

# The Saturday Review

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## The True End of Knowledge

LAST year you and I, progressive Americans all, consumed 45 million aspirin tablets daily. Each night we swallowed 20 million sleeping pills, the next morning chasing them with as many million "wake-up" pills. American doctors will this year write nearly 40 million prescriptions for the new anti-worry pills, called "tranquilizers," hoping to stave off the anxiety, depression, and fear that hamstring our modern living. Juvenile delinquency is a common topic over our teacups. Seventy-five million Americans are chronic drinkers and 5 million of these are confirmed alcoholics.

Such is the price of our sagacity: one out of every two hospital beds in America is occupied by a mental patient; one out of every ten children born suffers a mental illness. Today the hallmarks of our civilization are stomach ulcers and heart attacks. Slowly but surely in our land of bounty we are driving ourselves to a sort of prosperous desperation. Like modern Franksteins we are being devoured by our own alchemies, and many of us find ourselves American aliens, mentally and spiritually displaced in our own native land.

However did we come to believe that we could manufacture happiness out of steel and synthetics and bring peace and good will to earth by splitting an atom?

It is trite but true that our generation has made greater technological advances than all our ancestors combined since time began. We have indeed turned natural resources into heretofore undreamt-of power, power to send planes around the world without refueling, power to place perpetual-motion machines in outer

space, power to blast mankind from the face of the earth forevermore. Yet, withal, we know we have failed to tap the greatest resource of all, the power of the human being for mutual understanding and respect, one for another, his benign ability to settle his difficulties and differences in peace. And until we do learn in lowliness of mind to esteem another as equal or better than ourselves, violence shall not cease to be heard in the world, nor wasting, nor destruction.

Perhaps our fault lies in our trusting nothing we cannot see or hear or feel—for we are opportunists, most of us. But the problem goes deeper. We have somehow taught ourselves that might makes right, that superiority is virtuous, that wisdom is found in gold and onyx and sapphires and topaz.

I am a librarian. There is prevalent opinion which holds that librarianship is a sort of Casper Milquetoast profession, and that our stock-in-trade—namely, the book—is an ineffectual artifact which serves primarily to collect dust on musty, dim-lit shelves. Therefore, the book is of no practical importance, we hear, for the busy, hard-driving man of the world.

But let me state that throughout all history man's recorded word has been more powerful than his most diabolical machines. And books—instead of being lifeless, static things—have been man's most dynamic, most explosive force in the world. No other has had so powerful an impact upon humanity, anywhere, anytime. If you doubt this, remember "The Prince," remember "Das Kapital," remember "Mein Kampf" and "Uncle Tom's Cabin,"

and remember the New Testament.

While I can do no more in this space than express a solitary opinion, I am convinced that the world we have made for ourselves is scheduled for sadder days unless we learn to capitalize on man's innate goodness and somehow to sponsor his eternal yearning for peace and lovingkindness, one for another. The deep, deep reservoir of the human spirit, powerful and everlasting, yet remains to be utilized for the preservation of all that mankind—in his sanest moments—really believes in and cherishes. I would address one general admonition to us all: consider the true end of knowledge—seek it not for pleasure or profit, not for prowess or power, but only for the benefit and betterment of mankind.

Librarians, teachers, preachers, statesmen, writers, and others have the vast advantage of communication. And we have easy access to the materials which man most needs to direct or re-direct his destiny and to strengthen his armor, intellectual, cultural, and spiritual. However, man and the materials so necessary to his beneficence do not just happily fall together, by chance. They must be brought together—and in my humble opinion this very act of bringing them together is the principal role of the librarian of the future. If our era is one of tragedy, terror, and maddening tension, it is also one of tremendous opportunity and unbounded challenge. The future promises even greater opportunity, even vaster challenge.

UP TO now the library profession has put great stress upon acquiring materials and upon organizing them for their smooth flow into the hands of our patrons. But the time has come, or so it seems to me, for us to realize that these practices, however important, are but means to an end. The end itself, we must know, is wisely interpreting these materials for the hosts of men, women, and children of all walks of life, who now more than ever come within our care, providing them proper guidance to the vast store of recorded knowledge which is our rightful province. Surely, our success in helping them survive their many ordeals, in making them better citizens of a world we must all inhabit—whether we like it or not—may be measured in terms of our ability to translate into dynamic force the best that has been thought and said in the past and found only in our workshops. Therein lies the real, the only solid foundation for "The Library and Its Future."

—W. STANLEY HOOLE.

Librarian, University of Alabama.

# LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

## ELEVENTH HOUR

DR. SCHWEITZER—the man of the eleventh hour. I knew he would eventually come through in the spirit of his provoking concept of “reverence for life.” His great humanitarian declaration reveals the issue for what it should be (SR May 18)—an unmistakable call to arms of all peoples of the world who are concerned (and who is not?) with the preservation of the human race.

ALVIN B. AUBERT.

Baton Rouge, La.

## A REPRINT?

WILL YOU NOT preserve the type and make a reprint of NC's statement and Dr. Schweitzer's. We could use such a reprint.

CARL SOULE.

Chicago, Ill.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** More requests for reprints of the Schweitzer Declaration of Conscience have been received in the first week following publication than for any article in the history of The Saturday Review. Two reprints are now available:

1) *The Schweitzer Declaration of Conscience and N.C.'s Introduction*. Price: 5¢.

2) *The complete reprint of all the material, including the Schweitzer Declaration, the Introduction, the reply by Dr. Willard Libby, and counter-replies by Harrison Brown and John Lear*. Price: 10¢. Reduced price on both reprints in quantities of fifty or more.

## TO THE PRESIDENT

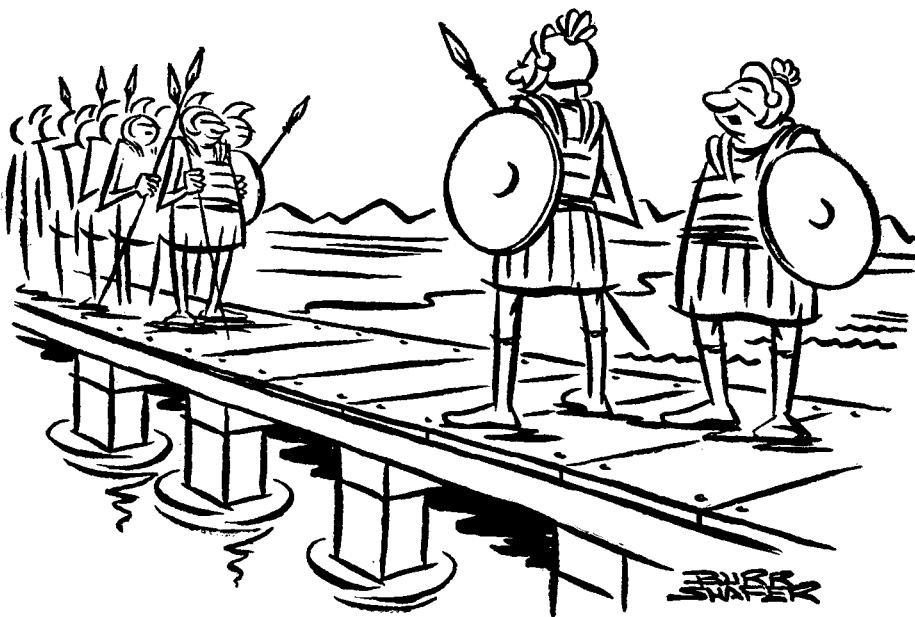
TODAY I SENT the following letter to the President of the United States.

Dear Sir:

It matters not whether the increased radioactivity produced by the testing of atomic weapons is an infinitesimal fraction of existing background values well within permissible and safe limits. It matters not whether the effects of such radiation exert a negligible and practically unmeasurable action on longevity, the incidence of leukemia, or the occurrence of mutations in generations to come.

The fact remains that the contamination of the world by the explosion of nuclear weapons is increased, never to be reduced within the foreseeable future. It is immaterial whether this increase can be measured in whole numbers or fractions of a roentgen, or whether it is so minute that it cannot be determined by existing yardsticks. One cannot escape the conclusion that the margin of safety is being lessened to some extent—never to be restored.

To be forthright, let us admit that the maintenance of peace through defensive strength and superiority is a second-rate device, popular today because of our inability to eliminate strife through conviction, moral suasion, and international understanding and law. Perhaps we fear that the eradication of atomic weapons will



THROUGH HISTORY WITH J. WESLEY SMITH

“Well, then, if I can't help, is there anything I should tell Mrs. Horatius?”

place us at a disadvantage before larger forces possessing greater quantities of conventional materials.

“The one sort of inconsistency that is culpable,” said Daniel Webster, “is the inconsistency between a man's . . . conscience and his conduct.”

I beg of you to take immediate action.

GEORGE A. PERERA, M.D.

New York, N. Y.

## PERSONAL MAILING

I, FOR ONE, would be happy to mail a reprint of the Declaration to everyone I know, with a covering letter from my husband and myself. Perhaps this evidence of our concern about the problem of exposure to radioactivity would make an impression even on people who had already read Dr. Schweitzer's statement. The letter would ask recipients to make a similar mailing.

MRS. JANICE A. OSER.

E. Weymouth, Mass.

## PRAYER TO GOD

IT WAS NOT until I read Schweitzer's simple and eloquent words that I realized the extent of the threat to mankind, to all mortal life in fact, of the senseless immorality of the atomic tests. My next reaction was the only one possible: prayer to Almighty God.

HERBERT E. MOULTON.

Lisle, Ill.

## POSTCARDS TO WASHINGTON

I AM CONVINCED that nothing is going to stop the bomb tests until a far more general protest from the public takes place. I am pretty sure that there is

enough knowledge now to produce the beginnings of such a protest. I am naive enough to think that if everyone sent merely a postcard to Washington there might be an impressive demonstration of feeling.

MARGARET S. RICHARDSON.

New York, N. Y.

## THE TRUTH

SINCE DR. SCHWEITZER has called on public opinion to make itself known I shall add a coal to the fire herein by stating that I accept his views as truth. I am writing letters to other effective places, also.

JANE E. MARCH.

Montclair, N. J.

## OVERCOME OUR LETHARGY

NEEDLESS TO SAY, all serious-minded people reading Schweitzer's Declaration must be moved to immediate action. This is no longer in the realm of staying politically safe for fear of repercussions “ten years from now.” We must overcome the lethargy that has fallen upon us.

CLAIRE MICHAELS SERCHUK.

New York, N. Y.

## DISAPPOINTING

DR. SCHWEITZER's Declaration was very disappointing, and its title is a misnomer. From a theologian, a philosopher, and one of the world's greatest public benefactors, I expected his bomb appeal would at least contain some moral pronouncements, but the word “conscience” does not appear in it anywhere except in the title. Instead, it is a cold recital of medical facts about radiation. These facts are in