milner (Boston, Massachusetts). And according to Alfred Klausler (St Paul, Minnesota), "it always pays to be tolerant."

Examples of Tolerance were numerous, — and even intolerance did not escape. "Have you tasted the frost of New England virtue?" asks Hazel Sawyer Schnitzer (Belleville, New Jersey), for whom intolerance is "the Spirit that rides Earth to its doom." On the other hand, "if my five year old boy mixes in the sugar bin the salt and sugar which the grocer has just delivered, I display Tolerance in not spanking him when he assures me he did it in an effort to save space," says the Rev. H. H. Mitchell (Moscow, Idaho); while in the eyes of Professor Ben H. Petty (Lafayette, Indiana) "it is displayed when the average conceited husband confesses that his wife possesses just about as many qualifications fitting her to drive the car as he claims for himself." Or to follow W. Garland Young (Louisville, Kentucky), it is "what makes the business head writhe in his chair when the college graduate walks in and sits on his desk, asking for a job."

Finally there is Victor F. White's description of Tolerance as "remembering that the other fellow did not preside at his birth", which may be set beside the birthday note of Joseph d'Evreux (Halifax, Nova Scotia): "Tolerance is the child of common sense and a sense of humor," leaving us so uncertain which was the lady that we hastily change the topic and introduce our ten prize winners as follows:

1 Tolerance has three phases, emotional, intellectual, and moral. In its first phase it is human sympathy; in the second, understanding of other people's reasons and motives for action; and in the third, simple, basic, firm, ethical convictions. The three working together cause one to (1) condone, (2) appreciate, and (3) often support actions contrary to one's own natural impulses and personal opinions. The third phase of Tolerance keeps it from degenerating into a vicious sentimentality, and makes true Tolerance a source of power, not weakness. (*Elsa Grueneberg, Parkville, Missouri*).

2 Tolerance is that state of mind which regards truth as being always relative and never absolute. It arrives at opinions, but never reaches

conclusions; it entertains persuasions, but avoids convictions; it ignores verdicts, but courts facts. Tolerance indicates an intellect hitting on all six; it mirrors a mind mellow with good humor. It loves light and laughter, and hates nothing, — save intolerance. It is the Nirvana of the dreamer, but Pandemonium to the doer. Tolerance first visions the plan. But in the end intolerance does the job. (*Dwight T. Scott, Washington, D. C.*).

3 Tolerance is laziness dressed in Sunday clothes. It is the apology for lack of back bone, and wears a self-awarded crown set with paste jewels. It takes possession of a person and he goes through life excusing all the wrongs he is too indolent to correct. It is the household out of which humanity exits when it must cross the room to reach the front door. (*Mrs. H. J. Bryson, Raleigh, North Carolina*).

4 Tolerance is the combination of intelligence, kindness, generosity, and indifference, with the capacity for seeing and hearing a great deal about love, religion, politics, education, marriage, golf, international debts, radios, shows, what the young people are coming to, automobiles, sports, books, art, bridge, taxes, short skirts, evolution, race horses, prohibition, bootleggers, sex, high prices, jokes dirty or old, operations, children, wives, husbands, mothers-in-law, relatives, business, parties wild and otherwise, Coolidge, movie actors and actresses, weather, crops, money won, lost, or made, what he or she said and what I said to them, scandals, real estate, local gossip; and doing little and saying less. (*Rachelle Shacklette, Lexington, Kentucky*).

5 Tolerance is the wisdom, or the expedient policy, of those in power, or in a position of advantage, to use the knowledge of human nature sympathetically when they deal with races who differ physically, culturally, or politically from them, — or with individuals and minorities in their own country who deliberately overstep the sacred boundaries of standardized life, law, thought, or religion. It presupposes the submergence of fear, hate, and prejudice. Only the presence of an ethical motive makes it a virtue, for politics is often tolerant of corruption, religion of sin; but, — Gamaliel was tolerant of Christianity, Frederick II of Rousseau, America of political refugees. (*William Schaffrath, Syracuse, New York*).

6 Tolerance is that virtue which enables a man to smile when some one trods on his mental corns. It is the quality displayed by one who, having the power to coerce his opponents and enforce his own opinions, refrains from using it. It is (or would be if such things were possible) General Amos Fries demanding free speech for Communists; Henry Ford addressing a convention of the Independent Order of B'nai B'rith; James Weldon Johnson being elected an honorary member of the Ku Klux Klan; Dr. John Roach Straton inviting E. Haldeman-Julius to speak from his pulpit. (*Floyd L. Yeomans, Marne, Michigan*).

7 Tolerance: (1) A kindly, generous, and brave attitude toward ideas, institutions, customs, and modes of conduct antagonistic to, — or not

in agreement with, — one's own views, ideas, institutions, customs, and (assumed) self-interests. (2) The antithesis of intolerance, which latter has its origin in super-egotism, selfishness, conceit, fear, and an inherent tendency to brutality and tyranny. This does not mean that one should not fight for his convictions, but he should do so with the recognition of the right of the other man to fight for his as well. (*Maynard Shipley, San Francisco, California*).

8 Tolerance is a virtue to be handled with care. To tolerate red radicalism is the same sweet gesture which Aesop warned us of in the fable of the warmed up viper, which stung the tolerant, kind man to death. Parents who tolerate little disobediences in children are the ones who later on are weakly inquiring, "What shall we do with our children?" Governments tolerate lawlessness and bring anarchy upon themselves. Tolerance of weakness, poor work, slipshod methods, ruins any business, be it national, commercial, or domestic. A government must be intolerant of errors within itself, but tolerant of its neighbors. A business, likewise; while the only individual who attains tolerance is the one who is intolerant of injustice in himself. (*Willson Barrett, Rusk, Texas*).

9 Tolerance is the attitude we extend toward any faction as strong as ourselves, composed of people who do what we wouldn't do, in the hope that they will let us do what they wouldn't do. We have found that fighting scratches our faces. Being called names disturbs the tranquillity of our self-satisfied souls. Besides, we often get the worst of the scrap. Thus, painful as the realization has been to us, we have found that in order to live ourselves, we are forced to let live. So we have learned not to spring at the strong man who disagrees with us, but to adopt instead a policy of indifference, — only we call it Tolerance, because the word sounds charitable and progressive and Christian in an age when soft footsteps justify to ourselves the frequent use of the big stick, when that use is quite without danger of retaliation. (*Alice Wildey, Chicago, Illinois*).

10 Tolerance is the ability to endure the windy tirades of certain old people on the subject of politics, religion, "the good old times", or the unspeakably degenerate younger generation. (*G. B. Bowen*).

*Next word to be defined, — LOVE. Definitions, typewritten and not exceeding one hundred words, should reach the Editor not later than May 25, for publication in the July issue.*

# THE NEW AMERICAN LANGUAGE

## *Second Series*

**O**NE of America's most distinguished men of letters, now, alas, deceased, declared that the American people was "romping amid the ruins of the English language". We have asked our readers to regard themselves as master masons ordained by Webster to rebuild the ramparts, — or to come and romp with us.

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So much by way of placating those who feel that the past should still hold our entire attention. Passing now to the abundant material which the last three months have accumulated, we find that the old difficulty about "brothers and sisters" has produced a variety of suggestions. Dr. Otto J. Monson (Santa Monica, Calif.) proposes *sothers*, which is presumably superior to *sisbros*