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An Hour With Albert Schweitzer

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WHILE traveling in Alsace, France, some years ago, I decided to call on Albert Schweitzer. I had not corresponded with him, nor did I know whether he was home. But I took a chance and boarded the local train at Colmar, hoping to find him in his house in the village of Günsbach.

One of the first persons I met was the village sheriff wearing his red cap at a rakish angle and carrying a weather-beaten cane. I inquired whether Dr. Schweitzer was home.

"Oh, you want to see the doctor, do you?" he asked, looking at me as if to say, "Do you think any mortal can go to his house just like that?"

As I had no intention of being cross-examined by this friendly but inquisitive fellow, I proceeded to the house which he finally pointed out to me with his cane.

I was fortunate; the doctor was in. Although I was not expected, I was shown into his study. He looked at me sharply. "What do you want here?" he asked.

The abrupt question was a little unexpected, and for a moment I watched the strong face which reminded me of that of a workman rather than an intellectual and artist. I noticed his bushy mustache and his swarthy complexion. I told him that I had read some of his books, especially the story of his youth, and that I hoped I would one day meet him. That seemed a plausible reason, because after a few moments he said, "We will have supper in a few minutes. Go and wash your hands over there." He pointed to a basin and faucet in the corner. I did so without delay, for it was clear that he was accustomed to giving orders and having them obeyed.

I spent a few unforgettable days in Schweitzer's home. I was impressed by his naturalness and his distaste for sterile politeness. One afternoon a gentleman, accompanied

by two young ladies, passed by the house. Schweitzer finally opened the window.

"What are you looking for here?" he called.

The gentleman, a doctor from Holland, said rather timidly, "I would like to know whether this is Dr. Schweitzer's house."

"Yes, it is, and I am Schweitzer. What do you want?"

"I would like to

take a picture of the house, if you don't mind."

"Take it, and when you are through, come in awhile." (When he entered he probably noticed a sign posted on various doors: "If possible, do not stay more than five minutes; Dr. Schweitzer has to work.")

The two girls, daughters of the Dutch doctor, inquired about Schweitzer's work in Africa. They wondered about the nurses, doctors, and equipment in the hospital. They also asked whether he did some hunting, if he had a radio, et cetera. Finally the father suggested, "Don't bother the doctor with so many questions."

an hour with Albert Schweitzer

*Intimate Glimpses of the Famous
Medical Missionary of Lambaréné*

by Daniel Walther, Professor of Church History,
Andrews University

"Let them ask all they want," Schweitzer replied. "When I get tired, I will let them know myself."

The girls enjoyed every moment of the visit, but the father seemed uneasy. When they had left, Schweitzer said, "The girls were pretty nice, because they were natural, but I didn't like him. He has in him the demon of politeness!" (*Höflichkeitsteufel*.)

Schweitzer spent a happy childhood in upper Alsace, where he was born in 1875. His father, an evangelical parson, performed his duties with orthodox efficiency. Albert learned there principles of tolerance, kindness toward animals, and a great love for hard and honest work. Early he was convinced that nature is mysterious, filled with suffering. As a student, he was no prodigy. He was not, apparently, endowed with a particular brilliancy of mind. In fact, he did not always succeed in his exams.

Yet, sixty years ago, before he reoriented his life, he was respected far and wide as a theologian, philosopher, and musician. His doctoral work, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, gave a new emphasis to theological thought. In fact, it was considered revolutionary at the time. In theological matters, Schweitzer does not accept some of the orthodox Christian beliefs. He is convinced that he has to follow the "truth" as he, personally, understands it, regardless of standard opinions usually and historically conformed to.

Many refer to his unusual talents, but, he said humorously about himself, "I know what they say! The musicians say, 'He may be fine as a physician;' the physician states, 'He may be acceptable as a theologian;' and the theologian considers me primarily as a philosopher and an organ expert. But all agree on this: 'He is at his best in the primeval forest!'"

When he was thirty years old he was in great demand as a scholar and artist, but he was intensely dissatisfied because he felt condemned at what he considered a selfish use of his talents. He was strongly convinced that he must serve mankind in a direct and practical way.

When he casually read in a French Mission Society pamphlet that a doctor was needed in French Equatorial Africa, his decision was made. He would start the study



Home of Dr. Schweitzer in Günsbach.

of medicine and accept the call. While pursuing his studies for six years he continued his other tasks as professor, writer, and artist. At thirty-six he was granted (but not without opposition) the right to go to French Equatorial Africa. But there was to be no salary, no allowance, no aid of any kind. Schweitzer asked no remuneration; he merely wanted to serve. (The opposition to Schweitzer's acceptance came from board members who considered Schweitzer unorthodox in theology.)

It seemed strange that a man so signally endowed and admired by the cultural and artistic world should agree to go without any financial support into the primeval forest. A good share of the needed funds was raised by his own lectures and organ recitals. In his book, *On the Edge of the Primeval Forest*, he mentions that part of the funds came from his book on J. S. Bach: "So the cantor of St. Thomas had his share in caring for a hospital in Africa."

As I visited in his home, I thought of the amazing personality and contributions of this man who has sometimes been referred to as the thirteenth apostle. For fifty years now he has dedicated his life to those "marked by suffering."

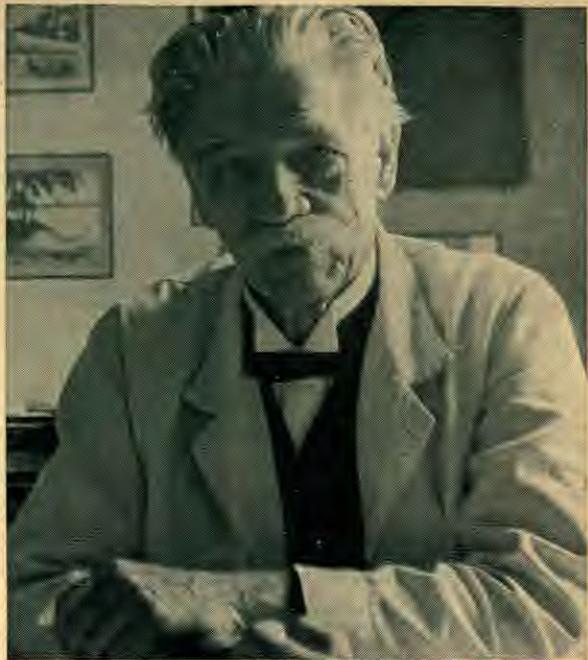
"Why did you do it?"

"I did it for Him," he said.

This spiritual adventurer could not be at ease in the comfort of Western civilization. His labor in the primeval forest was to him the "giving of himself." Over the years he has returned occasionally to Europe to lecture, give concerts, and write. Schweitzer gives our generation a unique example of devotion, free from pedantry and hypocrisy. His hospital at Lambaréné is a modern epic, a symbol of spiritual heroism. When he received the Nobel Peace Prize, he used it for much-needed improvements in his jungle hospital. When he first went there with his newly married wife he found a lonely encampment in the awesome solitude of the African bush. But even before his baggage arrived, he started to work.

At first he labored with primitive means in an abandoned chicken house. He was assisted by Joseph, a national cook, more familiar with kitchen anatomy than the jargon of surgeons. Joseph

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Dr. Albert Schweitzer, beloved physician of Lambaréné.



Playing the church organ at Günsbach.



Day's end on the banks of Ogooué River, Lambaréné.



Günsbach. Schweitzer's home is at lower right.



by J. O. Iversen

Truth for Teen-Agers

Give Me Five Minutes More

A TOP tune a few years back was "Give Me Five Minutes More." This was the plaintive appeal of an ardent suitor who didn't want to say "Good-night."

What would we do if we had only five minutes more? What do the seconds, minutes, hours, days, months, and years mean to us?

An eighty-year-old gentleman kept a detailed log of how he spent his days, and then he took a total. Here's how it stacked up: During his life span he had slept twenty-six years, worked twenty-one years, spent two hundred twenty-eight days shaving and one hundred forty days paying bills. He had scolded his children twenty-six days, and spent two days yelling at dogs. Only twenty-six days had been spent laughing.

A boss turned down an employee's request by saying: "Look! You spend a third of your life sleeping, a third working, and another third playing, and now you want a three-week vacation."

Another clock watcher figured that during a seventy-year life span a person spends nine years on amusements, six years in eating, six years traveling. Tragically only *one* year is given to religion. God ought to have at least ten years—one day in seven, for "Six days shalt thou labor, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God." Exodus 20:9, 10.

Solomon sharpened his pencil in his day: "To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose

under the heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted; . . . a time to weep, and a time to laugh; . . . a time to keep silence, and a time to speak." Ecclesiastes 3:1-7. "Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth." Ecclesiastes 12:1.

How do you spend your time? Some people kill time. Others let it die a slow death.

Ever hear the song (usually by some operatic hopeful), "I love life, and I want to live"?

Gallup the pollster buttonholed 29,000 Americans, aged ninety-four or older, and learned that the way to achieve long life is: (1) Be a woman, (2) be born in Norway, (3) be born of long-lived ancestors, (4) don't worry, (5) don't smoke, (6) eat wisely and not too much, (7) have enthusiasm, (8) have a religious belief.

The formula sounds good, but what if you were born in Jenks, Oklahoma? How much time do you have left to live?

A prominent business concern has computed: Subtract your present age from 80. Take the balance and multiply by 7. Divide the answer by 10. Of course, you can forget the whole thing if you're a careless driver.

It's later than you think.

The clock of life is wound but once,
And no man has the power
To tell just when the hands will stop—
At late or early hour.

Now is the only time you own!
Live, love, toil with a will.
Place not your faith in tomorrow;
The clock may then be still.

To each new life God gives a gift certificate of time. What you do with yours can make you a success or a failure. Greatness is built around minutes. David prayed, "So teach us to number our days." Psalm 9:12. A little girl prayed: "Dear God, keep me *alive* till I die." [END]

Pontius Pilate

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to the procurator that while they were ready to "honor" Tiberius, it would be against their ancestral laws to "worship" him.

"In other words," says Fr. Crehan, "they were being pushed by Pilate to take part in some form of emperor worship which their faith in the one God found revolting. A temple of Tiberius in Caesarea would be just the thing to put the screw on these troublesome people, and as Caesarea was a city of mixed race, one could always rely on the interest of non-Jews in the cult."

If this is a correct interpretation of this inscription it provides further evidence of the way in which Pilate was continually exasperating the Jews during his period of office, and why, under the threat of being reported to Caesar, he had to capitulate in the condemnation of Jesus. [END]

Hour With Schweitzer

(Continued from page 9)

would say, "This man has trouble in his upper cutlet," or "This woman has a pain in her sirloin." But Joseph also encouraged the doctor, who tells of the time of a severe epidemic of dysentery. The hospital grounds swarmed with people needing care, and Schweitzer had given strict orders concerning hygiene. But his orders were not followed. And so, discouraged, after operating past midnight as usual, he sat down tired and said, "What a fool I was, after all, to come and try to help these people!" Joseph replied, "Yes, sir, you are a big fool here—but not in heaven."

As we sat at table, Schweitzer asked me about my religious experience. He wanted to know why I had accepted

a certain way of life and belief. It was clear that he was not satisfied with superficial or standard answers; he wanted to find out in truth what causes a man to be a Christian. It would be well if everyone would undergo such a severe test to make him realize what his basic beliefs *really* are.

On a later visit I asked him, "If you had the opportunity to address all the young people in the world, what would you tell them?"

First, he thought, he would urge young people to stay young in spirit, not to become "mature" in their thinking too soon.

"Next I would tell the young people to be more thankful."

"But," I said, "you know that in America gratitude is a national institution. We even have a Thanksgiving Day."

"That is not what I have in mind," he said. "That turkey-dinner type of gratitude, when an overly rich nation eats itself sick, is not my idea of gratitude. What I have in mind is the inner gratitude, the grateful heart."

"Linked with this, there is another quality I would like to see—plain, down-to-earth honesty. Intellectual honesty first; to think one's own thoughts, write one's own sentences, speak one's own words, and have an individual concept of God. Oh, that shallowness of our age as seen in the press, the radio, et cetera!"

During my stay in Schweitzer's home there was one thing I wanted more than anything else. I wanted to hear him play the organ. One day he told me that he was going to practice in the church to get ready for an organ recital in Strasbourg. Interested? That was the very thing I had hoped for! I had heard him play in public, but to watch him practice was another matter.

In the church he took off his coat, sat on the organ bench, and entered without delay into communion with Johann Sebastian Bach. As the grand melodies floated through the empty church, I secretly wished I could sit on the same bench and watch the score and technique. As if he had detected my thought, he stopped, turned sharply to me and said, "Come here and sit on this bench!"

I stepped closer, but still stood at a little distance. He insisted, "Here, I said," and he pointed with authority to the exact place where I was to sit. I obeyed.

Soon he forgot everything. He was not aware of time or of the fact that someone was watching him play. He was one with Bach; he was in the company of a cherished and most respected friend. And how he understood him! How he made him talk and sing and jubilate! He played on for hours, until it grew dark in the empty church. At last he took a deep breath, rose from the bench, and proceeded to walk away—and then suddenly realized that I was still there. He apologized in his own way, and we went home. The stars were already shining, and I am certain that in his soul, as in mine, the mighty chords were still ringing. [END]

Hand on the Helm

(Continued from page 19)

eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and His ears are open unto their prayers." 1 Peter 3:12.

He is generous: "No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly." Psalm 84:11.

He is eager to be helpful: "I am the Lord thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go." Isaiah 48:17.

Second, God is eternal. He endures. He is not here today and gone tomorrow. He is "the same yesterday, and today, and forever." Hebrews 13:8.

There never was a time when He did not exist: "Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever Thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, Thou art God." Psalm 90:2.

There never will be a time when He will cease to exist: "For I lift up my hand to heaven, and say, I live forever." Deuteronomy 32:40.

He is immortal: "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory forever and ever." 1 Timothy 1:17.

Third, God is omnipotent. He has all power at His command: "Both riches and honor come of Thee, and Thou reignest over all; and in Thine hand is power and might; and in Thine hand it is to make great, and to give strength unto all." 1 Chronicles 29:12.

There is nothing He cannot do: "I know that Thou canst do everything, and that no thought can be withholden from Thee." Job 42:2.

He is free of all restraint: "Our God is in the heavens: He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased." Psalm 115:3.

He considers nothing impossible. Said Jesus, "With God all things are possible." Matthew 19:26. "The Lord God omnipotent reigneth." Revelation 19:6.

Fourth, God is omniscient. He knows everything. There is nothing hidden from Him: "For His eyes are upon the ways of man, and He seeth all his goings." Job 34:21.

There is nothing He does not understand: "His understanding is infinite." Psalm 147:5.

There is no word that He does not hear: "For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, Thou knowest it altogether." Psalm 139:4.

There is nothing He does not see. Wrote David: "Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, Thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, Thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall Thy hand lead me, and Thy right hand shall hold me." Psalm 139:7-10.

Fifth, God is infinite. He is without limitations of any kind. Not only in power, wisdom, and knowledge, but also in righteousness: "My righteousness shall be forever, and My salvation from generation to generation." Isaiah 51:8.

His mercy is likewise limitless: "The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him." Psalm 103:17.

Such is the God the Bible reveals. He is infinitely powerful yet infinitely compassionate, infinitely wise yet infinitely good, infinitely just yet infinitely merciful.

And such is the One who says to us all as the gathering storm envelops us, "Be still, and know that I am God."

His is the hand on history's helm today—and on the helm of your life and mine.

Knowing Him, trusting Him, we shall find the courage we shall need to meet the coming crisis victoriously.

[END]