

A Declaration of Faith
Dr. Albert Schweitzer

The following letter, translated from the original German text, has a far greater significance than the recent occasion which gave rise to it. We therefore print it in full to show the intellectual and theological affinity of its outstandingly great author with Christian liberals. Dr. Schweitzer may hence-forward be counted an adherent of those principles of enfranchised religion for which "Faith and Freedom" stands. - EDITOR

LAMBARENE, Sunday, August 10th 1947

To the delegates of the Conference of the International Association for Liberal Christianity and Religious Freedom (I.A.R.F) in Berne.

Let me tell you how sorry I am, not to be able to be present at your Conference. For various reasons it is impossible for me to travel to Europe as yet. However, in thought I am with you in these days.

In this conference you will not forget that you are serving an unwanted object; unwanted because the spirit of to-day is opposed to free religious thinking. However, it is needed more than ever before, because for the spiritual life of our time it is a necessity. Only out of the renewal of ethical and religious thought can arise the spirit which gives to mankind the understanding and power to go from darkness and struggle into light and peace.

Free Christianity has the great task of bringing to mankind once and for all the conviction that thought and religion are not irreconcilable but actually belong to each other. Every deep religion begets thinking and every truly deep thought becomes religious.

The greatest human spirits have striven for the combination of thinking and religion because they saw this as a necessity for man's spiritual well being. We continue this effort in a time when mankind must first of all learn again to respect spiritual truth. The heart of the Christian is, for us, the Kingdom of God. Only a Christianity which is inspired by this idea and is actively willing the Kingdom of God, is near the original spirituality; only this can give mankind what it needs.

By standing for free Christianity and not asking men to become religious by giving up the thinking which is part of their very nature, we have in Jesus one, who denounces the laying on man, in the name of religion, heavy burdens which do not belong to it. We keep to the words of St. Paul: "Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is unity."

May our free Christianity show itself able in spirit and in deed to fulfil its task in our time; may we all keep alive in ourselves the need to work on ourselves, that our Religion may become ever deeper and more real, so that the spirit of Jesus shall not only make us free, but deepen the reality of our Christian living. May this be our ideal.

In this thought I feel myself bound to you and I hope that this Conference may be a blessing to you.

With kindest regards, yours very sincerely,

ALBERT SCHWEITZER