ALBERT SCHWEITZER:

A MAN BETWEEN TWO CULTURES

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BOOK REVIEW

My research is primarily based on the works written by Albert Schweitzer. The "Cahiers Albert Schweitzer" and the publications "Etudes Schweitzeriennes" constituted major references as well. While in France, I had the opportunity to visit Gunsbach, Kaysersberg, Strasbourg, all the places in Alsace where Schweitzer lived. Another great place of inspiration was the little village of Sessenheim which still honors the memory of Goethe. The meetings with Professor Jean-Paul Sorg were always a valuable source of information. Furthermore, I particularly examined the works of Charles R. Joy and Norman Cousins, and of many more. The most hermetic work was Kant's philosophy whose writings are quite complex. The most fascinating book I read in the course of this study was definitely the 'Quest of the historical Jesus', the translation by W. Montgomery of 'Von Reimarus zu Wrede: Eine Geschichte der Leben-Jesu Forschung by Albert Schweitzer; it is a real masterpiece.

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PREFACE

When I decided to conduct this research project on Albert Schweitzer, I encountered diverse reactions. The question that rose immediately is whether he was a German writer? Or was he just a French missionary who went to Gabon to bring some relief to the indigenous people? I realized then that in the mind of many people the personality of Schweitzer was a blurred image. But how did I reach my decision? I was born and raised in Strasbourg, Alsace, and during my youth, I heard the name of Schweitzer but he was never depicted to me as an extraordinary man, nor was in any kind of way a revered person. My family lived about 30 miles from the village of Gunsbach, a place where Schweitzer lived and always came back to. I had never been in Gunsbach, and I had never seen Albert Schweitzer.

After having lived in the United States for a long time, I discovered the existence of a tremendous number of organizations supporting his legacy. I became curious about this famous compatriot of mine, and decided to investigate his life. Back in France, I interviewed the late Professor François Isch[1]. He gave me a copy of the text of a conference he had given in 1991, "Albert Schweitzer: l'Homme et son Oeuvre" (Albert Schweitzer: the man and his work), recommended several books to me, and put me in contact with Professor Jean-Paul Sorg[2], with whom I spent long hours delving into the life of this great Alsatian. Hundreds of books have been written about Schweitzer; they describe his accomplishments as a philosopher, an amazing interpreter of the music of

[1] **François Isch** (1918-2004), former dean of the faculty of medecine of Strabourg and chairman of the association of the French friends of Albert Schweitzer.

[2] **Jean-Paul Sorg,** specialist in the writings of Albert Schweitzer, member of the Liberal Protestant Union.

Bach, a theologian and a medical doctor. But none of the authors or references I have consulted had ever made any comment about the true identity of this notorious man. There is an unexplored aspect of his life: the real self. So many questions I had discussed with my own father came to my mind. We, Alsatian people, speak two languages: French and Alsatian, a Germanic dialect, and very often we have also an education in High German; we changed nationality several times in our destiny. So who are we? What is our authentic character?

The purpose of this study is a search for a deeper look into the life and work of Albert Schweitzer in order to understand better the man who is still mostly remembered as the "white doctor of Lambarene". However, what makes this project unique are the facts that first, it addresses an issue that has been neglected or ignored by most scholars; and second, the research is conducted by a compatriot who shares the same heritage.

Theologist and pastor, philosopher and moralist, musician and musicologist, medical doctor and construction worker, he was a man of many faces with countless achievements. Not only as a Christian, but also as a Humanist, he was deeply concerned about poverty and suffering. The place and time at Schweitzer's birth were factors of great importance in determining his faith. History, especially, had a significant influence on his destiny, and therefore I dedicate a whole chapter to the historical background and context. Some readers may wonder why so much history has to be known in order to understand the man. Alsace has a very violent past, each generation, century after century, having experienced at least one or sometimes several wars. Its history shaped its culture; the history of a land is like the vessel containing the soul of its nation.

After a summary of the major events that marked his life, I analyze the close relationship Schweitzer formed over the course of many years with those whom he considered his four masters: Immanuel Kant, Jean-Sebastian Bach, Goethe and Jesus-Christ. No real hierarchy can be established among them as they affected Schweitzer's life in different ways. Bach led him to believe in the importance of art in life. His encounter with the philosophy of Kant raised the question of his true belief. The great admiration for the work of Goethe remained unchanged throughout the years, and set an example to be followed. In time of turmoil, Jesus was the source of love and hope.

My goal is to identify some underlying influences by analyzing the personality and the achievements of these four characters. Many studies have been done on the author, but none explored how he assimilated the messages of his masters, and how this process has affected his views toward the French and German culture.

Finally, "Reverence for Life", the much ignored or forgotten philosophy of Albert Schweitzer calling for the respect of all life forms is a call for humanity that never lost its acuteness, and that seems more appropriate than ever in our contemporary world.

In conclusion, some answers to the question relating to the true identity of Albert Schweitzer are proposed. Did he feel like a Frenchman, or was he more at ease in the German culture?

CHAPTER I

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Albert Schweitzer was born on January 14, 1875, in Kaysersberg, a small town in Alsace, then part of Germany, and today part of France. On the crossroads of civilizations between North and South, and East and West, Alsace is a land of different cultures, a land of encounters. It has a rich past and its inhabitants are proud of their traditions. To understand Albert Schweitzer, one must first understand this region where he was born and grew up; it experienced a destiny very often tragic and always exceptional,. The history of Alsace is a sad one, often compared to a "Kreuzweg" ("the way of the cross" referring to Christ carrying his cross on his way to crucifixion) of a nation fighting to survive under the attack of numerous invaders and conquerors.

The land of Alsace is a fertile and prosperous plain, bordered in the West by the Vosges mountains, and in the East by the Rhine and the Black Forest. Archeological remains indicate that it was first inhabited during the Paleolithic period, and later was part of the Celtic world.

I. 1. Part of the Roman Empire:

Alsace was a major battlefield during the Roman Empire. Great battles were fought on this land. Julius Cesar recorded a victory in the battle against Arioviste, a king of German tribes, in his War of the Gaules. (Vol. I XXXI, 10) Cesar came to Alsace with six legions, 30,000 heavily armed soldiers, 8,000 horsemen, and 12,000 lightly armed

soldiers in 58 B.C. With this victory, Cesar established a barrier against attacks by barbarian hordes coming from the North. Alsace belonged to the Roman Empire for the next five centuries. Several fortifications were built along the Rhine, and Argentorate, which is today the city of Strasbourg, became the departure base of all the expeditions of Vespasian. However, uprisings, repressions, and invasions were never ending. When the Franks conquered Colonia (the city of Köln today) in 355, the Alamans attacked the land of Alsace. Julian, nephew of the Emperor Constance II, managed to contain their attack, but Argentorate (Strasbourg) was destroyed. The city was reconstructed and all the passages for its access were reinforced. Another great battle was fought by Gratian in 377, which was the last victory for the Romans.

I. 2. Invasions and Medieval Times:

In 451, the Huns invaded Alsace and burned down every city and village. They were followed by the Alamans who finally settled in the plain. The Alamans are the true founders of the Alsatian population, and their language constitutes the substract of the contemporary Alsatian language.[1]

After the fall of the Roman Empire, the Church took control of the land. The Alamans converted to Christianity, and numerous churches and convents were built. Argentorate changed its name to "Strateburg" (city of the roads) and hosted its first bishop, Saint-Amand.

It is in Strasbourg that two grandsons of Charlemagne split his empire into three territories by a treaty called "Serments de Strasbourg" in 846 (oaths of Strasbourg). This

[1] Philippe Dollinger, *Documents de l'Histoire de l'Alsace*, Edouard Privat, Toulouse, pp. 40-41

manuscript is the oldest French text ever written and is preserved in the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris. Charles the Bald and Louis the German had decided to conclude an alliance against their elder brother Lothar. The oaths were pronounced in French and in German.[2] The Oaths of Strasbourg are the symptom of a geopolitical and geolinguistic fracture in Europe of the 9th century. They announce the foundation of two blocks: *Regum* (future kingdom of France) and *Imperium* (the future Holy Empire presented as heir of the Roman Empire). Alsace was part of Lothar's territories, and soon attracted the covetousness of the King of France who made some incursions in the land. The French kings would keep an interest in this fertile land in the centuries to come.

In 917, Alsace was again ravaged, this time by Hungarian hordes that burned down most of the country. Very little is known about the 10th and 11th centuries. The life was mostly rural, Strasbourg being the only city in Alsace.

A new era started at the end of the 11th century. Peace returned under the protection of the Saxon Emperors and the Hohenstaufen Princes. Art and literature spread in the monasteries and churches, castles and cities. Manegold von Lautenbach deserves to be remembered, not only for the *Universal History* he wrote, but for a pamphlet he published in 1084 against King Henri IV, where he explained the sovereignty of the people, and the contract the king had passed with his subjects. In the pamphlet he stated that if the king does not respect this contract and fulfill his duties, it would be right to depose him. The audacity of such ideas depicts von Lautenbach as a precursor of Jean-Jacques Rousseau.[3]

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[2] Peter A. Machonis., *Histoire de la Langue du Latin à l'Ancien Français,* University Press of America, Lanham, New York, London, 1952, p. 89, pp. 115-119

[3] Philippe Dollinger, *Histoire de l'Alsace*, Edouard Privat, Toulouse, France, 1970, p.121

Another major literary work of this period is the *Hortus Deliciarum,* an incredible encyclopedia, richly illustrated, written by Herrade von Landsberg, Abbess of the monastery of Saint-Odile, to educate her nuns. In her work, she recorded all beliefs and customs, as well as astronomy, history, geography, botany, all the knowledge people had collected. It is a valuable document of the life at all levels of society of that time.

After 1190, with the beginning of the construction of the cathedral, Strasbourg became the most important center in the region of the superior Rhine.

Alsace also played an important role in the Minnesang movement which originated in French epic poetry, especially by the work of Chretien de Troyes. Among the first and most famous personages, who probably served as a link between the French troubadours and the German Minnesänger and can be considered as a precursor, is Reinmar von Haguenau, who died around 1210. He took part in the crusade of Frederic Barbarossa and spent some of his life at the court of Austria. The Meistersinger considered him to be one of the twelve founders of their brotherhood. He celebrated the lady of his heart in the same way that Walther von der Vogelweide did, and was greatly admired by him. [4]

"Hôhe alsam dine sune stêt das herze min:
Daz kumt von einer frouwen, din kan staete sìn,
Ir genade, swâ si sî.
Si machet mich vor allem leide frî."[5]

('High like the sun, my heart stands:

[4] Documents de l'Histoire de l'Alsace, p. 107/ Willy Grabert, Arno Mulot, Helmuth Nürnberger, *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur,* Bayerischer Schulbuch-Verlag, München, 1990, p. 24

[5] Hugo Moser, Helmut Tervooren, Von Kraus, *Des Minnesangs Frühling*, S. Hirzel, n.p. 1977, p .261

This is because of woman, to you constant can be
Her favor, wherever she is.
She frees me from all sorrow').

Gottfried von Strassburg (around 1200), a contemporary of Hartman von Aue, Wolfram von Eschenbach and Walther von der Vogelweide, ranked as one of the great medieval German poets. He composed *Tristan und Isolde*, an epic poem of 20,000 verses, but died before completing it. Gottfried introduced in his work not only the notion of the beauty of nature, but also the realities of life. He pointed out the forces in the world which prevent people from having an idealistic life. He was sensitive to human suffering and weakness, but did not believe in the sublimation of all this pain through God's miraculous intervention. Rather, he believed that mankind had to survive in a world full of failures, disappointments and suffering. This kind of discourse was completely new for that period. [6]

Another reference to Alsace in the 13th century comes from Konrad Puller, a Minnesänger who was serving Rodolphe von Habsbourg in Austria. He sang about his lady left in Alsace:

Wil ie man gegen Elsazen lant,
Der sol der lieben tuon bekannt,
daz ich mich senen,
Wenen kan sich min herze nach ir.[7]

('If someone travels to the land of Alsace
He must tell my darling,

[6] Geschichte der deutschen Literatur, pp. 28-29
[7] Document de l'histoire de l'Alsace, p.110

that I miss her
My heart can only be accustomed to her').

The 13th century marked the medieval apogee of Alsace. But the following two centuries are, like for most of Europe, marked by violence and epidemics .The plague called the "black death", and cholera decimated the population. The Jewish population in the cities was accused of spreading the plague, and many of them were exterminated. Hundreds of villages disappeared, their inhabitants having all died. Two invasions of the Armagnacs, French mercenaries called *Schinder* (Skinner) because of their cruelty, added to the misery of the population. However the cities were able to resist their attacks, but they became aware of their fragility mostly due to rivalry existing among them and the intrigues among the nobility. The emperor also had failed in protecting them. Therefore, ten cities decided to create an alliance to protect one another called the "Decapole", but Strasbourg remained an independent city. Despite wars and diseases, Alsace remained a very prosperous country at the end of Middle Ages. Its traders and merchants exported their goods (wine, wheat, leather, fabrics and paper) throughout most of Europe.

I. 3. Renaissance Mouvement

At the end of the 15th century and during the first decades of the 16th century, the deep movements of the Renaissance, Humanism and Reform profoundly marked the destiny of Europe and brought major changes in Alsace. Never before was the Church so criticized for its abuses and corrupted lifestyle. For more than thirty years, the inhabitants of Strasbourg listened to the strong voice of Jean Geiler von Kaysersberg denouncing the abuses of the Catholic Church from his chair in the cathedral of Strasbourg. A very

respected figure, his moral authority was appreciated far beyond the borders. Geiler von Kaysersberg shared his views and efforts to reestablish some sense of morality within the clergy, and did so with other humanists of the Rhineland, like Jacques Wimpheling and Sebastian Brant. The three men came together and formed a group called *sodalitas litteraria.* They were mostly educators, and related the rules of classical Latin to ethics, intelligence and honesty. Erasme mentioned them in a letter of 1514.[8]

Sebastian Brant (1458-1521), author of the *Narrenschiff* (1494), a satire illustrating all the human vices, mastered Latin prosody, *the nobilissima lingua*, and imposed to the German verses a metric inspired by Florentine poetry.

It was in Strasbourg that the first Bible was printed in the language of Luther, i.e. in modern German, that the first Mass was said in German (1524), two years after the translation of the Bible, and that the first newspaper printed in German was published around 1605 by a certain Johann Carolus.

The consequences of the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, which ended the Thirty Years War, were the integration of Alsace into the French Kingdom, and the creation of the Province of Alsace (1618-1715), which caused a deep cultural change in the life of its inhabitants. A great part of the Alsatian bourgeoisie had already been in contact with the French language, this mostly because French culture had a considerable prestige and was the leading culture in Europe. However, the average Alsatian, especially in the countryside, had a poor knowledge of French. German remained the written language, the spoken language being the Alsatian dialect.

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[8] Histoire de l'Alsace, pp. 179-192

I. 4. Enlightenment:

During the 18th century, Alsace was part of the great changes that occurred in Europe. It became the soil where two different cultures that were rivals for a long time, French and German, became complementary, and created a province already marked by the seal of the European spirit. The movement of Enlightenment[9] penetrated all levels of society, and artistic life in Strasbourg was blossoming. Two different kinds of people and two different styles of plays coexisted. Some liked the French classics, - Racine, Molière, Voltaire, Rousseau -, and the other ones appreciated the performances of Lessing and Schiller's works. *Minna von Barnhelm* was even translated into French and played on May 31, 1775. It was mostly the upper level of the Alsatian society that was very fond of anything French, and that would include fashion, manners, food...

Goethe studied law in Strasbourg from 1770 to 1771, mostly to satisfy his father's will. Personally he was more interested in literature and poetry, and also natural sciences, medicine and architecture. It was during this period he composed the *Sessenheimer Lieder* to commemorate his great love for Friederike Brion, the daughter of the pastor of Sessenheim.[10]

I. 5. Alsatian Language

Alsatian -'Elsässisch' in German - is a dialectal variant of German which is still

[9] **Enlightenment** was a 18th century European philosophical movement characterized by rationalism, an impetus toward the study of human culture and the natural world, and a spirit of skepticism and empiricism in social and political thought.

[10] Raymond Matzen, *Goethe und Friederike Brion*, Kehl, Strasbourg, Basel, Morstadt Verlag, 2003, p .7

spoken in Alsace. It is considered to be a Low Alemannic dialect similar to the one spoken in Baden and in Switzerland. In contemporary Alsace the Alemannic speech varieties co-exist with French. The name of Alsace (in French) or Elsass (in German) is mentioned for the first time in the 7th century with the name "Eticho or Adalric, Duke of Elsass", the father of Saint-Odile. In 642, Fredegaire, a chronicler, called its inhabitants "Alsaciones", and the land between the Rhine and the Vosges mountains, "Alesacius". However, its origin is still much debated, and three major hypotheses are proposed:

- the first one considers the name "Alsace" as German compound of *ali* (other) and *saz* (established), meaning the part of the Alamans that settled down;

- the second hypothesis refers to a Celtic origin *alisa* (cliff) referring to people living at the foot of the mountains;

- the third one which is usually rejected by linguists is based on the name of the river passing through Strasbourg, the *Ill*, and an area next to the city called *Elsau.*[11]

I. 6. Modern Times

For centuries, armies had marched into Alsace from all directions, from Sweden and from Spain, from Italy, Hungary, Germany and France. Each placed claim on the place and to the people, fighting first with swords and spears, bows and arrows, and then with guns and canons, and finally bombs.

In the summer of 1870, there again came that sinister sound of soldiers marching into Alsace. Gunfire resounded and canons thundered until the white flag of surrender was raised on the spire of the cathedral of Strasbourg. This time the Prussians were the

[11] Histoire de l'Alsace, pp .60-63

invaders.

After this war, called the Prussian War, Napoleon III lost Alsace-Lorraine, and Alsace fell under the dominance of Germany. In May 1871, the Treaty of Frankfurt put an end to a terrible war for France. The Germany of Bismarck[12] annexed Alsace and a part of Lorraine, and this land now called "Elsass-Lothringen", became a territory of the German Reich; it was granted partial autonomy in 1911. With this annexation, the German Reich incorporated the Alsatian population that had assimilated important aspects of French culture, but was German through its origin, and spoke a German dialect. From 1871 to 1918, German was the administrative and above all the school language, so that Alsatians born at the end of the 19th century were educated entirely in New High German. Only a small minority of young wealthy Alsatians would have had some knowledge of French.

In literature, as well as in the arts, the awareness of an Alsatian identity appeared. An Alsatian Museum was founded, the newspaper *Strassburger Neue Zeitung* was published, and overall a program of Alsatian plays was launched with great success. Two masterpieces, *D'Herr Maire* (Mr. Maire) by Gustave Stosskopf, and *D'Hans im Schnockeloch* (Jo in the Mosquito Hole) by Bastian, are still performed today. This awareness led to repercussions on the political level: A movement for an independent Alsace emerged while some Alsatian politicians argued about whether Alsace should be a "Land" with equal rights to the one of the German "Länder", and others wanted to keep ties with France. It was during this period of political and cultural turmoil that Albert Schweitzer was born.

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[12] **Prinz Otto Eduard Leopold von Bismarck** (1815-1898), Prusso-German statesman, was the architect of German unification and the first chancellor of the unified Germany.

I.7. Conclusion

Why did history play such an important role in the destiny of Albert Schweitzer? It is history that tells us who we are by chronicling and describing actions and thoughts within narratives. History is where cultural values interconnect with social practice to develop historical traditions. History plays a major role in the constitution of individual, social and cultural identity. For both individuals as well as nations, the sense of identity is solidly based in the past. Many great German writers were engaged in the question of national and cultural identity. Alsace shared most of the disastrous history of the German territories, and many stages of its troubled past have triggered debates about its culture. The famous German philosophers, Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744-1803), Friedrich Hegel (1770-1831), Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900), and many other thinkers focused on theories of culture and on the philosophy of history.

It is worth remembering that Albert Schweitzer was a man of great knowledge and much curiosity who had studied theology and philosophy. The heritage of the past, with both the suffering and struggle for survival, and the courage and tenacity to restart, to rebuild, were the clay he was made of. He knew the history of his land and of his people, and he carried in his mind the burden of the past, all the blood that had been shed, all the misery of so many wars and diseases. He could not accept the sight of pain and distress, and therefore could not tolerate the comfortable life of a bourgeois. For many years, as I describe it in the next chapter, he searched for a way to fight cruelty, to bring relief to the unfortunate, and overall to find the purpose of his life.

CHAPTER II

LIFE OF ALBERT SCHWEITZER

Albert Schweitzer was born on January 14, 1875, in Kaysersberg, a small town in the Southern part of Alsace. He was always proud having been born in 1875, because, as he said, the vintage was an exceptional! He was also proud to be born in Kaysersberg, birthplace of Johann Geiler von Kaysersberg (1445-1510), a famous Catholic preacher.

Albert Schweitzer was the son of a Lutheran pastor and teacher. Shortly after his birth, his family moved to a nearby village, Gunsbach, where he lived a happy childhood surrounded by his three sisters and a younger brother. In the small church of Gunsbach, the Protestant pastor and the Catholic priest took turns every Sunday morning to lead worship. At home, little Albert spoke Alsatian and sometimes French because it was the language the Schweitzer family used to exchange letters with their relatives living in France. His education in school and in church was in the German language, however. So since the beginning of his childhood, Schweitzer was trilingual: Alsatian, French, German-, the Alsatian dialect being a Germanic language, but different enough from German so that it is not always intelligible to a German speaker.

II. 1. Childhood:

The great love Schweitzer felt not only for mankind, but also for all living beings showed at an early age. It was already a sign of his great respect for all life forms. As a

little boy, he refused to follow his friends in killing birds with a slingshot. He always remembered a particular Sunday when he heard the ringing of the church bell and found the courage to say no to the killing, the courage to be different. He wrote about this first step he had taken as a young boy:

> *Und immer wieder, wenn die Glocken der Passionszeit in Sonnenschein und kahle Bäume hinausklingen, denke ich ergriffen und dankbar daran, wie sie mir damals das Gebot: "Du sollst nicht töten" ins Herz geläutet haben.*
>
> *Von jenem Tag an habe ich gewagt, mich von der Menschenfurcht zu befreien. Wo meine innerste Überzeugung mit im Spiele war, gab ich jetzt auf die Meinung anderer weniger als vorher...*
>
> *Die Art, wie das Gebot, dass wir nicht töten und quälen sollen, an mir arbeitete, ist das grosse Erlebnis meiner Kindheit und Jugend.* [13]
>
> ('And again and again, when the church bells sounded in the sunshine and through the bare trees at the time of the year when we celebrated the Passion, I think full of emotion and thankfully about how at that time they were ringing in my heart the commandment: "You shall not kill".
>
> From this day on I dared to free myself from the fear of men. When my deepest convictions were questioned, the opinion of others did not matter that much anymore...
>
> The way the commandment that we shall not kill and torture worked on me, is the great experience of my childhood and youth').

Little Albert was also aware of social differences. When his parents wanted to dress him like "a little Sir", he would refuse to wear shoes on weekdays because the

[13] Albert Schweitzer, *Aus meiner Kindheit und Jugendzeit*, Munich, C.H. Beck, 1927, pp. 23-24

children of the village wore only wooden shoes. This awareness became even stronger when fighting with a country boy and taking advantage of him, this young villager told him:

> *Ja, wenn ich alle Woche zweimal Fleischsuppe zu essen bekäme wie du, da wäre ich auch so stark wie du!*
>
> ('If I got to eat beef broth twice a week like you, I would be as strong as you'.)[14]

At a very early age, he showed a great sensitivity to music, especially choral singing. His father taught him the piano at the age of four, and later the organ. At the age of nine, he was able to replace the organist in church on Sundays. In the Mulhouse High School, he studied music under the supervision of Eugene Munch, a well-known master at that time. Munch recognized Schweitzer as an exceptionally gifted child, and had him play the great organ of the Saint-Etienne church in Strasbourg. Albert was only sixteen when he was able to play the Brahms Requiem.

Schweitzer was not only aware of the great suffering of human beings, but also of animals, and considered what he could do about it. In his teenage years, these concerns became more and more important to him:

> *So lange ich zurückblicken kann, habe ich unter dem vielen Elend, das ich in der Welt sah, gelitten.... Insbesondere litt ich darunter, dass die armen Tiere so viel Schmerz und Not auszustehen haben.*
>
> ('As long as I can remember, I suffered because of the great misery that I witnessed in the world... Particularly, I suffered because the poor animals had to endure so much pain and misery'.)[15]

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[14] Albert Schweitzer, *Aus meiner Kindheit und Jugendzeit*, p.7
[15] Idem, p.22

II. 2. The years of High School:

Growing up in a happy family, finding great pleasure in music, and being successful in his studies, he started questioning whether it was right to enjoy all this happiness, and whether he was entitled to such happiness without having to give something back to society. As a high school student, these thoughts came repeatedly to his mind:

> *Der Gedanke, dass ich eine so einzigartig glückliche Jugend erleben dürfte, beschäftigte mich fort und fort. Er erdrückte mich geradezu. Immer deutlicher trat die Frage vor mich, ob ich dieses Glück denn als etwas Selbstverständliches hinnehmen dürfe.*
>
> *So wurde die Frage nach dem Recht auf Glück das zweite grosse Erlebnis für mich. Als solches trat sie neben das andere, das mir schon von meiner Kindheit her begleitete, das Ergriffensein von dem Weh, das um uns herum in der Welt herrscht. Diese beiden Erlebnisse schoben sich langsam ineinander. Damit entschied sich meine Auffassung des Lebens und das Schicksal meines Lebens.*[16]

> ('The thought that I was granted such a unique and happy youth obsessed me more and more. It suffocated me. The question of whether I was allowed to accept such happiness as just a matter of course became more glaring.
>
> This is how the question about the right of happiness became the second major issue for me. This question lined up with the one that had accompanied me since childhood, it was the seizing feeling in front of the suffering that reins around us in the world. These two experiences slowly merged into each other. And out of it came my vision of life and the fate of my life.')

[16] Albert Schweitzer, *Aus meiner Kindheit and Jugendzeit,* p. 49

Nearly every summer, he was spending some time with his godmother in Colmar, a little medieval city, only twelve miles away from Gunsbach. In the middle of the city's gardens, there was a bronze statue of Admiral Armand Bruat[17], Commander of the French fleet during the Crimean war that stood until the German occupation of 1940. On the base of the statue, a bronze black giant represented the Southern continent bending in surrender. Yet Schweitzer found great nobility in the features, and each time he visited the gardens with his godparents, he asked for a little detour, as he was fascinated by this amazing sculpture by Bartholdi. Later on, he wrote:

> *It was this statue by Bartholdi which summoned me at age of thirty to live and work in Africa.*[18]

II. 3. The years in Paris:

After obtaining his high school diploma, Schweitzer made his first trip to Paris where two of his father's brothers were living: Auguste and Charles Schweitzer. Auguste was a wealthy businessman who introduced him to two famous piano teachers, Maria Jael and Isidore Philipp, and to the organist, Charles-Marie Widor. Charles Schweitzer, a professor, founded the "Society for the propagation of foreign languages in France" in 1893. Charles Schweitzer happened to be the grandfather of the famous French writer and philosopher, Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980).

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[17] **Armand Joseph Bruat** (1796-1855) was a French admiral. He joined the French Navy in 1811 during the Napoleonic Wars. He served in Brazil and the West Indies, and was stationed in Senegal and then in the Pacific.He was made governor of the Marquesas Islands in 1843. At the same time, he also represented France at the court of Queen Pomare of Tahiti, where he was able to convince her to accept a French protectorate. In 1849, he became Governor-General of the Antilles, and was promoted to Vice-Admiral.

[18] Robert Payne, *The three worlds of Albert Schweitzer,* New York, Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1957, p. 64

Albert met Charles-Marie Widor (1845-1937), professor of music at the conservatory and regarded at that time as the greatest French composer for the organ, in the church of Saint Sulpice where he played Bach[19] for him. This encounter with Widor, who said that he had never heard Bach played with such profundity, was the start of a great and heartwarming lifelong friendship.

III. 4. The years in Strasbourg:

Back in Strasbourg in Fall 1893, Albert Schweitzer started to study philosophy and theology at the University of Strasbourg. He loved the city with its intense intellectual life. Once French, Strasbourg had been German again since the Franco-Prussian War. The city was the perfect combination of French "esprit" and German pride. The University was one of the oldest in Europe[20], and considered a leading institution of learning. Schweitzer also continued his musical studies with Ernest Munch, the brother of his former master in Mulhouse. He studied Hebrew and Greek, read the Holy Scriptures in their original languages, and meditated on a regular basis. His curiosity and strong desire to learn gave him such energy that he was able to study philosophy, theology and music at the same time.

Not satisfied by studying only Bach, he plunged himself into the repertoire of Mozart[21], Gluck[22] and Wagner[23]. He was always very annoyed when Bach enthusiasts

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[19] **Johann Sebastian Bach** (1685-1750), German composer and one of the world's greatest musical genius. His work marks the culmination of the baroque style.

[20] The **University of Strasbourg** was founded in 1621. Louis Pasteur, Marc Bloch, Jean Calvin, and four Nobel Prize winners studied or taught there.

[21] **Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart** (1756-1791), Austrian composer, who is considered one the most brilliant composer ever.

[22] **Christoph Willibald Gluck** (1714-1787), German composer, whose work to reform opera had great influence.

decried Wagner. For him, Bach, Beethoven and Wagner were equal. Later, he noted in his study on Bach:

> *Beethoven and Wagner poetize in music; Bach paints. And Bach is a dramatist, but just in the sense that the painter is. He does not paint successive events, but seizes upon the pregnant moment that contains the whole event for him, and depicts this in music.*[24]

His uncle Charles, who was very pleased with his progress, sent him tickets to attend the performance of *The Ring of the Nibelungen*[25]at Bayreuth. Schweitzer attended the second performance of *The Ring*, the first one having been played twenty years earlier in 1876. It was also the opportunity for him to meet Cosima Wagner, wife of Richard Wagner and daughter of Franz Liszt[26].

The constant desire to know, to learn, and to understand, was a desire that would be forever unfulfilled for Schweitzer, but it was the trigger of all his actions, and the secret of his genius:

> *Die Freude an dem Suchen nach dem Wahren und Zweckmässigen war wie ein Rausch über mich gekommen... Die Überzeugung, dass der Fortschritt der Menschheit nur dadurch möglich wird, dass das Vernunftgemässe an die Stelle der Meinungen und der Gedankenlosigkeit tritt, hatte von mir Besitz ergriffen und äusserte sich vorerst in stürmischer und unangenehmer Weise."*[27]

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[23] **Richard Wagner** (1813-1883), German composer and conductor, one of the most influential cultural figure of the 19th century. His work revolutionized the concept and structure of opera.

[24] Albert Schweitzert, *J. S.Bach*, translated by Ernest Newman, New York, The MacMillan Company, 1964, Vol. II, p.47

[25] Cycle of four operas composed by Richard Wagner, and based on the German epic poem *The Niebelungenlied* : *Das Rheingold (1869), Die Walküre (1870), Siegfried (1876),* and *Götterdämmerung (1876)*

[26] **Franz Liszt** (1811-1886), Hungarian born pianist and composer.

[27] Albert Schweitzer, *Aus meiner Kindheit und Jugendzeit,* pp. 44-45

('The joy in the search for truth and usefulness came over me like a thrill... The conviction that humankind progress will only be possible if reason replaces opinions and lack of thought, took possession of me, and was expressed at first in a stormy and unpleasant way.')

As a young student, he had put the lyrics of a song that already illustrated this commitment on the wall of his room:

Toujours plus haut *Toujours plus haut!*
Place ton rêve ou ton désir *Si, bien souvent, ton ciel se voile,*
L'idéal que tu veux servir, *Que de ta foi brille l'étoile*
Toujours plus haut! *Toujours plus haut!*

('Always higher Always higher
Place your dream or your desire If quite often, your sky becomes darker
The ideal you want to serve May the star of your faith shine
Always higher! Always higher!')[28]

Schweitzer was a great admirer of Goethe and shared with him an everlasting curiosity, as well as a neverending quest for answers. Often he would walk through the countryside and talk to the peasants as Goethe did when he was questioning his fellow countrymen about the fruit trees, while deep inside he conceived the *Second Faust*.[29] When one reads the story of Albert Schweitzer's life and his tremendous accomplishment as a young student, the character of the young Faust comes to mind. Both men were on a search for clues about the meaning and the purpose of life.

As for Faust the day of Easter, Pentecost was a turning point in the life of the

[28] Jacques Feschotte, *Albert Schweitzer,* Paris, Editions Universitaires, 1952, p.23

young Albert. Despite his many occupations, Schweitzer always found the time to come back to his roots, the little village of Gunsbach. There, on a Pentecost morning, the weather being beautiful and the birds singing, he felt that one could not accept such great happiness without giving something back. These thoughts had haunted him since a very young age. However, it was on this Pentecost morning of 1896 that he decided to spend ten more years studying theology, science and music, and decided that, once he reached the age of thirty, he would dedicate his life to some action of high moral value.

II. 5. Short stay in Paris, Studies in Berlin:

Extremely well organized in his many activities, he was not only a man of vision, but also a man of reality. In 1897, then twenty-two years old, after having completed his theology dissertation, he went to the Sorbonne in Paris to study the philosophy of Kant. The subject of his philosophical dissertation was "The philosophy and the religion of Kant".

But the intellectual lifestyle of Paris was not serious enough and did not suit his taste. He left for Berlin, where he studied philosophy with Adolf von Harnack.[30] He found that scholarly life in Berlin was much more profound than that of Paris:

> *Von dem geistigen Leben Berlins wurde ich stärker berührt als von dem von Paris. In Paris, der Weltstadt, war das geistige Leben zersplittert... Besonders Eindruck machten auf mich die einfache Lebensweise der Berliner Gesellschaft und die Leichtigkeit, mit der man in den Familien Eingang fand.*[31]

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[29] Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Goethe - Faust*, Verlag C.H. Beck, München.
[30] **Adolf von Harnack** (1851-1930), leading German Protestant theologian and historian.
[31] Albert Schweitzer, *Aus meinem Leben und Denken*, Leipzig, Felix Meiner Verlag, p.18

> ('I was much more touched by the intellectual life in Berlin than by the one in Paris. In Paris the intellectual life was shattered... I was especially impressed by the simple lifestyle of the Berliner society, and by the ease with which one could enter a family.')

And he remembered one day in the summer of 1899,when in the home of the distinguished archeologist and Hellenist Ernst Curtius, he heard someone saying: *Wir sind ja doch alle nur Epigonen!* (We are only inheritors of the past!)[32]

When Schweitzer returned home that evening, it was clear to him that this scholar expressed a deep truth. In Philosophy of Civilization which he wrote later, and also in his speech on acceptance of the Nobel Prize in 1953, he developed his thought of that moment of awareness in Berlin.

Having studied in Paris and in Berlin, he became a Doctor in Philosophy in 1899. Just one year later, he wrote another dissertation, and earned a degree in Theology. He became a professor of Theology and the Principal of the Seminary Saint-Thomas in Strasbourg. He was then almost thirty years old.

II. 6. Medical Doctor:

Schweitzer became an outsider to his family and friends when in 1905 he started medical school and graduated with honors in 1910. During all these years, he never stopped playing the organ and giving concerts. After his internship, he returned to Paris to study tropical medicine in 1912. The same year, he married Helene Breslau, a Jewish girl, daughter of a Professor of History at the University of Strasbourg. She shared his ideal,

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[32] Robert Payne, *Three Worlds of Albert Schweitzer*, New York, Thomas Nelson & Sons, p. 78

and in order to be able to assist him, studied to be a nurse. They had known each other for several years. They spoke German to each other, but their correspondence was mostly in French.

Albert Schweitzer had now reached the point in his life to realize his perpetual dream: to dedicate his life to ease human suffering. Remembering the statue of the black man in the gardens of Colmar, he decided to open a hospital in Gabon, a French colony in Africa, near the river Ogoue. Thanks to his concerts and publications, he financed the whole operation, and bought the surgical equipment and all the necessary medication to start a small hospital in the middle of the rainforest.

The first departure took place in 1913. In one of the containers was a piano offered by the friends of the Bach Society of Paris. Albert and Helene arrived in Lambarene on April 1916. The conditions were very primitive: Schweitzer performed his first surgery in a chicken coop. The local population had tremendous health problems. Not only working as a medical doctor, but also as a carpenter or as a mason, Schweitzer built the hospital with his bare hands, and added more and more buildings.

II. 6. <u>World War I</u>:

Unfortunately, sad days were awaiting Albert and Helene. When World War I broke out, Albert and Helene's situation became precarious and they were apprehensive about the future. Since the Schweitzers were German citizens, they were considered enemy aliens in the French colony. On August 5, 1914, Albert Schweitzer and his wife were forbidden from performing all medical activities in Gabon. This chapter in his life inspired a book and later a movie entitled "Il est minuit Dr. Schweitzer" (It is Midnight

Dr. Schweitzer)[33]. The couple was arrested in September 1917, and deported to France. At first, they stayed in a prisoner camp in the French Pyrénées, and later they were transferred to another camp in Saint-Remy in Provence. Thanks to the intervention of Swiss friends, the couple was released and went back to Gunsbach in Alsace. The birth of their daughter, Rhena, brought some sunshine into this dark period. But the future still did not look good: they both were in bad health, especially Helene, who would never completely recover from this internment, and they had no more money.

Finally, help came from Sweden: in 1920; Albert Schweitzer was invited to give a program of lectures and conferences there. It was in Sweden that he mentioned for the first time the concept of "Reverence for Life". He explained that, while being rowed up the Ogoué river in Lambarene, his search for a name illustrating his philosophy was answered. He would call it *Ehrfurcht vor dem Leben* (Reverence for Life) because,

> *Man's ethics must not end with man, but should extend to the universe. He must regain the consciousness of the great chain of life from which he cannot be separated. He must understand that all creation has its value.*[34]

For three years, he gave lectures and concerts throughout England, Switzerland and Denmark.

II. 8. Albert Schweitzer, World Citizen

Schweitzer returned to Lambarene in 1924. More and more journalists curious about his work came to visit him. He became an increasingly famous international figure.

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[33] Gilbert Cesbron, *Il est minuit Docteur Schweitzer*, Paris, Robert Laffont, 1966.
[34] George N. Marshall, David Poling, *Schweitzer, a Biography.* Albert Fellowship, 1989, p. 188

In 1928, Schweitzer received the Goethe Prize from the city of Frankfurt, Germany. At that time, he made his first and only trip to the United States, to Aspen, Colorado, on the invitation of Robert Hutchins, Chancellor of the University of Chicago, who organized the Goethe Bicentennial celebration there.

In a speech he gave on November 4, 1953 in Oslo when he accepted the Nobel Peace prize of 1952, Schweitzer talked about the danger of nuclear weapons. Many well known scientists, among them Albert Einstein, thought that the reputation of Albert Schweitzer could make the public aware of the perils of nuclear testing.

He arrived in London in October 1955 to receive the Order of Merit, the highest honor of the land, bestowed on him by Queen Elizabeth II. At that time, the only other non-British citizen ever to receive such an honor was President Dwight D. Eisenhower. The University of Cambridge also conferred on Schweitzer an honorary degree of Doctor of Law.[35]

On April 23, 1957, Radio Oslo emitted Schweitzer's speech "Declaration of Conscience". The speech was broadcasted by 140 radio stations around the world. However, some governments, in the East and in the West, prohibited the broadcasting. Schweitzer renewed his calls from Radio Oslo for the abandonment of nuclear testing and the production of atomic bombs several times. January 14, 1958, the 83rd birthday of Albert Schweitzer, the chemist and Nobel Price winner, Linus Pauling[36] delivered a petition to the United Nations, signed by Schweitzer and 9,235 scientists, urging an

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[35] Charlie May Simon. *All men are brothers*, New York, E. P. Dutton & Company, Inc., 1956, p. 177

[36] **Linus Pauling** (1901-1994) American quantum chemist and biochemist. He was awarded the Nobel Prize in chemistry in 1954, and the Nobel Peace Prize in 1962 for his campaign against above-ground nuclear testing.

international agreement to stop nuclear testing.

One last time, in 1959, the famous doctor made the trip to Europe where he stayed about three months. It was his farewell to his homeland of Alsace and especially to the little village of Gunsbach. He returned to Lambarene where he spent the rest of his life. He died there, in 1965 at the age of ninety, and was buried next to his wife.

II. 9. Conclusion

Schweitzer was born a German, Alsace being part of Germany at that time. He was educated in the German culture, but was exposed to French culture at a very young age. Since knowing the French language was considered highly prestigious, it was used by the Schweitzer family in their correspondence. As a very educated person, he had to write in French, and most of the letters he addressed to Helene Breslau were written in French. While the language of his education was mostly German, and French was only used in special settings, the language spoken at home, in the family, in Gunsbach and its surroundings, was Alsatian.

From this brief biography, it is already obvious that the young Schweitzer was exposed since early childhood to the French and German cultures, the latter seeming to be dominant. His studies in Strasbourg were mostly conducted in German. During his stays in Paris he seemed at ease in the French language. His encounter with Widor was not only the start of a lifelong friendship, but certainly also a constant opportunity to be part of the French society, and even of the French bourgeoisie. Having relatives in Paris, he was visiting the French capital on numerous occasions, and developed many friendships:

Bei dem öfteren Verweilen in Paris machte ich manche wertvolle Bekanntschafte. Mit Romain Rolland[37] kam ich etwa um 1905 herum zum ersten Male zusammen. Anfangs waren wir nur Musikanten füreinander. Nach und nach entdeckten wir aneinander, dass wir auch Menschen waren und gewannen uns als Freunde lieb.

Auch zu Henri Lichtenberger[38], dem feinsinnigen französischen Kenner der deutschen Literatur, kam ich in ein herzliches Verhältnis.

In der Pariser „Société des Langues étrangères » hielt ich, auf deutsch, in den ersten Jahren des Jahrhunderts eine Reihe von Vorträgen über deutsche Literatur und Philosophie.[39]

('During my frequent journeys in Paris I made worthy acquaintances. I encountered Romain Rolland for the first time around 1905. At the beginning we were only musicians for each other. But little by little, we discovered that we were also human beings, and we cherished our friendship.

I developed also a warm relationship with Henri Lichtenberger, the fine French expert of German literature.

At the beginning of the century I gave a series of presentations on German literature and philosophy at the Parisian 'Society of Foreign Languages'.')

In these early years of Schweitzer's life, we can already distinguish a man who is part of two cultures and showed himself as a linkage between them. However, it appears that the fascinating "Vie Parisienne" (Parisian life) was in some way too superficial for him, and that to study philosophy he felt more at ease in Berlin.

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[37] **Romain Rolland** (1866-1944), French writer was a history teacher, and member of the Ecole Française de Rome, then a professor of History of Music at the Sorbonne. He won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1915. Alifelong pacifist and humanist, he was a friend of Gandhi, and was strongly influenced by the philosophy of Hinduism. He also developed a great passion for art and music.

[38] **Henri Lichtenberger**, (1864-1941) French Germanist, he was born in Alsace, but after the war of 1870, in which Alsace fell at Germany, his family moved to Paris. He was professor for German philology to the Sorbonne, and an exchange professor for comparative literature sciences in Harvard.

[39] Albert Schweitzer, *Aus meinem Leben und Denken*, p.23

CHAPTER III

ALBERT SCHWEITZER and IMMANUEL KANT

"Nur in der Erfahrung ist Wahrheit"[40]
(Only in experience, there is truth)

In this chapter, after providing a summary of Kant's biography and philosophy, I will examine Schweitzer's approach to the German philosopher, and attempt to identify any aspect of French thought that might have influenced him.

Schweitzer completed his first doctoral dissertation, Die Religionphilosophie Kants ('Kant's Philosophy of Religion') within a period of six months. It was published the same year, 1899, in Tübingen. He mentioned Kant in his acceptance speech for the Nobel prize in November 1954, and in several sermons.

Kant was one of the three great masters who ruled Schweitzer's life in the field of ethics. The other two were Socrates and Nietzsche. Socrates liberated ethics from the social and religious traditions; Kant demonstrated the absolute of ethics; and Nietzsche, who may be the greatest among the thinkers of ethics, declared that ethics are nothing if they do not take into account the whole personality of man, including his body and his soul[41]. In his comparison of Kant to Socrates, Schweitzer considered both men to be ethical geniuses on a rational search for an explanation of the rules of morality. Kant, through his critical research, was on the way to formulating an ethical conception of the world.

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[40]Immanuel Kant, *Prolegomena,* Berlin, Akademie Edition, 1911.
[41] Strassburg Vorlesung 1912, cited in Cahiers Nr. 137

III. 1. Kant's biography

Immanuel Kant was born in 1724 in Königsberg, Kingdom of Prussia (now Kaliningrad, Russian Federation), and died in the same town in 1804. He was raised in a Pietist family, and received a strict education that favored Latin and religious instruction over mathematics and science. Pietism was then a popular Lutheran reform movement that laid emphasis on religious devotion, personal humility, and a literal reading of the Bible. He went to the University of Königsberg where he studied the philosophy of Leibniz and Wolff, and was introduced to the mathematical physics of Newton. In 1755, he became a university lecturer, and turned to philosophical issues, although he would continue to write about scientific topics all his life. He produced several important works in philosophy, and, at the age of forty-five he was finally appointed Professor of Logic and Metaphysics at the University of Königsberg.

For the next ten years, Kant remained silent. He surfaced from his silence with the *Critique of Pure Reason* which is now recognized as one of the greatest works in the history of philosophy. The 800page book in the original German edition was written in a very dense style, and was difficult for many readers. Kant, recognizing the need for clarification, then wrote the *Prolegomena to any Future Metaphysics.* He published a second revised edition of the *Critique of Pure Reason* in 1787. He also wrote a great number of essays on history, religion, politics and other topics. His works were welcomed by his contemporaries, and strengthened his preeminent status in eighteenth-century philosophy.

Kant is regarded as one of the most influential thinkers of modern Europe and the last major philosopher of the Enlightenment. In order to understand Kant's reasoning, it is

necessary to briefly consider Kant's pre-critical philosophy, and to mention, in addition, the work of some of his contemporaries. These philosophers are an important part of the whole context of European civilization by which Kant's, as well as Schweitzer's thought was molded.

III. 2. Kant's Precursors

Lesser known philosophers of the eighteenth-century have influenced Kant and were part of his background, especially Christian Wolff[42], Alexander Baumgarten[43], and George Meier[44] with his "Vernunftlehre" (Study of Reason).

The great contribution of Wolff (1679-1754) lies in making German for the first time a philosophical language. The demand for his work was heavy and it was translated into Latin to make it internationally accessible. It is worth noting that at that time Leibniz' work was almost completely unpublished. For Wolff, philosophy was essentially concerned with morals and only secondarily with metaphysics. In this, he was in full agreement with the great writers of the German "Aufklärung", and also to a great extent with the view of Kant. His philosophy was often considered a common sense adaptation of the Leibniz system. He defined it as the science of the possible, and divided it, according to human faculties, into a theoretical and a practical part.

Baumgarten's (1714-1762) book, "Metaphysics", which is an exposition of Wolff-

[42] **Christian Wolff** also known as **Wolfius**, (1679-1754), born in Breslau. He was the most eminent German philosopher between Leibniz and Kant He was also the creator of German as the language of scholarly instruction and research.

[43] **Alexander Gottlieb Baumgarten**, (1714-1762), German philosopher born in Berlin. He was a follower of Leibniz and Christian Wolff, and gave the term *aesthetics* its modern meaning. He developed aesthetics to mean the study of good and bad perceptions, linking good perceptions with beauty.

[44] **George Friedrich Meier**, (1718-1777) was with Baumgarten among the chief representatives of Wolffianism in Frankfurt am Main.

Leibniz views, was written in a kind of Latin, and consisted of four parts dealing respectively with ontology, cosmology, psychology, and theology. He maintained that the ground of anything is that from which we can understand why it is. That which contains the ground of anything is its *principium*: the *principium* of existence is a cause. Kant considered Baumgarten to be an admirable analytical thinker.

Meier's (1718-1777) work, Vernunftlehre ('Study of Reason') is an explanation of the principles of Aristotelian or formal logic. It is usually described as eclectic philosophy, in that it qualifies its empiricism with a number of obvious rationalist assumptions as Locke had previously done. Three aspects of Meier's work deserve consideration, in particular his views on Logic, Psychology, and Architectomic or system building in general, since in each of these his influence on Kant was considerable[45]. Kant used these texts in his logic lectures.

The works of Baumgarten and Meier are important to Kant's Critique, not so much to the content of Kant's thought as they never even recognized the existence of the problems which the Critique of Pure Reason claimed to solve, but for their terminology and manner of presentation. Kant used these books in his lectures on Metaphysics and Logic. We must remember that, unlike French and English, German did not have at that time a developed philosophical terminology. Kant was concerned with several questions, and the connection between them is exactly what the "Critique" is about. For Kant, there was a question of space, a question of cause, and a question of psycho-physical

[45] Thomas Weldon, *Introduction to Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, Oxford, Clarendon Press, 1946, pp.40-48

interaction. His purpose was to justify the empirical scientific method without prejudice to the validity of Euclid, Newton, on the moral law. He proposed to survey the field of human knowledge as Locke had done it before but with a different approach.

III. 3. Philosophy of Immauel Kant

Kant's claim was that our knowledge begins with experience, and that we are led through pure reason to accept that intelligible unities, such as God, freedom, and immortality do exist.

> *Es ist durchaus nöthig, dass man sich vom Dasein Gottes überzeuge; es ist aber nicht eben so nöthig, dass man es demonstrire. (Kant)*[46]
> ('It is absolutely necessary that one is convinced of God's existence; but in the same way it is not necessary to demonstrate it.')

The proposition that God does exist, like every other existential proposition, is synthetical. It might be argued that the concept of the most real being is the one and only concept in regard to which the denial of existence of its object would involve self-contradiction. This is the ontological argument and Kant formulates it thus:

> *The concept of ens realissimum possesses all reality; reality comprehends existence, and therefore existence is contained in the concept of a possible thing. If that thing were annulled, the possibility of that thing would likewise be annulled, and this is self-contradictory... Existence is never a real predicate... If I say that God exists, I add no new predicate to the concept of God.*[47]

[46] F. E., *Kant's conception of God,* England M.A., Ph. D. Humanities Press; New York, 1968, p.1
[47] Kant's conception of God, p.123

Kant insisted that while the existence of God could not be proven, we ought to come to a belief in God's existence by way of logical understanding. He concluded that God was a requisite for morality and gives meaning to our life on earth. The existence of God was one of the three postulates of morality, the other two being freedom of the will, and immortality of the soul.

The idea of God as Kant saw it belonged properly not to physics, or even metaphysics, but to ethics. In moral contexts, the idea of God could come alive by being interpreted as that of a loving father, a just judge or a wise lawgiver.[48] Kant had freed his ethics of any suggestion that basic ethical concepts have a special connection with the concept of God: our ideal of moral perfection is now supposed to be determined purely by reference to moral ideas.

The history of philosophy from René Descartes[49] to Kant has a genuine unity of its own which depends mainly on the almost universal acceptance of the claims of a new method of mathematical physics to interpret the universe and explain man's place in it. There is a striking similarity between Descartes' somewhat apologetic assertion that everyone ought to go through the process of rigorous doubting and reassurance once in his life and Kant's contention that there is no metaphysical problem to which that answer is not provided in the "Critique of Pure Reason". Based on the thinking of St. Thomas Aquinas[50], Descartes accepted the traditional view, that everything which exists can be

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[48] W. H. Walsh, *Kant'sCriticism of Metaphysics*, Edinburgh, University Press, 1975, p. 70

[49] **René Descartes** (1596-1650), very influential French philosopher, mathematician, scientist, and writer. Named the "Founder of Modern Philosophy" and the "Father of Modern Mathematics", he influenced mathematics with his "Cartesian coordinate system" used in geometry and algebra. He was advocated by Spinoza and Leibniz, and opposed by Hobbes, Locke and Hume.

[50] **Saint Thomas Aquinas** (c.1225-1274), philosopher and theologian in the scholastic tradition. His philosophy had tremendous influence on Christian theology, especially the Roman Catholic Church, and extended to Western philosophy as a vehicle of Aristotelianism.

analyzed into substance and essence. Cartesianism produced changes in the traditional philosophy of Aquinas who claimed that perception refined by the intellect was in fact knowledge.

Cartesianism disagreed with this traditional view maintaining that perception provides us with a false and true representation of real things. The basis of the whole Cartesian system is that mathematics alone can give us genuine knowledge because of the clearness and distinctness of the notions which it uses and of the necessary relations which subsist between them.[51]

But Kant was mostly influenced by the views of Leibniz. The position of Leibniz, both in physics and in metaphysics, rest on development of the standpoint of Descartes. His concern was not so much how things happen, but why things happen. Leibniz maintained that every physical particle can be held to represent the whole universe. However, he failed to draw a distinctive line between physical and metaphysical conceptions. The weakness of the Cartesian system was its total inability to reconcile the substantial or independent existence of a plurality of observable phenomena with their undeniable interrelatedness to one another. Leibniz' solution lies in his acceptance of relations between phenomena as a fact.

From this, Kant draws two conclusions: the objects of the sense cannot be regarded as real, and that the ultimate real is therefore accessible not to sensibility, but to understanding. This suggests a distinction between the intelligible and sensible worlds such as Kant later drew in his inaugural dissertation.[52]

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[51] Thomas D. Weldon, *Introduction to Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, pp. 11-16
[52] Idem, pp.11-16

Kant's work marked the starting point of the 19th century philosophy, and gave rise to the Idealist school with Fichte, Hegel and Schopenhauer. The thinking of the 18th century, the German way, as well as the French and English ones, converged in his work. He tried to unify them in a conception of a unified world. Through him, the German philosophy became a universal philosophy.

According to W. H. Walsh, the Critique of Pure Reason is a "critical examination of the powers of human intelligence, considered as operating on its own". Kant tries to explain that, above the concepts of understanding, the faculty of reason has its own concepts, and that these ideas play a genuine role in the search of empirical knowledge. Reason gives rise to principles which lead the process of understanding.[53]

III. 4. Schweitzer's Approach to Kant's Philosophy

In his dissertation, Albert Schweitzer does not intend to judge Kant's work. Instead, he wants to do a critical analysis, *eine Untersuchung über die Grenzen der menschlichen Erkenntnisse* ('An Investigation about Human Knowledge'). In other words, he wants to look at Kant's philosophy under a new light without any prejudice.

> *Die reine Vernunft wollte alle ihre Erkenntnisse in ein System bringen. Es sind ihrer drei: sie betreffen das Wesen der Seele, den Abschluss unserer Welterkenntnis und das dem Sein zu Grunde liegende Urwesen.*
>
> ('Pure reason wanted to bring all its findings into a system. It was concerned with three subjects: they concern the existence of the soul, the conclusion over our world knowledge, and the being as the basis of the

[53] W. H. Walsh, *Kant's criticism of metaphysics*, p.40

original existence.')

Auf dem Gebiete der reinen Vernunft können keine Meinungen bestehen... Jede Behauptung auf dem Gebiete der reinen Vernunft muss von einem Beweise begleitet sein.

('In the field of Pure Reason, there cannot be any opinions... Any statement in the field of Pure Reason has to be claimed with proof.')[54]

He believed that Kant was convinced of the existence of a superior being that expected our obedience. Based on this conviction, Kant redefined religion, and reinforced it by erasing all old doubts. Schweitzer joined Kant in his awareness of a superior force, and deplored the lack of consciousness, of willpower and force among his fellow citizens:

Il manque ce qui fait le fondement de toute religion, à savoir le sentiment, la conscience intuitive que dans notre vie cherche à s'accomplir une volonté su prieure aux volontés humaines : il manque aux hommes de notre époque la volonté de cette volonté et par là les forces spirituelles qui pourraient les élever par-dessus un savoir purement pratique et intéressé[55].

('What is missing is the substance that constitutes the foundation of any religion, which means the conscious intuition that a superior will, superior to the human will, is trying to find fulfillment in our lives: What man of our time lacks is the will of this will, and therefore the spiritual force which could elevate him over a knowledge that is only practical and interested.')

Schweitzer considered Kant to be a great ethical thinker, as well as a great critical theorician of knowledge, but mediocre in his attempts to build a conception of the world.

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[54] Thomas Weldon, *Introduction to Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, p.5-6
[55] Schweitzer, cited in Cahier Nr. 137, p.6

He disagreed with Kant on the subject of "ewigen Frieden" (eternal peace). Kant believed that an eternal peace could be established only through the process of institutions and international laws. But Albert Schweitzer did not believe in the possibility of peace without an ethical change in human behavior. In his speech of acceptance of the Nobel price in 1954, he mentioned Kant, as follows:

> *Dans son projet de paix perpétuelle, Kant croit que la solution viendra uniquement de l'autorité croissante d'un droit international et qu'une cour internationale d'arbitrage réglerait les conflits entre les peuples... En quoi il s'est trompé... Sans l'esprit éthique, le droit ne peut ni établir ni garantir la paix*[56].
>
> ('In his project of eternal peace, Kant believed that the solution will come from the increasing authority of international law, and that an international court of arbitration will find a solution to the conflicts between the nations...He was wrong ... Without ethical thinking, rights can neither establish, nor guarantee peace.')

For Kant, ethics were only concerned with the relations and duties among humans. Living creatures and nature were not taken into account.

> *Und da die Gesetze, nach welche das Dasein der Dinge von der Erkenntnissen abhängt, praktisch sind, so ist die übersinnliche Natur, soweit wir uns einen Begriff von ihr machen können, nichts anderes als eine Natur unter der Autonomie der reinen praktischen Vernunft. Das Gesetz dieser Autonomie aber ist das moralische Gesetz; welches also das Grundgesetz einer übersinnlichen Natur und einer reinen Verstandeswelt ist...*[57]
>
> ('And as the laws, according to which the existence of things depends on cognition, are practical, so is the supernatural nature as far as

[56] Schweitzer Nobel Price speech, cited in Cahier Nr. 137, p.18
[57] Thomas D. Weldon, *Introduction to Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, pp. 51-52

> we can have a concept of it, nothing else that nature under the autonomy of pure practical reason. But the law of this autonomy is the moral law which is also the basic law of a supernatural nature and a pure world of reason...')

III. 5. Analysis of Schweitzer's Critic

In the Schweitzerian approach, ethics are no longer limited to humans, they concern all living beings, including our relation to the cosmos. Ethics address all dimensions of human life with all forms of relation in personal, private and social life, and relation with other forms of life, things and the environment.

Schweitzer felt attracted to Kant and at the same time repulsed. He admitted:

> *Even being critical of him, I know that I owe him a lot. I moved away from him because for me reason brings you to mystics. In this way, I would recognize rather Spinoza and Leibniz as guides, if I do have any precursors, which I don't believe. Because I have the feeling I came to this path only by the effort of reflection applied to the elementary questions of existence. At this moment, I did not try anymore to understand from the inside, like Kant, the notions of space and time, but I let them go trustfully, like you let the cows leave the stable; I was tired of keeping them! That's how I freed myself from Kant!*[58]

Philosophy always appealed to Schweitzer more than theology. His way of thinking was that of a philosopher. In 1908, he was already declaring:

> *Und ich bin eben nicht Theologe, sondern der Philosophie, dem „Denken" ergeben. Und das ist eine herrliche und zugleich furchtbare*

[58] Schweitzer, cited in Cahier Nr. 137, p.16

Krankheit.[59]

('And I am not a theologian but dedicated to philosophy, to thinking. And this is a wonderful and at the same time a terrible disease.')

In contrast to other philosophers, Kant believed that philosophy belongs among sciences, and that its results must hence appear in scientific form, and that in consequence philosophical writing must use technical terms and precise distinctions. He said,

> *...für die Maxime unseres vernunftigen Verhaltens hinreichend zu bestimmen, ist die Wesiheitslehre, und diese wiederum als Wissenschaft ist Philosophie in der Bedeutung wie die Alten das Wort verstanden (Liebe zur Weisheit), bei denen sie eine Anweisung zu dem Begriffe war, worin das höchste Gut zu setzen und zum Verhalten, durch welches es zu erwerben sei.*[60]
>
> ('...to define adequately the maxim of our reasonable behavior the doctrine of wisdom, and the latter again considered as science is philosophy in the meaning the elder did understood this word (love of wisdom), for whose it was an instruction to the concept, in which to set the highest Good and for the behavior, through which it has to be acquired.')

Schweitzer never attributed any scientific role to philosophy. He also disagreed with Kant on the subject of eternal peace, as for him there cannot be any possibility for peace without an ethical change in human behavior. He came to the conclusion that there is a decline in culture, and a failure in civilization. He held philosophy responsible for this letdown. He accused the philosophers who did not reach out and who forgot the ultimate role of philosophy. They were the ones to be blamed:

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[59]Jean-Paul Sorg, *Lire Albert Schweitzer*, Cahier Nr. 10, p. 40
[60] Thomas D. Weldon, *Introduction to Kant's Critique of Pure Reason*, p. 125

> *Das Entscheidende war das Versagen der Philosophie. Im 18. und im beginnenden 19. Jahrhundert war die Philosophie die Anführerin der öffentlichen Meinungen gewesen. Sie hatte sich mit den Fragen, die sich den Menschen und der Zeit stellen, beschäftigt und ein Nachdenken darüber im Sinne der Kultur lebendig erhalten.*[61]
>
> (What was decisive was the failure of philosophy. In the 18th century, and in the beginning of the 19th century, philosophy was the leader of public opinion. It was engaged in the questions related to the people and the times, and had preserved an active thinking oriented toward culture).

Schweitzer mainly blamed Kant for being so theoretical and having so little compassion. He believed a philosopher should not only deal with the techniques of reason, but with the relationship of man to the universe, and constantly continue to explore and to develop.

> *Philosophy will never be complete and can never be complete, by the very nature of philosophy. The human mind is capable of infinite growth. There are endless adventures in creative thought ahead of us. It is only when men bow low before great thinkers and proclaim them to have said the last word that philosophical growth becomes arrested.*[62]

Did Schweitzer in his analysis of Kant have any French influence? While Kant was an admirer of Rousseau, and so was Goethe,

> *Rousseau enchants Goethe and his Strassburg friends by preaching a return to nature which accords with their own personal ideas.*[63]

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[61] Albert Schweitzer, *Kulturphilosophie*, München, Becks Verlag, 1948, p. 3

[62] Norman Cousins, *Albert Schweitzer's Mission, Healing and Peace,* New York, W.W. Norton & Company, 1985 pp.72-73.

[63] Albert Schweitzer, translated by Joy Charles R., *Goethe, Four Studies by Albert Schweitzer,* Boston, The Beacon Press, p. 65

Despite the fact that Kant had integrated different ideas from the philosophical tradition, and that included not only Leibniz theory of pre-established harmony, but also the concept of substance of Descartes, Schweitzer did not pay a great tribute to the French philosopher. He mentioned Descartes, but found the Cartesian system weak because of its inability to find the interrelatedness of phenomena. He was not very impressed by the *Cogito, ergo sum* (I think, therefore I am), and treated this philosophical monument with a lot of irony:

> *I find it difficult to be impressed by 'I think, therefore I am.' One might as well say, 'I have a toothache, therefore I exist.' These catchwords are tricky things. I don't think they serve the cause of creative thoughts in philosophy.*[64]

III. 6. Conclusion

We cannot establish in detail any obvious French influence in Schweitzer's approach to Kant's philosophy. However, one could argue that Kant is a result of European thought, and that includes René Descartes, Denis Diderot[65], Jean-Jacques Rousseau[66], François-Marie Voltaire[67], and many more. Let us not forget that Diderot's *Encyclopedia* was the bestseller of its century throughout the Old Continent, and that Voltaire spent several years at the court of Prussia, invited to the palace of Frederick the

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[64] Norman Cousins, *Albert Schweitzer's Mission*, p. 74

[65] **Denis Diderot.** (1713-1784) born in Langres. French philosopher and writer. His major work was the *Encyclopédie* published in 1751. He was Catherine II of Russia librarian. After his death, his heirs sent his vast library to Catherine II who placed it at the Russian National Library.

[66] **Jean-Jacques Rousseau,** (1712-1778) born in Geneva. French philosopher and writer. He considered man good by nature, when in the state of nature, but is corrupted by society. His most important work, *Le Contrat Social*, outlines the bais for a legitimate political order.

[67] **Voltaire** (pen name), **Arouet, François-Marie.** (1694-1778) born in Paris. French philosopher and writer. he was very prolific, and wrote in almost every literary form. He was an outspoken supporter of social reform and defended civil liberties, including freedom of religion and the right of a fair trial.

Great whose was a grand admirer of him. The French Revolution had transformed European culture, and put an end to previous social and cultural values. Among the most important of influences are Kant and Rousseau, who pushed the boundaries, each one in his own way. Rousseau challenged the French government with his 'Man is born free, but is everywhere in chains', and Kant argued that we do not see nor speak of reality, only how it appears to us. But it was the work of Descartes in the 17th century that started the modern period, and set the agenda for those who came after him. Therefore we cannot refute the impact of French philosophy in Schweitzer's Religionsphilosophie Kants.

Schweitzer's dissertation on Kant still raises interest and was republished in 1987 in Germany. In 2004, several conferences were held throughout Europe in commemoration of the 200 years of Kant's death. Unfortunately, they received very little coverage. Also fifty or sixty years ago, Schweitzer could quote Kant in his sermons and maintain the attention of the members of his parish. Today any reference to Kant's philosophy in a Sunday service would be most surprising. Could this be considered as a sign of cultural decline?

CHAPTER IV

ALBERT SCHWEITZER and JOHANN-SEBASTIAN BACH

„In no other art does the perfect consign the imperfect to oblivion so thoroughly as it does in music"[68]

In Africa, Dr. Schweitzer played the piano every day. In the primeval forest, the music of Bach brought him peace and harmony. Late in the evening, when most of the lights at the hospital had been turned out, the Doctor played the piano in his small workroom. As he was playing a Bach Toccata:

> *His feet moved over the organ footboard with speed and precision. His powerful hands were in total control of the piano as he met Bach's demands for complete definition of each note – each with its own weight and value, yet all of them intimately laced together to create an ordered whole... All things inside A.S. spoke in his playing, ...the vibrations of the Toccata racing through me. When he was through, he sat with his hands resting lightly on the keys, his great head bent forward as though to catch any still-lingering echoes. He was now freed of the pressures and tensions of the hospital.*[69]

Music was at the core of Schweitzer's life, but not just any music, it was Bach's music. This chapter will argue that Schweitzer's way of performing Bach had its origin in a music whose roots reached back to Bach himself. After briefly describing Bach's life

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[68] Albert Schweitzer, Bach I, p. 49

[69] Cousins, Norman. *Dr. Schweitzer of Lambarene,* New York, Harper & Row Publishers, 1960, p.177-178

and music, and the musical education of the young Schweitzer, I will attempt to uncover any interaction between the French and German cultures in the relationship of the two men.

IV. 1. Bach's Biography

Johann-Sebastian Bach (1685-1750) was a German composer and organist whose sacred and secular works for choir, orchestra and keyboard drew together almost all of the strands of the baroque style and brought it to its ultimate maturity. He is considered one of the greatest composers in history.

Born into a distinguished family of German musicians and composers, Bach received his earliest instruction from his father. After his parents' death, in 1695, the nine-year old orphan moved to Ohrdruf, where he lived and studied organ with his older brother Johann Christoph. In 1700, he attended the Latin School of Lüneburg, and sang in the choir of the Michaeliskirche. The school had also a famous music library where the young Bach had access to a great selection of scores. There he copied, studied and performed music. He acquired a valuable education, and established the strong foundation of his musical erudition. In addition, the Michaelskirche housed the "Ritterakademie", a college of young aristocrats, where French music and manners were cultivated. There were regular concerts given by French bands maintained by the duke of nearby Celle[70].

[70] **Celle** is an historic town in Lower Saxony, south-west of Lüneburg. Celle was the seat of the reigning dukes of Braunschweig-Lüneburg from 1378 to 1705. Their reign covers the time when Bach was attending the Michaelisschule in 1700-1702. The Obituary refers to Bach's encountering well-manged French music played by the famous band kept by the Duke of **Celle** or **Zelle**. It states that most of the players were actually French – a result of its having been formed by the French duchess of the ducal line, Eléonore Desmier 'Olbreuse.

Bach had an insatiable curiosity about music and sometimes walked great distances to hear an organist playing, despite widespread poverty and miserable conditions throughout the country. It is certainly not easy to imagine the drabness and narrowness of a German provincial town in Bach's time. During the Thirty Years War, one third of the population of Germany and nine tenths of its wealth had been destroyed, leaving a heritage of misery for generations. The patronage of numerous small courts was limited by lack of funds; and the Lutheran church, to which Bach's work was devoted from 1723 to his death, did not offer more than a modest living.

Bach served as a court musician and composer in Arnstadt, at the courts of the Dukes of Weimar[71] and of the Prince of Anhalt-Köthen[72], and finally as cantor and director of music at Leipzig.

IV. 2. The Music of Bach

Bach's fame during his lifetime was due more to his ability as an organist than to his reputation as a composer. However, since the nineteen century, he has been hailed as a genius whose work represents the peak of the Baroque era. Although he introduced no new musical forms, he enriched the prevailing German style with a robust and dazzling

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[71] **Duke Johann Ernst.** Bach came to Weimar for the first time in 1703. He was employed for about 6 months as a violinist in the private orchestra of the Duke. The Duke died in 1707.
Duke Wilhelm Ernst (1662-1728) He was a Lutheran ruler and a sponsor of court music. He hired Bach as organist and encouraged him to make the most of his talents for the organ. But Weimar was ruled by two dukes at that time. Bach was in friendly terms with the nephew of the late Johann Ernst, **Duke Ernst August** (1688-1748), and his half-brother, **Johann Ernst** (1696-1728) who was musically gifted. Johann brought back from a trip to Amsterdam a rich collection of Italian music. Bach made various organ transcription of this material and particularly Vivaldi's concertos which had a profound influence on his composition style.

[72] **Prince Leopold of Anhalt-Cöthen** (1694-1728). He is best remembered for employing Bach as his Kapellmeister from December 1717 to April 1723. Bach composed several cantatas and a serenade in his honour.

contrapuntal technique, a seemingly effortless control of harmonic and motivic organization from the smallest to the largest scales, and the adaptation of rhythms and textures from abroad, particularly Italy and France. He was best known during his lifetime as an organist, organ consultant, and composer of organ works, both in the traditional German free genres such as preludes, fantasias, and toccatas, and in stricter forms such as Vivaldi's chorale preludes and fugues. He established a reputation at a young age for his great creativity and ability to integrate aspects of several different national styles into his organ works.

Bach's forceful suavity and vast output have earned him wide acknowledgement as one the greatest composers in the Western tonal tradition. Revered for their intellectual depth, technical command and artistic beauty, his works include the *Brandeburg Concertos,* the keyboard suites and partitas, the *Mass in B Minor,* the *Saint Mathew Passion,* the *Musical Offering,* the *Art of Fugue,* and about 240 church *cantatas.*[73] He brought the polyphonic baroque music to its culmination, creating masterful and vigorous works in almost every musical form known in his period. The music of French baroque with its emphasis on tone color and timbre influenced the music of Bach as well as the Vivaldi 1712 collection of concertos. This fact was a decisive moment in Bach's development. From this point, he combined his earlier counterpoint style with its northern German and French influences, with Vivaldi. Bach absorbed these influences to become the transcendent composer of High Baroque, and he joined the fluidity of the melody, and the drama of Italian style with the spiritual power and profundity of German Lutheranism.

For many, Bach remains the greatest and most influential composer of the

[73] Wikipedia.org

Western world. However, he was not aware of the greatness of his work, and never fought for the recognition of his art and of his works. Schweitzer regarded him as a universal personality and a collective soul:

> *Bach is clearly not a single but a universal personality... Johann Sebastian Bach –to speak the language of Kant- is a historical postulate. Whatever path we traverse through the poetry and the music of the Middle Ages, we are always led to him...*
>
> *Bach is a terminal point. Nothing comes from him; everything merely leads up to him. To give his true biography is to exhibit the nature and the unfolding of German art that comes to completion in him and is exhausted in him- to comprehend it in all its strivings and its failures. This genius was not an individual, but a collective soul.*[74]

IV. 3. Schweitzer's Musical Education

Like Bach, Schweitzer was devoted to music since early childhood. He, too, was born into a family of musicians, and was first taught music by his father. Schweitzer recalled his village of Gunsbach, with the old presbytery where he listened to his father at the piano. His paternal grandfather and his two brothers were all organists. It was common at that time for a schoolmaster to have studied music, and to play at least two instruments: the organ or piano, and the violin. Albert recalled how deeply he had been impressed by the first piano concert he attended with his uncle when he was eleven years old. Some time later it was a performance of Richard Wagner's[75] *Tannhäuser* that made

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[74] Charles R Joy., *Albert Schweitzer, an Anthology*, Boston, The Beacon Press, 1947, pp.51-52

[75] **Richard Wilhelm Wagner** (1813-1883), born in Leipzig. German composer and conductor, Wagner is mostly known for his operas which he called music dramas. His four operas cycle *Der Ring des Nibelungen* (1876) transformed musical thought through his concept of *Gesamtkunstwerk* (total artwork). Wagner was also a very prolific writer, authoring hundreds of books, poems and articles.

another strong impression on him.

Bach entered Schweitzer's life when he was still a young boy, and became his master. The young Albert first studied music first with Eugene Münch whose nephew, Charles Münch, was the Director of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Dr. Münch often took him to St. Stephen's church on Saturday afternoon, where he could listen in the organ loft. It was there that he first became acquainted with the music of Bach. Very soon after he started to play the organ and was taking the place of his teacher.

In later years, Schweitzer continued his musical studies in Paris with the great French organist, Charles-Marie Widor[76]. His private lessons with Widor and his association with the Cavaillé-Coll[77] organ in the church of St. Sulpice were of fundamental importance to his later musical development. Widor was to tell Schweitzer that organ playing is like the manifestation of a will filled with a vision of eternity.[78] When Widor was puzzled by some Bach movements which he could not completely grasp, Schweitzer explained to him how the clarification could be found in the lyrics of old German songs. Widor was so impressed by Schweitzer's interpretation of Bach that he suggested that Schweitzer write a book about the composer. Widor collaborated with Schweitzer on his edition of Bach's organ music. Like Camille Saint-Saëns ,the famous organist stood at the head of his generation but much of his music had fallen into neglect by the end of his life.

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[76] **Charles-Marie Widor** (1844-1937) born in Lyon. French organist, composer and teacher, Widor created the genre of the organ symphony. He was appointed as organist at Saint-Sulpice, Paris, the most prominent position for a French organist, thanks to the support of Charles Gounod and Camille Saint-Saëns. He remained at Saint-Sulpice for 64 years.

[77] **Aristide Cavaillé-Coll** (1811-1899), born in Montpellier. French organ builder. He was considered the greatest organ builder of the 19th century. His oragans are symphonic organs, that means that reproduce the sounds of other instruments or combine them. His largest and greatest organ is in Saint-Sulpice, Paris.

[78] Michael Murrayl, *Albert Schweitzer, Musician*, Hants, England, Scolar Press, 1994, p.3

IV.3. Jean-Sébastien Bach. Le Musicien-Poète

In 1905, Schweitzer published his celebrated study of Bach, *Jean-Sebastian Bach: Le Musicien-Poète.* It was written in French and prefaced by Widor. In the introduction of *Le Musicien-Poète*, he did not forget his first organ teacher, who had opened his mind to the understanding of Bach's music, and remembered him in the following terms:

> *When I undertook to write the chapter on the chorales, memories of these first, profound, artistic emotions came flooding back to me. Certain phrases came to the point of my pen all formed, and then I realized that I was only repeating the words and using once more the imagery by which my first organ teacher had opened my mind to understanding the music of Bach.*[79]

In this work, Schweitzer pointed out the deep interrelation among the different forms of art. In music, expression is essentially symbolical. He made clear how man can think erroneously that he "sees" whereas in reality he "hears" from a silent canvas or he sees from the sound of music. According to Schweitzer, if we have the eye of an artist, we should be able to perceive art at its different levels of inter-coloration.

> *The artist is not only a painter, or only a poet, or only a musician, but all in one. Various artists have their habitation in his soul.*[80]

In the second volume, he explained very clearly the essential distinction between the German and the French perception of the arts. He claimed that this difference had its

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[79] Charles Joy, *Music in the life of Albert Schweitzer*, New York, Harper Brothers,. Boston, Beacon Press, 1951, p. 9

[80] Albert Schweitzer., *J.S. Bach II*, p.8

origin in the difference of attitude towards poetry:

> *The German poet is more of a poet than the French. Therefore French painters reproach German artists for a lack of real, objective feeling for nature. German painting, on the other hand, in spite of its admiration for the splendid technique of the French, feels somewhat chilled by a kind of deliberate poverty of imagination that it detects in it. In literature, these contrasted ways of looking at nature have given Germany a splendid lyrical poetry that the French have never been able to achieve.*[81]

Despite the admiration German artists feel for the splendid technique of the French, they are somewhat chilled by the poverty of imagination that can be detected in their work.

Schweitzer regarded Beethoven and Wagner more as poets, and Schubert and Berlioz more as painters. As for Bach, he compared his music to the architecture of a cathedral. He perceived Bach as an architect who, as in Gothic art, found free connections of different profiles to build a new harmony. And so one had to understand the architectural structures of his music. He said:

> *Bach's music is Gothic. Just as in Gothic architecture the great plan develops out of the simple motive, but enfolds itself in the richest detail instead of in a rigid line, and only makes its effect when every detail is truly vital, so does the impression a Bach work makes on the hearer depend on the player communicating to him the massive outline and the details together, both equally clear and equally full of life.*[82]

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[81] Albert Schweitzer, *J.S. Bach II*, p.11
[82] Albert Schweitzer, *J.S. Bach, I*, p. 363

Initially written in French, Schweitzer rewrote the manuscript in German in 1908. This second version is not a translation of the first one, but a completely new work composed of all new material. Both editions were published in Leipzig. A third version revised and enlarged by the author was printed in the English language in 1911 and distributed in London and New-York. The book counts 455 pages in the original French version, 844 pages in the German edition, and 926 pages in the English one – the German edition being an almost entirely new book, and the English one being the translation of the German one with a some revision.[83]

IV. 4. Schweitzer's Interpretation of Bach

Schweitzer developed a simple style of performance that he considered to be closer to what Bach intended it to be. He based his interpretation mainly on his reassessment of Bach's religious intentions. The difference between Bach and other mystics is that Bach uses music to express a state of grace, whereas others use words. Schweitzer's overt motive was to convey Bach's thought; he was the first one to depict Bach's way of portraying in tone the sentiments or ideas drawn from poetry.

Throughout the German version of his book, *Johann Sebastian Bach*, Schweitzer advocated this new style, which had great influence in the way Bach's music is now being treated. Music was part of Schweitzer's life, and as Charles Roy mentioned in the foreword of his book, he became,

...a Minister of music, trying to interpret to the world the religious

[83] Michael Murray, *Albert Schweitzer, Musician*, p.14

> *significance of the Cantatas and the Passions, himself more and more an embodiment of the man whose works he reproduced.*
>
> *The life of Albert Schweitzer has been strung on a continuous golden chain of music, which will not be broken until his fingers are silenced beneath the waving, sun-drenched palms of the hilltop cemetery at Lambarene...*[84]

Schweitzer turned out to be one of the greatest interpreters of the music of Bach. He believed that Bach, like every lofty religious mind, belongs not to the church but to religious humanity, and that:

> *...any room becomes a church in which his sacred works are performed and listened to with devotion.*[85]

He felt that wherever Bach's music was played, it had a spiritual impact on people and guided them to inner peace.

His writings on the performance practice in Baroque music, and particularly in the music of Bach, had a considerable influence in the early years of the twentieth century. The motto in his performance of Bach's works was clarity of expression. His interpretation of Bach was new and revolutionary; it was undeniably a return to the spirit and to the meaning of the cantor of Saint-Thomas. One question that is often raised is how well Schweitzer finally played the music of Bach. Fortunately, evidence of this can be found in the form of phonograph recordings made in Strasbourg, at St.Aurelia's Silberman organ, in 1936. Thirty-three disks were recorded, of which twenty-five contain

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[84] Joy Charles, *Music in the Life of Albert Schweitzer*, p. XIV
[85] Albert Schweitzer, *Bach I*, p. 264/ Joy Charles, *Wit and Wisdom*, Boston, The Beacon Press, 1949, p.33

Schweitzer playing Bach. His playing is considered to be exciting; partly because of his inexorable rhythm, which is both poetic and authoritative, and partly because every move seemed so well planned.[86]

IV. 5. Schweitzer, Organ Constructor

He developed a great awareness of the style of Baroque organs such as the organs of Gottfried Silbermann[87], the great Alsatian organ builder of the eighteenth century, and a contemporary of Bach. On these organs, it was possible to perform the works of Bach in the sonorities in which he had played them. Schweitzer's interest in organs probably originated from his grandfather, who also had shown a great interest in organ building. In 1906, he wrote a pamphlet, *The Art of German and French Organ Building and Playing*, in which he outlined his ideas for the building of a perfect organ, comparing the contemporary French and German styles of the instrument. Schweitzer presented his views on how to build a modern organ at the Vienna Congress of the International Musical Society in 1909. His writings on this subject had a significant influence in the early years of the Organ Reform Movement, which moved away from the large nineteenth century Romantic instruments to the more refined instruments suited to Baroque music.[88]

Schweitzer's concern was always to foster understanding among parties, so that the division between the French and German arts of organ playing would be erased,

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[86] Michel Murray, *Albert Schweitzer, Musician*, p. 38

[87] **Silbermann, Gottfried** (1683-1753) German organ and piano builder. He was born in Kleinbobritzsch, but moved to Strasbourg in 1702 where he learned organ construction. Silbermann and Bach were contemporaries and worked together on the escapement mechanism for the first forte pianos. They also shared an interest and advanced knowledge of acoustics to the voicing and location of organs.

[88] Friends of A.S. (U.K.) website, Albert Schweitzer, Musician.

creating new life for both. In a letter written in French to Mr. Henderson, he remembers the last conversation he had with his friend Widor:

> To A.M. Henderson, organist, University of Glasgow, from Lambaréné, 24 August 1945
> *Dear Mr. Henderson,*
> *...And we have memories of Widor in common! I saw him again a few months before his death... We talked again of organ building. He disapproved of the departure by French organ building from the traditions of Cavaillé-Coll, and was sad that his voice was not listened to and that some of his pupils wanted to transform the lovely old organs they were in charge of. But he was certain that his works for organ would endure and influence the organists of the future.*
> *How often do I think of this dear master, while practicing the organ here, in the African solitude, on the pedal-piano, given me by the Paris Bach Society...*[89]

IV. 6. Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, we have witnessed the constant presence of both cultures, French and German: the young Bach was educated with French music and manners; and Schweitzer chose to study the music of a German composer, Bach, in Paris. When Schweitzer left for Africa, it was the Paris-Bach society that offered him a piano built especially to resist the damp primeval forest. Far from civilization, he played Bach in the solitude of the equatorial night to find solace.

Another fact that illustrates the interaction between the two cultures is Schweitzer's lifetime friendship with Widor, which was conducted in the French

[89] Murray, Michel. *Albert Schweitzer, Musician*, p.129

language. Widor recognized in Schweitzer's interpretation of Bach the layers of different influences. In particular, the deep attachment to Bach Schweitzer had developed, must have been in part because of his historical background where we can find a concordance of the two flows of civilization. It is because of these deep historical roots which Schweitzer had studied and understood that he could establish a natural linkage between the music of Bach and his own mind. Schweitzer identified the difference between the French and German perception of Bach's music. His sensitivity to German culture enabled him to grasp its inspiration from old German songs, which Widor could not perceive.

Bach himself had to transcend French and Italian influences to reach the conception of High Baroque. Schweitzer's devotion to Bach mirrors this complex interaction. The two men are a synthesis of German and Latin cultures. They are a wonderful example of the encounter of different currents. The scientific mind of the young Schweitzer was able to establish a lifelong bond with the logic of Bach. Schweitzer did not just regard Bach as a German musician, he revered him as an universal creator. In his bond with Bach, he rose above an interpretation colored by nationalism, thus giving his music a sound of universality.

CHAPTER V

ALBERT SCHWEITZER and WOLFGANG JOHANN GOETHE

All thinking is strengthened by the fact that in any given moment it must find its way through reality and no longer concern itself with imagined things[90]

Subsequent to a brief biography of Goethe, I will describe in some details the special bonds he developed with Alsace, the land where Schweitzer was born and raised. Goethe, like Schweitzer, was not just a man of one country: he traveled in many countries, and spoke German, French and English. In exploring the link between the two men, similarities and differences will be identified.

V.1. Goethe's Biography:

Johann Wolfgang Goethe was born on August 28, 1749 in Frankfurt-am-Main, and died on March 22, 1749, in Weimar. He was a German polymath; he was a poet, novelist, dramatist, humanist, scientist, theorist, painter, and for ten years minister of state of the Duchy of Weimar. Goethe spent his early life in the house of his family in Frankfurt-am-Main. He studied all common subjects and several languages (Latin, Greek, French, English and Hebrew). At a young age he already disliked the church, and characterized its history as a *Mischmasch von Irrtum und Gewalt* (hodgepodge of mistakes and violence). He studied law in Leipzig, but was not very successful in his studies, and returned to Frankfurt. Finally after a severe illness, he resumed his studies in

[90] Charles Joy, *Wit and Wisdom,* p.26

Strasbourg. In Alsace, Goethe found great happiness and just blossomed. In the next part of this chapter, I will describe in some detail the special bonds Goethe developed with Alsace, the land where Schweitzer was born and raised.

After the publication of his legal thesis, Goethe was offered a career in the French government, but he declined it. Instead, he worked for a short time as a lawyer: first for a few months, in 1771, in Frankfurt: and in again, in May 1772, in Wetzlar: At the invitation of Karl August, Grand Duke of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach[91], he went to live in Weimar where he held different political offices.[92] At the request of Karl-August, he was ennobled in 1782 by Emperor Joseph II, and the same year he admitted he wasn't a Christian. His journey in Italy from 1786 to 1788 was of great importance for his philosophical development. In 1792, three years after the French Revolution, he assisted the Duke of Weimar as a military observer in the battle of Valmy[93] against French revolutionary troops, and again during the siege of Mainz[94] which he recorded in his work *Die Belagerung von Mainz.*

Goethe had another encounter with French troops when Napoleon's army

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[91] **Karl August, Grand Duke of Saxe-Weimar-Eisenach** (1757-1828), born in Weimar. He was brought up under the regency of his mother, a woman of enlightened ideas. He spent some time in Paris with his brother. In Frankfurt, he was introduced to Goethe: the beginning of an historic friendship. In 1775, as he returned to Weimar to govern his duchy, one of the first acts of the Duke was to call for Goethe, and in 1776 he made him member of the privy council. He said, "People of discernment congratulate me on possessing this man. His intellect, his genius is known..." He was interested in literature, in art, in science; his goal was to educate his people. Under a ruler so enlightened, Weimar became the intellectual centre of Germany.

[92] Wikipedia.org

[93] The battle of **Valmy** was fought on 20 September 1792, around the village of Valmy in northern France. Following the declaration of war of France on Austria on 20 April 1792, combined forces consisting of Prussians, Austrians, Hessians and emigrants under the command of the Duke of Brunswick, representing King Frederick William II of Prussia, invaded France. The French armies were commanded by the Generals Dumouriez and Kellermann . It was a French victory, and a turning point in the world's history because a French defeat would probably have condemned the French Revolution .

[94] **Siege of Mainz** (14 April-23 July 1793) Allied forces composed of Prussia, Austria and German States besieged and captured the city of Mainz, Germany, from the French forces.

invaded Weimar in 1806. French "spoon guards", the least disciplined soldiers invaded his house. After 1794, Goethe dedicated himself mostly to literature, and after a life of immeasurable achievements, he died in Weimar in 1832.

Goethe produced volumes of poetry, essays, critiques, and scientific work, including a theory of optics and early work on evolution and linguistics. He was also interested in mineralogy, and there is a mineral *goethite* which was named after him. Though his literary work acquired great attention, Goethe considered his most significant achievement to be his understanding of nature.

Goethe was undoubtedly one of the greatest masters of world literature. His genius embraced all fields of human endeavor. Among his most notable works, I would like to mention *Götz von Berlichingen* (1773), and another piece of *Sturm und Drang; Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* (1774) (The sorrows of Young Werther), which made him famous and was widely translated; and *Dichtung und Wahrheit* (1811) (Poetry and Truth), an autobiography. *Faust* was Goethe's most famous work and considered to be the greatest work of German literature. It is a tragic play that was published in two parts: part one completed in 1806, published in 1808, and followed by a revised publication in 1828-1829. An earlier form of the work, *Urfaust*, was developed between 1772 and 1775; part two was finished in 1832, the year of Goethe's death.

Goethe's poetic work was set to music by almost all major composers of this period, from Mozart, Liszt and Mahler to Beethoven, Berlioz and Schubert. His epic drama *Faust* was completed in stages and was to be published only after his death. It inspired an opera by Gounod as well as symphonies by Liszt, Wagner and Mahler.

V.2. Goethe Bonds with Alsace

Goethe had many ties to the land of Alsace. He came to Strasbourg in the spring of 1770 to study law and medicine for about one and a half years. He graduated on August 6, 1771, with the title of a "Lizentiate", an equivalent of a doctorate in law. In the heart of the city, Goethe was always deeply impressed by the wonderful architecture of the cathedral where so many craftsmen from all of Europe had applied their talent. He considered it not only to be a masterpiece, but as he said in *Von deutscher Baukunst* (About German building art), it is...*ein aus tausend harmonierenden Einzelheiten bestehendes Gesamtgebäude*[95], (...a construction made of thousand pieces standing in harmony).

But Goethe also had more personal ties with Alsace, particularly with the little village of Sessenheim, 25 miles North of Strasbourg. This small place would have remained unknown forever if Goethe had not fallen madly in love there with Friederike Brion, the nineteen year old daughter of the local pastor. In *Dichtung und* Wahrheit, Goethe tells us about his encounter with her:

> *In diesem Augenblick trat sie wirklich in die Türe; und da ging fürwahr an diesem ländlichen Himmel ein allerliebster Stern auf... Schlank und leicht, als wenn sie nichts an sich zu tragen hätte, schritt sie, und beinahe schien für die gewaltigen blonden Zöpfe des niedlichen Köpfchens der Hals zu zart. Aus heiteren blauen Augen blickte sie sehr deutlich umher, und das artige Stumpfnäschen forschte so frei in die Luft, als wenn es inder Welt keine Sorge geben könnte; der Strohhut hing am Arm, und so hatte ich das Vergnügen, sie beim ersten Blick auf einmal in*

[95] www.bad-bad.de/elsass/goethe.htm

ihrer ganzen Anmut und Lieblichkeit zu sehn und zu erkennen.[96]

('At that moment, she truly came to the door; and then, in truth, the most lovely star rose in this countryside sky... slim and light, as she would not carry anything, she stepped, and her neck seemed almost to fragile to bear the two heavy blond braids of her little cute head. With her light blue eyes, she looked around, and her little turned-up nose was seeking so freely as there would not be any worries in the world anymore; a straw hat was hanging on her arm, and so I had the pleasure to see and recognize her in all her grace and loveliness in my first glimpse.')

Friederike was a great source of inspiration for Goethe. Unfortunately, only a few letters from this idyllic encounter still exist, but the *Sessenheimer Liederbuch* contains the verses Goethe composed for her in the most beautiful lyrical style. Among them, there is the well known poem *Heidenröslein*:

Sah ein Knab' ein Röslein stehn,	'A boy saw a little rose standing,
Röslein auf der Heiden,	Little rose on the heaths,
War so jung und morgenschön	Was so young and beautiful in the morning
Lief er schnell, es nah zu sehen,	He ran fast, to see it near
Sah's mit vielen Freuden.	Saw it with many joys
Röslein, Röslein, Röslein rot,	Little rose, little rose, little red rose,
Röslein auf der Heiden[97].	Little rose on the heaths.'

The psychological and intellectual experience which Goethe went through while in Alsace was not unique in itself; it was rather a particular striking instance of a crisis which affected many of his contemporaries during this epoch of the preromantic

[96] Raymond Matzen, *Goethe und Friederike Brion* p. 17
[97] Idem, p.79

movement. In England, France, and Germany there was a rebellion against the petrified rationalism of the time, and the restriction which stylistic rules placed on the creative impulse. The rebels claimed that a fair allowance must be given to irrational forces, to the autonomy of genius, and to national idiosyncrasies. A new attitude emerged against the prevailing tendency of the Age of Enlightenment which created a "French Europe" with Voltaire as her sovereign.

V.3. Goethe, a European:

In Germany, these aspirations, under the significant name of *Sturm und Drang*[98], found a strong, sometimes virulent expression. The leaders, mostly men from the Eastern parts, were Johann Georg Hamann[99] (1730-1788) whose writings, though involved and abstruse, are still brimming over with vigorous life, and Johann Gottfried Herder[100] (1744-1803) sometimes admirably perceptive, and sometimes dangerously erratic.

Because of his accidental presence in Strasbourg, Herder's encounter became "the most important event in Goethe's life at the time. An eager disciple of Hegel, just a few years older, Goethe was to know his first great spiritual metamorphosis which indeed he

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[98] ***Sturm and Drang*** (Storm and Stress), a movement in German literature and music that called attention to the unpredictable emotions of the individual. It started in 1765 and lasted about 20 years. The major advocates of *Sturm and Drang* were Hamann, the young Goethe and his friend, Schiller. The major works of this period are Goethe's play *Götz von Berlichingen,* and his novel *The Sorrows of Young Werther.*

[99] **Johann Georg Hamann**, (1730-1788), important German philosopher of the Counter-Enlightenment, and ideologue of the *Sturm and Drang* movement. He was Pietist and a friend of Immanuel Kant. He did not trust in reason, and therefore concluded that faith in God is the only solution to the philosophical problems.

[100] **Johann Gottfried Herder** (1744-1803), German poet, theologian and philosopher, born in Mohrungen in East Prussia. He studied at the University of Königsberg under Hamann's guidance. He met Goethe in Strassburg in 1770, and had a great influence on him. This encounter is often considered as the beginning of the *Sturm and Drang* movement. Later, Herder moved to Weimar where he played a significant role in the development of romanticism.

was ready to undergo.

The ideas represented and exalted by Herder, and later his aggressively sweeping views of France, which he considered as having definitely lost all importance, accounted for the rejection of Goethe as regards the genius of France. Goethe spurned the materialistic philosophy, according to which the universe is a mere machine, devoid of any free and independent spiritual impulsion. In Diderot's *Encyclopedia*, he saw essentially the praise of a technicality moral to the soul. He dismissed disdainfully a literature which, with Voltaire as its embodiment, had stiffened into old age and wordy distinction, and a little later, he was to charge Corneille and Racine with impotence. A faithful echo of his master, he decreed that France was lacking a sense of greatness.

Such rejections were linked with the new orientation proposed by Herder. He introduced Goethe to a world in which landscapes, unknown or ignored until then, all possible intellectual attitudes and all feeling, imagination and dreams, found a place. It was the world of Shakespeare whom Goethe was to venerate without reservation, of Ossian[101], of Laurence Sterne (1713-1768)[102]. Herder persuaded Goethe that the gift that makes the poet was not the privilege of a few learned individuals, but a faculty granted to all men and all people. In Shakespeare, he revealed to Goethe the self-assured creator acknowledging no law, but that of the inner consistency of the work of art.

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[101] **Ossian**, author of a cycle of poems of the 3rd century that the Scottish poet James Macpherson has translated from ancient sources. In 1760 Macpherson published in English *Fragments of Ancient Poetry collected in the Highlands of Scotland,* and in 1765 he added a collected edition *The Works of Ossian.*The poems were very successful and influenced many writers, including Walter Scott, J.W. von Goethe G. Herder; they also had an influence on romantic music: Franz Schubert composed *Lieder* setting many of Ossian's poems.

[102] **Laurence Sterne** (1713-1768), born in Clonmel, Ireland. His was an Irish born English novelist and an Anglican clergyman. He was best known for his novel *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy, Gentleman* which was translated in all major European languages, and made him famous.

Through his lessons, Herder set free forces latent in Goethe, swept him off in a whirlwind of emancipation, and stirred up the genius in him. But Herder also taught Goethe the necessity of belonging. He showed him that the true creators have fed on the substance of their nations, and that is how Goethe, in whom the poet emerged mightily, became aware of the importance of his being a son of Germany. Carried away by a dazzling impetus, he was not content himself with praising the cathedral of Strasbourg as an organic building in which "as in the works of eternal Nature... everything contributes to the general effect; he also made the assertion – glaringly erroneous – that the Gothic style in its greatness is alien to the French genius and can only be a product of German architecture. All this incitement resulted in Goethe's "getting rid of and shaking off all French ways", as he put it in a famous passage of his autobiography. The remark might seem to imply that he broke altogether with France. In fact, it simply meant that Goethe did not intend to remain the "Frenchified" German he had been until now. He did not want to be a German cut off from Germany because Germany was the land that could foster his poetic creativeness. He wanted to protect the creative act which secured him the total fulfillment towards which he tended with all his might. Yet he was to go on welcoming with gratitude things which France, and other countries as well, could bring him.

It must indeed be stressed that when Goethe entered upon his new course in Strasbourg, his ties with France had not been completely severed. Surviving elements of these links persisted and would go on persisting. Goethe did not forget what he called with admiration "the great and splendid French world". He felt close to François

Rabelais[103], Clément Marot[104], Michel de Montaigne[105], Jacques Amyot[106] in whom he found power akin to that of certain 16th century Germans. He greeted Jean-Jacques Rousseau as a kindred spirit. Diderot came into his life, never to go out of it. To Goethe, who did not think even now in nationalistic categories, Frenchmen could be dear so long as they were well-minded individuals with strength of their own. By 1772, he was fired with enthusiasm for Claude Lorrain[107], the poet-painter. In the impetuous Pierre Beaumarchais[108], he would recognize two years later his counterpart, almost his brother.

In 1769, Goethe was twenty-one years old. He had already discovered exciting prospects, and was growing aware of his creative ability. He would grow more sober, and acquire more culture. Much later, in 1830, Goethe spoke with smiling indulgence of the "young fools of 1772" whose agitation would have served no purpose if the Germans had had "beside other great models" their own Diderot – a remark in which one may perhaps see a repudiation, if only partial, of Herder.

Speaking from the point of view of maturity, Mephistopheles, at the end of the bachelor scene in the Second Faust says a few quietly ironical lines, which define the young Goethe of the lustrum starting in Strasbourg, as well as his ulterior development.

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[103] **François Rabelais** (c.1483-1553), born at Chinon, France, he was a major French Renaissance writer.

[104] **Clément Marot** (1496-1544), born at Cahors, France, he was a French poet of the Renaissance period. He held the charge of *escripvain* (writer) to Anne de Bretagne, Queen of France.

[105] **Michel Eyquem de Montaigne** (1533-1592) born on the family estate, the Château de Montaigne, near Bordeaux, France., was one of the most influential writers of the French Renaissance.

[106] **Jacques Amyot** (1513-1593), born in Melun, France, he was a French Renaissance writer and translator.His translation of Plutarch was translated into English , and supplied Shakespeare with materials fo his Roman plays.

[107] **Claude Lorrain** (1600-1682), born in Lorraine. His real name was Claude Gellée. French artist of the Baroque era, he is admired for his works in landscape painting.

[108] **Pierre Beaumarchais** (1732-1799). His real name was Pierre-Augustain Caron. He was first a watch-maker and an inventor.. Best known for his theatrical works, he had an adventurous life, being also a politician, a spy, a musician, an inventor, and revolutionary, both French and American.

Doch sind wir auch mit diesem nicht gefährdet,
In wenig Jahren wird es anders sein:
Wenn sich der Most auch ganz absurd gebärdet,
Es gibt zuletzt doch noch e Wein.[109]
('But this man is no danger to us
Within a few years all this will have changed;
The cider may indulge in all its follies,
It will eventually turn into wine.')

Voltaire would have smiled his approbation.

V.4. Schweitzer's Encounter with Goethe

As any student of his age, Schweitzer had studied Goethe's writings and poetry at the Gymnasium, a kind of elevated high school, but he was not particularly impressed by him at that time. Perhaps one could think that, in a certain way, it was Goethe who came to him. Indeed, in summer 1898, Schweitzer decided to study philosophy in Strasbourg, and therefore rented a room in the city. Destiny gave him the same room where Goethe lived, and probably wrote his love letters to Friederike Brion!

The speeches Schweitzer gave on Goethe are important, not so much to understand Goethe, as they are to contribute to our understanding of Schweitzer. The surprising similarity in the life and basic principles of the two great men is well illustrated in the following address: Goethe Prize Address, Frankfurt-am-Main, August 28, 1928.

In this talk, Schweitzer recalled Goethe's description of the *Harzreise* (Trip to the Harz) where the poet traveled through bad weather in order to bring some comfort to a desperate friend. He followed his example: "*Thus, when I had to render help to some*

[109] J. W. Goethe, *Second Faust.*

man in the course of my life, I said myself, this is your Harzreise."[110]

Whenever life requested him to undertake a work for which he was not prepared, Schweitzer found in Goethe's writings the words to encourage him. He encountered Goethe again when he started to study natural sciences for his medical career. He remembered that Goethe, too, had come to the sciences, and had studied everything that reveals nature like botany, geology, zoology, chemistry, physics, and anthropology. Very few remember that it was Goethe who discovered the intermaxillary bone in the human cheek, and that he was a precursor of the Darwinian theory indicating that every bone in the human body was part of the vertebral system. Schweitzer wrote:

> *I discovered why Goethe surrendered himself in loyalty to natural sciences. It is a distinctive gain and an occasion of enlightenment for anyone immersed in intellectual work to confront facts which are to be reckoned with, not because he has imagined them, but simply because they exist.*[111]

His next encounter with Goethe took place in the primeval forest, when famine was threatening the hospital in Lambarene. When starting to clear the forest in order to establish a plantation, he was harassed by stubborn workers:

> *When I was overwhelmed with despair, I thought of Goethe, who had his Faust busy at the end redeeming the land from the sea in order that men might live and find nourishment there. In the dark primeval forest, Goethe stood beside me as a smiling and understanding comforter.*[112]

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[110] Albert Schweitzer, *Pilgrimage to Humanity*, Translated by E. Walter Stuermann, New York, Philosophical Library, 1961, p.56

[111] Albert Schweitzer, *Pilgrimage to Humanity*, p.57

[112] Idem, p. 59

The way the author of Faust was an active participant in the thoughts and events of his time was an enduring experience for the white doctor. Above all, he was impressed not only by the young and mature man, but also by the old Goethe very aware of the problems resulting from the replacement of human labor by machines.

> *Among the men of his time, he attempts to be a person who comprehends the coming new era and will match his powers with it. This is what deeply impresses one about the old Goethe.*[113]

In the deep intimacy Schweitzer had developed with Goethe, he discovered how to transcend encounters and happenings, and to give value to simple events of life.

> *He offers us what he has experienced in thought and action and what he has transformed into a higher reality. Only in personal experience do we come near to him. Only through an experience commensurate with his do we find him a friend instead of a stranger. We thus feel ourselves united to him in reverent friendship.*[114]

To face the never ending changing conditions of life, one has to become a person who understands his time, and can adjust to it. To be a match for all situations, he reminded himself that Goethe pointed out three obligations:

> *We must contend with the conditions of modern life so that men, who are about to have their humanity strangled by their work, may be able to preserve and enhance their spiritual life.*
>
> *We must contend with men so that, in time when external things make so great an impact on their lives, they can find the way to*

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[113] Albert Schweitzer, *Pilgrimage to Humanity*, p. 60
[114] Idem, p. 60

inwardness and persevere in it.

And we have to wrestle with ourselves and with everyone else so that, in a time of confusion and inhumanity, we can remain true to the great humane ideals of the eighteenth century, translating them into the concepts of our day and advancing their realization.[115]

In this lecture on Goethe, Albert Schweitzer disclosed very clearly some of the influences that molded his character. He called himself a disciple to the great immortal of the German literature. He felt indebted to Goethe, and recognized him as a man loyal to a simple nature philosophy. As a man of great humility, he might sometimes have valued too highly the influence Goethe had upon his life.

V. 5 Similarities

There are, however, great similarities in the lives of the two men, not so much in their activities and achievements, but overall in their attitude in life.

Goethe performed an amazing variety of tasks at his government post at Weimar: he reconstructed the mines at Illmenau, managed the court theater, was in charge of schools and roads, built factories and laboratories, and strove to introduce economy into the finances of the duchy. Fortunately, he kept all the details of his life in his daily journal. At fifty, Goethe was director of the theater of the court and minister of education, but his *Faust* was still not completed.

Schweitzer experienced a comparable situation. To run the hospital with little support and inadequate assistance was a daily challenge. Like Goethe he was

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[115] Albert Schweitzer, *Pilgrimage to Humanity*, p.61

overwhelmed by a great number of tasks: building, planting a garden out of the jungle, writing many letters, keeping the records of the pharmacy, ordering supplies, performing surgery on the sick, and at the same time teaching and preaching to the natives. Even though his duties were of a different nature than those of Goethe, he too was constantly under pressure, and always had to put his literary, musical and philosophical work on the back burner. Then Schweitzer found great comfort in the fact that he shared the same faith as Goethe.

Both men had fleeting moments of regret that they could not continue or complete some important undertaking.

V. 6. Differences

Both men became famous, but they differed in many fields. Goethe was a strange blend of paganism and Christianism, and was not very much impressed by the rules of the Church. On some occasions, he would show considerable disrespect for its icons. Once while copying some paintings in the Sistine Chapel in Rome, which was a very cool place in summer, he ended up dozing in the papal chair. One cannot imagine such behavior for Schweitzer, who always showed great respect for the faith and believes of other men, albeit he could have reactions of impatience when confronted with the emptiness of some traditional forms of religion. Schweitzer's faith was based on the profound principle of Christian love.

Goethe was a man of his time, having a very active social life, and an important network of relations. He understood the life of his era in its external and perhaps more superficial aspects. He had an epicurean side in his personality; he appreciated a good

glass of wine, and he also had great taste for the style of his clothes.

Schweitzer was much less a man of his time, for the simple reason that he chose to live in the primeval forest, far removed from all the main currents. His lifestyle was reduced to the minimal basic needs; when he died, he was lying in a simple, aged iron bed. However he literally penetrated the soul of mankind in a much deeper way that Goethe ever did.

Goethe was fascinated by Islam, and started to study the Koran. The archives in Weimar conserve his first studies of the Koran from 1771-72. Goethe even read the translation of the Koran to the members' of the Duke of Weimar's family. Goethe's positive attitude toward Islam at that time went far beyond these of anyone else in Germany before.

Schweitzer, on the other hand, found no need to compare the spiritual values of Islam with the ones of Christianity. For him, Islam lacked spiritual originality and was not a religion with profound thoughts on God and the world.

Both men had a strong feeling for justice. Goethe, however, when the reality did not please him, took refuge in escape. His relationship with Friederike came to an end in a very unjust way for the young woman, and there are more similar examples in Goethe's life.

Schweitzer had a more rigorous and profound sense of justice that exceeded that of Goethe. On the level of morality and spirituality, he was the master and Goethe the novice.

V. 7. Conclusion

In some way, Schweitzer idealized Goethe, and put him on a pedestal. Even

though Goethe's work was more significant and serves humanity in a more substantial way, his personal relationships very often ended in failure. Schweitzer, on the other hand, always found great satisfaction in fulfilling his duties, as unpleasant as they might be. He carried on his venture as a symbol of Christian love when he came to the primeval forest to exemplify, and also to repay a debt which the white race owed to the black.

I would like to end this chapter with an anecdote which is not without humor, reported by Herbert Wild, Pastor of Sessenheim from 1945 to 1966. As the date of the 200th anniversary of Goethe's birthday was approaching in 1949, Pastor Wild wanted to invite Dr. Schweitzer to participate in the commemoration by doing a presentation about his relationship with Goethe. Therefore, he visited him in Strasbourg, but Schweitzer was already packing for his departure to Lambarene, and turned down the invitation. As the Pastor was leaving, he heard the Doctor mumbling in his moustache in Alsatian:

> *Der Simpel von Goethe hätt's Rikel hirote sotte,*
> *er wärt mit em bigott nitt schlächt gfahre!*[116]
> ('This dummy of Goethe should have married the little Rikel,
> My God, he would not have done badly with her.')

At present, Sessenheim, this little village north of Strasbourg, remains a destination for all lovers of German literature, a place of veneration for the love between a young poet and an Alsatian girl, and as the contemporary great Alsatian poet and writer, Raymond Matzen says:

> *Ein Ort der Andacht und ein Born,*
> *Solange die Natur im Lenz*
> *Ein Dichterherz noch lang entflammt*
> *Solange man das „Mailied" noch*

[116] Raymond Matzen, *Goethe und Friederike Brion,Das Sesenheimer Liebesidyll,* p. 112.

Und „Röslein auf der Heiden" singt,
Solang man den „Faust" noch liest
Und spielt und sich darein erkennt,
Bleibt Sesenheim im stillen Ried
Ein Ort der Andacht und ein Born[117]

Raymond Matzen

('A place of veneration and a refreshing source,
As long as nature in spring
The poet's heart for a long time inflamed
As long as we still sing "das Mailied"
And "Röslein auf der Heiden"
As long as we still read and play Faust
And recognize ourselves in it
Sesenheim will remain in the silent moor
A place of veneration and a refreshing source.')

In this chapter, the lifelong relationship Schweitzer developed with Goethe has been examined. The French influence is omnipresent. We discovered that the young Goethe, very fond of French culture, later tried to reject his "addiction" to French culture under the influence of Herder. Goethe did not approve of the removal of the French monarchy and the upcoming of the new ideas of *Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité* of the French Revolution. However, he was not completely successful in his efforts to liberate himself from French influence. Evidence of this failure is found in the little museum of Sessenheim where one can see some exemplars of Goethe's letters to the Duke of Weimar written in perfect French!

[117] Idem, p. 2

CHAPTER VI

ALBERT SCHWEITZER and JESUS of NAZARETH

His neverending quest for truth made it impossible for Schweitzer not to question the accepted interpretations of the Bible. Reading the Holy Scriptures in Greek, he started to write several books on Jesus, Paul, the Last Supper and Baptism. With these books, he invalidated the work of some of the greatest New Testament scholars of his time, and wiped out the late 19th century general protestant conception of Jesus by taking significant steps towards an understanding of the historical Jesus. As Charles R. Joy mentioned it in his introduction of Wit and Wisdom of Albert Schweitzer:

> *Schweitzer showed conclusively that Jesus was the child of his age, that he shared the eschatological ideas of late Judaism, that he looked for an immediate end of the world, that he believed he was to be the Messiah and rule in the new Kingdom of God when the end came. At first Jesus thought the Messianic reign would begin before the disciples had returned from the teaching mission on which he had sent them, Then, when he found that he had been mistaken, he arrived at the conclusion that he must suffer an atoning sacrifice, and that on the cross the great transformation would come. This, too, failed to happen, and so the despairing cry:" My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"*[118]

VI. 1. Significant Approaches in the Critical Study of Jesus

Schweitzer lived at a time when biblical scholarship had undergone a revolution. He devoted close criticism to those full of self-confidence that based their research on the recent progress of psychiatry to demonstrate that Jesus was in fact a paranoiac, a megalomaniac or an epileptic. Several of his books covered this subject and all would

[118] Charles Joy, *The Wit and Wisdom of Albert Schweitzer*, p.10

deserve our attention, especially the following ones:

1) The psychiatric study of Jesus (1913)
   This critique of three psychiatric studies constituted Schweitzer's doctoral thesis (1913). He underscored that there is no evidence of mental imbalance in the life of Jesus.
2) The mystery of the kingdom of God (1914)
   Schweitzer's views were considered controversial, but this important theological work is still regarded with great respect by theologians.
3) Christianity and the religions of the world (1923)
   This work compares Christianity to Brahmanism, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Chinese religions. The author confronted the ethical foundations of the religions, and concluded that except Christianity, they all are world-life negative, and therefore cannot establish the basis for ethical action.

But in order to illustrate his journey in search of the historical Jesus, I will limit myself to the major work Schweitzer wrote about Jesus, namely *Von Reimarus zu Wrede.* It was first published in Germany in 1906, and translated into English in 1910, under the title, The Quest of the Historical Jesus. This book established Schweitzer's reputation as a theologian.

In this main achievement, Schweitzer analyzed over fifty authors, praising the ones who produced convincing and well-argued points of view, and criticizing the mediocre ones. He particularly denounced the renaissance viewpoints of Jesus made popular by Schleiermacher. I will pay special attention to the perspectives that Hermann Samuel Reimarus, David Friedrich Strauss, and Ernest Renan brought to the subject, and investigate how Schweitzer judged their claims. These three authors, two Germans and

one Frenchman, have been selected for the following reasons: Reimarus was the first researcher on the subject; Strauss' work had a tremendous impact; and Renan was in some way a French version of the quest for the historical Jesus.

VI. 2. Hermann Samuel Reimarus (1694-1768), a German philosopher and writer of the Enlightenment, is particularly remembered for his Deism, a doctrine that states that human reason can arrive at a knowledge of God and ethics from the study of nature and our own internal reality, so that we do not need religions based on revelation. He developed a rationalist critique of revelation, arguing that for the rational person, religion had to be based on reason. Reimarus' importance lies in his attempt to understand Jesus as an historical person, rather than a divine being, and in doing so, he inaugurated the modern study of the New Testament.

Reimarus was born in Hamburg, and spent his life there as a professor of Oriental Languages. He studied theology, ancient languages, and philosophy in Jena.[119] Many of his writings were published during his lifetime, but Reimarus was not a famous person among his contemporaries. He was, however, the first author of interest to have an historical approach to the life of Jesus. Before him, the only Life of Jesus of any significance had been written in the sixteenth century by the Jesuit Hieronymus Xaviera, a nephew of Francis Xavier[120], in the Persian language for the use of the Moghul Emperor

[119] http://en.Wikipedia.org

[120] Saint **Francis Xavier** (1506-1552) was born in the castle of Xavier in the kingdom of Navarre (today part of Spain). He studied in Paris where he met Ignatius Loyola. Xavier, Loyola and five others founded the Society of Jesus on August 15, 1534, on the hill of Montmartre in Paris. With the approval of the Pope they established the Order of Jesuits. Xavier carried on his missionary in East Indonesia, India and Japan. He died on the island of Shangchuan on December 13, 1552. One year later, his body was shipped to Goa where it is still today, placed in a glass container and having resisted decay for so long.

Akbar who would be the most powerful ruler of Hindustan. One century later the text was brought back to Europe by a merchant, and translated into Latin.

Philosophy for Reimarus, as Schweitzer would consider it afterward, had a high moral purpose: the advancement of happiness and rightness for humanity. For Reimarus, philosophy contained the fact that Christianity was crucial to this achievement. Reimarus was aware of the controversy his book would stir up and decided not to publish it. His *magnum opus* was circulated during his lifetime only among his friends. However, after his death, in 1774, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing started to publish part of the manuscript which counted 4,000 pages, and is still preserved in the Hamburg municipal library. The fragments he published are the following:

> The Toleration of the Deists.
> The Decrying of Reason in the Pulpit.
> The impossibility of a Revelation which all men should have good grounds for believing.
> The Passing of the Israelites through the Red Sea.
> Showing that the books of the Old Testament were not written to reveal a Religion.
> Concerning the story of the Resurrection.
> The Aims of Jesus and His Disciples.[121]

Lessing could not really accept Reimarus' standpoint, since he as a thinker had a deep conception of Jesus. Reimarus was a historian, Lessing was not. But Lessing had grasped the significance of his work, that it was the first criticism of tradition of a

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[121] Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, Translated by W. Montgomery, B. D., from the first German edition, *Von Reimarus zu Wrede, 1906.* New York, The MacMillan Company, 1966, pp.14-15.

historical mind.

Reimarus created a more secular Jesus using evidence of the New Testament. In his study of the Bible, he found discrepancies between the Old and the New Testament and refused to accept the Bible as the word of God. The Gospels followed no order in recording the acts and miracles of Jesus, and were not much concerned with history. Lutheran theologians had begun to consider the question of harmonizing the events, but soon they found out that some of them were recorded several times. Reimarus argued that the Gospels were not historically based. Jesus was not a religious founder, and he did not have any intention to end or replace the Jewish faith. He was purely a radical Jewish preacher. The apostles were themselves preachers, and consequently presented their own views. They never claimed that Jesus said and taught all the things they had written. Schweitzer agreed with Reimarus' assertion.

> *Reimarus takes as his starting-point the question regarding the content of the preaching of Jesus. 'We are justified', he says, 'in drawing an absolute distinction between the teaching of the Apostles in their writings and what Jesus Himself in His own lifetime proclaimed and taught.' What belongs to the preaching of Jesus is clearly to be recognized. It is contained in two phrases of identical meaning, 'Repent, and believe the Gospel,' or, as it is put elsewhere, 'Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand."……'*
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> *Jesus must have known, too, that if the people believed His messengers, they would look about for an earthly deliverer and turn to Him for this purpose. The Gospel, therefore, meant nothing more or less to all who heard it than that, under the leadership of Jesus, the Kingdom of the Messiah was about to be brought in.* [122]

[122]Albert Schweitzer, *Quest of the Historical Jesus*, p. 16-17

And Schweitzer shared Lessing's point of view in recognizing the importance and high value of Reimarus achievement:

> *To say that the fragment on 'The Aims of Jesus and His Disciples' is a magnificent piece of work is barely to do it justice. This essay is not only one of the greatest events in the history of criticism, it is also a masterpiece of general literature. The language is as a rule crisp and terse, pointed and epigrammatic – the language of a man who is not 'engaged in literary composition' but is wholly concerned with the facts...seldom has there been a hate so eloquent, so lofty a scorn; but then it is seldom that a work has been written in the just consciousness of so absolute a superiority to contemporary opinion. And withal, there is dignity and serious purpose: Reimarus' work is no pamphlet.*[123]

Though Schweitzer referred to Reimarus' analysis, he was not completely satisfied with research that was solely based on reason. The historical Jesus and the Christ of faith were not the same person. The figure of faith created by Jesus' followers in the Gospels was adapted and developed by the Church. Theologians tailored this figure into dogma and orthodoxy. For Schweitzer, it is the spiritual Jesus who is important. He can be found in the Gospels, and He is independent of historical knowledge, but He is essential for the progress of ethics and the human experience of the divine.

In summary, Reimarus had not been inspired by any predecessors, nor was he followed by any disciples. He was not a famous person among his contemporaries, but he marked the starting point of Schweitzer's quest of the historical Jesus: *his work is one of those supremely great works which pass and leave no trace because they are before their*

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[123] Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, p. 15

time.[124]

VI. 3. David Friedrich Strauss (1808-1874) was born in a village near Stuttgart. He was a brilliant student who first attended the University of Tübingen where he studied theology, and later the University of Berlin. There he studied under Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher[125], and worked with Hegel[126], whose *Phenomenology* had a great influence on him. In 1832, he returned to Tübingen as a tutor and lecturer.

Strauss made an exhaustive analysis of the whole work of Reimarus in his book on him, *Hermann Samuel Reimarus und seine Schutzschrift für die vernünftigen Verehrer Gottes.* Reimarus had claimed that the Gospel stories were the work of frauds, liars, and hypocrites, who created the whole story for their own benefit. At the age of twenty-seven, Strauss published his magisterial work, *The Life of Jesus* (1835). *Leben Jesu,* a two volume work of over 1,400 pages, was very controversial. No single theological work had ever provoked such consternation, or had such enduring significance in the theological world. Since the Reformation, no book had generated such a reaction. Strauss became famous overnight. According Horton Harris, he split the

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[124] Albert Schweitzer, *the Quest of the Historical Jesus,* p. 26

[125] **Friedrich Daniel Ernst Schleiermacher** (1768-1834) German theologian and philosopher. He studied at the University of Halle where he became acquainted with historical criticism. His psychology is based on the dualism of the ego and the non-ego. His doctrine accepted the fundamental principle of Kant that knowledge is bounded by experience. But in contrast to Kant, he introduced the doctrine of *summum bonum*, the ultimate good, which represent the ethical view of conduct of man in relation to society an the universe.

[126] **Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel** (1770-1831), German philosopher born in Stuttgart. He introduced a system for understanding the history of philosophy and the world itself by developing a new form of thinking which he called "speculative reason" and which includes the concept of "dialectic". Hegel was very influenced by the French Revolution and sometimes labeled as "The Orléans of German Philosophy". The interpretation of Hegel's work is represented by two opposite camps: the Right Hegelians who advocated a Protestant orthodoxy and political conservatism; and the Left Hegelians who interpreted Hegel in a more revolutionary way leading to atheism in religion, and liberal democracy in politics.

century into two theological eras, before and after 1835.

> *The new principle provided an explanation of the origin of the myths themselves. Instead of simply asserting the stories to be mythical or legendary, as had previously been the case, Strauss declared that they had been written solely in order to prove that Jesus was the Messiah prophesied in the Old Testament....the old interpretation is now, at long last, to be overthrown and replaced by the new and scientific understanding.*[127]

The most profound shock for the traditional believer was the forthright repudiation of the historical veracity of the Gospels. For Strauss, Jesus was human, not divine.

> *The presupposition on which the whole Life of Jesus was written was a denial of the miraculous and supernatural in the world. The traditional supernatural interpretation of the events narrated in the Gospels has no place in Strauss' view of the world, and God's activity was possible only indirectly through the laws of nature.*[128]

Strauss had argued that the Gospels should not be read in a straightforward way. The question was, how much would remain as a religious foundation if he dared to apply the concept of myth. *The Life of Jesus* tested the Gospels for their historical validity, and concluded that most of the narratives could not be verified as true historical events, and that they were myths. Earlier scholars were already struggling with the impact of the Enlightenment on the Bible. How could these two points of view be reconciled?

Two major positions existed at that time, the rationalistic and the

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[127] Harris Horton, *David Friedrich Strauss and hi Theology*, Cambridge University Press, 1973, p. 46
[128] Idem, p.41

supernaturalistic. Both parties argued with each other. The rationalists claimed that violations of natural law were impossible, and that therefore miracles could not exist. However they were to find some natural explanation of the miracle stories. The supernaturalists, on the other hand, defended not only the historical accuracy of the biblical accounts, but also the elements of direct divine causation. For them, the miracles were exactly what they seemed to be, in other words, the result of divine intervention into the natural order.

Strauss disagreed with both parties. He found all options trying to explain the miracles impossible to imagine. From his perspective, as soon as the story is exposed to the sober light of history, it disappears as a historical fact. Rejecting both the rationalist and the supernaturalistic approaches, he offered a third approach, a mythical approach. He argued that the text had a different purpose, and that it was using the imagery of the early church's inherited religious and literary tradition - he meant the Hebrew Bible -, to make a statement about the spiritual significance of Jesus.

He applied the same procedure to all texts. Marie's virginity, the baptism, the transfiguration, the healings - everything should be understood as the result of the use by the church of the early Jewish concepts of the Messiah in order to convince the believer that Jesus was indeed the Messiah.[129] In his mythical interpretation, Strauss considered the fictional narratives of the Gospels not to be a very conscious process where all events, supernatural and historical, were deduced from the Old Testament and their veracity was based on the prophecies. The recognition of the mythical nature of the Gospel story of Jesus meant only that Christian faith had come to a freer stage. According to Strauss, the

[129] Marcus Borg, *David Friedrich Strauss.* http://www.westarinstitute.org

fact that the historical Jesus is not identical to the Christ of Christian faith should guide us to the discovery of the true identity of Christ. As Marilyn Chapin Massey pointed out in her introduction of the translation of *In Defense of my Life of Jesus against the Hegelians* by David Friedrich Strauss:

> *Christians have always struggled to understand the Christ of faith, how he is truly God and truly man, one person with two natures. The "Life of Jesus" ends the struggle. By dissociating Christ from the single human Jesus, it frees Christians to see that the true identity of Christ is the Hegelian idea of the human species.*[130]

In this book, Strauss defended *The Life of Jesus* against its Hegelian critics. One of the reasons it struck panic into readers was because it was consistent with the principles of Hegelianism and could be considered as a Hegelian product. At that time, Hegelianism was the official philosophy of the government of Prussia, the most important Protestant state among the thirty-nine states that then constituted Germany. The major claim of the Hegelians was to reconcile traditional Christianity with modern thought. Hegel wanted to reconcile religion and philosophy, in making a distinction between religious representation and philosophical concept. Hegel asserted that the forms are different, but their content was the same. In Hegel's view, the content of the incarnation of God in Christ is the same as the philosophical concept of absolute truth. The publication of *The Life of Jesus* destabilized this claim and initiated criticism of religion in Germany. Many opponents of the Hegelian philosophy used its conclusions to show the destructive consequences of the Hegelian philosophy.

On one hand, Schweitzer shared Hegel's desire to bring together religion and

philosophy, on the other hand, he disagreed with him in the following terms:

> *Hegel dares to say that everything serves progress. The passions of rules and of people – all are the servants of progress. One can only say that Hegel did not know the passions of people as we know them, or he would not have dared to write that![131]*

In Defense of My Life of Jesus against the Hegelians shows the principles by which Strauss took apart one of the most significant interpretation of Christian orthodoxy, and thereby planted the roots of its most influential criticism of religion. Heinrich Heine[132] called Strauss a German Voltaire. Strauss brought together the Bible with the most significant nineteenth century cultural product, the philosophy of Hegel (1770-1831) into a form that exploded in Germany and cleared the way for the leftwing Hegelian movement that culminated in the work of Karl Marx (1818-1883): *the threat to the reputation of Hegelianism was indeed so severe that the Prussian Minister of Education, Baron Karl von Altenstein (1770-1840) asked the theologian, Carl Friedrich Göschel (1784-1862) to save it by refuting The Life of Jesus.*[133]

It was Strauss who initiated *the Quest of the Historical Jesus* of Schweitzer, and was responsible for most of the books written about Jesus in the nineteenth century. Though his work was called *The Life of Jesus*, it actually does not say much about the

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[130] Marilyn Chapin Massey, Intro, p. XI et p.XII

[131] Albert Schweitzer, *Religion and Modern Civilization.* Cited in *Wit and Wisdom of A.S.*, p.60

[132] **Heine, Christian Johann Heinrich** (born Chaim Harry Heine, 1797-1856). German poet of Jewish origin. He was born in Düsseldorf, and studied at the universities of Bonn, Berlin and Göttingen. In Berlin, he worked with Hegel. In order to have access to civil career, closed to Jews at that time, he converted to Protestantism and changed his name. Finally, he went to Paris as a journalist where he reported on French cultural and political affairs. His views annoyed the German authorities who tried to enforce a nationwide ban on his works. He died in Paris after a long illness.

historical Jesus, and leads to a more critical examination of biblical sources. However, it was never Strauss' intention to destroy Christian faith, and he was very concerned about not disturbing the spiritual life of his fellow citizen:

> *If the people were comforted by the old ideas, then it was the responsibility of the preacher not to disturb their faith before they had been educated to the higher level of knowledge which could assimilate the new concepts. Rather, the preacher was to move slowly and to raise the congregations gradually to the new scientific ideas.*[134]

His hope was to have written a book that the German people could understand in the same way Ernest Renan had written one for the French. His book, nevertheless, was very austere, suited for just a few scholars, and did not have the style of a novel. Renan, on the other hand, had more the style of an imaginative writer with some theatrical quality. The publication of *Leben Jesu* cost Strauss his university career. He was dismissed from his position at Tübingen, and when he tried to secure another appointment at Zurich, he was pensioned off before he gave his first lecture. He never again was able to teach. He wrote some more books, entered into an unhappy marriage, and died in 1874. At his own request, he was buried without any Christian ceremony.

VI. 4. Ernest Renan (1823-1892) was born in Treguier, a fishing town of Brittany. His father disappeared at sea, and the young Ernest grew up with two women, his mother and his sister Henriette, who became his best friend and supporter. Renan was such a brilliant student that he was sent to a superior college in Paris, and later to the Seminary of St.

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[134] Horton Harris, *David Friedrich Strauss.* Cambridge University Press, 1973, p. 23.

Sulpice and St. Stavistas. It was during his stay in the last establishment that he realized he was not meant to be a priest. In 1849, he went on a scientific mission to Italy, and on his return accepted a small post at the Bilbliothèque Nationale de Paris. For his doctoral degree, he published a work on a famous Islamic philosopher of the Middle Ages, Averroes. When the chair of Hebrew and Chaldaic at the Collège de France became available, Renan offered his candidature, but was strongly opposed by the Catholics. Despite his admiration for Renan, the Emperor Napoleon III could not grant him the chair, so he sent him on an archeological mission to Syria.

Henriette accompanied her brother and shared his investigations of Phoenician antiquities. In 1861, the two went to Lebanon where Renan wrote his first draft of the *Vie de Jésus* (Life of Jesus), his sister copying it for him. During their visit to the ancient Byblos, Ernest and his sister were struck by a fever attack which was fatal for Henriette. She was buried in the land of Adonis, as Renan tells us, in the most wonderful dedication that prefaces the *Vie de Jésus*:

> *A l'âme pure de ma soeur Henriette*
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> *Morte a Byblos le 24 septembre 186*
>
> *Te souviens-tu, du sein de Dieu où tu reposes, de ces longues journées de Ghazir, où seul avec toi, j'écrivais ces pages inspirées par les lieux que nous avions visités ensemble ? Silencieuse à côté de moi, tu relisais chaque feuille, et la recopiais sitôt écrite, pendant que la mer, les villages, les ravins, les montagnes se déroulaient à nos pieds. Quand l'accablante lumière avait fait place à l'innombrable armée des étoiles, tes questions fines et délicates, tes doutes discrets, me ramenaient à l'objet ultime de nos communes pensées. Tu me dis un jour que ce livre-ci, tu l'aimerais, d'abord parce qu'il avait été fait avec toi, et aussi parce qu'il était selon ton cœur. Si parfois tu craignais pour lui les étroits jugements*

de l'homme frivole, toujours tu fus persuadée que les âmes vraiment religieuses finiraient par s'y plaire. Au milieu de ces douces méditations, la mort nous frappa tous les deux de son aile ; le sommeil de la fièvre nous prît à la même heure: je me réveillai seul ! Tu dors maintenant dans la terre d'Adonis, près de la sainte Byblos et des eaux sacrées où les femmes des mystères antiques venaient mêler leurs larmes. Révèle-moi, ô bon génie, à moi que tu aimais, ces vérités qui dominent la mort, empêchent de la craindre et la font presque aimer.[135]

('Do you remember, from the bosom of God where you repose, these long days at Ghazir, where alone with you, I wrote these pages, inspired by the places we had visited together? Silent at my side, you read again each page, and copied it as soon as I had written it while the sea, the villages, the ravines spread at our feet. When the overwhelming light had given place to the innumerable army of stars, your fine and subtle questions, your discreet doubts, brought me back to the sublime object of our common thoughts. You told me one day that you would love this book, because it had been written with you, and also because it was close to your heart. When sometimes you did fear for it the narrow judgments of the frivolous, yet always you were persuaded that the truly religious souls would ultimately like it. In the midst of the sweet meditations, death struck us both with its wing; the sleep of fever seized us at the same time: I woke up alone! You sleep now in the land of Adonis, near the holy Byblos and the sacred waters where the women of the ancient mysteries came to mingle their tears. Reveal to me, O good genius, to me you loved, those truths which conquer death, keep us from fearing it, and make it almost beloved.')

Schweitzer must have been deeply touched by reading these lines. At the

[135] Ernest Renan, *Vie de Jésus*, dédicace, Paris, Calmann-Lévy Editeurs, 1923

beginning of his book, Renan sets the tone of his language by this dedication. The love and the respect he showed for his sister, he carried on to his readers. Like Schweitzer, he did not want to offend anyone, and true Christians should not have been outraged by his writings. He rejected the accusation that he insulted religion, and on the contrary said that he was serving it, by explaining that it took 300 years to establish Christianity.

> *Puisqu'il m'a été donné de tracer de Jésus une image qui a obtenu quelque attention, j'ai cru devoir offrir cette image, sous une forme convenablement préparée, aux pauvres, aux attristés de ce monde, à ceux que Jésus a le plus aimés... Je crois que beaucoup de vrais Chrétiens ne trouveront dans ce petit volume rien qui les blesse... La sincérité scientifique ne connaît pas les mensonges prudents... Ce n'est donc pas ici un nouveau livre. C'est la « Vie de Jésus » dégagée de ses échafaudages et de ses obscurités... Je ne réfuterai pas pour la vingtième fois le reproche qu'on m'adresse de porter atteinte à la religion. Je crois la servir.* [136]
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> ('As I was given the opportunity to draw a portrait of Jesus that attracted some attention, I thought it was my duty to offer this image, in a decent way, to the poor, to the ones saddened of this world, to the ones Jesus loved most... I believe that many true Christians will not find anything offending in this little volume...Scientific truth does not know cautious lies... This is not a new book. It is the "Life of Jesus" free of its accumulation of arguments and darkness... I will not reject for the twentieth time the reproach that I was harming religion. I believe that I serve it.')

Jesus never said that he was God, but he believed that he had a close relationship with Him. Renan made clear that Jesus' God is our Father, the God of humanity. He

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[136] Ernest Renan, *Vie de Jésus*, I-X

believed that the highest conscience of God which ever had existed within human kind was the one of Jesus: *La plus haute conscience de Dieu qui ait existé au sein de l'humanité a été celle de Jésus.*[137]

By rejecting the prejudice of his people, Jesus had established the universal paternity of God. In Jerusalem, non-Jews would not be accepted in the temple, but Jesus argued that any man of good will is a son of Abraham. He viewed pride based on the blood line as an enemy to be fought. Jesus is not Jewish anymore; he is a revolutionary who addressed all humans as God's children. He proclaimed human rights, not Jewish rights; the religion and the deliverance of mankind, not those of the Jewish people. Renan had certainly shocked many of his contemporaries by saying:

> *Jésus, à quelques égards, est un anarchiste, car il n'a aucune idée du gouvernement civil. Ce gouvernement lui semble purement et simplement un abus... Tout magistrat lui parait un ennemi naturel des hommes de Dieu... Il veut anéantir la richesse et le pouvoir, mais non s'en emparer....*[138] *La vraie fraternité s'établit entre les hommes par la charité, non par la foi religieuse.*[139]
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> ('In some way, Jesus is an anarchist because he has no clue of a civil government. He sees this government purely and simply as an abuse... Any judge seems to him a natural enemy of the men of God... He wants to destroy wealth and power, but he does not want to conquer it...True fraternity among human beings is based on charity, not on religious faith.')

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[137] Renan, *Vie de Jésus*, p. 35
[138] Idem, p. 70
[139] Idem, p. 146

Renan regarded Jesus as an ethical teacher or as a prophet of inner life whose views of the kingdom of Heaven were mystical rather than political. Compassion, forgiveness and love were the essence of his message. He believed in the good will of humankind, and founded his doctrine on it:

> *Jésus a fondé la religion dans l'humanité comme Socrate y a fondé la philosophie, comme Aristote y a fondé la science. Il y a eu de la philosophie avant Socrate et de la science avant Aristote...mais tout a été bâti sur le fondement qu'ils ont posé. De même, avant Jésus, la pensée religieuse avait traversé bien des révolutions ; depuis Jésus elle a fait de grandes conquêtes...il a fixé pour toujours l'idée du culte pur...Jésus a fondé la religion absolue, n'excluant rien, ne déterminant rien, si ce n'est le sentiment.*[140]
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> ('Jesus has founded religion in humanity like Socrates has founded philosophy, like Aristotle has founded science. There was philosophy before Socrates and science before Aristotle... but everything was built on the foundation they had put down. In the same way, before Jesus, religious thought had gone through many revolutions; since Jesus, it made great conquests... he has forever fixed the idea of pure worship...Jesus has founded the absolûte religion, excluding nothing, deciding nothing, except for the sentiment.')

Renan explicated that Christianity had such an impact because it was a religion without any external form. It was pure religion, c'*était la religion pure,* with no ritual, with no temple, with no priest; a religion of world ethics, conceived for the conscience of men.

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[140] Ernest Renan, *Vie de Jésus*, pp. 252-253

> *C'est par l'attrait d'une religion dégagée de toute forme extérieure que le christianisme a séduit les âmes élevées...Son mot d'ordre, c'est la bonne nouvelle, l'annonce que le règne de Dieu est proche.*[141]
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> ('It is through a religion free from any external form that Christianity has attracted noble souls... Its leitmotiv is the good news, the announcement that the Kingdom of God is near.')

The Vie de Jésus was a bestseller: 60,000 copies were sold in less than six months, and edition followed edition. It made Renan famous – or infamous, depending upon one's viewpoint -, and created a scholarly movement concentrated on recapturing the "real" Jesus. The Catholic community felt very offended, and reacted without delay. Renan, like Strauss, was suspended from his professional duties, although he kept his salary and for two years taught Hebrew to his students in his home. The rage of orthodoxy against the author and his writings was as great as that triggered by Strauss's Leben Jesu which was not exactly a biography of Jesus, but much more a criticism of the Gospels, and an attempt to find the truth in order to replace myth with history.

Renan's work was the first book in which Jesus was presented with much tenderness and sympathy as an entirely human being. The author sought to eliminate the later additions made by the disciples, and tried to revive the original Jesus as he actually lived. Arguments about the trustwortheness of the Gospels and their dating had been done by earlier critics, but no one had ever described Jesus with such charm and skill as a man who could be loved and judged as a man, and at the same time worshiped.

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[141] Renan, *Vie de Jésus*, p. 61

This was not the only book about the history of Christianity Renan wrote. Three years later, he published The Apostles followed by The Gospels and the Second Christian Generation, Saint Paul, The Antichrist. His last work in this series, The Christian Church, and Marc Aurelius, in which Renan depicted with such erudition the social and intellectual life of Pagans and Christians in the last days of the Roman Empire, was also a great winner:

> *The publication of Ernest Renan's La vie de Jésus in 1863 is rightly regarded as a key moment in French history. The book served as an important symbol of science and free thought in the battles over the Republic and laïcité, and presented a thesis that characterized French scientific philosophy in the mid-nineteenth century...Renan's philosophy was rooted not in empiricism, but in an essentially pantheistic metaphysics, prizing the realization of God within oneself as the highest ethical achievement. This was an innovation of the highest importance in France, where a traditionalist, but post-Christian theism had marked social thought since the Revolution. Renan and his generation, notably Hyppolyte TAINE (1828-1893), dispensed with the traditionalist religious dualism that typified the social outlook of Alexis de TOCQUEVILLE (1805-1859), Jules MICHELET (1798-1874), and their contemporaries. Far from articulating a materialist dead end in the history of ideas, their Romantic individualism was critical to later developments in European thoughts, including aestheticism and irrationalism.*[142]

Renan, like Strauss, intended his *Life of Jesus* to be part of a complete version of

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[142] Alan Pitt, *The Cultural Impact of Science in France:Ernest Renan and the Vie de Jésus.* The Historical Journal , 43: 79-101. Cambridge University Press, 2000.

the history and doctrine of the early Church. It was the first *Life of Jesus* for the Catholic Church, and his purpose was entirely historical. Strauss's *Leben Jesu* had been translated into French in 1840, but it was not released with great publicity, and was only known to a few scholars. Finally it should be noted that Renan, like Strauss, did not want to establish a new system of dogma.

VII.5. Schweitzer's Approach

Schweitzer, who had a great admiration for French culture, criticized Renan's work severely. He recognized that the author came with the characteristic French mental accent to give to the Latin world in a single book "the result of the whole process of German criticism". However, he deplored the lack of profundity in the work: Renan had the skill to make the reader see Jesus alive under the blue sky of Galilee! French people read his book like a lovely novel. Renan's reconstruction of the story of Jesus perhaps does not lack plausibility in all of its features, but it certainly does not present Jesus as a figure of great respect. From an aesthetic point of view, Schweitzer can only condemn Renan's assumption that Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane had a thought on the girls he might have married in Galilee. It is for this reason that he found the aesthetic feeling for nature of Renan neither pure, nor profound.

> *It is a standing enigma why French art, which in painting grasps nature with directness and vigor, with an objectivity in the best sense of the word, such as is scarcely to be found in the art of any other nation, has in poetry treated it in a fashion which scarcely ever goes beyond the lyrical and sentimental, the artificial, the subjective, in the worst sense of the word...Renan is no exception to this rule... He looks at the landscape*

> *with the eye of a decorative painter seeking a motif for a lyrical composition... But that was not noticed by the many,...because they had lost the power of distinguishing between truth and artificiality...Renan's Vie de Jésust is Christian art in the worst sense of the term- the art of the wax image.*[143]

Schweizer did not discover in Renan's publication on Jesus the "Gründlichkeit" (the profoundness) found in Strauss' work. Strauss was not the most famous theological writer of his time, but he was honest and profound. He was the one who used the myth concept to explain the Gospel. Schweitzer held him in very high esteem, and said that in more than 400 pages written by Strauss, there was not one meaningless sentence.

The character and the ethics of Jesus have been the dominant note of the spiritual life of Albert Schweitzer. The similarity of his motives and those of Jesus have been the most significant aspect of his psychological personality. He made Jesus' life viewpoint his own. His ethical achievement was the most significant and praiseworthy of all the many activities which constituted his inner life. For him, Jesus is an expression of God's spirit, and remains our spiritual Lord. In the conclusion of *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, Schweitzer deplored having to conclude his critical study so negatively. He suffered having to advance a truth which must be offensive to Christian faith. However, he believed that truth was ultimate goal. And reverence for truth, as such, includes a respect for historical truth. Truth should be a part of our faith. Schweitzer came to the following conclusion:

> *The Jesus of Nazareth who came forward publicly as the Messiah,*

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[143] Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus,* pp.181-182

> *who preached the ethic of the Kingdom of God, who founded the Kingdom of Heaven upon earth, and died to give His work its final consecration, never had any existence. He is a figure designed by rationalism, endowed with life by liberalism, and clothed by modern theology in an historical garb....*
>
> *The historical foundation of Christianity as built up by rationalistic, by liberal, and by modern theology no longer exists; but that does not mean that Christianity has lost its historical foundation. The work which historical theology thought itself bound to carry out, and which fell to pieces just as it was nearing completion, was only the brick facing of the real immovable historical foundation which is independent of any historical confirmation or justification.*
>
> *Jesus means something to our world because a mighty spiritual force streams forth from Him and flows through our time also. This fact can neither be shaken nor confirmed by any historical discovery. It is the solid foundation of Christianity.*[144]

Schweitzer's statement was and remains very controversial, and perhaps quite disturbing. Some readers of this project may agree, others may disagree. Therefore, I will refrain from any comment on the content of this statement, and encourage the reader to find his or hers own answers. Many saw Schweitzer as anathema to the foundation of Christianity. How can one be a true Christian when he denies the divinity of Christ, the Immaculate Conception, the miracles, atonement, and the fact that the Scriptures represent the total revelation of God? This issue certainly had a great and long lasting impact on the way Schweitzer was recognized in France. In the *Cahiers Albert Schweitzer* of September 2006, Jean-Paul Sorg deplores that *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* is not

[144] Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, pp.398-399

yet translated into French, and is not available in French bookstores.

Dr. Walter M. Horton, an American professor of Oberlin College, commented this question in these terms:

> *I do not want to give the impression that liberal theology in France is altogether mute and apologetic, or on the defensive... There is one unabashed and unrepentant liberal in France who would give the lie to any such assertion: Albert Schweitzer. Whether he is really a Frenchman or a citizen of the world is a bit problematic... But whether he is a Frenchman or not, there is no doubt that Schweitzer is a liberal... Frankly, he believes that Jesus and Paul were entirely mistaken in their eschatology. What we moderns must do, he believes, is "take the ethical religion of Jesus out of the setting of his world-view and put in our own," and thus under the influence of the spirit of his ethical religion, to "make the kingdom of God a reality in this world by works of love."*[145]

Schweitzer's studies of the historical Jesus brought him further and further away from Christian orthodoxy. He believed in the evolution of human spirituality, and that the advancement of human thought should bring greater awareness of God. Nevertheless, by advanced spirituality, he was not considering this evolution so much in theological terms as in ethical and moral conditions.

VI. 6. Conclusion

But where in this enthralling quest for Jesus' identity can we find any trace of French influence? I could not retrace any French contacts with Reimarus, but he was a

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[145] Walter Horton, *Contemporary Continental Theology,* pp. 194-195

very highly educated man, a professor of Hebrew and Oriental languages, who also ha an interest in philology, mathematics, philosophy, history, science... In addition, traveled in the Netherlands and England, and we know that Voltaire visited England and wrote letters in praise of it. Moreover, the new ideas that were wandering all over Europe came together and were popularized, especially in France. Let us not forget that Reimarus was a Deist, and Deists attacked Christianity, especially Catholicism, accusing it of superstition. At that time, Deism was the belief of many philosophers, and became for a short while the state religion during the French Revolution. In such a context, French influence cannot be excluded.

As for Strauss, who was a young Hegelian, Schweitzer had great admiration for him. Young Hegelianism lasted less than two decades; the young intellectual Germany was inspired by the French Revolution, and hoped to realize the promises of the French Revolution. However, these hopes were tempered and later silenced. With the publication of Strauss' *Leben Jesu,* Hegelianism was seen as a destroyer of Christian orthodoxy. To defend himself, Strauss borrowed the terms used to designate the relationship of French politicians to the *Ancient Régime*, classifying all Hegelians as either of the "right" or the "center", or the "left".[146] This philosophical political classification was popular from its beginning, and has remained so to this day.

Renan, like Schweitzer, was a great worker, and published a great deal. It seems that Schweitzer reproached Renan for a lack of profundity but the two men shared the views that the fraternity of humans is based on charity, and not on devotion. But, Renan was not the only French writer Schweitzer consulted. In his research on Jesus, twenty

[146] Lawrence Stepelevich, *The First Hegelians,* The Philosophical Forum, vol. 8, n.p., 1976

more French authors are referred to. The list of these works is given in Appendix I.

Considering that Schweitzer mentioned a certain number of French authors, and that most if not all of the German authors were more or less under the influence of French thought, the strong influence of French culture cannot be denied.

CHAPTER VII

REVERENCE FOR LIFE

In the preceding chapters, we explored the relationship Schweitzer developed over the years with his four masters: Kant, Bach, Goethe and Jesus. All four had a strong and lasting impact in his life, and shaped his life principles. Reverence for Life is not only the philosophy he conceived, Reverence for Life is the essence of Schweitzer himself.

VII.1. Origin of the concept of Reverence for Life

In Schweitzer's childhood, the principles of Reference for Life are already affirmed. His sensitivity to pain and suffering can be traced to his early days:

> *So lange ich zurückblicken kann, habe ich unter dem vielen Elend, das ich in der Welt sah, gelitten... Insbesondere litt ich darunter, daß die armen Tiere so viel Schmerz und Not auszustehen haben. Der Anblick eines alten hinkenden Pferdes... – es wurde nach Kolmar ins Schlachthaus getrieben – hat mich wochenlang verfolgt.*[147]
>
> ('As far as I can remember, I have suffered seeing so much misery in the world... Especially, I suffered because the poor animals had to stand so much pain and misery. The sight of an old limping horse – it was dragged to the Colmar slaughterhouse – had haunted me for weeks.')

He will never forget the bell ring of this Passion Sunday morning that stopped him killing a bird with a slingshot. The sound of the bell reminded him of the commandment not to kill, and impacted him in a powerful way for the years to come.

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[147] Albert Schweitzer, *Aus meiner Kindheit und Jugendzeit,* Munich, C.H. Beck, 1927, p.22

Once in Africa, Schweitzer had already decided on the faith of his existence, but he had not yet found the way to mold his thoughts. He was looking for a concept that illustrates the principles he proposed for a better life. The answer came to him one day, in 1915, when going upstream on the river Ogoue on an old steamboat. He was on his way to make a medical call for the wife of a Swiss missionary. During the trip, he was thinking about how contemporary culture could acquire deeper morals, but he could not find any answers. He felt empty, and wrote:

> *Geistabwesend saß ich auf dem Deck des Schleppkahnes, um den elementaren und universellen Begriff des Ethischen ringend, den ich in keiner Philosophie gefunden hatte.*
>
> ('Absent minded, I was sitting on the deck of the scow to grab the elementary and universal concept of ethics that I had not found in any philosophy.')

But at sunset on the third day, he saw a herd of hippopotamuses:

> *Am Abend des dritten Tages, als wir bei Sonnenuntergang gerade durch eine Herde Nilpferde hindurchfuhren, stand urplötzlich, von mir nicht geahnt und nicht gesucht, das Wort „Ehrfurcht vor dem Leben" vor mir. Das eiserne Tor hatte nachgegeben; der Pfad im Dickicht war sichtbar geworden. Nun war ich zu der Idee vorgedrungen, in der Welt- und Lebensbejahung und Ethik miteinander enthalten sind! Nun wußte ich, daß die Weltanschauung ethischer Welt- und Lebensjahung samt ihren Kulturidealen im Denken begründet ist.*[148]
>
> ('At sunset of the third day as we just passed a herd of hippopotamuses, the word „Reverence for Life"came up to me suddenly, completely unexpected, and not searched for. The iron door had opened; the path in the thicket became visible. Now I had reached the idea in which

[148] Albert Schweitzer, *Aus meinem Leben und Denken*, Leipzig, Felix Meiner Verlag, 1932, p.136

> philosophy of life, life affirmation and ethics are contained in each other! Now I knew that weltanschauung of ethical world- and life-affirmation, have their common foundation in the spirit of perfect culture.)

For Schweitzer, Reverence for Life will be the foundation for all moral thoughts and action.

VII. 2. Reverence for Life, the Philosophy

What is Reverence of Life and how can it be created? The German word *Ehrfurcht*, translated in English by 'reverence', is a compound of two German words, *Ehre* (honor) and *Furcht* (fear tinted with respect) means literally 'honorable and respectful fear for life'. Compared to the immensity of the universe, man is insignificant. But once he knows life in himself, then he is ready to understand life in the universe and to be in harmony with it.

Schweitzer showed that no thinker in the past had offered a real system of ethics. He found the Socrates' ethical system, and the classical systems in general, too formal and too narrow. Kant had tried in vain to solve the puzzle, but he failed because he limited his method of ethics to the relations between men without including the other forms of life. As we have seen it in an earlier chapter, Schweitzer found Descartes' assertion, *Cogito ergo sum* without content. For Schweitzer, to think is to think about something; he formulated human awareness in these terms: *Ich bin Leben, das leben will, inmitten von Leben, das leben will.* (I am life that wants to live, between life that wants to live.).

Like Goethe, in *Wilhelm Meister,* Schweitzer chose the concept of 'Reverence' to explain life. However he never acknowledged that these words may have come through

Goethe's voice. Perhaps they just became an integral part of his unconsciousness:

> *The Three, who represent the Chief, say to Wilhelm: 'One thing there is which no child brings into the world with him; and yet it is on this one thing that all depends for making man in every point a man. If you can discover it yourself, speak it out.' Wilhelm thought a little while and then shook his head. After a suitable pause, the Three exclaimed: 'Reverence!' Wilhelm seemed to hesitate. 'Reverence!' cried the Three a second time. 'All want it, perhaps you yourself.'*
>
> *The Three then go on to explain the threefold reverence which they inculcate: reverence for that which is above, reverence for that which is around, reverence for that which is above is called the Ethnic. The religion which depends upon reverence for that which is around is called the Philosophical. The religion which depends upon reverence for that which is below is called the Christian. This reverence for that which is below is the last step which mankind is fitted and destined to take. Out of these three reverences, concluded the Three, springs the highest reverence of all, reverence for oneself.*[149]

Goethe never extended the idea of 'Reverence' into a complete system as Schweitzer did it. Nevertheless, Schweitzer denied any inspiration from Goethe, and commented on the writings of Joy in these terms:

> *I cannot tell exactly the extent and the intensity of Goethe's influence upon me... As for the idea of reverence for life, I think I am right in saying that he had no part in the genesis of the idea or of the words. I have always been disturbed by the passage concerning the threefold reverence, because Goethe deals superficially with it instead of going to the bottom of the matter... And when the idea and the words had come to me, it was of Buddha*

[149] Goethe, *Wilhelm Meister,* cited by Charles R. Joy in *Goethe Two Addresses by A. Schweitzer,* pp .24-25

I thought, and not of Goethe.[150]

Schweitzer's ethics is fundamentally religious. He was deeply touched by Jesus' ethic of love, the Jesus who introduced into the late Jewish conception of the kingdom his strong emphasis on love. *Love your neighbor as yourself*, and this love includes love for your enemies, said Jesus in Sermon on the Mount. Schweitzer

> *Tiefe Weltanschauung ist Mystik insofar, als sie den Menschen in ein geistiges Verhältnis zum Unendlichen bringt. Die Weltanschauung der Ehrfurcht vor dem Leben ist ethische Mystik. Sie läßt das Einswerden mit dem Unendlichen durch ethische Tat verwirklicht werden. Diese ethische Mystik ensteht in logischem Denken... Die Weltanschauung der Ehrfurcht vor dem Leben hat also religiösen Charakter. Der Mensch, der sich zu ihr bekennt und sie betätigt, ist in elementarer Weise fromm.*[151]
>
> ('Deep weltanschauung is mystic inasmuch as it brings man spiritually in connection with infinity. Weltanschauung of Reverence for Life is an ethical mystic. This ethical mystic originates in logical thought... Therefore, the weltanschauung of Reverence for Life has a religious character. The man, who professes it, is basically a pious man.')

Reverence for Life is not only Schweitzer's philosophy, it is also his religion. The philosophy, religion, and weltanschauung of Reverence for Life are profoundly mystic. For Schweitzer, 'mystic' means to be one with the universe or with the will of life, in other words, to be one with God. Martin Strege brings some more light to this rather complex philosophical concept:

> *Was also Schweitzer mit Ehrfurcht vor dem Leben bezeichnet, ist*

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[150] Albert Schweitzer, *Goethe, Four Studies*, p. 27
[151] Albert Schweitzer, *Aus meinem Leben und Denken*, pp. 230-204

Religion, Philosphie, Weltanschauung, Mystik und Ethik zugleich. Wenn er eine Größe nennt, meint er die anderen mit. Sie sind Wechselbegriffe und können gegeneinander ausgetauscht werden. Daraus folgt, daß die Ehrfurcht vor dem Leben nicht mit ein paar Sätzen erklärt werden kann, sondern sein gesamtes Gedankengefüge umfaßt. Schweitzer verstehen heißt ihn und seine gesamten Gedanken von einem Mittelpunkt her auf einen Mittelpunkt hin verstehen. Nur so wird seine Denkmystik, die zugleich Tatmystik ist, begreiflich.[152]

('What Schweitzer means by Reverence for Life is religion, philosophy, weltanschauung, mystic and ethics, all together. When he mentions one field, he means also the other ones. These are interchangeable concepts that can be exchanged one for another, Therefore, Reverence of Life cannot be explained in a few sentences, because it includes a whole thinking process. To understand Schweitzer means to understand his whole way of thinking from one point to the other. His spiritual mystic, which is an action mystic at the same time, can only be understood in this way.')

Schweitzer was ahead of his time in calling for humane treatment of animals in medical experiments and in food production. He claimed that plants, animals and humans interact in complex chains of interdependency, and that our survival depends on it. The inclusion of the world of plants and animals in the system of ethics represented a widening of ethical responsibility. Usually, society refers to a scale of values which places animal life above plant life, and human life above all. Reverence for Life requires man to respect all life forms without establishing any scale of values. In conflicting claims, it is the responsibility of the individual to make the right choice. Schweitzer

[152] Martin Strege, *Albert Schweitzers Religion und Philosophie,* Tübingen, Katzman Verlag, n.d., p.20

refused to fix such a value scale and he explained why:

> *Besonders befremdlich findet man an der Ethik der Ehrfurcht vor dem Leben, daß sie den Unterschied zwischen höheren und niedererem, wertvollermn und weniger wertvollem Leben nicht geltend mache. Sie hat ihre Gründe, dies zu unterlassen.*
>
> *Das Unternehmen, allgemeingültige Wertunterschiede zwischen den Lebenwesen zu statuiren, läuft daraul hinaus, sie danach zu beurteilen, ob sie uns Menschen nach unserm Empfinden näher oder ferner zu stehen scheinen, was ein ganz subjektiver Maßstab ist...*
>
> *Im Gefolge dieser Unterscheidung kommt dann die Ansicht auf, daß es wertloses Leben gäbe, dessen Schädigung und Vernichtung nichts auf sich habe. Unter wertlosem Leben werden dann, je nach den Umständen, Arten von Insekten oder primitive Völker verstanden.*[153]
>
> ('What seemed strange about the ethics of Reverence for Life is that it does not consider the difference in life between higher and lower, more valuable and less valuable. It has its reasons to omit this.
>
> To attribute different levels of values to all life forms means to judge them accordingly, if they seem to stand closer or further to our feelings, was a completely subjective rule...
>
> As a consequence of such a decision, the opinion would be that they are non valuable lives which could be damaged or destroyed. According the situation, different kind of insects or primitive tribes could then be considered as non valuable.')

The ethics of Reverence for Life makes no distinction between higher and lower, more valuable and less valuable lives. It requires kindness to all living organisms, because by ethical conduct toward all creatures, we enter into a spiritual relationship with

[153] Albert Schweitzer, *Aus meinem Leben und Denken*, p. 203

the universe. Also, if all forms of lives are respected, nations must have an equal right to their existence.

VII. 3. Relevance of Reverence for Life in the Contemporary World

Schweitzer wrote in the aftermath of World War I, and he saw a dangerous time coming in Western civilization. This turning point was manifested in the depreciation of human life and deep-rooted in the forces of mass society. People were now disallowed their own beliefs and this through excessive working, specialization, or control by governments, corporations, and churches. To compensate for these forces, humans must engage in personal reflection on moral values. Therefore, ethics must allow leeway for individual interpretation; they must be flexible, open, and tolerant. Schweitzer deplores the state of modern man:

> *Sein ganzes Leben hindurch ist der heutige Mensch also der Einwirkung von Einflüssen ausgesetzt, die ihm das Vertrauen in das eigene Denken nehmen wollen... Von allen Seite und auf die mannigfachste Weise wird auf ihn eingewirkt... Durch den Geist der Zeit wir der heutige Mensch also zum Skeptizismus in bezug auf das eigen Denken angelhalten, damit er für autoritative Wahrheit empfänglich werde.*[154]
>
> ('Throughout his whole life, contemporary man is exposed to effects of influences that want to deprive him of the trust in his own thinking...He will be manipulated from all sides and in the most diverse ways ... Modern man will be brought to skepticism about his own thinking by the mind of present times in order to make him receptive for dominant truth.')

[154] Albert Schweitzer, *Aus meinem Leben und Denken*, p. 190

Schweitzer also anticipated the power of the press. When we consider the impact of the media today, we must admit that Schweitzer's worries were founded:

> *I am worried about present-day journalism. The emphasis on negative happenings is much too strong. Not infrequently, news about events marking great progress is overlooked or minimized. It tends to make for a negative and discouraging atmosphere. There is a danger that people may lose faith in the forward direction of humanity if they feel that very little happens to support that faith. And real progress is related to the belief by people that it is possible.* [155]

According Schweitzer, everyone needs a 'weltanschauung' in order to be able to live with ethical values. For that reason, older traditions and modern science have to be compatible. Science does not justify the discard of faith. Schweitzer spent almost fourteen years trying to conciliate 'Reverence for Life" with modern human knowledge by writing a thousand page manuscript; this unfinished philosophical work was published after his death under the title, "Die Weltanschauung der Ehrfurcht vor dem Leben". Perhaps the greatest value of Reverence for Life lies in bridging Christian orthodoxy and a naturalistic world view.

Schweitzer had come to the conclusion that historical or material factors in the life of a nation do not constitute the essence of civilization. The profound nature of a civilization is found in its ethics. According his moral conception of civilization, a man is ethical *only when life, as such, is sacred to him, that of plants and animals as that of his fellowmen, and when he devotes himself helpfully to all life that is in need of help.*[156]

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[155]Norman Cousins, *Dr. Schweitzer of Lambarene* p. 175
[156] Charles R. Joy, *The Wit and Wisdom of Albert Schweitzer,* p.13

In our Western world, civilization still excludes indigenous cultures. The spirit of Reverence for Life would allow:

> *... various cultures to flourish side by side while creating an atmosphere of universal consideration and cooperation. Sovereignty then would still exist, but on a lower level, limited not only by the dictates of modern technology and international concerns but also by the rules of civility and an understanding for those who are different, a modern humanism uniting the best legacies of the past with the realities of the present and the hopes for the future. This is where East and West and North and South are called upon to join forces and create a more equitable world.*[157]

Schweitzer's philosophy of life is a message of reconciliation of all men, all cultures, and all nations. *Die Versöhnung zwischen Menschen und Natur.* The reconciliation between mankind and nature. Politics, ambitions, greed, racism and violence have betrayed this spirit. Only if we achieve harmony in all life forms, and unity of idealism and realism, can we build an ethical western civilization.

[157] Niklaus R. Schweizer, *Turning Tide,* Bern, Berlin, Bruxelles, Frankfurt am Main, New York, Oxford, Wien. Peter Lang AG European Academic Publishers, 2005, p. 467

CHAPTER VIII

IDENTITY of ALBERT SCHWEITZER

In the development of this thesis, four chapters were dedicated to the bond Schweitzer developed with Kant in philosophy, with Bach in music, with Goethe in literature, and with Jesus in mystics. They were the four pillars that ruled Schweitzer's life, but how did they affect his identity? In the present chapter, we will delve more deeply into the effects the exposure to the French and the German cultures had on the shaping of Schweitzer's personality. We will also look at the use of language and at the consequences of political event. One's identity is very closely related to the idea of nation, and here again history gives us some clues to better understand the complexity of Schweitzer's identity.

VIII. 1. The Concept of Nation:

Before the nineteenth century, people were ruled by kings, princes, dukes, or bishops, and in some cases oligarchies, but they did not have any idea of nationhood. The typical state in Europe was a dynastic state. In the late eighteenth century, the development of national movements throughout Europe was accelerated by the French Revolution and the conquest of Napoleon. These changes promoted a national identity, and a political unit corresponding to it. At the end of the nineteenth century, most of Europe was divided into nations, and individuals had identified personally with one of these nations.

Schweitzer was born in 1875 when the land of Alsace was part of the German

Empire. He was born and raised as a German citizen, according the political situation of that time. Yet two factors already differentiated him from a regular German citizen: first his parents, born before 1870 when Alsace was French territory, had received a French education; second, the vernacular language was Alsatian. When going to high school in Mulhouse, and staying with relatives, he remembered his aunt reading every evening for three hours, and her exclamations when she was impressed by the beauty of the style of some French authors:... *Oh dieser Daudet*[158]*! Oh dieser Theuriet*[159]*! Welch ein Stil! Oh wie kann dieser Victor Hugo*[160] *beschreiben!*[161] (Oh this Daudet! Oh this Theuriet! What a style! Oh how this Victor Hugo can describe!) Since his early childhood, Schweitzer spoke the two languages currently. He explained that his particular style was the result of the conjunction of the two languages. In the preface of his book "Jean-Sébastien Bach: Le Musicien-Poète", he apologized for his Germanisms, and wrote:

> *C'est là l'héritage fatal de ceux qui vivent et qui pensent en deux langues. Mais ne sont-ils pas nécessaires à la science et à l'art surtout, ces esprits qui appartiennent deux cultures ? Si de tout temps, le beau privilège de l'Alsace a été de faire connaître l'art français et la science française en Allemagne et, en même temps, de frayer la voie en France à ceux des penseurs et des artistes allemands qui ont une importance européenne, cette tâche ne s'impose-t-elle pas aux Alsaciens*

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[158] **Alphonse Daudet**(1840-1897) French novelist. He depicted social life, tragic events, and the southern country life with poetic refinement. *Lettres de mon Moulin, Tartarin de Tarascon,* and *l'Arlésienne* are among his most famous works.

[159] **André Claude Adhémar Theuriet** (1833-1907) French poet and novelist. His novels relate to provincial and country life. He became member of the Académie Française in 1896.

[160] **Victor-Marie Hugo**(1802-1885) known as the greatest French poet. He as also a novelist, a dramatist, and a statesman. His best-known novels are *Les Misérables* and *Notre-Dame de Paris*. He was a very influential supporter of the Romantic movement in France. In politics, he campaigned for human rights, and became a strong advocate of republicanism. He was elected to the Académie Française in 1841, and after the fall of Napoleon III, to the National Assembly and the Senate.

[161] Albert Schweitzer, *Aus meiner Kindheit and Jugendzeit,* p. 27

de notre génération qui sont restés en contact avec la culture française plus qu'à ceux de n'importe quelle autre époque ?[162]

('It is there the terrible inheritance of those who live and think in two languages. But are they not necessary to science and to the arts in particular, these minds that belong to two cultures? If Alsace had always the beautiful privilege to convey the knowledge of French science and French art to Germany, and, at the same time, to open the gate to France to those among the German thinkers and artists who have some significance in Europe, is this task not the duty of the Alsatians of our generation who remained in contact with French culture much more than of anyone of another era?')

When nationalism arose, so did different ways to define a nation. In general, nations are considered inclusive categorizations of people that have in common national symbols, a national culture, a national literature, a national music, national heroes, etc. These shared values build a national identity. Certain criteria distinguish one nation from another and determine who is a member of each nation. These criteria include a shared language and culture. National identity refers to both of these standards, and to a common heritage of each group.

However, the characterization of a nation varies from one country to another. Whereas German writers like Johann Gottlieb Fichte[163] had defined the nation by characteristics such as a race or an ethnic group having in common criteria like a language and a culture, the French writer Renan defined it by the simple desire of people

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[162] Albert Schweitzer, cited in Etudes Schweitzériennes, Jean-Paul Sorg, Editions Oberlin, Strasbourg, 1991

[163] **Fichte, Johann Gottlieb** (1762-1814) He is one of the founders of the philosophical movement called German idealism, a movement inspired by Kant's philosophy. Fichte's philosophy was motivated by the problem of subjectivity and consciousness, and is considered as a bridge between Kant and Hegel. He is regarded as one of the father of German nationalism.

to live together.

Renan, whom Schweitzer referred to in his *Quest of the Historical Jesus,* was also famous for the definition of a nation he gave in a discourse in 1882, *Qu'est-ce qu'une nation?* (What is a nation?). He summarized it in a famous phrase: *avoir fait de grandes choses ensemble, vouloir en faire encore* (having done great things together, and wanting to do more). He recognized that the essential element of a nation is that all its individuals have many things in common, but he added that they must also have forgotten many things. By saying so, Renan was thinking about of the night of Saint Bartholomew[164] and the massacre of the Cathares[165]. Bad or shameful memories are often 'forgotten' in history manuals.

Fichte had a completely different approach to nationalism. In 1806, in a Berlin occupied by Napoleon, he gave several speeches praising the German nation that have been cited as an example of German nationalism. He spoke of the so-called superiority of the German people, and openly expressed the desire to expel all Jews from Germany.

Nationalism as an ideology has a very strict ethical principle: the national loyalty. In case of conflict, national loyalty takes priority over all loyalties to family, friends, profession, religion, or class.

Like the Alsatian population in general, Schweitzer grew up in a period of turmoil of politics, ideas and values very often contradictory. He deplored the rise of nationalism

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[164] **Saint Bartholomew's Day**: 24 August 1572. On this day the Protestants were slaughtered in paris, and in the provinces of France in the following weeks. It is believed to have been initiated by Catherine de Medicis, the mother of Charles IX. It was one of the worst religious massacre; the exact number of victims is not known. The Protestant European countries were horrified by the barbarian bloodshed.

[165] **Cathares** were the followers of a medieval dualistic religious movement judged heretic by the Catholic Church. In order to eradicate the movement the Pope Innocent III lanced in 1209 a crusade against the Cathares also called the Albigensians. The war lasted twenty years, and the Enquiry remained active during the rest of the century until catharism was completely extinct.

because it disrupted the bonds that should exist between all men, and destroyed the ideas of civilization. He had witnessed how World War I had led to the creation of new nation-states in Europe, and how, during the interwar period, the nationalist movements had powerful undertones of racism which culminated in nazism and fascism. He developed an aversion for nationalism illustrated by these terms:

> *What is nationalism? It is an ignoble patriotism, exaggerated till it has lost all meaning, which bears the same relation to the noble and healthy kind as the fixed idea of an imbecile does to normal conviction.*[166]

VIII. 2. Nationalism, Language and Territory

Nationalism also has a strong territorial component: each nation corresponds to a specific territory called the homeland, in German "das Vaterland". The nation-state warrants the existence of a nation, preserves its identity, and provides a territory where the national distinctive characters are dominant. In doing so, the state implements national education systems, national cultural programs and a national language policy. In a nation-state, the language should be the official language, and all citizens should speak it, and not a foreign language.

A common language has always been a characteristic of a nation, and the ideal goal for nationalists to reach. The constitution of nation-states, and their consolidation after a revolution or the gain of independence, is usually followed by policies to restrict, replace and even forbid minority languages or local dialects. In France, for instance, more than fifty regional languages were spoken before the French Revolution. After the Revolution, the only language tolerated in public life and schools would be French, and

[166] Charles R. Joy, *The Wit and Wisdom of Albert Schweitzer,* p.60

since that time has been the only official language in France.

No other region has experienced more intolerance caused by this law than Alsace. With each historical change, the Alsatian people had to adjust their language. Speaking a Germanic dialect before 1648, the Alsatians became French after the Thirty Years War, German in 1870, French in 1918, German again in 1939, and finally French in 1945. They maintained their own dialect but this did not happen without a constant struggle. The conqueror, from this or the other side of the Rhine, always imposed his rules. With each political change there were Alsatians who fought for the recognition of their cultural identity, but in vain. Alsace remained the battlefield where the two cultural giants, France and Germany, were challenging each other. However, the fate of this land could have been different. Like the Baron Frederic-Guillaume de Turckheim mentioned in several speeches in 1827 and 1828, Alsace should play the role of an intermediary between France and Germany, and therefore its schools should provide *eine wahre Volksbildung* (a real popular education).[167]

Writing in the midst of the dispute concerning Alsace, Renan declared that the existence of a nation was based on a daily referendum and that the language was not a sign of identity, but a historical formation. There was an interesting exchange of letters between Renan and D. F. Strauss. On Septembre 13, 1870, Renan wrote:

> *Vos germanistes fougueux allèguent que l'Alsace est une terre germanique, injustement détachée de l'Empire allemande. Remarquez que les nationalités sont toutes des cotes mal taillées ; si l'on se met raisonner ainsi sur l'ethnographie de chaque canton, on ouvre la porte à des guerre*

[167] Eugène Philipps, *Les luttes linguistiques en Alsace*, p.320 – Société d'Edition de la Basse Alsace, Strasbourg, 1986

sans fin. De belles provinces de langue française ne font pas partie de la France, et cela est très avantageux, même pour la France...La réunion de l'Alsace à la France, par exemple, est un des faits qui ont le plus contribué à la propagande du germanisme ; c'est par l'Alsace que les idées, les méthodes, les livres de l'Allemagne passent d'ordinaire pour arriver jusqu'à nous[168]...

('Your fiery Germanists pretend that Alsace is a German province unfairly detached from the German Empire. Notice that nationalities are all bad classifications; if one would start to reason this way about the ethnography of each district, it would be an open door to never ending wars. Beautiful French speaking provinces are not part of France, and this is a great advantage even for France... The fact of Alsace being part of France, for instance, is one of the facts that contributed most to the propaganda of German culture; it is through Alsace that the ideas, the methods, the German books usually come all the way to us...')

And Strauss answered :

Dass Elsass und Lothringen einmal zum Deutschen Reich gehört haben, dass überdiess im Elsass und in einem Teil von Lohtringen die deutsche Sprache, trotz aller französischen Bemühungen sie zu unterdrücken, noch immer die Muttersprache ist, war für uns nicht Veranlassung, Anspruch auf diese Länder zu erheben. Wir dachten nicht daran, sie von einem friedlichen Nachbar wiederzufordern. Nachdem er aber den Frieden gebrochen und die Absicht kundgetan hat, unsere Rheinlande, die er einmal mit höchsten Unrecht ein paar Jahre besessen, abermals an sich zu reissen, jetzt müssten wir die grössten Toren sein, wenn wir, als die Sieger, was unser war und was zu unserer Sicherung nötig ist (doch auch nicht weiter als dazu nötig ist), nicht wieder an uns

[168] Eugène Philipps, *Les Luttes Linguistiques en Alsace*, p. 323

nehmen zu wollten.[169]

('The fact that Alsace-Lorraine once belonged to the German empire, and that German was still the native language for Alsace and a part of Lorraine, this despite all the French efforts to oppress it, were no reason for us to claim these provinces. We did not think about taking them back from a peaceful neighbor. But after he had broken the peace and made his intentions known to torn to him once again the Rhine provinces that he had occupied once with great injustice, we would be the greatest fools if, being victorious, we would not want to take back what was ours and what is necessary to our safety (but not more that is necessary).')

These debates continued for decades. For Germany, the fact that the Alsatians spoke a German dialect was an irrefutable fact of their German identity. The French thought otherwise as illustrated by the correspondence between Theodor Mommsen[170] and Numa-Denis Fustel de Coulanges. Mommsen wrote:

Wären die Franzosen ruhig geblieben, so hätten die Bewunderer des Münsters geseufzt, die Pilger von Sesenheim geweint, aber niemals wären auf ihren Spuren unsere Scharen gefolgt, um diese durch Kunst und Literatur geheiligten Orte wiederzunehmen.[171]

('If the Frenchmen had not moved, the admirers of the cathedral would have sighted, the pilgrims of Sesenheim cried, but our hordes would never have followed their traces to take back these places sacred by art and literature.')

And Fustel de Coulanges[172] answered in a letter written in Paris on October 27, 1870,

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[169] Eugène Philipps, *Les Luttes Linguistiques en Alsace,* p.324

[170] **Mommsen, Christian Matthias Theodor** (1817-1902) Classical scholar, jurist and historian, Mommsen was considered the greatest classicist of the 19th century. He received the Literature Nobel Prize in 1902

[171] Eugène Philipps, *Les Luttes Linguistiques en Alsace, p.324*

[172] **Fustel de Coulanges, Numa Denis** (1830-1889) French historian at the Ecole Normale Supérieure in 1870, at the Faculté de Lettres in 1875, and to the chair of medieval history which was created for him

entitled, *L'Alsace est-elle allemande ou française?* (Is Alsace German or French?) The letter was published in *La Revue des Deux Mondes* the same month:

> *... Vous avez quitté vos études historiques pour attaquer la France; je quitte les miennes pour vous répondre...*
>
> *La langue n'est pas non plus le signe caractéristique de la nationalité. On parle cinq langues en France, et pourtant personne ne s'avise de douter de notre unité nationale. On parle trois langues en Suisse : la Suisse en est-elle moins une seule nation, et direz-vous qu'elle manque de patriotisme ?*
>
> *Ce qui distingue les nations, ce n'est ni la race, ni la langue... La patrie, c'est ce qu'on aime. Il se peut que l'Alsace soit allemande par la race et par le langage ; mais par la nationalité et le sentiment de la patrie, elle est française. La race, c'est de l'histoire, c'est le reste et le signe d'un passé lointain. Ce qui est actuel et vivant, ce sont les volontés, les idées, les intérêts, les affections. L'histoire vous dit peut-être que l'Alsace est un pays allemand ; mais le présent vous prouve qu'elle est un pays français.*[173]
>
> ('You left your historical research to attack France; I leave mine to answer you...
>
> Language is not a characteristic of national identity. Five languages are spoken in France, and no one doubts our national unity. Three languages are spoken in Switzerland: is therefore Switzerland a less united nation, and would you say that it lacks patriotism?
>
> What distinguishes the nations is not the race, neither the language... The homeland is what we love. Alsace might be German by race and by language; but by the nationality and the feeling for the homeland, it is French. The race is history; it is the leftover and the sign of

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at the Sorbonne. In 1875 he was elected to the Académie des Sciences Morales, and became Director of the Ecole Normale in 1880. He was known for his diligent seeking after the truth.

[173]Eugène Philipps, *Les Luttes Linguistiques en Alsace*, pp. 323-325

> a faraway past. What is contemporary and alive, are the will, the ideas, the interests, the affections. History might tell you that Alsace is a German land; but the presence proves you that it is a French province.')

Both countries argued about the true national identity of the Alsatian people, Germany evoking the past, and France referring to the present. However none of the belligerents ever consulted the Alsatian people. After 1918, the use of the German language was outlawed in Alsace by the French government. The inhabitants were denied of their past, and their history. The only language allowed in school was French. All other languages were forbidden, even in the schoolyard, and transgressions were severely punished. As a result of this oppressive French language policy[174], the Alsatian speakers began to fell ashamed when using their own language, Alsatian, and over time many families stopped teaching their language to their children, and tried to speak only French to them.

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[174] **French Language History and Policy:** France has one official language, the French language. The Ordinance of Villers-Cotterêts of 1539 made French the administrative language of the kingdom of France for legal documents and laws. Previously, official documents were written in medieval Latin, which was the language of the Roman Catholic Church. The Académie Française was established in 1635 to act as the official authority on the usages, vocabulary, and grammar of the French language, and to publish an official dictionary of the French language. Before the French Revolution, more than fifty regional languages were spoken, which were mutually incomprehensible. In the 18th century, it is estimated that about three million inhabitant of France spoke French. After the Revolution, French was imposed as the national language, and became the symbol of the national unity of the French state.
In 1964, the French government allowed for the first time one and a half minute of Breton on regional television. But as late as in 1972, the President Georges Pompidou declared that there is no place for the regional languages and cultures in a France that intends to mark Europe deeply. In 1999, the French socialist government signed the Council of Europe's European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages, but it was not ratified. President Chirac argued that it would threaten "the indivisibility of the Republic, and the unity of the French people." France, Andorra and Turkey are the only European countries that have not yet signed the Framework Convention for the protection of national minorities.

VIII. 3. Schweitzer's Choice of Language

Schweitzer grew up in this environment, but he was privileged because his parents educated him in all three languages. He was perfectly trilingual, and could switch from one language to another with no difficulty. Alsatian was the language used in daily life, at home, in the village, with relatives and friends. German was the official language for administrative business, the language of politics and the language of the Church. French was the language of choice spoken in salons, and utilized in correspondence. Schweitzer completed his education in Paris and in Berlin. Having relatives in Paris, he made frequent visits to the French capital city, and was well acquainted with the French lifestyle.

Schweitzer mastered French and German, but even being bilingual, one is rarely equally at home in both languages. It is not in philosophy or theology that Schweitzer used his linguistic knowledge, but in music. At the age of thirty, he wrote one of his important books about the music of Bach in French, *Bach, le Musicien-Poète.* Many years later, he commented about this difficult performance:

> *Dass ich das Werk auf französisch schrieb, während ich gleichzeitig deutsche Vorlesungen und deutsche Predigten hielt, bedeutete eine Anstrengung für mich. Wohl spreche ich von Kindheit auf Französisch gleicherweise wie Deutsch. Französisch aber empfinde ich nicht als Muttersprache, obwohl ich mich von jeher für meine an meine Eltern gerichteten Briefe ausschliesslich des Französischen bediente, weil dies so Brauch in der Familie war. Deutsch ist mir Muttersprache, weil der elsässische Dialekt, in dem ich sprachlich wurzle, deutsh ist.*[175]

[175] Albert Schweitzer, *Aus meinem Leben und Denken*, cited *Lire Albert Schweitzer,* Textes introduits par Jean-Paul Sorg, Langue et Culture régionales, Cahier Nr. 10, Strasbourg, 1987.

('Writing this work in French while giving German presentations and sermons at the same time, required a great effort for me. Since my childhood I speak French as well as German. However, I do not feel French is my native language, though the letters I addressed to my parents were written, at all times, exclusively in French, because this was the custom in the family. German is my native language because the Alsatian dialect, in which I am rooted, is German.')

Schweitzer had a different perception of French and German. Not only did the languages sound different, they also felt different. In the following quotation, Schweitzer compared the language of Rousseau and the one of Nietzsche in the most distinguished way:

Den Unterschied zwischen den beiden Sprachen empfinde ich in der Art, als ob ich mich in der französischen auf den wohlgepflegten Wegen eines schönen Parkes erginge, in der deutschen aber mich in einem herrlichen Wald herumtriebe. Aus den Dialekten, mit denen sie Fühlung behalten hat, fließt der deutschen Schriftsprache ständig neues Leben zu. Die französische hat diese Bodenständigkeit verloren. Sie wurzelt in ihrer Literatur. Dadurch ist sie im günstigen wie im ungünstigen Sinne des Wortes etwas Fertiges geworden, während die deutsche in demselben Sinne etwas Unfertiges bleibt. Die Vollkommenheit des Französischen besteht darin, einen Gedanken auf die klarste und kürzeste Weise ausdrücken zu können, die des Deutschen darin, ihn in seiner Vielgestaltigkeit hinzustellen. Als die grossartigste sprachliche Schöpfung in französisch gilt mir Rousseau „Contrat Social". Als das Vollendetste in deutsch sehe ich Luthers Bibelübersetzung und Nietzsches „Jenseits von Gut und Böse" an.[176]

[176] Albert Schweitzer cited in *Lire Albert Schweitzer,* Textes introduits par Jean-Paul Sorg, Langue et Culture Régionales, Cahier Nr. 10, Strasbourg, 1987.

> ('I sense the difference between the two languages in the following: for French, it feels like I would walk in a well-maintained path of a beautiful park; for German, like I would wander in a magnificent forest. Out of the dialects with which she has kept contact, new life flows constantly into the German writing. French has lost this bond with the soil. It takes root in its literature. Therefore it became, in positive and negative meaning of the word, a finished product, while German in the same way remains unfinished. The perfection in the language is in the fact that you can express a thought in the clearest and shortest way, while the perfection of the German language resides in the variety of its forms. "The Contrat Social" of Rousseau is for me the greatest French work/ creation. As the most accomplished in German, I see the translation of the Bible by Luther, and Nietzsche's.')

VIII. 4. Schweitzer, the Man

He was a man of deep love, compassion and kindness. His existence was conditioned by the quántity of suffering he saw around him, though he never despaired or turned away from life. He denounced a society in which greed and ambition prevailed. He understood that deep and true change could not come from political institutions, but only through the conversion of each individual mind, and therefore developed ethical principles stated in his philosophy, Reverence for Life.

Schweitzer was a radical. In all his fields of interest – religion music, philosophy, ethics – he always returned to the original sources. He dismissed academic theology and studied the ancient scriptures to investigate the historical Jesus. He believed that truth must be attained through truth, and that thought must be expressed in clear and simple words. That is why his writings found only limited interest among scholars, theologians

and philosophers, who disapproved of what they considered the banality of his style. Christians condemned his ethical pantheism as a betrayal of historic Christianity.

There were also others who criticized him, and they were probably right sometimes. His co-workers in the hospital of Lambarene complained about his impatience and his stubbornness. The medical practices at Lambarene were often judged outdated, and even lacking of hygiene; animals, for instance, were allowed to go wherever they wanted without being harmed. The hospital was like a village with a communal existence, in the style of a Hindi ashram with its code of hospitality.

Schweitzer was regarded by many as a controversial figure; he was accused of paternalism and colonialism. Some African nationalists declared his attitude toward native people offensive. He probably felt superior as a white man, but despite an unconscious racism, he was one of the few European of his time who pointed out the very unpopular issue of Europe's guilt in the treatment of natives in the African colonies. Schweitzer was also a man of his time, and many aspects were different then. Many of his ideas about the African people would be disapproved of today.

Nevertheless, Schweitzer never responded to any criticism. He followed his goal and maintained a dignified silence. Two years before his death, he wrote to a friend in Strasbourg:

> *My strategy is never to answer any attack regardless of its nature. This is my principle and I have adhered to it faithfully. No one will be able to fight silence in the long run. It is the invincible opponent. There is also no need for anybody to defend me. I am destined to follow my path without quarreling. It is my destiny to prepare the path for the spirit of Reverence for Life, which is also the spirit of peace. I am deeply moved to have been*

given this wonderful task, and the realization of this enables me to follow my road without inner struggle...[177]

Was he a happy man? He was a man of duty and ideal. He was too busy to think about happiness or unhappiness in terms of his own life. He did not seem to worry about this. He would think generally about the things that needed to be done, but when the construction of his hospital was completed, or when a life was saved, he certainly would feel a sense of fulfillment and deep reward.

Schweitzer was also a man of humility. As a humble benefactor of mankind, he was not an ambitious self-seeker, and did not care for fame. There was a simplicity about Schweitzer that one can only find in the truly great.

VIII. 5. Schweitzer's Identity

Schweitzer grew up in a land that was always a hinge connecting two great traditions. He appreciated both cultures, each one in his own way. He never thought about having to choose between them, because they both were part of his daily life. He completed his education in Paris and in Berlin. He decided to leave for Africa only for ethical reasons, and for the mission he had decided to accomplish, nationality had no inference with his decision.

During World War I, he and his wife were arrested in Lambarene by the French authorities, but their only crime was holding a German passport. When Schweitzer was

[177] Albert Schweitzer, cited by Erich Graesser in *The Relevance of Albert Schweitzer at the Dawn of the 21st Century*, p. 89, The Albert Schweitzer Institute for the Humanities, Lanham – New York – London, 1992.

deported to a prisoner camp in France, he experienced great hardship. The accidental death of his mother beneath the galloping feet of German cavalry troops added to the sadness of this dark period in his life. During the following years of suffering and privation, he never showed any bitterness or feelings of revenge. He had been deeply hurt and disappointed by the two worlds he admired most. At an early age, he had already sensed the evils of excessive nationalism and had declared himself to be international. The awful tragedy of World War I confirmed his abhorrence of nationalism and warfare.

He became a French citizen and returned to Africa. His decision was not an effort to escape from French or German domination. It was only motivated by a powerful urge to cancel out the centuries of rape, pillage, murder and deeds of hatred that white men had perpetrated against the African people and against colored nations throughout the world. As Norman Cousins notes, Schweitzer came to Africa on a mission to heal the bodies and the hearts:

> *The point about Schweitzer is that he brought the kind of spirit to Africa that the dark man hardly knew existed in the white man. Before Schweitzer, white skin meant beatings and gunpoint rule ant the imposition of slavery on human flesh... The greatness of Schweitzer – indeed the essence of Schweitzer – is the man as symbol. It is not so much what he has done for others, but what others have done because of him and the power of his example.*[178]

He never seemed to have suffered of "Heimatlosigkeit" (lack of homeland). His departure was a free choice, and his motivation to achieve his goals was very high. But how did this decision affect his personality? Despite the distance and the difficulties of

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[178] Norman Cousins, *Dr. Schweitzer of Lambaréné,* New york Harper & Row Publishers, 1960, p. 215.

communication at that time, he kept all his ties with his friends, relatives, scholars, etc. He remained amazingly focused on his goal for the rest of his life: His way to atone for Europe's sins against black people was to bring them a gift of the highest value, namely health and freedom from pain.

The hospital of Lambarene became his kingdom, as he said to Alain Peyrefitte[179] in August 1959. Peyrefitte was very surprised not to find any Frenchman among the hospital staff. Doctors, nurses, assistants of all kind hailed from Germany, England, Switzerland, Scandinavia, the Netherlands, the United States and Canada, but none from France, other that Schweitzer's personal assistant who was Alsatian. The language used in the hospital was mostly German and English; French was only used with some Africans. The last day of his visit, Peyrefitte inquired about the reason for this French absence. Schweitzer's answer gives us definite evidence regarding the nature of his true identity:

> *Ce n'est pas un hasard, dit-il de sa voix profonde au fort accent alsacien. Quand j'ai fait appel à des Français, je n'ai guère eu que des ennuis. Dès qu'ils sont en groupe, ils complotent. Ils ne sont pas ... comment dites-vous en français... vertrauenswürdig.*
>
> *Si je les vois enthousiastes à leur arrivée, je sais qu'un peu plus tard, ils seront déprimés. La plupart sont tellement choqués par notre vie primitive qu'ils repartent aussitôt. Certains restent plus longtemps ; alors, ils se mettent en tête de raser mon village et de le remplacer par un hôpital à l'européenne...Il manque aux Français comme une dimension de la vie. Le respect des faits, le respect des autres. La soumission au réel...*

[179] **Alain Peyrefitte** (1925-1999) French scholar and politician. He became member of the Académie Française in 1977.

Excusez-moi, on n'est jamais tranquille avec vos compatriotes...[180]

('It is not by chance, he said with a deep voice and a strong Alsatian accent. When I called for French people, I had only trouble. As soon as they are together, they conspire. They are not... how do you say in French... reliable.

When I see them arriving full of enthusiasm, I know that a little bit later they will be depressed. Some stay longer: then they decide in their head to level my village and to replace it by a hospital in the European style... The French lack somehow a dimension of life. The respect of facts, the respect for others. The submission to reality... Excuse-me, one can never be at peace with your compatriots.')

Schweitzer answered Peyrefitte's question without hesitation, and explained in a very detailed way, but also with a touch of humor, why he could not trust Frenchmen. When he said, "vos compatriotes" (your compatriots), he definitely excluded himself as a French citizen.

The question raised is: What kind of effect did the four masters have on Schweitzer's identity? French influence was present all over Europe, and was very strong during this era. Any scholar was exposed to it. German philosophers were all influenced by Descartes or Rousseau. What was different for Schweitzer, is that he had his original identity as an Alsatian, born in a land that had a history, a language, traditions, etc., but he was denied of it. The power to be wanted him to give up his language, to ignore his past, and to become French or German, when in fact he was neither. He was more at ease in the German language because his native language was a Germanic dialect, but he appreciated French culture. He never said, "I am French" or "I am German"; he transcended the two

[180] Alain Peyrefitte, *Le Mal Français*, Plon, Paris 1976, pp. 3-5

cultures. He took always great pride in his origin, and was very attached to his little village of Gunsbach. He was and remained Alsatian.

In Africa, the debate about his national identity lost its significance. Schweitzer had become a world citizen. When the time of the great departure came for him, he passed away peacefully in his simple aged iron bed, his daughter Rhena at his side. According to his will, the people in Strasbourg were the first to be notified of his death. There was a very simple service when the Ambassador of the United States, David Blaine, came to Lambarene from the American Embassy in Libreville, as the personal representative of President Johnson. Albert Bongo, representing the President of the Republic of Gabon, said the most touching words:

> *He was the oldest and most famous Gabonese. The venerable and most venerated citizen of the world has passed away. Our soil will accept him as a precious gift. Now, Great Doctor, you will be here forever.*[181]

Alsatian, German, French, African, or world citizen? Albert Schweitzer was all of them, but most of all he was free man!

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[181] George N. Marshall, *An Understanding of Albert Schweitzer,* Philosophical Library, New York, 1966, p.11

CONCLUSION

At the beginning of this research project, I pointed out the importance of knowing history in order to better understand the present. The chapter on history provided us fundamental information about Schweitzer's heritage, and the faith of the land of Alsace.

After a summarized biography of Schweitzer, I examined the relationship he developed with each of the masters that influenced his life: Kant, Bach, Goethe and Jesus. None of them prevailed over the other one, and none of them contradict the other one. These philosophers, musician, and spiritual leader affected Schweitzer's life, each one in his own way.

The goal of this research was to identify the distribution of German and French influences in the impact these four masters had on Schweitzer true identity. It became evident that he was much more at ease in the German language and literature because, as he explained it himself, of his native language, Alsatian, which is a German dialect.

The study also traces any French influence Kant, Bach or Goethe might have directly or indirectly through their precursors. Die Religionsphilosophie Kants by Schweitzer was certainly the most dense reference that I consulted. Music was always present, and it was interesting to find out that it was a Frenchman who taught Schweitzer Bach's music. As for Goethe, it was for me a most delightful experience to become a pilgrim of Goethe at the little village of Sessenheim in Alsace.

The Quest of the Historical Jesus was Schweitzer's work that impressed me deeply due to its quality. The quest was conducted with methodology and with great honesty. Many references came from French scholars.

This thesis would have been lacking an important achievement in Schweitzer's life if I had not included a chapter on Reverence for Life. This philosophy, especially after the two world wars that created France and Germany, is a call for reconciliation among human beings, but also reconciliation between man and the universe. Its concept is a major addition to the philosophy aimed at deepening our concern for the fragile balance of our environment. Schweitzer's dominant motivation was to find a way to bring the nations of the world back from the edge of self-destruction.

The final chapter sheds some more light on the personality of Schweitzer. History again provides us some clues about the national identity of the Alsatian people and the language policies of the ruler. The past history of Alsace was always manipulated by its two powerful neighbors; one wanted it to be French, the other to be German, both ignoring the fact that this land had its own identity. The last way to assimilate its inhabitants was to erase the memory of their own past by not teaching them their history or, in more extreme cases, by destroying any reference to the past. France was always reluctant to endorse multiculturalism, which was perceived as in contradiction with French republican values. In its policy of integration, the first target was to promote the national language and to wipe out all regional languages. The way Alsatians suffered, for decades, being mocked because of their accent, and treated with some condescendence by the 'Français de l'intérieur', meaning the French people living on the other side of the Vosges mountains, is very well illustrated by Eugène Phillips words:

> *...Appartenant à une génération qui a grandi avant la guerre dans un climat de nationalisme exacerbé, qui a bu pendant la guerre le calice du mépris de la condition alsacienne jusqu'à la lie, qui a assisté après la guerre la dégradation de l'identité alsacienne sans y échapper elle-même :*

témoins de notre temps, je ne pense pas ne pas exprimer ce que des milliers de mes compatriotes ont toujours ressenti, pensent et ressentent encore... Parler de crise d'identité en Alsace, c'est soulever un problème épineux. L'Alsacien, par définition, ne connaît pas de crise... L'Alsacien, par définition, est un homme heureux. Et se doit de l'être. C'est son portrait officiel...

Si l'identité alsacienne connaît sa plus grave crise de l'histoire, c'est parce qu'elle se trouve livrée, presque sans défense, à l'action de forces qui, sous de fallacieux prétextes, cherchent à écraser tout ce qui leur semble non conforme aux normes qu'elles ont fixées arbitrairement...[182]

('Being part of the generation that grew up before the war in a climate of intense nationalism, that drunk during the war the chalice of contempt of the Alsatian condition to the last drop, that witnessed after the war the degradation of the Alsatian identity without escape: witness of our times, I think that I express what thousands of my compatriots thought and felt, and still think and feel... To speak about an identity crisis in Alsace is always a touchy subject. By definition, the Alsatian does not have an identity crisis... By definition, the Alsatian is a happy man. And he has to be. It is his official portrait...

If the Alsatian identity experiences its most serious crisis in history, it is because it is exposed, almost without any defense, to the action of forces which, under fallacious reasons, try to level everything that is not true to the norms they have fixed arbitrarily...')

The problem the Alsatian people encounter with these 'forces' is because they speak a German dialect. Alsace is the only region in France that, through its language and

[182] Eugène Philipps, *L'Alsace face à son destin. La crise d'identité.* Société d'Edition de la Basse-Alsace, Strasbourg, 1978, pp. 16-17.

culture, has participated for more than a millennium to the history of Germany. The case of Alsace is unique when compared to other ethnic minorities in France or to German regions like the Saarland or the Palatinat.

Much more could be said on this subject, and it would certainly be of great interest to investigate more deeply on the Alsatian identity. However, we did find out that Schweitzer never had a choice concerning his national identity. He transcended two major cultures, French and German, and was in this context a European ahead of his time. He never felt French as being the language of the master. Like many educated Alsatians, he was using three languages in his daily life. These languages did not conflict because they were used in a natural organized setting. The dialect is, like the Alsatian poet, Claude Vigée[183] said, *Le dialecte est pour moi une langue inérieure,* (the dialect is for me the language of the heart). We had also a closer look at the nature of the man, and like any human, he turned out not to be perfect. Schweitzer chose to live in Gabon, not in order to escape from France or Germany, but to fulfill his ethical dream.

What is the legacy of Schweitzer? When we look at the international scene today, we detect how much his philosophy of respect for all life forms is needed. In so many ways his words were prophetic years ahead of his time. He understood the truth that all culture, everything we call civilization, comes from our visions, our beliefs and convictions. When these values degenerate, we enter a period of spiritual decadence, and civilization collapses. From Africa, Schweitzer began to call out to awaken the world:

A new Renaissance must come, and a much greater one than in

[183] **Claude Vigée**, Alsatian Jewish poet born in Bischwiller in 1921. During WWII, he was active in the Jewish resistance in Toulouse. He went into exile in the United States and taught Romance Languages. Vigée combines relections on Alsace with those of Judaism in his poetry.

> *which we stepped out of the Middle Ages; a great Renaissance in which mankind discovers that the ethical is the highest truth and the highest practicality...I would be a humble pioneer of this Renaissance, and throw the belief in a new humanity like a torch into our dark age.*[184]

A thorough reminder of Schweitzer's appeal is called for, so that we might revive his message. But there is a bright side to his legacy. His hospital has become a leading African research centre in pathophysiology and treatment of highly infectious diseases. And in Alsace, "Les Amis d'Albert Schweitzer"[185] continues to fight for his recognition in France. The Alsatians are also standing up for the rights of their language with a campaign this year called, *A Friejohr for unseri Sproch!* (A spring of our language), a 'Renaissance' for Alsatian!

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[184] Albert Schweitzer, *Civilization and Ethics,* p.23

[185] **Les Amis d'Albert Schweitzer** (the Friends of Albert Schweitzer) is a French association founded in the first years of the fifties. Robert Minder, Professor at the College de France, initiated the first publication of the magazine "Les Cahiers d'Albert Schweitzer" in 1959. The goal of the association is to promote Schweitzer's philosophy among the French youth, and to research all possibilities to develop Schweitzer's work. The Association supports also the hospital of Lambaréné. Since 1990, it publishes annually a booklet called "Etudes Schweitzériennes" (Schweitzerian Studies), which covers each year a specific aspect of Schweitzer's work.

APPENDIX

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Albert Schweitzer, Organ – Bach
Toccata, Adagio and Fugue in C Major
Fugue in A Minor
Fantasia and Fugue in G Minor
Chorale – Preludes: *1. „O Mensch bewein'dein Sünde gross"*
2. „Wenn wir in höchsten Noten sein"
3. „Ich ruf zu Dir, Herr Jesu Christ"
4. „Gelobet seist Du, Jesu Christ"
5. „Herzlich tut mich verlangen"
6. „Nun komm' der Heiden Heiland"
Prelude in C Major
Prelude in D Major
Canzona in D Minor

Recorded at the Parish Church, Gunsbach, Alsace by Columbia Records.

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