

JAMES CARLETON PAGET

»A Stranger
and an Enigma«

The Contexts and Contested Legacy
of Albert Schweitzer

*Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen
zum Neuen Testament*

539

Mohr Siebeck

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539



James Carleton Paget

“A Stranger and an Enigma”

The Contexts and Contested Legacy
of Albert Schweitzer

Mohr Siebeck

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In loving memory of Emily Carleton Paget
(20.iv.1997 to 27.v.2021)

Preface

The appearance of this book is the consequence of a failure on my part. Some years ago I had thought of writing an intellectual biography of Albert Schweitzer. Intermittent periods of leave were devoted to that aim, and progress of a kind, at least in terms of words read and notes taken, was made. Encouragement in the task was increased with the ongoing publication of further volumes of Schweitzer's 'Nachlass' by C. H. Beck, along with other previously unavailable material. But in the end, in spite of much endeavor, I ran out of energy. In part this was attributable to a lack on my part of imagination and no doubt of intelligence, too. I struggled to get a clear purchase on Schweitzer, a view of his intellectual background and development, which both differed from the mound of previous work, or seemed to unravel the phenomenon that is Schweitzer in a way that was illuminating. I also became perturbed by the sheer amount of subjects I needed to master in order to write a book of the kind I had originally conceived; and I despaired of ever doing so (my training, such as it is, was not in modern history or in philosophy or in music but in biblical studies, a subject whose very narrowness allows one to read most of the primary literature on a single subject and most of the secondary, something which in relation to a biographer of Schweitzer, is simply not possible). Moreover, a good and thoughtful biography of Schweitzer, written by Nils Ole Oermann, appeared during the course of my labours, which argued a number of points I had wanted to argue and did so effectively and intelligently, rendering me even less confident of publishing my own account of Schweitzer's life.¹

My failure to complete the task I had set myself appears especially disappointing in that even taking account of Oermann's volume, and other significant recent work, mainly but not exclusively, written by German scholars,² there is, in spite of the plethora of literature on Schweitzer, still room for another bio-

¹ Oermann, *Schweitzer*. For a detailed review of this important book, see Carleton Paget, 'Theologians in context.'

² I would especially highlight Günzler, *Einführung*; Mühlstein, *Helene Schweitzer Bresslau*; Brabazon, *Albert Schweitzer*; Ohls, *Improvisationen*; Barsam, *Reverence for Life*; Cicovacki, *Restoration*; Zager, *Liberaler Theologe*; Suermann, *Homo Politicus*; Arnold, *Albert Schweitzer*; Ohls, *Albert Schweitzer Arzt*; Fetscher, *Tröstliche Tropen*; and a series of essays by Ruth Harris (Harris, 'Allure'; and Harris 'Schweitzer and Africa'). Suermann, *Homo Politicus*, 5, suggested that at the time he was writing in 2012, there was a renaissance in Schweitzer studies. There is some truth in this if one simply looks at quantity of publication and the length of some of the

raphy of the man. Contrary to his own self-presentation, which tends, as will be shown, to emphasize his opposition to the times he lived in and to make much of moments of individual revelation somehow disembodied from the world in which they took place, Schweitzer reflects both in his own person and in the way people reacted to him, important and striking aspects of the intellectual, cultural and political atmosphere of the tumultuous era he inhabited. Too often, especially within the context of his African setting, students of Schweitzer have endorsed the self-image of a man almost transcending his own setting, a view which has rightly been criticised.³ As the late Ben Pimlott noted in a short essay defending biography, the major purpose of such a genre should lie in bringing to life a particular period of history through the prism of one of its significant participants.⁴ As he states, “The kind of biography that is worth reading, and writing, illuminates a changing environment by revealing the way in which a particular character interacts with it.”⁵ Schweitzer’s long life lends itself well to the Pimlottian vision of biography. After all, that life converges with a range of issues. Relevant here are the history of Alsace, fin de siècle Germany and France, the history of music, theology, philosophy, social, political and other tendencies within Weimar Germany, African and colonial history more generally, in particular mission history and decolonisation, the two World Wars, the history of nuclear disarmament, the evolving concept of humanitarianism, and the cultural and political history of the periods following the First and the Second World Wars, in the latter of which Schweitzer became a complex icon reflecting shifts and changes in a variety of contexts.⁶ While moves have been made in this direction, these have tended to focus on particular facets of Schweitzer’s life.⁷ It saddens me that I was not equal to fulfilling such a task. My hope, however, is that what I have written above and elements of the current volume below, will persuade a brighter, more effective and more knowledgeable person than myself that this is both a real *desideratum* and so a task worth undertaking.

In the current volume, which in some ways is an unsatisfactory hodge-podge of this and that, I have brought together a collection of articles, which is prefaced by a long introductory essay. In the latter I discuss Schweitzer in relation

books mentioned above. But the effect of these publications in promoting the life and thought of Albert Schweitzer, except perhaps in Germany, has been minimal.

³ Harris, ‘Schweitzer and Africa’, 1110, notes: “Perhaps because Schweitzer cut such a titanic figure in the West, the biographies seem strangely de-contextualized, detached from the larger histories of tropical medicine, and even from fashionable trends in imperial history, transnational history, and humanitarianism.” See chapter 7 in this volume.

⁴ Pimlott, ‘Contemporary Biography.’ See also Suermann, *Homo politicus*, 17–19, who addresses the controversy relating to the writing of biography, arriving at a view of the genre as a balance between societal and individual concerns. See further chapter 9 in this volume.

⁵ See Pimlott, ‘Contemporary Biography’, 39.

⁶ The first to write in a scholarly way about this subject was Mbondobari, *Archäologie*. See also now for the specifically German context, Fetscher, *Tröstliche Tropen*.

⁷ See esp. the work of Oermann, Suermann and Harris.

to his different identities, understood both geographically and intellectually, and conclude by showing what might unify these. The chapters which follow, with the exception of one, have been published before, often in difficult-to-access journals. They appear here in a considerably revised form, so as to include insights from more recent publications and my own developing thoughts. This section of the volume takes up and expands upon observations made in the introductory essay. The first two chapters deal with Schweitzer's New Testament work as this relates to Jesus and Paul, focusing in more detail upon comments in the introduction about Schweitzer as a New Testament critic. The chapters on Schweitzer's theology and piety show how his attachment to the New Testament and in particular to the figure of Jesus, reveals certain things not only about his own Jesus-centred theology but also his philosophical thinking. The chapter on Schweitzer's relationship with Adolf von Harnack touches upon observations made in the introduction about Schweitzer's own distinctive brand of liberal theology, through the prism of a perhaps surprising relationship, while at the same time exploring Schweitzer's interaction with the prevailing post-First World War theological atmosphere in Germany, especially as evidenced by Karl Barth and his followers. It is contended that Harnack and Schweitzer shared a deep suspicion of the Swiss theologian's ideas and this in part explains the warmth of their contact from the early 1920s onwards. Chapter six concerns Schweitzer's relationship with Jews and Judaism. In what is a strangely overlooked subject, given that Schweitzer was married to a Jewish woman who converted to Christianity, and lived through the Holocaust, an attempt is made to discuss Schweitzer's engagement with Judaism in his scholarly work, especially as this relates to the New Testament, and also his attitudes towards the former more widely, not least in the Second World War and afterwards. The picture which emerges shows a complex disjunction between Schweitzer's public role as a moral critic of the west and his apparent failure to express himself publicly on anti-semitism and the Holocaust. Chapter 7 examines Schweitzer's relationship to Africa, referred to in the introduction but explored here in its different facets, a subject which has become increasingly controversial in a developing postcolonial setting. The eighth chapter on Schweitzer's relationship with Cambridge takes further observations in the introduction about the nature of Schweitzer's fame and its decline. The final chapter, which addresses, at least indirectly, the challenge of chapter eight, asks why, if at all, attention should continue to be paid to Schweitzer. The answer it provides is ambivalent, as it contends both with Schweitzer's anachronistic paternalism, which reflects the colonial setting in which he worked as a medical missionary, harking back to comments made in chapter seven, and those aspects of his thought, which seem burningly actual and pertinent. It is hoped that from these chapters, which inevitably converge at certain points, a set of themes and stimuli for further research emerge. Another aim of the volume is to encourage greater interaction between German-language

research, which dominates the field of Schweitzer studies, and that found in the English language. Too often they seem to pass each other like ships in the night.

The writing of this volume has been greatly enriched by the fact that a decade ago, together with the talented and energetic Prof. Michael Thate, now of the University of Princeton, I co-edited a collection of essays on Schweitzer, which cover many of the different facets of his life and thought.⁸ Insights contained within these essays have proved fruitful in allowing me further to develop my own ideas in relation to the most recent Schweitzer scholarship. Also important in spurring me on has been Ben Rattigan, who was instrumental in setting up the British Schweitzer Institute and kind enough to ask me to be one of its trustees. Its journal, together with the three conferences which have taken place under its auspices and through Ben's personal generosity, have reminded me that Schweitzer and his life still resonate in circles which are not narrowly academic.

Many people have been important in the writing of this book. I am especially grateful to Tobias Stähler at Mohr Siebeck and other members of staff, not least Markus Kirchner, Susanne Mang and Constanze Braun for seeing the book safely to publication and continuing to believe in the project when it seemed like the book would never appear. I am particularly honoured that it is being published by the renowned Verlag of Tübingen, not least because a number of Schweitzer's most important books appeared with the same press well over a hundred years ago. Moreover, Tübingen is a place to which I feel special bonds of attachment, having spent an immensely happy four months there in 1990 when a research student. My book does not replace but complements, I hope, Erich Grässer's important and erudite work, which was the last book dedicated to Schweitzer to be published by Mohr Siebeck almost fifty years ago.⁹

I would like also to thank Christophe Chalamet, Predrag Cicovacki, Caroline Fetscher, Ruth Harris, William Horbury, George van Kooten, Julius Lipner, David Maxwell, Justin Meggitt, Isgard Ohls, Brendan Simms, Brian Stanley, Anna Stepler, and Werner Zager, either for reading the whole work or sections of this monograph and making important suggestions for its improvement; or simply for stimulating conversation about Schweitzer. I am also grateful to Romain Collot of the Archives Centrales Albert Schweitzer, Gunsbach, who has provided me with much help in accessing letters by and to Schweitzer.

Many years ago, when I was a teenager, I remember watching with rapt attention Don Cupitt's six-part BBC television series entitled *The Sea of Faith*. In the third program, entitled 'Going by the Book', Cupitt looked at various challenges, direct or indirect, to the authority of the Bible, as these had occurred in particular in the 19th and early part of the twentieth centuries. The bulk of

⁸ See Carleton Paget and Thate, *Albert Schweitzer*.

⁹ Grässer, *Albert Schweitzer*. Thate, *Remembrance*, which was also published by Mohr Siebeck, although making Schweitzer's work on Jesus central to his thesis, is not strictly speaking a book dedicated to the study of Albert Schweitzer.

the program focused on Albert Schweitzer about whom I had heard nothing at the time. The account Cupitt gave of Schweitzer all those years ago sowed in me the seed of my fascination with the Alsatian; and so I wish to express my thanks to Don, whose colleague I was eventually to become at the University of Cambridge.

Luke Hase, whose fine Ph. D. thesis I had the privilege of supervising and which was successfully submitted as I concluded the writing of this volume, has managed, with accuracy and skill, to help me create a more or less consistent text, a burdensome task, given that several chapters appeared in journals with different house styles. I also want to extend my thanks to the Faculty of Divinity in the University of Cambridge and my college, Peterhouse, for helping to fund Luke's work.

In the mid-1990s Simon Gathercole used to sit at my feet in supervisions after changing subjects from Classics to what was then called Theology and Religious Studies. I am now much more his pupil than he ever was mine; and this book has benefited hugely from the immense amount of time he has spent in helping me organize and think through its contents. Without his enduring belief, often opposed by me, that I should move forward with its publication, I doubt the book would have seen the light of day.

Above all else, I wish to thank Susanna Avery-Quash, my partner for many years, and now my wife. She has been a massively stalwart support in times good and bad. Not only have I benefited from her advice about writing (as an accomplished scholar herself she has been able to empathise with the ups and downs of the writing process) but I have learnt a great deal from her optimistic and affirmative approach to life and been helped by her great human intelligence and patience. She has been a constant encouragement to me in the writing of this volume and its appearance owes more than I can say to her.

Finally, I want to remember my beloved eldest daughter, Emily, who, sadly, died on May 27th, 2021, aged just twenty-four. Since that terrible day, I have never once woken up and not thought about her and reflected on what she might have been. I dedicate this book to her memory.

James Carleton Paget, June 11th, 2024

Table of Contents

Preface	VII
Articles previously published and now appearing in this volume in revised form	XIX
List of Abbreviations	XXI
1. Abbreviations of Titles of Schweitzer's Bibliography	XXI
2. Other Abbreviations	XXIII
Introduction: Albert Schweitzer: Thoughts and Reflections	1
1. Prelude: A Stained Glass Window	1
2. Schweitzer's Cultural Identities	8
2.1 Schweitzer: Maverick Rebel and/or Cultural Traditionalist	8
2.2 Schweitzer's Context and Influences	9
2.3 Schweitzer and Politics	26
3. Schweitzer's Places: from Alsace to Africa	29
3.1 Alsace	29
a) Introduction	29
b) Germany and France	32
c) France and Germany and Alsace	41
3.2 Africa	44
4. Schweitzer's Intellectual Identities	50
4.1 Introduction	50
4.2 Schweitzer as a Theologian	50
a) Schweitzer's Career as a Theologian	50
b) Schweitzer as Theologian and Biblical Critic	55
c) Features of Schweitzer's New Testament Scholarship	61
d) Schweitzer's Hermeneutic and the New Testament	72
e) Schweitzer's Theological Vision of the New Testament	75
f) Schweitzer's Work on Non-Christian Religions	78
aa) Introduction	78
bb) Content	81
cc) Conclusion	95
4.3 Schweitzer as a Philosopher	99

a) Schweitzer's Philosophical Works: From Kant to Kultur-philosophie	99
b) Schweitzer's Critique of his Philosophical Contemporaries	101
c) Schweitzer's Proposed Vision for Philosophy	103
d) Schweitzer's Self-Perception as Philosopher	105
e) Central Themes in Schweitzer's Philosophy	107
f) Reflecting on Reverence for Life	116
g) Influences	119
aa) Kant	119
bb) Schopenhauer	121
cc) Nietzsche	122
dd) Goethe	127
h) Concluding Reflections	130
4.4 Schweitzer and Music	131
a) Introduction	131
b) Schweitzer's Musical Life	132
c) Schweitzer and Organs	134
d) Schweitzer as an Interpreter of Bach	135
e) Bach the Mystic and Jesus	142
f) Concluding Reflections	146
5 Concluding Observations	149

Chapter 1: Albert Schweitzer's Second Edition of The Quest of the Historical Jesus

1. Introduction	159
2. The Origins and Context of GLJF	164
3. Contents of GLJF	172
4. Postscript	198

Chapter 2: Schweitzer and Paul

1. Introduction	203
2. The Origins of Schweitzer's Understanding of Paul	204
3. Geschichte der Paulinischen Forschung (1911)	209
4. Die Mystik des Apostels Paulus 1930	218
4.1 The Delay of the publication of Mystik	218
4.2 The Writing of Mystik	219
4.3 Features of Mystik	222
4.4 The Immediate Reception of Mystik	232
5. Concluding Observations and Outstanding Issues	234
6. Legacy New and Old	243

Chapter 3: “That Most Difficult of Theologians” (Karl Barth): the Place of Theology in Albert Schweitzer’s Life	249
1. Introduction	249
2. Albert Schweitzer and Theology. Some General Remarks	250
3. Elements of Schweitzer’s Theology	253
4. Schweitzer’s Philosophy and its Relationship to Theology	255
5. Conclusion	264
 Chapter 4: Aspects of Albert Schweitzer’s Piety	267
1. Introduction	267
2. Early Life	270
3. Schweitzer’s Religiosity: the Strasbourg Years and Beyond	274
3.1 Introduction	274
3.2 The Church Service	275
3.3 Preaching	277
a) Introduction	277
b) Scripture	280
c) Christian Tradition	284
d) Jesus	288
4. Conclusion	299
 Chapter 5: Albert Schweitzer and Adolf von Harnack: an Unlikely Alliance	305
1. Introduction	305
2. Early Encounter	306
3. Scholarly Engagement	308
3.1 Sacraments	308
3.2 Jesus and the Gospels	310
3.3 Preliminary Thoughts about Paul	319
4. The First World War and Beyond	321
4.1 Attitudes to the War	321
4.2 Philosophy	324
4.3 Membership of the Preussische Akademie	330
4.4 Harnack, Schweitzer, Paul and Dialectical Theology	332
5. Conclusion	347
 Chapter 6: Albert Schweitzer, Judaism and Jews	351
1. Introduction	351

2. Judaism in Schweitzer's New Testament Scholarship	352
2.1 Jesus	352
2.2 Paul	363
2.3 Judaism in Schweitzer's Non-New Testament Work.....	369
3. Contemporary Jews (aside from Buber) and Judaism in Schweitzer's Life.....	374
3.1 Albert Schweitzer's Alsatian Context	374
3.2 Albert Schweitzer and the Breslau Family	379
4. Schweitzer and Nazism	383
5. A Sense of Guilt?	390
6. Conclusion	396
Chapter 7: Albert Schweitzer and Africa.....	401
1. Introduction	401
2. The Decision	404
3. Schweitzer's Self-Perception as a Medical Missionary.....	413
4. Africa in Albert Schweitzer's Writings	421
5. Africa and the Thought of Albert Schweitzer.....	441
6. The Hospital	447
7. Concluding Thoughts	450
7.1 General	450
7.2 Specific Points	452
Chapter 8: Schweitzer and Cambridge: a Modest Relationship?	457
1. Introduction	457
2. Schweitzer, Cambridge and Francis Crawford Burkitt.....	457
3. Schweitzer, C. H. Dodd and Cambridge	465
4. Schweitzer's Visit to Cambridge to Receive his Honorary Degree (October, 1955).....	468
5. Conclusions	472
Chapter 9: Why Bother with Albert Schweitzer?.....	477
1. Introduction	477
2. Why Bother?	479
2.1 Compelling Biography.....	479
2.2 Intellectual Achievements	481
a) Introduction	481
b) New Testament Studies.....	483
c) Philosophy.....	488

2.3 Africa – Schweitzer’s Work as a Medical Missionary	493
3 Conclusion	496
Some significant dates in the life of Albert Schweitzer	499
Bibliography	505
Archives Consulted	505
1. Schweitzer Bibliography	505
1.1 Volumes Published in Schweitzer’s Lifetime	505
1.2 Volumes Published Posthumously	507
1.3 Letters	507
1.4 Collections	508
1.5 Articles/Essays	508
2. Secondary Literature	509
Indices	535
Index of Authors	535
Index relating specifically to Albert Schweitzer	539
Index of Subjects	543

Articles previously published
and now appearing in this volume in revised form

- 'Albert Schweitzer's second edition of *The quest of the historical Jesus*', *BJRL* 88 (2006; imprint 2009), 3–39.
- 'Schweitzer and Paul', *JSNT* 33 (2011), 223–56.
- “That most difficult of theologians” (Karl Barth): the Place of Theology in Albert Schweitzer's Life', *ExpT* 128.3 (2016), 105–14.
- 'Aspects of Albert Schweitzer's Piety', *TLZ* 141 (2016), 1023–40.
- 'Albert Schweitzer and Adolf von Harnack: an unlikely alliance', *ZKG* 122 (2011), 257–87.
- 'Albert Schweitzer and the Jews', *HTR* 103 (2014), 363–98.
- 'Albert Schweitzer and Africa', *JRA* 38 (2012), 277–316.
- 'Why bother with Albert Schweitzer?', *SIJ* 1 (2021), 1–26.

List of Abbreviations

1. Abbreviations of Titles of Schweitzer's Bibliography

- À l'orée de la forêt vierge* = *À l'orée de la forêt vierge: Récits et réflexions d'un médecin en Afrique équatoriale française* (FT of *Zwischen Wasser und Urwald*: Paris: Albin Michel, 1952).
- Abendmahlsproblem* = *Das Abendmahlsproblem auf Grund der wissenschaftlichen Forschung des 19. Jahrhunderts und der historischen Berichte* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1901).
- African Notebook* = *From My African Notebook* (ET of *Afrikanische Geschichten*: London: Allen & Unwin, 1938).
- Afrikanische Geschichten* = *Afrikanische Geschichten* (Hamburg: Richard Meiner Verlag, 1952 [1938]).
- Aufsätze* = *Aufsätze zur Musik*, S. Hanheide (ed.) (Kassel: Bärenreiter, 1988).
- Bach I and II* = *J. S. Bach* (ET of *J. S. Bach*: 2 vols.: London: A & C Black, 1923; originally published with Breitkopf and Hartel, London, 1911)
- Bähr, Leben, Werk und Denken* = *Leben, Werk und Denken 1905–1965, mitgeteilt in seinen Briefen*, H. W. Bähr (ed.) (Heidelberg: Schneider, 1987).
- Briefe aus Lambarene* = *Briefe aus Lambarene 1924–1927*, in *AW 1*, 477–685.
- Briefwechsel* = *Theologischer und philosophischer Briefwechsel, 1900–1965*, W. Zager (ed.) (Werke aus dem Nachlass; Munich: C. H. Beck, 2006).
- Chinesischen Denkens* = *Geschichte des chinesischen Denkens*, B. Kämpf and J. Zürcher (eds.) (Werke aus dem Nachlass; Munich: C. H. Beck, 2002).
- Decay* = *The Decay and Restoration of Civilization: The Philosophy of Civilization I* (ET of *Verfall*: London: A&C Black, 1955 [1923]).
- Ehrfurcht vor dem Leben* = *Die Lehre von der Ehrfurcht vor dem Leben. Grundtexte aus fünf Jahrzehnten. Im Auftrag des Verfassers*, Hans Walther Bähr (ed.) (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1966).
- Four Studies* = *Goethe: Four Studies*, C. R. Joy (ed. and tr.) (Boston: Beacon, 1949).
- Gespräche* = *Gespräche über das Neue Testament*, W. Döbertin (ed.) (Munich: Beck, 1994).
- GLJF* = *Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung* (2nd ed. Tübingen: Mohr, 1913), in *AW 3*, 15–887.
- Indian Thought* = *Indian Thought and Its Development* (ET of *Indischen Denkens*: New York: Holt, 1936).
- Indischen Denker* = *Die Weltanschauung der indischen Denker* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1934), in *AW 2*, 423–654.
- Internationales Regulativ für Orgelbau* = *Internationales Regulativ für Orgelbau: entworfen und bearb. von der Sektion für Orgelbau auf dem Dritten Kongress der internationalen Musik-gesellschaft* (Wien, 25 bis 29 Mai 1909) (Strasbourg, 1909).

- Interpreters* = *Paul and His Interpreters: A Critical History* (ET of *Paulinische Forschung*: London: A&C Black, 1912).
- J. S. Bach* = *J. S. Bach* (Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1908).
- Kindheit und Jugendzeit* = *Aus meiner Kindheit und Jugendzeit* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1924), in *AW* 1, 253–314.
- Kultur und Ethik* = *Kultur und Ethik*, *Kulturphilosophie* II (Munich/Bern: C. H. Beck, 1923), in *AW* 2, 95–420.
- Kultur und Ethik in den Weltreligionen* = *Kultur und Ethik in den Weltreligionen*, U. H. J. Körtner and J. Zürcher (eds.) (Werke aus dem Nachlass; Munich: C. H. Beck, 2001).
- Leben und Denken* = *Aus meinem Leben und Denken* (Bern, 1931), in *AW* 1, 19–252.
- Life* = *Out of My Life and Thought* (ET of *Leben und Denken*: New York: Holt, 1949).
- Messianitäts- und Leidensgeheimnis* = *Das Messianitäts- und Leidensgeheimnis: Eine Skizze des Lebens Jesu* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1901), in *AW* 5, 195–340.
- Mysticism* = *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle* (ET of *Mystik*: London: A&C Black, 1953 [1930]).
- Mystik* = *Die Mystik des Apostels Paulus* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1931), in *AW* 4, 15–510.
- Orgelbaukunst* = *Deutsche und Französische Orgelbaukunst und Orgelkunst* (Leipzig: Breitkopf and Härtel, 1906).
- Paulinische Forschung* = *Geschichte der Paulinischen Forschung von der Reformation bis auf die Gegenwart* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1911).
- Predigten* = *Predigten, 1898–1948*, R. Brüllmann and E. Grässer (eds.) (Werke aus dem Nachlass; Munich: C. H. Beck, 2001).
- Primeval Forest* = *On the Edge of the Primeval Forest and More from the Primeval Forest*, (New York: Macmillan, 1948 [1920]).
- Psychiatrische Beurteilung* = *Die psychiatrische Beurteilung Jesu: Darstellung und Kritik* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1913).
- Reich Gottes* = *Reich Gottes und Christentum*, U. Luz, U. Neuenschwander, and J. Zürcher (eds.) (Werke aus dem Nachlass; Munich: C. H. Beck, 1995).
- ‘Relations’ = ‘The Relations of the White and Coloured Races’, *CR* 133 (1928): 65–70 (see Schweitzer, *Wir Epigonen*, 325–48).
- Quest 1* = *The Quest of the Historical Jesus: A Critical Study of Its Progress from Reimarus to Wrede* (ET of *Reimarus*: London: A&C Black, 1910).
- Quest 2* = *The Quest of the Historical Jesus* (2nd ed.) (ET of *GLJF*: London: SCM, 2000)
- Reimarus* = *Von Reimarus zu Wrede: Eine Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1906).
- Religions of the World* = *Christianity and the Religions of the World* (New York: Macmillan, 1923).
- Religionsphilosophie Kants* = *Die Religionsphilosophie Kants von der Kritik der reinen Vernunft bis zur Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der blossen Vernunft* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1899).
- Schweitzer/Bresslau, *Jahre* = *Die Jahre vor Lambarene: Briefe 1902–1912*, Miller-Schweitzer, R. and G. Woytt (eds.) (GT Munich: C. H. Beck, 1992).
- Schweitzer/Buri, *Existenzphilosophie* = *Existenzphilosophie und Christentum: Briefe 1935–1964*, A. U. Sommer (ed.) (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2000).
- ‘Selbstdarstellung 1929’ = ‘Selbstdarstellung’, in *Die Philosophie der Gegenwart in Selbstdarstellungen*, Bd. 7, R. Schmidt (ed.) (Leipzig: Felix Meiner, 1929), 205–48.

- Sorg, *Correspondance* = Sorg, Jean-Paul, *Albert Schweitzer – Hélène Bresslau: Correspondance* (3 vols.: Vol. 1: 1901–1905 [*L'amitié dans l'amour*]; vol. 2: 1906–1909 [*L'amour dans l'amitié*]; vol. 3: 1910–1912 [*L'Alliance*]) (Colmar: Jérôme, 2005–2011).
- Strassburgervorlesungen* = *Strassburger Vorlesungen*, E. Grässer and J. Zürcher (eds.) (Werke aus dem Nachlass; Munich: C. H. Beck, 1998).
- Verfall* = *Verfall und Wiederaufbau der Kultur*, Kulturphilosophie I (Munich/Bern: C. H. Beck, 1923), in *AW* 2, 17–94.
- Vorträge* = *Vorträge, Vorlesungen, Aufsätze*, C. Günzler, U. Luz, and J. Zürcher (eds.) (Werke aus dem Nachlass; Munich: C. H. Beck, 2003).
- Weltanschauung* 1 and 2 = *Die Weltanschauung der Ehrfurcht vor dem Leben*, Kulturphilosophie III, C. Günzler and J. Zürcher (eds.) (Vol. 1: Erster und zweiter Teil; Werke aus dem Nachlass; Munich: C. H. Beck, 1999, 2000).
- Weltanschauung* 3 and 4 = *Die Weltanschauung der Ehrfurcht vor dem Leben*, Kulturphilosophie III, C. Günzler and J. Zürcher (eds.) (Vol. 2: Dritter und Vierter Teil; Werke aus dem Nachlass; Munich: C. H. Beck, 1999, 2000).
- Wir Epigonen* = *Wir Epigonen: Kultur und Kulturstaat*, U. H. J. Körtner and J. Zürcher (eds.) (Werke aus dem Nachlass; Munich: C. H. Beck, 2005).
- Zwischen Wasser und Urwald* = *Zwischen Wasser und Urwald: Erlebnisse und Beobachtungen eines Arztes im Urwalde Äquatorialafrikas* (Bern: Haupt, 1921), in *AW* 1, 315–476.

2. Other Abbreviations

- ACJD Abhandlungen zum christlich-jüdischen Dialog
- AKThG Arbeiten zur Kirchen- und Theologiegeschichte
- ARW *Archiv für Religionswissenschaft*
- ATR *Anglican Theological Review*
- BENT Beiträge zur Einleitung des Neuen Testaments
- BHTh Beiträge zur historischen Theologie
- BJRL *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*
- CH *Church History*
- CQR *Church Quarterly Review*
- CR *Contemporary Review*
- ChrCent *Christian Century*
- CW *Christliche Welt*
- DLZ *Deutsche Literaturzeitung*
- DtPfrBl *Deutsches Pfarrblatt*
- EC *Early Christianity*
- EJM *Europäisches Journal für Minderheitenfragen*
- EvPrKEL *Evangelisch-protestantischer Kirchenbote für Elsass und Lothringen*
- EvTh *Evangelische Theologie*
- ExpT *Expository Times*
- FHS *French Historical Studies*
- HA *History in Africa*
- HEI *History of European Ideas*
- HibJ *Hibbert Journal*

HJ	<i>Historical Journal</i>
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
IDR	<i>Im deutschen Reich</i>
ISP	<i>International Studies in Philosophy</i>
JAH	<i>Journal of African History</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JEAS	<i>Journal of East African Studies</i>
JEH	<i>Journal of Ecclesiastical History</i>
JES	<i>Journal of Ecumenical Studies</i>
JJS	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
JR	<i>Journal of Religion</i>
JRA	<i>Journal of Religion in Africa</i>
JSHJ	<i>Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus</i>
JSNT	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i>
JSNTSup	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament, Supplement Series</i>
JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i>
LZD	<i>Literarisches Zentralblatt für Deutschland</i>
MGWJ	<i>Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums</i>
MIH	<i>Modern Intellectual History</i>
MR	<i>Massachusetts Review</i>
NJWJ	<i>Neue Jahrbücher für Wissenschaft und Jugendbildung</i>
NovTSup	<i>Novum Testamentum Supplement</i>
NTS	<i>New Testament Studies</i>
NZSTh	<i>Neue Zeitschrift für Systematische Theologie</i>
PBA	<i>Proceedings of the British Academy</i>
PKZ	<i>Protestantische Kirchenzeitung</i>
PM	<i>Protestantische Monatshefte</i>
PQ	<i>Political Quarterly</i>
PrJb	<i>Preussische Jahrbücher</i>
RAL	<i>Research in African Literatures</i>
RGG	<i>Religion in Geschichte und Gegenwart</i> , 4th ed. (9 vols.; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1998–2007)
RHE	<i>Revue d'histoire ecclésiastique</i>
RHR	<i>Revue de l'histoire des religions</i>
RHPhR	<i>Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie religieuses</i>
SCH	<i>Studies in Church History</i>
SEJ	<i>Studies in European Judaism</i>
SIJ	<i>Schweitzer Institute Journal</i>
SJHC	<i>Studies in Jewish History and Culture</i>
SOF	<i>Studia Oecumenica Friburgensia</i>
SP	<i>Synthesis Philosophica</i>
ThQ	<i>Theologische Quartalschrift</i>
ThR	<i>Theologische Rundschau</i>
ThTo	<i>Theology Today</i>
TLZ	<i>Theologische Literaturzeitung</i>
TRE	<i>Theologische Realenzyklopadie</i>
TutzT	<i>Tutzinger Texte</i>
TWAS	<i>Twayne's World Authors Series</i>

<i>TynB</i>	<i>Tyndale Bulletin</i>
<i>UW</i>	<i>Unsere Welt: Illustrierte Zeitschrift für Naturwissenschaft und Weltanschauung</i>
<i>WMH</i>	<i>Wisconsin Magazine of History</i>
<i>WUNT</i>	<i>Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament</i>
<i>ZKG</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte</i>
<i>ZNThG</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für neuere Theologiegeschichte</i>
<i>ZNW</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche</i>
<i>ZST</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für systematische Theologie</i>
<i>ZTK</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche</i>
<i>ZWT</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für wissenschaftliche Theologie</i>



Albert Schweitzer in the west window of the First Presbyterian Church, Deerfield (Illinois), designed by Willet Studios (Philadelphia), early 1960s. Photo by the Revd. Dr. Suzan Hawkinson.

INTRODUCTION

Albert Schweitzer: Thoughts and Reflections

1. Prelude: A Stained Glass Window

In the small American town of Deerfield, some twenty-five miles north of Chicago, and not far from the western shores of picturesque Lake Michigan, slightly set back from the busy central thoroughfare of the town, sits the handsome First Presbyterian Church. Built in the early 1960s, mainly as a result of the energetic leadership of the man who was to be its minister for some twenty-eight years, the Revd. Bernard Didier, the church boasts a fine west window, created by the Willet Studios of Philadelphia, and entitled the 'Window of the Four Gospels'. Rising up some twenty feet, its four panels develop, respectively, the themes of governance, teaching, healing, and missionizing. In the third of the panels, devoted to healing, moving downward, there is a depiction of the evangelist Luke, the Physician, and the symbol associated with his Gospel, the head of an ox. Beneath this are depictions of Christ's miracle in Capernaum from the Gospel, and from the Acts of the Apostles the raising of Eutychus by Paul and the farewell of Paul spoken to the elders at Ephesus. This is followed by a depiction of St. Francis of Assisi giving clothes to a poor man on a road. Then come some scenes from the Reformation, including Calvin's welcoming of a group of refugees to Geneva, and the depiction of various nineteenth-century Protestants associated with healing, including Florence Nightingale and David Livingstone. At the foot of the panel, its final section, the viewer is presented with an image of a senescent Albert Schweitzer, his sleeves rolled up, disporting his signature moustache and bow tie, attending to an African patient, prostrate beneath him, while another African sits to the side. In the background is the Strasbourg hospital in which Schweitzer trained as a doctor, and where Calvin preached during his exile in that city. Immediately to the left of this depiction of Schweitzer (as you look at the window), the foundation as it were of the section of the panel devoted to teaching, is a picture of the owlishly bespectacled Karl Barth, seated reading a book and representing Christian learning.

This little known stained glass window, found in the church of a modest American mid-western town is but one example of many in the United States, Britain, Germany and elsewhere, which present depictions of Schweitzer. It raises important points for those interested in the study of Albert Schweitzer. First, it gives evidence of a time when the name of Schweitzer was widely known

(sufficiently well known for him to be depicted in a church in small-town Deerfield), and his reputation extraordinarily high, especially in the United States¹ and Germany.² From the end of the Second World War through the 1950s and 1960s (the Deerfield window dates from 1963) books and articles about him, in a variety of media, rattled off presses, stretching from the US to Japan;³ and although his stock began to fall towards the end of his life,⁴ his death was still a major event eliciting extended obituaries in newspapers around the world, and laudatory comment from many heads of state.⁵

While today Schweitzer's achievements are still remembered by some (interestingly, President Obama, in his acceptance speech for the Nobel Peace Prize of 2009, compared himself unfavourably with four previous Laureates, one of whom was Albert Schweitzer),⁶ and while there are many schools, streets, professorships, and institutions named after him, the adulation and fame surrounding him, especially as this was witnessed after 1945, is a distant memory.⁷

¹ Schweitzer only visited the United States once, in 1949 (on this see esp. Fetscher, *Tröstliche Tropen*, 59–86 and 107–32, here focusing on his visit to the Goethe Festival at Aspen; and Oermann, *Schweitzer*, 165–70). While his popularity in Europe, especially Germany, is perhaps easier to explain (on this see n. 8 below), his popularity in the U. S. is perhaps more surprising. Ruth Harris, 'Review', 217, has tentatively suggested that the growing issue of race relations in the U. S. may have played a role with Schweitzer's hospital seeming like a conservative, but humanitarian, intervention that prescribed a cautious and paternalist pace to emancipation. Fetscher, *Tröstliche Tropen*, 59–87, suggests that after the Second World War the allies, led by the United States, were especially keen to promote the idea of the good German in an attempt to elevate the disgraced reputation of the German nation at a time when the Federal Republic of Germany (better known as 'West Germany') was a lynchpin in its 'Cold War' strategy. Goethe was especially important in this respect, being seen as a symbol of the cultivated and ethical side of German life. In 1949, to celebrate the 200th year since Goethe's birth, there was a conference held in Aspen in 1949. Schweitzer was invited to speak at the conference. His appearance was important, not least because he was thought to be helpfully like Goethe (here as a polymathic, 'good' German, even though since 1919 he had been a Frenchman) and so an aid to the message the organisers were trying to propagate. Fetscher, citing a book by Allen, *Romance*, 166, notes the comments of one advertising agent: "We all recognize that it is rather hard to make Goethe understandable to the so-called average guy, but working with Schweitzer who can provide us with flesh and blood, I think that the job can be done ... [Y]ou could almost call Schweitzer an incarnate Goethe." The association of Goethe and Schweitzer was echoed in a number of publications, e. g. Lind, *Die Universalmenschen Goethe und Schweitzer*.

² See Fetscher, *Tröstliche Tropen*. See n. 8 below.

³ For the growth of both Lambarene and Schweitzer as a symbol see Oermann and Suermann, 'Albert Schweitzer's Lambarene'; Oermann, 'Idea'; Mbondobari, *Archäologie*; Suermann, *Homo politicus*, 195–204; Ohls, *Improvisationen*, 281–88; Ohls, *Albert Schweitzer Arzt*, 303–4; Hörisch, 'Megaprominenter'; and Fetscher, *Tröstliche Tropen*.

⁴ See esp. Oermann, 'Idea'; and Mbondobari, *Archäologie*.

⁵ See Ohls, *Improvisationen*, 280–81, citing Suzanne Oswald's publication on the obituaries written at the time of Schweitzer's life, found in Oswald, *Urwaldspital*, 200 f.

⁶ Barack Obama, "Remarks by the President at the Acceptance of the Nobel Prize", Oslo, Norway, December 10, 2009 (see <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-acceptance-nobel-peace-prize>).

⁷ This is truer for the Anglophonic world than the German-speaking one. See Friedrich Schweitzer, 'Von Vorbildern', 40–41, who quotes a press report of the Allensbacher Institut für

Much discussion has been given to explaining such adulation⁸ and its disappearance.⁹

Secondly, the image of Schweitzer presented by the window is accurate but limited. It is accurate in the sense that in the minds of many of Schweitzer's admirers, his main achievement lay in the foundation of his hospital in Lambaréne where he lived for extended periods from 1913 to his death in 1965; but it is limited in the sense that for some of the same admirers, what was truly remarkable about Schweitzer was that he had chosen to do such work when

Umfrageforschung of January 2013, in which it was claimed that 88 percent of the German population had heard of Schweitzer and 26 percent counted him as one of the three most important models. The same author also notes that at least 300 social institutions ('soziale Einrichtungen'), like schools, are named after Schweitzer in Germany. Strikingly, 16 percent of those aged between 16 and 29 counted him as a significant model. Fetscher, *Tröstliche Tropen*, by revealing the depth and extent of Schweitzer's post-war popularity in Germany (she does not discuss his more recent reception), shows indirectly why Schweitzer might continue to resonate with Germans.

⁸ See n. 1 above for reception in the United States. Partial explanations for the post-war adulation lie in the desire for a western moral hero, who appeared to oppose the nihilism of that conflict. In this respect see a letter dated 16.iv.1954, where Georg Wehrung, a former pupil of Schweitzer at Strasbourg and Professor of systematic theology in a variety of German universities, voices this viewpoint (Schweitzer, *Briefwechsel*, 737). See Kantzenbach, *Schweitzer*, 8, who mentions the quest on the part of politicians for ideals, and the fact that German moral integrity, in the wake of the war, was something rare and therefore precious. Also significant was the need for a figure who showed up the more benign side of European colonialism. On this see the comments of Claus Jacobi in *Der Spiegel* in 1960: "Denn Albert Schweitzer dient der westlichen Welt als fleischgewordenes Alibi: Stellvertretend für sie soll er die Sünden des Kolonialismus sühnen, abendländische Kultur verkörpern und im Urwald die in Europa eingestürzten Bastionen der Humanität gegen die Unmenschlichkeit wiederaufrichten." ('Albert Schweitzer, Mythos des 20. Jahrhunderts', in *Der Spiegel* from 21.12.1960, 50). See Mühlstein, *Helene Schweitzer*, 256: "In den Nachkriegsjahren wird er (Schweitzer) zu dem 'guten Menschen' schlechthin, der sich während der finsternen Jahre des zweiten Weltkrieges seine Integrität bewahrt hat. Dass sich hinter dieser Verehrung häufig auch der Wunsch verbirgt, die eigene unschöne Vergangenheit zu verdrängen, steht auf einem anderen Blatt." Fetscher, *Tröstliche Tropen*, in what she describes as a social-psychological study, gives the richest and most detailed account of the role of the symbol of Schweitzer and Lambaréne in post-war Germany, dividing his reception into three different periods, and showing how, in various ways, that symbol, allowed Germans to negotiate their Nazi past without straightforwardly confronting it. See esp. *ibid.*, 52–54; and 207–25. Some of what Fetscher has to say in her highly informative study is captured in Suermann's reference to Schweitzer as a 'Kollektivalibi' (Suermann, *Homo politicus*, 201), here in the context of a discussion of the decision to award Schweitzer *Der Friedenspreis des Deutschen Buchhandels* in 1951.

⁹ The gradual disappearance of Schweitzer's world renown is partly accounted for by changing attitudes to colonization. Against this background Schweitzer has come to be seen as entertaining anachronistic views and to symbolize a colonial past, which many had come to view sceptically. In Germany the population began in the 1960s to take on issues to do with the Second World War in a more direct way as a younger generation confronted their leadership with the atrocities of that period and so the function of Schweitzer/Lambaréne as a symbol came to play less of a role. West Germany also began to recover from the War economically. Fetscher, *Tröstliche Tropen*, 56–57, sees both factors as contributing to the diminishing prominence of the Schweitzer/Lambaréne symbol. Further on this see chapters 7 and 8 in this volume.

an apparently distinguished career lay before him either as an academic or as an organist. As some of Schweitzer's detractors pointed out, there was nothing exceptional about his activity as a medical missionary – after all, scattered throughout the European colonies, there were many others like him.¹⁰ What was remarkable, many contended, was that his work in Africa appeared to be an act of striking self-denial when one considered the kind of career in a variety of fields he might have had in Europe, a point which Schweitzer, indirectly, encouraged, though also sought to deny.¹¹ Many of those same people were not aware, in any informed way, of Schweitzer's work as philosopher, theologian, or even as an organist and writer on music;¹² and yet his academic work in all its manifestations, was connected, either directly or indirectly, with his work in Lambarene, which could be seen as the endpoint and embodiment both of his particular form of Jesus-centred theology and his activist philosophy, which were intimately linked. Schweitzer was a 'healer', if one is thinking in terms of his representation on the stained glass window in Deerfield's First Presbyterian Church, as a result of what he thought, that is, there is a clear link between Schweitzer's thinking, both theological and philosophical, and his decision to engage in the kind of activity he did in Africa.¹³ Thinking and action were a unity, or as he stated to

¹⁰ See Audouyraud, *Docteur Schweitzer*, who makes this point polemically. See chapter 7 in this volume.

¹¹ In what is his earliest autobiographical publication, appearing in English as Schweitzer, *Primeval Forest*, 1 (AW 1, 315), Schweitzer emphasizes this point, though it is not clear that when he left for Africa in 1913, he assumed that he would never again return to the life he had before. On this see Woytt, 'Albert Schweitzer scheidet', and chapter 7 in this volume. Schweitzer was also to express this point in various letters, including one to Anna Schäffer, a friend from his days at grammar school in Mühlhausen, dated October 1905, where he speaks of having to forego "eine glänzende Laufbahn als Universitätslehrer und Schriftsteller." (quoted in Scholl, *Albert Schweitzer*, 19). See also Schweitzer, 'Selbstdarstellung 1929', 34. Here he describes the intellectual activities he engaged in between 1919 and 1924 (the year he returned to Africa for the second time) as "Wunderbares", noting that when he went to Africa he had to give up his work as an organist, his academic work, and his financial independence. He goes on to state: "Diese drei Opfer hatte ich zu bringen begonnen. Nur meine Vertrauten wussten, welches Weh es mir bereitete." For the importance of seeing his decision to go to Africa as the relinquishing of a brilliant career, see F. Schweitzer, "Von Vorbildern".

¹² As Ohls, *Improvisationen*, 280–84, notes, after reading the obituaries compiled by Oswald, what is clear is that it was Schweitzer's personality and his practical work, which had impressed itself upon the majority of those who assessed his career, and especially the public at large, but not his thought. See also her comment that "der Schweitzermythos der humanistischen Weltanschauung schuf eine moralische Leitfigur", as well as her view that Schweitzer's own presentation of himself as a 'Humanitätsimago' led to the onesided concentration on his personality and character rather than his thought (see Ohls, *Improvisationen*, 303). See also Suermann, *Homo politicus*, 4: "Der Grund für die unzureichende Würdigung des Geisteswissenschaftlers Schweitzer liegt sicherlich darin, dass die meisten Menschen in Schweitzer eher den gütigen Humanisten denn einen wegweisenden Denker sahen;" and Kantzenbach, *Schweitzer*, 9: "In dem enormen Schrifttum über Schweitzer hat die Würdigung des Menschenfreundes eindeutig den Vorrang."

¹³ See Ohls, *Improvisationen*, 280, who correctly notes that Lambarene was what she terms

Norman Cousins, one of his greatest advocates in the United States, he wished to make his life his argument.¹⁴ So to present him as a healer is only a partial account of the man, though, as will be argued below, without his work in Africa he would not have attracted the interest and celebrity he did, or become a symbol of humanitarian beneficence.¹⁵ The stained glass window, then, raises the question of how to understand Schweitzer, how to categorise him when he combined in himself a number of identities.

Schweitzer's placement next to Karl Barth raises a related point. Both Barth and Schweitzer were theological rebels, men who in their youth and beyond found much that was inadequate in the prevailing liberal/theological and cultural mood.¹⁶ Barth's rebelliousness was exclusively associated with the period after the First World War, where Schweitzer's had preceded that cataclysm (Schweitzer was ten years older than Barth), even if his major philosophical writings were penned after the First World War and in partial reaction to them. Barth insisted that theology claim as its proper subject the reality of God and adopted a dialectical way of thinking in which the otherness of God was emphasized over against an anthropocentric theology associated with the liberal tradition. His distinctive interpretation of the Christian tradition took place exclusively from within the church and the academy. Schweitzer, on the other hand, carried out his task not by writing a commentary on a biblical book, or a *Church Dogmatics*, or seeking to emphasize God's difference from man, but through the writing of a 'Kulturphilosophie' in which he attempted to forge a universal ethic, based upon a central principle, which arose from reflection upon the character of man's will

'die Gestaltwerdung' of 'reverence for life.' Much of her *Improvisationen* is an attempt to argue that case.

¹⁴ Cousins, *Schweitzer*, 125.

¹⁵ This is made clear in some of the most recent contributions to literature on Schweitzer, especially in the work of Suermann and Fetscher. In this context note should be taken of the fact that in terms of sales, Schweitzer's volumes on Africa and his biographical works were the most popular.

¹⁶ Relatively early on (certainly in Barth's career), they attracted some comparison. As an early instantiation of this, see Werner, *Weltanschauungsproblem*, which was published in 1924. The publication begins by noting: "Charakteristisch für den Gang, den in neuester Zeit die Entwicklung des theologischen Denkens genommen hat, ist das Aufkommen einer Opposition, die sich immer energischer dagegen verwehrt, dass die Theologie sich in Historismus und Psychologismus verliere. Karl Barth und Albert Schweitzer stehen beide in den vorderen Reihen dieser Opposition und gehören zu denen, deren Mahnruf am kräftigsten gewirkt hat und zur Stunde weithin vernommen wird." (Werner, *Albert Schweitzer*, 1). While Werner outlines similarities between Barth and Schweitzer, he and, later, his compatriot, Fritz Buri, saw Schweitzer as a helpful buffer against a dominant Barthianism in Switzerland in particular. For responses to the book, see Werner's own remarks in a letter addressed to Schweitzer, dated 29.xii.1929, in Schweitzer, *Briefwechsel*, 768–69. He claims a broadly warm reception except from the Barthians, highlighting in particular Barth's own response in his journal, *Zwischen den Zeiten*. He notes, *inter alia*, the latter's expressed reluctance to engage in argument with Schweitzer until such time as the latter engages in an argument with him. For further discussion see chapter 5 in this volume.

and the way that such reflection led to a sense of the latter's absolute connectedness to the world of which he was a part and for which he was meant to feel a sense of unlimited ethical responsibility. Many of the influences which contributed to the development of his idea of 'reverence for life' were self-confessedly philosophical. God-talk, though a pallid presence but, some would argue, essential, to his ideas, was not the major subject of discussion – in fact it was often consciously avoided. For Schweitzer, Christian dogma was something from which, at least in its traditional sense, one was to liberate oneself. While Schweitzer was keen, like Barth, to assert the difference, indeed the almost alien nature of the Christian life over against a maligned 'Kulturprotestantismus', this was not predicated upon a dialectical theology, but rather upon an exclusively ethical set of assertions, which he saw through the mirror of a reconceived understanding of eschatology.¹⁷ Schweitzer's theology in the end remained liberal in a way that Barth's never did.¹⁸ Indeed it is striking how Schweitzer became a firm opponent of Barth, in part through Martin Werner, and felt the need, late in his life, to write a restatement, which he never completed, of his own liberal-theological creed.¹⁹ The juxtaposition with Barth reminds us both of Schweitzer's identity as a Christian intellectual but in a contested way, which, in part at least, stood at odds with academic theology and wider society, as that developed after the First World War.

The stained-glass window not only raises questions about Schweitzer's different identities but also highlights the role of place in his life. From 1913 Schweitzer's life oscillated between the region in which he was born, Alsace, represented by the hospital in Strasbourg, where he was to work both before his departure to Africa in 1913 and for a period after his return in 1918; and Africa, represented here by the patient to whose needs he is depicted as attending. Schweitzer's affiliation to the former remained profound²⁰ and arguments from an early stage were to be put forward highlighting the role of this so-called 'Grenzland' in the formation of Schweitzer's personality and attitudes.²¹ Can we,

¹⁷ See Sommer, 'Einleitung', 29–30. See also Grässer, *Albert Schweitzer*, 247–49. For further discussion of the relationship between Barth and Schweitzer see chapters 2 and esp. 5 in this volume.

¹⁸ See Tietz, *Barth*, 89–90. While she notes that Barth's cultural critique reflects the spiritual situation of the wartime and postwar period as seen in Spengler and Schweitzer, she writes: "Barth however placed no hope in a cultural reconstruction through which a 'new world' could arise. Culture belonged entirely on the side of the old; human beings were not themselves in the position to create something new."

¹⁹ Schweitzer, *Reich Gottes*.

²⁰ Lassus, *Albert Schweitzer*, 62–64, notes that Schweitzer did not have to make his headquarters in Gunsbach, the village in which his father served as a Protestant pastor from the late 1870s to his death in 1926. His decision to do so implies a considerable attachment to his homeland. His home address was in Königsberg in Germany, where his wife and daughter resided when they were in Europe.

²¹ For the first example of this see Barthel, *Elsässische*, 217–79. For the most recent discussion, see Steinhoff, 'Nest' and discussion below.

for instance, best explain his profound distaste of nationalism²² by the fact that he was brought up in a dual culture, speaking German and French and engaged with German and French institutions, even believing himself, for a time at least, as a cultural bridge between the two?

And what of Africa?²³ The window depicts Schweitzer dispensing care to a passive African, with another crouched by the side, his imperial-style clothing, emphasizing the distinction between himself and the patient, reinscribing a colonial image of benevolence, one which some have argued Schweitzer exemplified, both in the apparently paternalistic manner in which he ran his hospital and in his attitude to the imperial system of which he was a part.²⁴ To others, who emphasize Schweitzer's distance from the African culture of which he was a part, seen, for example, in his failure to learn any of the local languages and to train Africans as doctors, the image can most easily be read as a vision of the African as the subject of Schweitzer's Nietzschean desire for ethical self-fulfilment, rather than as a profound representation of empathetic engagement with a respected culture.²⁵ Here the resonances of the image on the window in the mid-twenties of the 2000s, over a century after Schweitzer's departure for the Gabon in 1913, can appear very different from the message, which was intended at the time of its construction, more than sixty years ago. In such divergent interpretations, indelibly influenced by their respective contexts,²⁶ one gains a sense of the ambivalent icon that Schweitzer has become as the 'postcolonial' era has witnessed changing attitudes and sensitivities to European involvement in Africa and elsewhere. The intended message of the window, the sense of Schweitzer as

²² For an early expression of this, see a sermon dated 15.xii.1907 in Schweitzer, *Predigten*, 870: "Der Begriff Mensch existiert in unserer Zeit nicht mehr. Die Menschen unserer Zeit sind füreinander Deutsche, Franzosen, Engländer, Russen oder Polen, aber nicht mehr Menschen. Die Scheidung zwischen den Völkern ist eine so tiefe wie noch nie. So sicher es ist, dass ein Mensch sich zu einem Volke natürlich zugehörend empfinden muss, so gewiss ist, dass unsere Zeit sich auf einer bösen Bahn befindet mit dem aufgeblasenen Nationalitätsstolz und dem falschen Patriotismus ..." See also Schweitzer, *Wir Epigonen*, 82 f.

²³ See Ohls, *Improvisationen*, 218–22 and passim. See chapter 7 in this volume.

²⁴ Criticism of the extent to which Schweitzer embodied imperialist assumptions began in his own lifetime. For a strikingly revisionist view (striking because it is in a commemorative volume dedicated to Schweitzer), see Du Bois, 'Blackman'. For more recent accounts of the controverted nature of Schweitzer's African activity see Oermann, *Albert Schweitzer*; Harris, 'Allure'; eadem, 'Schweitzer and Africa'; and Thate, 'Anachronism.' The shifting views on this matter are helpfully delineated by Mbondobari, *Archäologie*. An important contribution has also been made to the subject by Ohls, *Improvisationen* and eadem, *Albert Schweitzer Arzt*. Ohls presents Schweitzer both as a "convinced paternalist" (Ohls, *Improvisationen*, 288) imposing his own views upon a culture of which he was deeply critical, and someone who took seriously its particularities. See chapter 7 in this volume.

²⁵ See Harris, 'Allure'.

²⁶ "Alle Formen der Schweitzerrezeption (Verehrung und Verurteilung; Mythisierung, Demythisierung und Entmythisierung) lassen einen strukturell-ontologischen Zusammenhang erkennen zwischen der Reaktion auf Schweitzers Person und Lebenswerk und der jeweiligen sozial-geistigen Situation in den einzelnen Ländern." (Ohls, *Improvisationen*, 303, n. 1361).

a selfless healer, emerged out of a particular post-war context but now seems to contain more ambiguous and complex resonances.²⁷ The symbol, which Schweitzer embodied at the time in which the stained glass window was constructed, can seem strangely distant, even jarring, raising questions about the endurance of his legacy and the uses to which he can continue to be put both generally and specifically in the twenty-first century.²⁸

The rest of this chapter will develop some of the observations, which are suggested by consideration of the stained glass window at Deerfield's First Presbyterian Church. After some opening remarks which set Schweitzer broadly within his cultural, political and intellectual setting, I shall go on to consider Schweitzer's different identities, whether in ways suggested by the different physical locations of his life (Alsace and the Gabon) or by his different intellectual and aesthetic activities (theologian, philosopher and musician). Throughout the discussion the sense of Schweitzer as a complex mixture of characteristics, what one distinguished commentator on Schweitzer has dubbed a 'complexio oppositorium',²⁹ will be emphasized. I shall conclude with remarks which will seek to draw out some unifying threads from what has preceded.

2. Schweitzer's Cultural Identities

2.1 Schweitzer: Maverick Rebel and/or Cultural Traditionalist

Just as Schweitzer's Jesus was the product of his own environment, so was Schweitzer himself. And yet there is a tendency in writing about Schweitzer to lose sight of the particular settings of his complex life and write about him as if he somehow transcended them. This, to some extent, is encouraged by the way Schweitzer wrote about himself. His tendency is often to a form of self-presentation, which concentrates upon broadly spiritual and intellectual developments without highlighting the role of the wider environment upon his character and beliefs, through the pinpointing of specific influences upon his development.³⁰

²⁷ "In many respects, Schweitzer became a symbol in a war of representations as the many sides of the colonial debate were pointed against each other as opposed to Schweitzer himself. Schweitzer reflecting on his many representations and symbolic functions – both positive and negative, suggested that they all tended to be more 'imagined than correct.'" (Thate, 'Anachronism', 297). See chapter 9 in this volume.

²⁸ A sense of the difficulties of the 'African' Schweitzer emerges in the work of Ohls where a complicated balance is drawn between what can and cannot be retained in the Schweitzer legacy. See esp. Ohls, *Albert Schweitzer Arzt*, 395–8. See also chapter 7 in this volume.

²⁹ See Groos, *Albert Schweitzer*, 17–77.

³⁰ For the complex nature of Schweitzer's self-presentation, see Oermann, *Albert Schweitzer*; and especially Moll, *Albert Schweitzer*, 34–36. As well as emphasizing both the educative nature of Schweitzer's autobiographical works (they belong, as Groos pointed out, to 'Erbaunungsliteratur'; see Moll's view that Schweitzer appears in them as a "pädagogische Vorbildfunktion" [ibid., 36]), and the way in which they exemplify well-known autobiographical tropes,

Indeed a striking element of these works is the way in which Schweitzer presents his own significant intellectual discoveries as moments of quasi-revelation, encouraging, albeit indirectly, this sense of the genius who rises above his own setting.³¹

2.2 Schweitzer's Context and Influences

At the very beginning of the German edition of his work on Bach, Schweitzer distinguishes between two types of genius. One which he dubbed the objective genius is the perfect embodiment of all that has preceded (Bach himself falls into this category, but so also, according to Schweitzer, does Kant). He is not a conscious rebel against his times but brings unique perfection to the period of artistic creation of which he is a part. "It is," as Schweitzer writes, "not he who lives, – but the spirit of the times that lives within him."³² The other, who Schweitzer names the subjective genius, breaks away from what has preceded and makes his mark by being consciously different – his work is almost independent of the epoch in which he lives. "A law unto themselves, they place themselves in opposition to their epoch and originate new forms for the expression of their ideas."³³ Schweitzer thinks Wagner to be a genius of this kind. The categories are problematic and reflect Schweitzer's love of binaries. But precisely because they are categories given to us by Schweitzer, it is a useful exercise to see how he would have seen himself in relation to these crudely drawn typologies.

At one level Schweitzer presented himself as a man fighting against the prevailing tendencies of the culture of which he was a part and which he saw as showing clear signs of decline. He portrayed the new industrialised age, with its expanding cities, mass culture and controlling governments, as a direct threat to

Moll also questions at many points their historical reliability (here in part, though to a much greater degree, following Oermann, *Schweitzer*). Moll also makes the important point that at the beginning of the twentieth century Germany experienced a renaissance in autobiographical literature and he shows how this was reflected in the series published by Felix Meiner called "Wissenschaft der Gegenwart in Selbstdarstellungen." Moll notes how the preface to the seventh volume of the philosophical series, written by the editor, Raymund Schmidt, highlighted the need to seek out new intellectual leaders, not in the past but the present. Schweitzer was to contribute to the volume edited by Schmidt.

³¹ Note Harris, 'Allure', 805, n. 2, commenting here on the way people write about Schweitzer's involvement in Africa: "Above all, work on Schweitzer often remains unconsidered and decontextualised, strangely detached from emerging histories of tropical medicine and even from fashionable trends in imperial history, transnational history and humanitarianism." This to some extent is encouraged by Schweitzer's own telling of his biography. As Steffahn, *Schweitzer*, 25, notes, here commenting on Schweitzer's autobiographical account of his childhood and youth (*Schweitzer, Jugenderinnerungen*), Schweitzer is more interested in telling the tale of how a person has developed rather than taking account of the historical context in which this development occurred.

³² Schweitzer, *Bach*, 1.

³³ *Ibid.*, 1.

the integrity of the individual, to his or her capacity to act as independent agents capable of independent thought and moral action. Everywhere, according to Schweitzer, society threatened to crush the aspirations of the individual and it was precisely Schweitzer's aim to seek to reverse that process, or at least to show the way out of the collectivist malaise.³⁴ The intellectual culture of the time did little to ameliorate the situation – philosophy had abrogated its responsibility to think about what Schweitzer took to be the central questions of how we can progress (progression understood ethically) and had become little more than a 'Luxusbeschäftigung', concerned simply with itself and its history and not with wider questions of existence and its role as a guide in these areas.³⁵ Consistent with this, intellectual culture had become 'epigonic', inclined to regurgitate what had gone before and showing itself no longer capable of generating new, and enlivening thought. 'Epigonenschaft', which is difficult to translate into English, haunted Schweitzer from an early age, as he himself relates,³⁶ and appears to some extent to lie in the background, in complex ways, of much of what he writes.

Consistent with these tendencies, Schweitzer is keen to present himself as a person set against the world, or wanting at least to break away from its values – indeed central to his own philosophical position, sometimes understood as a kind of secularised eschatology, is the idea of being different from the world, precisely so one can act upon it, the key feature, as he sees it of the outworkings of Jesus' will.³⁷ Indeed many of Schweitzer's heroes are rebellious types – Her-

³⁴ In the work which Schweitzer never published, but which preceded *Decay* and upon which *Decay* was partly based, Schweitzer draws out the tension between the individual, who acts upon the impulses of 'reverence for life', and society. "Nur wenn wir in der Hingebung an die Gesellschaft zugleich in geistiger Spannung mit ihr verharren, ist unser Verhältnis zu ihr ein sittliches; nur so können wir in ihr sittliche Persönlichkeiten bleiben und sie selber in der Entwicklung zur Sittlichkeit erhalten." (*Wir Epigonen*, 214 f.). For further comment on this tension see, Schweitzer's 6th Gifford Lecture, in Schweitzer, *Vorträge*, 158; and Schweitzer, *Life*, 220–22 (*AW* 1, 229–31). For discussion of Schweitzer's view of society see Thate, 'Third Moralist', 196–97, showing how there are parallels between Schweitzer's depiction of the routinized and overorganized life of the city dweller (Schweitzer, *Decay*, 15–34; *AW* 2, 32–44) and material in Marx and Engels' *Manifesto of the Communist Party*, though Thate does not propose a direct influence of the latter on Schweitzer. See further discussion in this chapter.

³⁵ See below.

³⁶ See Schweitzer, *Wir Epigonen*, 19–20, for the earliest evidence of the epigonic nature of society (the text was written in September of 1915). See also Schweitzer, *Life*, 146 (*AW* 1, 158), for his assertion that such a view of society first struck him at a social event with the Curtius family in Berlin in 1899, where an unnamed guest uttered the words, "Why, are all of us just nothing but 'Epigoni?'" This differs from the passage in *Wir Epigonen*, which claims that such thoughts afflicted Schweitzer when he was at school. In a letter dated October/November 1904, Schweitzer expresses his desire to write a book with the title, *Wir Epigonen*. See Sorg, *Correspondance* 1, 151; Schweitzer/Bresslau, *Jahre*, 75.

³⁷ In this view eschatology becomes a way of looking to an idealized future, which is at once in tension with a present. See also his words in a lecture of 1906, entitled 'Jesus und wir': "Wir suchen einen, der aus Wassertropfen ein Feuer und Kraft machen kann. Von der Welt innerlich

Index of Authors

- Allen, J. S. 2
Allison, D. 483
Applegate, C. 137, 138, 142
Arendt, H. 498
Arnaut, R. 409, 429, 430, 454
Arnold, M. vii, 32, 35, 72, 153, 251, 267, 270, 273–75, 277, 278, 279, 280, 288, 371
Aschheim, S. 20
Ashton, J. 239–40, 244
Audouyraud, André 4, 494
Aujoulat, L.-P. 435
- Bähr, H. 31, 100
Balsiger, U. 84, 85
Bambach, C. 21, 328, 329, 339
Bammel, E. 315
Baranzke, H. 118, 492
Barnett, M. 419, 441
Barrett, C. K. 161
Barsam, A. vii, 51, 79, 80, 87, 93–94, 114, 116, 117, 118, 119, 122, 192, 193, 250, 256, 257, 258, 259, 262, 263, 295, 303, 343, 388, 490, 492
Barthel, E. 27, 33, 35, 38, 43, 261
Basch, S. 34
Bauer, W. 17
Bavink, B. 38
Beiser, F. 21, 328
Bentley, E. 391
Bernault, F. 402, 424
Bethune-Baker, J. 458, 474
Boswell, L. 38–39, 41, 43
Boundzanga, N. 404, 441
Bowden, J. 159, 162
Bowman 202
Brabazon, J. vii, 53, 162, 204, 305, 436
Bret, G. 135
- Brown, C. 71, 357, 486, 487
Bümlein, K. 394–96
- Carleton Paget, J. vii, x, 57, 153, 250, 411, 467, 481
Caron, V. 374–75
Carrol, A. 42
Chalamet, C. 56, 76–77, 105, 269, 270, 303, 339, 488
Chapman, M. 15, 18, 20, 57, 159, 160, 161, 196, 211, 330, 458, 459, 464, 473
Cicovacki, P. vii, 82, 89, 91, 94, 104, 105, 109, 115, 116, 117, 119, 124, 256, 432, 478, 489, 490, 498
Cinnamon, J. 414, 428, 429
Clark, H. 51, 250, 258, 259, 262, 269, 295–96, 303
Clarke, J. 80, 81, 88, 96, 97, 98
Comaroff, Jean 444
Comaroff, John 444
Cooper, D. 80, 82, 90
Cousins, Norman 5
Craig, J. 30, 84
Cupitt, S. 159
- Davenport, M. 433, 436
D’Costa, G. 97
Dillistone, F. 465, 467
Dougall, L. 461
Dubuisson, D. 92, 98
Dungan, D. 444
Dunn, J. D. G. 467
- Emane, A. 439–40, 493–94
Emmet, C. 461
Etherington, N. 415
Evans, C. 71, 357, 486, 487

- Fernandez, J. 425, 428, 441, 446, 450, 452, 455, 497
- Fetscher, C. vii, viii, 2, 3, 5, 26, 42, 45, 48, 156, 351, 380, 384, 386, 387, 388, 389, 390, 393, 394, 396, 402, 403, 405, 408, 410, 413, 414, 426, 428, 429, 430, 432, 433, 436, 438, 439, 440, 441, 442, 448, 451, 454, 455, 474, 478, 481, 494
- Fischer, C. 29, 38, 41, 42, 43
- Fredriksen, P. 247
- Frey, C. 14, 48, 194, 195, 258, 259, 263, 272, 390, 391, 412, 443, 444
- Fuhrmann, H. 379
- Gathercole, S. 70, 172, 173, 484
- Gerdmar, A. 352, 355, 362, 365, 366, 372, 396, 400
- Gerrish, B. 177, 186
- Giambrone, A. 70–71, 172, 173, 357, 484–85
- Gilman, S. 454
- Glasson, T. Francis 63, 359, 459, 483
- Goodin, D. 250, 269
- Gordon, P. 23, 339
- Gräb, W. 279
- Graf, F. W. 307, 342
- Grässer, E. vii, x, 6, 20, 51, 55, 61–65, 76, 151, 162, 186, 202, 211, 212, 216, 219, 229, 231, 236, 238, 239, 242, 243–245, 250, 254, 255, 265, 269, 271, 275, 279, 281, 343, 369, 389, 482, 483, 498
- Gray, C. 414
- Groos, H. 8, 72, 77, 162, 173, 174, 198, 214, 225, 230, 239, 250, 268–69, 270, 271, 279, 299, 304, 439, 456, 483, 488
- Grundmann, C. 415, 416
- Gunther, J. 425, 450
- Günzler, C. vii, 21, 24, 27, 38, 45, 48, 65, 79, 80, 82, 84, 94, 95, 98, 103, 104, 112, 116, 117, 118, 119, 120–133, 250, 256, 265, 294, 329, 384, 442, 443–4, 445, 446
- Halbfass, W. 96
- Hanheide, S. 33, 132, 133, 134, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 143, 145, 146–, 147
- Hardiman, D. 415, 416
- Harries, P. 403, 419, 424, 426, 428, 429, 432, 455
- Harris, Ruth vii–viii, 2, 7, 9, 14, 33, 34, 44 f., 46, 48–49, 80, 85, 87, 88, 90, 93, 155, 351, 373, 374, 375, 377, 378, 402, 409, 412, 414, 420, 429, 430, 434, 439, 441, 443, 445, 446, 448, 450, 455, 479, 480, 493, 495, 497
- Hastings, A. 435
- Hatcher, B. 92
- Headrick, R. 40, 415, 423, 425, 447, 448, 449, 455, 494
- Hege, B. 186, 314
- Heschel, S. 352, 354, 355, 356, 361
- Hiers, R. 305, 311, 327
- Hinrichsen, H.-J. 33, 131, 132, 135, 136, 137, 141, 147, 148, 482
- Holladay, C. 160, 162, 163, 166, 174, 175 f., 190, 192, 198, 317, 354, 464, 488
- Holtmann, S. 344
- Horbury, W. 223, 243
- Horrell, D. 447
- Hutchison, W. 87
- Ice, J. 79, 81, 250
- Igbokwe, A. 15, 51, 197, 200, 202, 238, 250, 259–64, 269, 292, 294, 295, 299, 303
- Iliffe, J. 425
- Isichei, F. 403
- Jacobi, Claus 3, 495
- Jacobs, M. 253, 303
- Joy, C. 33, 132, 134
- Kaempf, B. 79, 88–89
- Kalusa, W. 419, 426
- Kantzenbach, F. 3, 4, 30
- Kennedy, H.A.A. 244
- Kiesel, H. 29
- Kinzig, W. 321–23
- Kleffmann, T. 122, 130, 262
- Koch, W. 162, 194
- Kóhak, E. 119
- Kopf, D. 93
- Körtner, U. 20, 105, 114, 116, 118, 119, 154, 257, 258, 259, 295, 490, 492
- Koshar, R. 339, 345
- Kraftchik, S. 122, 190–91, 196, 258
- Kraus, O. 14, 25

- Krempper, M. 375, 376, 382
 Krieger, K. 380
 Krois, J. 21
 Krüger, H. 392
 Kümmel, W.G. 160, 163, 168, 205, 211,
 214, 217, 218, 223, 232, 236, 241
 Lagrange, M.J. 485
 Lange, D. 324
 Lannert, B. 160, 178, 185
 Lassus, P. 6, 31, 34, 41, 390, 402
 Lauster, J. 303
 Lawrence, A. 136
 Lipner, J.J. 93
 Mähl, H.-J. 57
 Mandani, M. 432
 Manen, H. 409
 Marchand, S. 211, 334, 366
 Marksches, C. 313, 317, 320, 331
 Marshall, G. 477
 Martin, M. 114, 116, 117, 438
 Matlock, B. 72, 210, 214, 216, 218, 226,
 236, 242, 243–5, 486, 488
 Maxwell, D. 403, 429, 435
 Mbondobari, S. viii, 2, 3, 7, 40, 41, 105,
 402, 403, 421, 422, 427, 441, 443, 452,
 481
 Mbuvi, A. 447
 McCormick, J. 23, 339
 McGillicuddy, Á. 43
 McKnight, G. 452
 Meurer, G. 113, 122, 125
 Minder, R. 30, 31
 Moeller, B. 305
 Moll, S. 8–9, 16, 18, 20, 21, 49, 59–60, 65,
 162, 176, 177, 187, 193, 196, 204, 235,
 279, 282, 401, 404, 405, 442, 445
 Morgan, R. 51, 75 f., 186, 193, 202, 238,
 265, 287, 294, 295, 299, 302, 352
 Moule, C. F. D. 243
 Mühlstein, V. vii, 3, 27, 35, 37, 38, 39, 323,
 351, 378, 379, 380, 381, 382, 383, 384,
 385, 386, 387, 428, 442, 457
 Murray, M. 131, 134, 135, 139, 141
 Ndombet, W.-A. 404, 441
 Near, J. 136
 Neill, S. 245
 Nelson, E. 88
 Neunswander, U. 23, 55, 122, 125
 Ngolet, F. 414
 Nineham, D. 159, 163, 467
 Nottmeier, C. 321–22
 Novenson, M. 244, 245, 246–47, 368
 Nowak, K. 324, 327, 329, 339
 Oermann, Nils Ole vii–viii, 2, 7, 8, 9, 27,
 37, 71, 122, 131, 133, 135, 153, 204, 249,
 268, 279, 305, 324, 351, 378, 383, 385,
 389, 404, 405, 406, 417, 424, 432, 436,
 447, 450, 451, 452, 453, 454, 455, 477,
 479, 480, 481, 482, 493, 495, 497, 498
 Ohls, Isgard vii, x, 2, 4, 7, 8, 25, 37, 40, 41,
 44, 45, 46, 47, 49, 52, 167, 392, 403, 408,
 409, 410, 412, 415, 419, 420, 421, 423,
 424, 426, 428, 429, 430, 431, 433, 434,
 435, 440, 444, 445, 446, 449, 450, 453,
 494, 498
 O'Neill, J. C. 195
 Osterhammel, J. 43
 Oswald, S. 433–34
 Pelikan, J. 225, 345
 Pels, P. 413
 Peterson, P. S. 344, 346
 Peterson, W. J. 135–36
 Picht, Werner 53, 171, 203, 241, 294, 295,
 296, 450, 479, 482, 493
 Pimlott, B. viii, 479–80
 Pleitner, H. 15, 18, 58, 59, 60, 61, 162, 168,
 176, 177, 180, 183, 185, 190, 191, 194,
 196, 197, 200, 201, 258, 303, 318
 Pohling, D. 477
 Raphaël, F. 374
 Ratschow, C. H. 163
 Rebenich, S. 321, 329
 Reumann, J. 63 f., 70
 Robertson, E. 43
 Robinson, J. M. 162, 163, 170, 186, 190
 Roetz 88, 91
 Rohls, J. 15
 Roscher, S. 376
 Rössler, A. 55, 268, 269, 270, 282, 284,
 285, 288, 292, 293, 296

- Rowland, C. 483
 Rumscheidt, H. M. 339
- Schäffer, C. 394–95
 Schechter, A. 394
 Schneider, J. 21, 22
 Schoeps, H. J. 243
 Scholl, J. 4
 Schorlemmer, F. 498
 Schrade, L. 131, 140, 144
 Schützeichel, H. 131, 133, 144–46, 148, 157
 Schüz, M. 117
 Schweitzer, Friedrich 2, 478
 Scott, C. 233, 243
 Seager, R. 80
 Seaver, G. 131, 162, 457
 Silverman, D. 30
 Simpson, M. 472
 Sommer, A. 6, 20, 22, 105, 196, 492
 Sorg, J.-P. 35
 Souter, A. 458
 Sparks, H. F. D. 162
 Spear, O. 48
 Spitta, P. 138, 142
 Stanley, B. 83, 87
 Steffahn, H. 9, 43, 53, 259, 266, 405
 Stegmann, E. 366, 369
 Steinberg, S. 379–80
 Steinhoff, A. 6, 17, 29 f., 36, 41, 374, 375, 376, 490
 Stendahl, K. 368
 Stiehm, L. 373
 Strohl, H. 17
 Suermann, T. vii–viii, 2, 3, 4, 5, 11, 12, 13, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 33, 34, 36, 37, 39, 41, 43, 45, 47, 156, 251, 325, 327, 351, 377, 382, 383, 385, 386, 387, 389, 390, 392, 399, 403, 404, 412, 434, 436, 438, 440, 450, 451, 452, 454, 477, 480, 481, 498
- Thate, M. x, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, 47, 49, 70, 106, 122–24, 150, 172, 173, 437, 480, 484, 493, 494
 Thomson, A. 34
 Tietz, C. 6, 298, 342
 Tofighi, F. 224, 236–37, 239
- Ungern-Sternberg von, J. 321
 Ungern-Sternberg von, W. 321
 Usarski, F. 79, 89, 90, 92, 96, 98
- Vaughan, M. 415, 418, 421, 425, 445
 Vermes, S. 372
 Vinck, H. 429
- Ward, M. 391
 Watson, F. 59, 65, 71, 191, 483, 484–85
 Weaver, W. P. 162, 179, 187
 Wehler, H.-U. 42
 Weir, T. 179
 Weitz, E. 21
 Wernle, Paul 16
 Wiese, C. 352, 356, 357, 358, 362
 Williams, C. P. 416, 417
 Williamson, G. 177–78, 179, 182, 183, 186, 192, 199, 200, 201, 202, 314, 315, 358–60, 361
 Windisch, H. 162, 168
 Winkler, R. 239
 Winnebeck, J. 306
 Wolf, J.-C. 119
 Wolfes, M. 253, 303
 Woytt, G. 4, 37, 167, 404, 407, 412, 430
 Wright, N. T. 245, 247, 484
- Zager, D. 267, 283
 Zager, W. vii, 64, 71, 132, 139, 141, 145, 146, 240, 270, 283, 284, 395
 Zahn-Harnack von, A. 305, 306, 320
 Zimmerman, E. 136
 Zorn, J.-F. 409, 414, 417

Index relating specifically to Albert Schweitzer¹

- Academic career and attitude towards
 academy 6, 11, 18, 55, 71–72, 103 f.,
 150–52, 234–35, 250–52, 406, 479
- Africa 6, 7–8, 44–48, 401–56
- criticism of colonial powers in 422 f.
 - decision to go to 404–13
 - distance from culture 44 f., 428 f.
 - the exotic 421–22
 - importance for thought 47–49, 442–47
 - languages of (Pahouin and Fang) 428
 - legacy of work there 435–41, 450–56
 - music of 428
 - names given to inhabitants 432
 - place in his thinking 44 f., 402, 441–47
 - polygamy 431
 - religions of 428
 - social observations about 422–23
 - subject of writing 421 f.
 - *see also* Racism
- Alsatian identity, understanding of 29–44
- Ascension, understanding of 287
- Atonement, understanding of 286,
 295–96, 418–21
- Bach, Johannes 132–49
- chorales 136
 - ethics of 144–46
 - French lack of familiarity with 136
 - interpretation of 153–42
 - and Jesus 142–46
 - as mystic 142–46
- Barth, Karl 339–47
- relationship to 5–6, 25, 76, 78, 241–2,
 249, 341–47, 487, 497
 - view of his *Römerbrief* 221, 223, 224
 - *see* Barth, Karl, *below*
- Biblical critic, 55–72 (*see also* Jesus; New
 Testament; Paul)
- Bresslau, Helene 15, 29, 31, 35, 36, 50,
 72, 99, 100, 125, 132, 144, 147, 148,
 149, 150, 155, 160, 161, 166, 209, 218,
 277–78, 283, 379–83, 398, 405, 415,
 447, 457, 463
- Bridge between German and French
 culture 32–34, 37–38, 41
- Buber, Martin 372–74
- Christian identity, 267–304
- contested issue, 268–70
 - *see also* Doctrine, Christian
- Christology 202, 236, 238–39, 259, 263,
 268, 295 f., 309
- Clergyman (Vikar) 51, 267 f., 271 f., 274 f.
- attitude to divine service and its role
 276–77
 - *see also* Preaching
- Colonialism 44–48, 157, 422 f.
- Correspondence of 25, 27
- Decolonization, attitude towards 432–33
- Democracy 22, 27–28, 327, 489
- Dialectical Theology (*see below*)
- Development and decline of image 2–4,
 347
- Doctrine, Christian 57, 76, 264–65,
 268–69, 282 f., 285–87, 300, 309–10
- Dreyfus/Dreyfusards (*see below*)
- Early life 270–74
- Enlightenment, importance of 28–29
- place in his thought, 101 f.
 - *see* Enlightenment *below*

¹ This index highlights subjects as they relate specifically to Albert Schweitzer. Inevitably, there are convergences with the main index of subjects. On occasion I simply refer readers to the latter as it would have been superfluous to create another index entry.

- Eschatology (*see below*)
- Expulsions, of Germans after Second World War, attitude towards 393–94
- Family background 30–31
- Father's influence 273–74
- First World War (*see below*)
- France
- awards from 40
 - criticisms of 33
 - increasing discontent with 38–41
 - relationship with in aftermath of First World War 38–40
 - *see also* de Gaulle, Charles *below*
- Francophile sentiments of family 30–31, 37
- Gabonese
- attitude towards 424–26
 - response to him 439 f.
- Germany
- nationalism of 36–37
 - Nazis, 383 f. (*see* Nazis and Nazism *below*)
 - opposition to 31–32, 37
 - philosophical tradition of 104 f.
 - positive attitude towards culture 32–33
 - reception in 2 f., 160–61, 168, 394, 399, 450
- God 77, 272, 292 (*see* God *below*)
- Goethe
- influence upon 127–31
 - place of and comparison with 2
- Guilt, European, of Schweitzer 114, 116, 117, 390–96
- Harnack von, Adolf
- relationship with 305–49
 - *see* Harnack, Adolf von, *below*
- Hermeneutics 58, 185 f., 190 f. (*see* Hermeneutics *below*)
- Hellenization (*see also* Hellenization *below*)
- Historicism, critical attitude towards 58–63, 184 f., 195, 342–43
- Historiography, Schweitzer's use of 13, 65 f. 68–72, 168
- History
- belief in 58–63 (*see also* Wahrhaftigkeit)
 - difficulties emerging from 59 f.
 - modern theology's fixation with 184–85
- History of religions 215, 217, 244–45
- Hospital at Lambarene 447–50
- Image
- curation of 26, 155–56, 443, 481
 - development and decline of 2–4, 347
- Internment in World War 1 38–39, 321, 389–90, 412, 453
- Jesus, account of life 352–53
- appropriation of (*see* hermeneutics)
 - Christology (*see below*)
 - commitment to 59, 273–74, 288 f., 402 f., 411–12
 - comparison with Bach 142–46
 - development of thoughts about 163
 - anti-dogmatic stance towards 285–86
 - eschatology of 62–63, 72, 73–74, 83, 226, 281, 290, 312–14
 - existence of 69–70, 177–79, 199, 313–16, 357–58
 - heroic vision of 193
 - as historically reconstructible figure 61 f. (*see also* Mark and Matthew *below*)
 - Jewish character of 352–62
 - as Messiah 75, 226, 295–96, 352–53, 363, 402
 - particularity of 318 f.
 - personality of 60, 192 f., 318–319
 - in philosophy 115, 193 f., 295, 326
 - redemption 297 f.
 - in relation to revelation 293
 - and Paul 228 f.
 - strangeness of 58–59, 158, 187–88, 198, 253, 341
 - superior to other religious figures 91–92
 - symbol 185–87
 - titles of 59, 295
 - will of 11, 59, 148, 176–77, 188–95, 265, 289, 295

- exemplar of will-to-love 115, 193 f., 258, 262–63, 295, 326
- Jews/Judaism, 353–99 (*see also* Anti-Judaism; Anti-semitism; Dreyfus/Dreyfusards; Jews/Judaism *below*)
- Kant, 20–21, 101–2, 107, 119–21, 127, 130, 155, 307, 490
- Kultur, attitude towards and understanding of (*see* Civilization *below*)
- Lambarene 401–49
 - co-workers at 387
 - as escape for Schweitzer 14, 155–56
 - history of 414
 - hospital 447–50
 - research at 25, 445, 449
 - place in Schweitzer's life and thought 5, 14, 44 f., 445–56
 - symbolic understanding 2–3, 47, 155, 452, 481
- Liberal theology (*see* Liberal theology *below*)
 - in Alsace 17–18, 278
 - criticism of 5, 14, 18, 73 f., 171, 179, 184 f., 318 f.
 - essential identification with 6, 17, 19–20, 57, 59–61, 74–78, 194 f., 270, 347–49
 - piety of 299–304
 - problem of modernization (*see also* Modernization)
- Medical studies, decision to become doctor 407 f.
- Medical missionary, understanding of 4, 13, 44, 157, 268, 413–19 (*see* Medical Missionary *below*)
- Missions
 - attitude towards 418 f.
 - interest in 408
 - subject of sermons 408
- Modernization, problem of in biblical study, 14, 18, 19, 58, 73, 76, 144, 459–60
- Music 132–49
 - organs, interest in construction of 134–35
 - place in his life 132–33
 - relationship with Widor 32–34, 135–37
 - sunaesthetic approach to 32–34, 52, 132–149, 482
 - Wagner, influence of 140–41
- Mysticism (Mystik)
 - as Christ mysticism 62, 66, 73–74, 148, 189, 289–90, 335–38
 - as eschatological mysticism 228–32, 237–39
 - as ethical mysticism 95, 110–115, 151–152, 257–63, 366–667, 488–89 (*see also* Reverence for life).
- Nationalism, opposition to 37–38, 321–22 (*see* Nationalism *below*)
- New Testament
 - exegesis of 63–64
 - features of scholarship concerning 61–72
 - hermeneutical issues raised by 72–75, 187–95
 - Jewish character of 352–69
 - subject of sermons 280 f.
 - theology of 75 f.
 - importance of work on 483–88
 - *see also* Hermeneutics; Jesus; Paul
- Nietzsche
 - changing views concerning, 383 f.
 - importance of 11, 12, 122–27
 - *see also* Nietzsche *below*
- Nobel Peace Prize (*see* Nobel Peace Prize *below*)
- Non-Christian religions 78 f.
 - attitude toward non-Christian religions 78–98 (*see also* Non-Christian religions; Buddhism; Hinduism; Islam *below*)
 - Christianity's superiority over 84
 - importance for thought 94 f.
 - origins of interest in 80 f.
 - relationship to philosophy 81 f.
- Nuclear Testing, opposition to 26, 46
- Old Testament, lack of concern with 280.
- Organ, player of and builder of 134–35
- Overbeck, Franz 19–20, 169, 196, 206, 262, 315, 327, 349

- Paternalism 46
- Paris Evangelical Missionary Society,
Relationship with 37–40, 167, 408 f.
- Paul 203–47, 332–38, 363–69
- absence of Christological concern 238
 - central questions in study of 209–10
 - de-judaization of 210
 - eschatology of 212 f.
 - Hellenized Paul, criticism of 210 f.
 - importance for 54
 - Jewish identity of 212, 363–69
 - legacy of work on, 243–47
 - mysticism of 236, 239
 - parallels with study of Jesus 240
 - place within Christian origins 66, 209–10, 211
 - psychologizing interpretations of 212
 - reception of Schweitzer's work on 214–18, 232 f.
 - relationship to Bach 147
 - relationship to earliest Christianity 206
 - relationship to later Christianity 229–30
 - relationship to Jesus 207, 228–29
 - relationship to philosophical ideas 242–43
 - unified nature of thought of 63, 211–13
- Philosophy 107–119, 488–92
- assumptions of 111 f.
 - early work on 100
 - engagement with post-war 23–24
 - evolving ideas about project 100
 - failures of 101–103
 - influences of 119–30
 - lack of interest in among professional philosophers 105
 - lasting achievements of 490–92
 - main tenets of 107–116
 - modern philosophy, criticisms of 22, 24, 99 f., 101–2
 - as public undertaking 103
 - purpose of 10, 22, 53, 99 f., 102–5
 - self-understanding as philosopher 103–7
 - theology, relationship to 51–52, 151, 204, 249–66, 311
 - vision of 103
 - as watchman 101
 - weaknesses of 116–119
- Piety of 267–304 (*see also* Liberal Theology)
- Politics 26 f., 438
- Post-modernity, relationship to 490
- Prayer, understanding of role in Christian life 276–77
- Preaching of 55, 277 f.
- contents of 280 f.
- Principal of Lutheran Stift in Strasbourg 251, 267, 275–76
- Progress, understood in moral terms 103, 106, 328–29, 439, 491
- Protestantism 77, 280, 284, 287
- Public theology, Schweitzer as exemplar of 17–18
- Rabbinic Judaism 359–60, 365, 398 (*see also* Late Judaism)
- Racism, signs of 434–41
- Reception of scholarly work, in Britain and Germany 160 f., 168, 316–17, 457–75
- Redemption, idea of 214, 228–32, 238, 262–63, 297–300, 333 f.
- Religion 13
- importance of 300
 - understanding of 81–83
- Religiosity 267–304
- reluctance to discuss 273
- Resurrection, understanding of 176–77, 205, 206–8, 226–29, 268, 282, 286–87, 363, 486
- Revelation, trope in self-presentation 9, 442
- scepticism concerning 78, 189, 200, 293
- Reverence for life, logic of 116–19, 254 f., 294–95
- origin of 442–43
 - philosophical coherence of 116–19
 - in sermons 302
 - relationship to Christian ideas 257–58
 - *see* Reverence for life *below*
- Revolution, attitude to 12
- Schopenhauer (*see* Schopenhauer *below*)
- Society, view of and relationship to, 10 f., 28–29 (*see* Society *below*)

Spengler, Oswald, 19–22, 106, 328, 339,
342

Strasbourg (*see* Strasbourg *below*)

Theologian, identity as 50–78, 249–76

– ongoing importance of 53, 250–52

– reasons for study 55

– relationship to philosophy 249–66

– reluctance to call himself 50f., 488

Wahrhaftigkeit, importance of concept for
57–58, 282

Weimar Republic, attitude to 21, 323,
382–83

Wrede, William, influence of 65, 235–36

– interaction with scholarly work
169–72, 213–14

Index of Subjects

- Achebe, Chinua 435, 494
Adenauer, Konrad 439, 478
Advaita Vedanta 92
Africa 44–49, 401–56
– distance from culture 44
– importance for Schweitzer's legacy 7–8, 493–96
– place in Schweitzer's thought 44–49, 441–47
– religions of 83
– *see also* Gabon; Schweitzer, Albert, Africa; Gabonese; Racism).
Ahimsa 92, 93–94, 95, 98
Alsace-Lorraine 6, 17, 29–44 (*see also* Regionalism; Schweitzer, Albert; Alsatian identity)
Alsatian Protestantism 17
Altdeutsche 35–36, 39–40
Andende 448
Anthropocentrism 339, 492
Anthropology 428–31,
Anti-Judaism 356, 362, 366, 368–69, 381–82, 387, 398, 401 (*see also* Antisemitism)
Antisemitism 357, 374 f., 387 f., 376 f.
Apartheid 439
Aristotle 68
Aspen, Colorado, Festival of (1949) 2, 393
Atonement
– doctrine of 286, 297
– mission as atonement 44, 206, 413, 419, 422, 493
Attitude (Gesinnung), 22, 74, 110, 113, 154
Augustine of Hippo 56

Bach, Johann Sebastian 33, 66, 132–49
Bach Society, Paris 33, 132, 133, 135, 216

Baeck, Leo 182, 356–58, 397
Bähr, Hans Walter 26, 71
Baldensperger, Wilhelm 30, 180, 237
Baptism 53, 67, 205–7 237, 308–9
Barth, Karl
– attack upon theological liberalism 5
– expression of post-war Zeitgeist 23, 339
– and Martin Werner 5–6, 224 f., opposition to 'cultural' view of Christianity 6
– opposition to mysticism 225
– relationship with Harnack 20, 33, 338–47
– relationship to Schweitzer 5–6, 25, 76, 78, 241–2, 249, 341–47, 487, 497
Barthel, Ernst 31, 42, 50, 98, 217
Bartholdi, Frédéric 408
Bauer, Bruno 11, 154, 177, 182
Baur, F. C. 62, 72, 182, 210–11, 283, 365–66
Bayreuth, Festspielhaus 171
Beethoven, Ludwig van 137, 141
Belle Époque 34
Bergson, Henri 21, 25, 130,
Berlin 10, 20–21, 34–35, 57, 178, 306, 321, 332, 340, 378, 382
Bertrand, André-Numa 409
Besant, Annie 80
Beutler, Ernst 128
Bianquis, Jean 38, 40, 410, 411, 417
Bhagavad Ghita 93
Biblical criticism (*see* Schweitzer, Albert, Biblical critic; Hermeneutics; Jesus; New Testament, Paul)
Boegner, Alfred 31, 32, 41, 53, 407 f., 410–11, 417
Born, Max 385, 388

- Bousset, Wilhelm 186, 192, 334–35, 355, 362, 366
- Brahmanism 90
- Bresslau, Caroline 386
- Bresslau, Harry 32, 35, 36–37, 164, 323, 376, 379–83
- Bret, Gustave 33, 132
- Brunner, Emil 23, 225, 345
- Buber, Martin 25, 83, 88, 372–74, 387
- Budde, Karl 32, 307, 335
- Buddhism 82, 83, 86, 89, 90, 92, 93, 420, 428
- Bultmann, Rudolf 23, 25, 32, 51, 56–57, 65, 75–76, 150, 162, 178, 202, 209, 218, 221–22, 223, 232, 233–34, 235–36, 239, 240, 243, 302, 331, 335, 489
- Buri, Fritz 24, 54, 61, 62, 74–75, 103, 303, 343, 488,
- Burkitt, Francis Crawford 160, 161, 174, 177, 314, 233, 458–65, 466, 472, 473
- Burkitt, Persis 463, 468
- Burkitt, Judith 470
- Bwiti movement 429
- Calvin, John 1, 56
- Cambridge, University of 457–75
- Cameron, James 439, 451
- Cameroon 40
- Carlyle, Thomas 193
- Carrez, Maurice 61, 305
- Carson, Rachel 491
- Casalis, Eugene 408
- Cassirer, Ernst 21, 101, 103, 106, 491
- Categorical imperative 99, 120–21, 155 (see also Kant)
- Catholicism 297, 391, 420 (see also Simultaneum)
- Cavaillé-Col, Aristide 134, 135,
- Chamberlain, Houston Stewart 321–23
- Charles, R. H. 63, 359, 458, 459
- Chesterman, Clement 28, 469–70
- Chinese thought 78 f., 88, 90, 94
- Die Christliche Welt* 324, 340
- Christology (see Schweitzer, Albert, Christology)
- Civilization (Kultur) 21 f., 102 f., 154, 327 (see also Kulturphilosophie)
- Clemenceau, Georges 322–23
- Coillard, François 408, 417
- Cold War 2, 26, 481
- Colenso, William 447, 455
- Collectivism 27, 29, 389
- Colonialism 3, 47, 157, 403, 422–25, 436–38, 453–54, 493–95 (see also Schweitzer, Albert; Colonialism)
- Communism 27, 481 (see also Marx)
- Conflict of life 114, 117
- Confucius 91, 94
- Conrad, Joseph 424
- Connectedness (Verbundenheit) 95, 98, 109, 112, 119, 156, 257
- Cook, Sir Albert 426
- Cousins, Norman 452
- Crucifixion (see Atonement)
- Curtius, Friedrich 36, 381
- Daube, David 466
- Davies, W. D. 243, 245–46, 367, 466–67
- De Gaulle, Charles 40
- Deerfield, Il., 1, 2, 157
- Deissmann, Adolf 39, 213, 214, 220, 223, 230, 366
- Delbrück, Hans 322
- Delitzsch, Franz 372
- Democracy (see also Schweitzer, Albert, Democracy)
- Descartes, René 109, 490
- Deutscher Monistenbund 178
- Dialectical Theology 6, 77, 186, 216, 244, 327, 332 f., 340, 343, 345, 348, 487
- Dibelius, Otto 32, 61, 203, 232, 233, 240, 242, 331
- Dilthey, Wilhelm 21, 137
- Dobschuetz, Ernst von 161, 217, 458
- Dodd, Charles H. 161, 163, 243, 465–68, 473,
- Drews, Arthur 177 f., 180, 182, 183, 199, 200, 318, 357
- Dreyfus Affair 34–35, 375, 379, 377–78, 382, 398–99
- Du Bois, W. E. B. 7, 47, 436–37, 494
- Du Chaillu, Paul 414, 429
- Dualism/Dualistic 89, 112, 114, 116, 143, 151, 154–55, 398
- Dukas, Paul 132
- Dulles, John Foster 27

- Dutch school of Pauline studies 182,
211–12, 217
- East Germany (Deutsche Demokratische
Republik) 7, 389, 420
- Eden, Sir Anthony 469,
- Edinburgh, University of 252, 267, 465,
472,
- Edinburgh World Missionary Conference
(1910) 83, 87, 429
- Ehlers, Alice 390
- Einstein, Albert 25, 477, 481
- Eisenhower, Dwight David 469
- Elborg, Ismar 356
- Enlightenment 29, 101–3, 106, 107,
253–55, 293, 310, 328, 346, 382
- Epigone; Epigonik 10, 13, 130, 153, 154
- Eschatology 19, 20, 60, 62, 64, 67,
75–77, 154, 159–202, 207–10, 213, 226,
230–34, 236 f., 243–47, 262, 309–315,
336–37, 353–55, 362–64, 458 f., 464–68,
484–86 (*see also* Schweitzer, Albert,
Eschatology)
- Ethics 48, 72, 93–94, 107–19, 127, 197,
222, 227, 242, 258, 294–95, 319,
342–43, 444–45, 490–92
- Eucharist (*see* Last Supper) 53–54, 66–67,
142, 205, 308–9, 353
- Expressivism 29
- Fang, language 428–29
- Fanon, Frantz 47
- Faouar, John 87
- Fauré, Gabriel 34, 132, 150
- Feine, Paul 217, 218, 331
- Fetishism 44, 48, 385, 424 f., 429, 431, 444
- Fichte, Johann Gottlieb 84, 130, 157, 447
- First World War 5, 6, 19, 21–27, 38–41,
41–44, 76, 321–22, 328 f., 348, 389 f.,
412
- Forkel, Johann Nicolaus 137
- Form Criticism 23, 61–62, 331
- France (*see also* Schweitzer, Albert,
France) 30–31, 32–41, 41–43, 134,
135–37, 375–77, 409, 412–15, 480
- Frank, César 136
- Frankfurt, City of 220, 372, 383
- Frankfurt, Treaty of 31
- Friedländer, Moritz 176
- Friedmann, Richard 387, 393
- Gabon 401–49
– history of before Schweitzer's arrival
413–15
– depiction of people 424 f.
– medical situation in 414–16
– political culture of 47 (*see also*
Schweitzer, Albert, Africa; Gabonese)
- Gandhi, Mahatma 93, 480
- Geiger, Abraham 356
- Gerhardt, Paul 297
- German-French relations as issue in
Schweitzer's life 29 f., 32–43 (*see also*
Regionalism; Schweitzer, Albert, Al-
satian identity)
- Germany (*see also* Schweitzer, Albert, Ger-
many) 2, 29 f., 32–41, 414–43, 134–36,
137–38, 159–60, 161–63, 178, 306, 322,
383–90, 394, 450 f., 477–78
- Gerold, Charles 40, 274–75, 280
- Gide, André 430
- Gillespie, Noel 423
- God 5–6, 77, 89, 91, 99, 114–15, 154, 225,
257–58, 262–63, 272, 276, 292–95,
326–27, 339, 343
- Goebbels, Joseph 385
- Goethe, Johann W., 2, 25, 65, 119, 127–30
- Gogarten, Friedrich 23
- Goguel, Maurice 223, 233, 244
- Gothic architecture as metaphor 140, 157
- Grabs, Rudolf 50, 171, 223, 254, 394
- Grafe, Eduard 62, 72
- Guilt, European 47, 422, 451, 453
- Guilmant, Alexandre 136
- Gunsbach, Alsace 6, 25, 31, 42, 50, 270,
271, 376
- Gunkel, Hermann 18, 153, 335
- Guthrie, W. K. C. 471–72, 474
- Hamburg Institute of Tropical Medicine
(Bernard Nocht Institute) 423
- Hammerskjöld, Dag 477
- Harnack, Adolf von 19, 25, 28, 57, 192,
206, 217, 222, 233, 238, 305–49, 355
– eschatology 309, 310–16, 336–37
– essence of Gospel 311–12

- ethics 319
- First World War, reaction to outbreak of 321–22
- developing thoughts about 322
- Hellenization of Christianity 309, 337–38
- hermeneutics of 312 f.
- historicism of 311 f.
- history of religions 334–35
- Jesus and Gospels 310–16, 319 f.
- Judaism, attitude to 355–57
- kingdom of God in thought of 312–13
- Marcion 327
- nationalism of 321–22
- New Testament study 320, 331–32
- philosophy, understanding of 325–26
- Paul, understanding of 320, 332–39
- relationship with Schweitzer 305–49
- representative of German ‘Bildungskultur’, 306
- Spengler 328–29
- understanding of ‘Dogmengeschichte’, sacraments 308–309
- Weimar Republic, attitude to 326–27
- *see also* Schweitzer, Albert; Harnack, Adolf von
- Harnack von, Axel (son of Adolf) 307, 332
- Hartke, Werner 124, 308, 442
- Hartmann, Eduard von 179 f., 192
- Hartmann, Nicolai 24, 106
- Hauptmann, Gerhart 32, 329
- Haushofer, Albrecht 386,
- Hegel, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich 22, 27, 71, 82, 106, 432
- Heidegger, Martin 24, 88
- Hellenized Christianity 66–67, 69, 181, 208, 210, 212, 216–17, 240, 368
- Hellenization 182, 227, 229–30, 241, 309–10., 320, 337, 367
- Herrmann, Wilhelm 57, 297, 339
- Hermeneutics 18, 59–60, 145, 176 f.
 - 187–91, 195–96, 199–200, 253, 314, 317–18, 360, 368–69, 460–61, 473, 483
 - (*see also* Hermeneutics; Schweitzer, Albert, Hermeneutics; Historicism; History)
- Hero, Cult of 60, 75, 193, 200
- Hesse, Adolf Friedrich 135, 136
- Heuss, Theodor 25, 26, 27, 28, 32, 36, 39, 40, 385, 389, 434, 477
- Heuss-Knapp, Elly (wife of Theodor Heuss) 36
- Hindenburg von, Paul 306
- Hinduism 83, 86–87, 90–91, 92–93, 420, 430
- Historiography (*see* Schweitzer, Albert, Historiography, use of)
- History (*see also* Hermeneutics; Schweitzer, Albert; Historicism; History)
- History of religions school (Religionsgeschichtliche Schule) 63, 179, 182, 211, 229
- Hitler, Adolf 215–17, 244, 366, 382, 386, 387, 389, 392, 395–96
- Hochhuth, Rolf, *Der Stellvertreter* 390–93, 399
- Hocking, William Ernest 87
- Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst, Chlodwig von 36
- Holl, Karl 320, 334
- Holocaust 387 f. (*see also* Schweitzer, Albert, Holocaust)
- Holtzmann, Heinrich 17–18, 59, 72, 169, 170, 191, 196, 212, 236, 356
- Holtzmann, Oscar 215, 303
- Homerton College, Cambridge 463, 469–70
- Hospital in Lambarene 3, 7, 46–47, 156–57, 424, 426, 431, 434, 440, 447–50, 455, 494
- Hume, David 84, 130
- Idealism 29, 82, 99, 177, 480
- Ignatius of Antioch 66, 181, 209, 229, 239, 320
- Indian Religions 78–98, 491 (*see also* Non-Christian religions)
- Industrialization 12, 129, 325, 427–28, 451
- Internationalism 37, 42–43
- Inwardness 88, 95, 108, 110, 143, 146, 294
- Islam 82–83, 87, 369, 420
- Israel, Nation State of 372
- Jacobi, Claus 31, 451, 495

- Jaeger, Werner 26, 51, 254
 Jaëll, Marie 132
 Jaspers, Karl 24, 26
 Jesus (*see* Schweitzer, Albert, Jesus)
 Jews/Judaism (*see also* Anti-Judaism
 and Anti-semitism) 82–83, 182, 212,
 244–46, 486, 353–99
 John, Augustus 469
 John's Gospel 32, 62, 154, 172, 239, 283,
 291, 295, 297, 302, 304
 Jülicher, Adolf 20, 32, 168, 169, 170, 217
 Jung, Carl 401–2, 404, 479
 Junod, Henri 427 f., 431, 432, 455
- Kabisch, Richard 205, 213, 236, 486,
 Kaftan, Julius 57
 Kähler, Martin 169, 185–86
 Kaiser Wilhelm II 36, 306, 321
 Kalthoff, Albert 177–78
 Kant, Immanuel (*see also* Categorical
 imperative; Schweitzer, Albert, Kant;
 Philosophy) 20, 21, 25, 57, 99, 101, 104,
 107, 116, 119–21, 129–31, 147, 307, 480
 Katanga Crisis (*see also* Schweitzer, Albert,
 Africa) 47, 435
 Kaunda, Kenneth 435
 Kennedy, John F. 26, 477
 Kierkegaard, S. 384
 Kingdom of God (*see also* Eschatology;
 Schweitzer, Albert, Eschatology), 59,
 185, 189, 226–27, 231–32, 238, 252–
 255, 268, 297, 327, 336, 362, 369–70
 Kingsley, Mary 44
 Kittel, Gerhard 223, 364–65
 Knittel, Michel 274–75, 280, 410
 Klausner, Joseph 175
 Königsberg 6
 Kraus, Oskar 73, 76, 105, 257, 385, 486
 Kulturphilosophie 5, 21 f., 103, 342
 Kulturprotestantismus 6, 17, 19, 270, 327,
 344, 370, 398, 455
 Kulturstaat 100, 157, 28, 45, 46, 370, 398,
 455
- Lake, Kirsopp 461
 Lantz, Edouard 406
 Lantz-Ehrhardt, Valentine 408
 Lao-tse 84, 91
- Last Supper (*see* Eucharist)
 Lebensanschauung 108, 118, 122, 129–30,
 197, 326
 Leese, Kurt 56, 68, 299, 392
 Leipzig 143
 Leipzig, University of 51, 203
 Leisegang, Hans 386,
 Lemmens, Jacques-Nicolas 135, 136
 Leprosy 449, 455, 471
 Liberal Theology 5–6, 14–20, 19, 58–61,
 74–78, 143, 172, 178–79, 182–88,
 195–97, 200 f., 252–54, 268–70, 273,
 283, 299, 301–3, 315–18, 341 f., 355–62,
 396–97, 408–11, 459–60, 480 (*see also*
 Schweitzer, Albert, Liberal Theology)
 Lienhard, Friedrich 36
 Lietzmann, H. 223, 230
 Life affirmation 89–93, 123–26, 256
 Life negation 89–95, 127
 Life philosophy (Lebensphilosophie) 21
 Lind, Emil 2, 394–96
 Listz, Franz 132
 Livingstone, David 1, 416
 Love, place in Schweitzer's philosophy as
 will-to-love 49, 73, 115, 125, 154, 193,
 227, 232, 242, 258, 262–65, 292–95, 489
 Löwith, Karl 21, 25, 339
 Lüdemann, H. 213
 Lüpke, Gustav von 33, 50, 153
 Luther, Martin (*see also* Protestantism) 56
 Lutheranism 17.130, 136, 142–43, 250–52,
 267, 300, 335, 366
 Luxemburg, Rosa 12
- Manchester, University of 131, 465
 Mann, Thomas 28
 Mao-tse 91
 Marcion 19, 325, 327
 Mark, Gospel of 11, 61–64, 66, 170–71,
 173, 175, 182, 353, 354, 483, 488 (*see
 also* Schweitzer, Albert, New Tes-
 tament)
 Marx, Karl 10, 27
 Mass culture 9, 11–12, 101, 181, 412,
 479–80, 491
 Matthew, Gospel of 61, 62, 64, 163,
 170, 182, 353, 468, 483, 488 (*see also*
 Schweitzer, Albert, New Testament)

- M'ba, Léon 440
 Medical missionary 413–19, 452, 493
 Meinecke, F. 32, 376
 Meiner, Felix 9, 50
 Miller-Schweitzer, Rhena (Schweitzer's daughter) 48, 378, 413, 439, 442
 Moffatt, James 233
 Mohr, J. C. B. (publishing house), 18,
 164–66, 167, 168, 171, 180, 204, 219–21
 Monism/monistic 79, 89, 91, 94–96, 110,
 151, 178–79, 184, 398
 Montgomery, William 159, 214, 218, 233,
 459, 461, 462, 464
 Moroccan Crisis, First 409
 Moroccan Crisis, Second 36, 409
 Münch, Ernst 132, 142
 Münch, Eugène 132
 Munz, Walter 424, 448, 450
 Mysticism (*see* Schweitzer, Albert,
 Mysticism)
- Nassau, Robert Hamill 44–45, 414, 428,
 430, 455
 Nationalism 6, 31, 34, 36–37, 86, 137,
 156–57, 322, 382, 385, 398, 492
 Natural philosophy 38, 39, 49, 79, 88–89,
 91, 94–95, 107 f., 128–29, 256
 Nature, Schweitzer's view of 388, 433,
 445, 447
 Nazis 37, 101, 103, 125, 344
 Nazism 23, 383–90, 392–95, 399–400
 N'dolo, Joseph 426, 440,
 Neo-Kantianism 20
 Nessmann, Victor 387
 Neunschwander, Ulrich 55
 New Testament, theology of 75–78 (*see*
also Schweitzer, Albert, Hermeneutics,
 New Testament)
- Nichtkulturstaat 432, 435, 454
 Niemöller, Martin 26, 40, 392, 399
 Nies-Berger, Edouard 34, 39–40, 133
 Nietzsche, Friedrich (*see also* Schweitzer,
 Albert, Nietzsche), 11–12, 19–21, 23,
 25, 106, 122–27, 129–30, 150, 190–91,
 257, 259–60, 295, 311, 326, 345, 347,
 383–84, 393, 480
 Nobel Peace Prize 2, 26, 391, 393, 449,
 477–78
- Nöldeke, Theodor 215
 Non-Christian religions 78–98 (*see*
also Buddhism, Chinese thought,
 Hinduism, Islam)
 Nuclear testing 26, 46, 477, 481
 Nuremberg Laws 387
 Nuremberg Trials 393
- Obama, Barack 2, 478
 Ochs, Siegfried 133
 Odenwald, Theodor 394
 Ogouwe River 48, 414, 442, 455
 Oikoume wood 414 f.
 Ojembo 47, 431
 Optants 375
 Order of Merit 469
 Orfeo-Catala, Barcelona 132
 Organs, Schweitzer's discussion of 134–35
 (*see also* Schweitzer, Albert, Music)
 Organ-reform movement (*see* Schweitzer
 as Organist)
- Oswald, Suzanne (Schweitzer's niece) 2,
 159, 433
 Overbeck, Franz 19–20, 169, 196, 206,
 216, 262, 327, 349
 Oxford, University of 101, 103, 225, 252,
 293, 457–58, 465, 468, 472, 474
- Pantheism 91, 115, 125, 292
 Paris, attitude towards 33, 34–35, 37
 Paris Bach Society 32
 Paris Evangelical Missionary Society 31,
 53, 156–57, 167, 406 f., 408–409, 446
 (*see also* Schweitzer, Albert, Paris
 Evangelical Missionary Society)
- Paternalism 431–34,
 Paul, Apostle 202–247
 – centre of his thought 63
 – Christology 259–61
 – conversion experience 230
 – as Christian thinker, ethics of 227
 – as demythologizer 238
 – importance for Schweitzer 54, 231 f.
 – Jewish background 226–27
 – Kingdom of God 232
 – juridical view of 206
 – justification 228
 – mysticism of 206, 224–25

- place of law 207, 227
- realistic language concerning 207
- relationship to Hellenism 69
- Spirit in 227
- as thinker 230
- transformation of views in later Christian history 229 f. (*see also* Schweitzer, Albert, Paul)
- Pauling, Linus 26, 42, 157, 477, 481
- Perles, Felix 356, 397
- Personality (Persönlichkeit), idea of in study of Jesus 60, 179, 182, 192 f., 194, 318, 361
- Pfister, Oskar 15, 97–98
- Pfleiderer, Otto 212
- Philosophy 99–131, 324 f., 488 f. (*see also* Schweitzer, Albert, Philosophy)
- Picht, Werner 299, 385
- Pirro, André 141–42
- Pius XII (Pope) 390, 392
- Planck, Max 26, 332, 386, 477
- Plato 25, 104, 120
- Playboy Magazine 477
- Politics, Schweitzer's attitude towards 26–29, 377
- Polygamy 431
- Preussische Akademie der Wissenschaften 325, 329–31

- Queen of Great Britain (Elizabeth II) 28

- Racism (*see* Schweitzer, Albert, Race)
- Rade, Martin 36, 60, 150, 156, 241, 331
- Radhakrishnan, S. 88, 93, 96
- Rammohan Roy 92–93
- Realpolitik 322
- Reformation, The 56, 212, 216, 271, 274, 287
- Regionalism, Alsatian (*see also* Alsace) 41–42
- Reimarus, Hermann Samuel 11, 70, 153, 172, 484
- Reinach, Théodore 34, 37, 150, 377–78, 398
- Reinach, Fanny 34, 377–78
- Reitzenstein, Richard 32, 215–16, 239, 330, 337, 365–66
- Religion 53, 56, 80–84, 91, 96, 115 (*see also* Schweitzer, Albert, Religion)
- Rengstorf, Karl-Heinrich 21–23, 298–99, 364
- Resignation, idea of 113, 122, 155, 256, 388, 492
- Responsibility 6, 117, 118, 256, 442, 444–46, 492, 497
- Resurrection 176–77, 205, 206–8, 226–29, 268, 282, 286–87, 363, 486
- Reuss, Édouard 16–17, 220, 273
- Revelation (*see* Schweitzer, Albert, Revelation)
- Reverence for life (Ehrfurcht vor dem Leben) 5, 6, 10, 20, 47–49, 51, 53, 64, 74, 79, 90, 99–119, 120–25, 155–58, 249–66, 291–95, 302–3, 388, 435–38, 442–45, 453–54, 488–92 (*see also* Schweitzer, Albert, Reverence for life)
- Rieger, Paul 357
- Ritschl, Albrecht 78, 169
- Robak, A. A. 390,
- Robert, Maurice 438–39,
- Robertson, John M. 178, 180
- Robinson, John A. T. 466,
- Rohrbach, Paul 306,
- Rolffs, Ernst 51, 197, 258, 271, 272, 273,
- Rolland, Romain 26, 31, 38, 41–42, 85–86, 96, 98, 392–93
- Rousseau, Jean-Jacques 427
- Russell, Bertrand 436, 469

- St. Andrews, University of 465
- St. Nicolai Church, Strasbourg 156, 166, 251, 267, 274, 277, 280, 288, 303, 418
- St. Sulpice (church in Paris) 134
- St. Thomas' Stift 42, 51, 268, 275
- Sacraments 54, 66–67 (*see also* Baptism and Eucharist)
- Saint-Saëns, Camille 34
- Sanday, William 160, 161, 177, 182, 458, 464–65, 472
- Sanders, Edward Parish 243, 245–46, 367, 467, 483, 486
- Sartre, Jean Paul 31
- Savorgnan de Brazza, Pierre 409, 414
- Schäffer, Anna 32
- Schickele, René 43

- Schirmer (musical publishers) 132
- Schillinger, Jean-Jacques (maternal grandfather) 30
- Schlatter, Adolf 169
- Schleiermacher, Friedrich 56, 77, 184, 225, 311
- Schmidt, K. L. 217, 218, 236, 331
- Schmiedel, Paul 179
- Schnehen, Wilhelm von 192
- Schopenhauer, Arthur 20, 25, 79 f., 82, 88, 90, 108, 121–22, 130, 154, 190–92, 256, 492
- Schrade, Leo 139
- Schwegler, A. 216
- Schweitzer, Albert (*see* Albert Schweitzer Index above)
- Schweitzer, Auguste (uncle of Schweitzer) 31, 34, 37
- Schweitzer, Carl (uncle of Schweitzer) 31
- Schweitzer, Helene (*see* Schweitzer, Albert, Schweitzer, Bresslau, Helene)
- Schweitzer, Louis (Schweitzer's father) 273–74
- Schweitzer, Louis (Schweitzer's great nephew) 41
- Schweitzer, Philippe (maternal grandfather of Schweitzer) 30
- Science, relationship to philosophy, medical
- Second World War, (*see* Anti-semitism, Germany, Nazism)
- Siebeck, Hans-Georg 171, 220, 235, 243, 246
- Siebeck, Georg 340,
- Silbermann, Gottfried 134
- Simmel, Georg 12, 20–21, 130, 306, 375
- Simultaneum 270–71
- Smith, Edwin 428
- Smith, Morton 163
- Smith, William B. 178, 179, 180
- Society as idea 10, 13–14, 28–29, 100–102, 124, 130, 155, 260, 327, 341–42
- Söderblom, Nathan 324, 329, 457
- Sokrates 84, 123, 130, 498
- Soteriology 297–98
- Spätjudentum ('Late Judaism') 223–34, 328–29, 355, 356, 358, 359, 360–61, 364–65, 370
- Spengler, Oswald 6, 21 f., 106, 342
- Spiegelberg, Herbert 384, 387, 436
- Spitta, Friedrich 204–5, 236
- Spitta, Philipp 137–38, 139, 142
- Spranger, Eduard 19, 21, 156
- Stained glass windows, representation of Schweitzer on 1, 477
- Stamps, representation of Schweitzer on 477
- Steiner, Rudolf 80,
- Stoicism 104, 130, 376, 447
- Stoskopf, Gustave 41, 42
- Strasbourg 165
- Cathedral of 132, 140
- Jews of 375 f.
- Protestantism in 17
- University of 17, 21, 30, 32, 35, 64, 132, 204, 205, 251, 271, 323
- Protestant Faculty of University of 30, 32
- Stift, St. Thomas 51, 275
- Synagogues of 375–76 (*see also* St. Nicolai Church)
- Strauss, David Friedrich 11, 153, 166, 172, 173, 177, 181, 270
- Street, Julian 34
- Streeter, B. H. 163
- Sufism 83
- Sunaestheticism 141
- Tagore, Rabindranath 88, 89–90, 93, 97
- Taylor, Charles 119
- Theological liberalism (*see* Schweitzer, Albert, Liberal theology)
- Theology (*see* Schweitzer, Albert, Theologian)
- Theosophy 80
- Thessalonians, Paul's First Epistle to 204
- Tillich, Paul 23, 249, 302, 303
- Treichke, Heinrich von 29, 379–80, 388
- Trensz, Dr. Frédéric 449, 450
- Trinity College, Cambridge 458, 462
- Troeltsch, Ernst 57, 99, 186, 192, 319, 322, 330
- Tschaner von Meysenberg, E. H. 87
- Tshombe, Moses 436
- Tübingen School 69, 172
- Tyrrell, George 160, 177

- Ulbricht, Walter 389
- Unitarian Church of the USA 42, 252
- United Nations 1–3, 128, 437, 451, 477
- United States 1–3, 477
- United Kingdom, reception in 25, 28, 160–61, 163, 233, 324, 416, 458, 465, 469, 471, 473
- Utilitarianism 104, 108, 123
- Vedantic traditions 86
- Vivekananda, Swami 80, 85, 93
- Wagner, Cosima 140
- Wagner, Richard 9, 132, 137, 138, 140–41, 171 (*see also* Schweitzer, Albert, Music)
- Wagner, Wieland 171
- Wagner, Wolfgang 171
- Wehnert, Bruno 176–77, 191, 192, 198
- Wehrung, Georg 203, 243,
- Weidel, Karl 176–77, 191, 192, 198
- Weiffenbach, Wilhelm 173
- Weimar Republic 21, 28, 306, 327
- Weinel, Heinrich 178, 179
- Weiss, Bernard 169
- Weiss, Johannes 65, 162, 178, 180, 185, 236, 315, 355, 362, 459–61, 483
- Wellhausen, Julius 32, 71, 168, 169, 174, 354
- Weltanschauung 49, 81, 107–8, 110, 116, 118 f., 197, 326, 482, 484, 492
- Werner, Martin 5–6, 15, 17, 54, 56, 60, 67, 74–75, 221, 224, 296, 298, 303, 341, 344, 345, 465, 487–88
- Wernle, Paul 161, 168, 169, 170, 173, 179, 214, 216, 315
- Widor, Charles-Marie 33, 34, 132, 134, 135, 136, 137 (*see also*, Schweitzer, Albert, Music)
- Wilke, Christian Gottlieb 168
- Wilke, Wilhelm Ferdinand 168
- Wildikahn, Anna 387
- Will-to-live 108 f., 112, 255 f.
- Will-to-power 124–25
- Will of love/Will-to-love 258, 262, 292, 294, 304
- Willink, Sir Henry 463, 468
- Windelband, Wilhelm 21, 43
- Windisch, Hans 32, 71, 168, 169, 178, 180, 183, 214, 232
- Winternitz, Moriz 87, 92, 93
- Wissenschaft des Judentums 356–57, 397
- Wobbermin, Georg 57, 185
- World-affirmation 89
- World-denial (*see* Eschatology) 89
- World Parliament of Religions (1893) 80
- World Philosophy (Weltphilosophie) 83–84, 96
- Wrede, William 32, 61, 65, 66, 72, 76, 170, 171, 172, 180, 213–14, 235–36, 242, 366, 484, 486
- Zabern Affair 42
- Zoroastrianism (also Zarathustra), 83
- Zen Buddhism 88
- Ziegler, Theobald 20, 43, 55, 237, 277
- Zinzendorf, Nicolaus 56
- Zola, Emile 399
- Zurich, University of 52
- Zweig, Stefan 384