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Leaders of Theological Thought.

ALBERT SCHWEITZER.

By Principal W. B. Selbie, D.D., Mansfield College, Oxford.

During a brief visit to the devastated regions of France shortly after the War, the present writer found himself with others one day in the ruined township of Günsbach, in Upper Alsace. There the party was met by the Pastor, a tall fine-looking old man, who emerged from a dug-out to welcome us with a group of school children whom he was engaged in teaching. Not till we left was it discovered that the old man was father to Albert Schweitzer, philosopher, theologian, doctor of medicine and musician. Of Günsbach and his boyhood and schooldays there and at Mülhausen Schweitzer has told us himself in a delightfully naïve and revealing little book, *Memoirs of Childhood and Youth*. Apparently he showed in his boyhood but little promise of the distinction he has since achieved. His school work was often unsatisfactory. He was a voracious but desultory reader, and his chief interests were science, history, and music. The power of application and systematic study came to him late, but, reading between the lines of his story, it is easy to discern a big nature in the making. Even as a boy he showed himself open to religious influences. He became interested in missions and was particularly sensitive to ecclesiastical art, architecture, and music. He had, too, an intense sympathy for all forms of suffering, human and animal, and quite early recognized the call to dedicate himself to the service of those in need. He writes:

'It became steadily clearer to me that I had not the inward right to take as a matter of course my happy youth, my good health, and my power of work. Out of the depths of my feeling of happiness there grew up gradually within me an understanding of the saying of Jesus that we must not treat our lives as being for ourselves alone. Whoever is spared personal pain must feel himself called to help in diminishing the pain of others. We must all carry our share of the misery which lies upon the world. Darkly and confusedly this thought worked in me, and sometimes it left me, so that I breathed freely and fancied once more that I was to become completely the lord of my own life. But the little cloud had risen above the horizon. I could, indeed, sometimes look away and lose sight of it, but it was growing nevertheless; slowly but unceasingly it grew, and at last it hid the whole sky.

'The decision was made when I was one-and-twenty. In that year, while still a student, I resolved to devote my life till I was thirty to the office of preacher, to science, and to music. If by that time I should have done what I hoped in science and music, I would take a path of immediate service as man to my fellow-men. What this path should be I counted on learning from circumstances during the interval.'

This programme Schweitzer followed out almost to the letter. He became a student and afterwards a teacher at Strasbourg University. Philosophy, Theology, and Music were the subjects to which he chiefly devoted himself. But he was not neglectful of the claims of practical religion. He became assistant pastor of the Church of St. Nicholas, and one of his tasks there was to prepare boys for confirmation. Of this work he writes: 'For ten years before I left for Africa I prepared boys in the parish of St. Nicholas for confirmation. After the War some of them came to see me and thanked me for having taught them so definitely that religion was not a formula for explaining everything. They said it had been that teaching which had kept them from discarding Christianity, whereas so many others in the trenches discarded it, not being prepared to meet the inexplicable.' This shows that even thus early he had begun to make much of the distinction between Christianity as a philosophy and as a working faith. He formulated the position at a later stage as follows: 'Christianity must, clearly and definitely, put before men the necessity of a choice between logical religion and ethical religion, and it must insist on the fact that the ethical is the highest type of spirituality, and that it alone is living spirituality. Thus Christianity shows itself as the religion which, penetrating and transcending all knowledge, reaches forward to the ethical living God, who cannot be found through contemplation of the world, but reveals Himself in man only. And it is thus that Christianity speaks with all the authority of its inherent truth.'

It was during these fruitful early years at Strasbourg that Schweitzer wrote his monumental work on Johann Sebastian Bach, by which he at once

leapt into fame in the musical world. Organ playing had become a passion with him, and he found Bach to be a kindred spirit. Away in the African forests he continued to study him, and on coming to England in 1917 gave recitals in London, Oxford, Birmingham, and elsewhere which showed him to be one of the great musicians of the world. It is not merely that he is a master of technique. He puts his whole soul into the work, and prepares for it with such devotion that playing the organ becomes an act of worship.

And with Schweitzer all this is only a parergon. His main interest during these formative years was in theology, and here, too, as a very young man he produced work which without exaggeration may be called epoch-making. In 1901 he published *Das Abend Mahl*, a study of the life of Jesus Christ in two parts, the first being confined to the Lord's Supper, and the second containing a sketch of the Life from the point of view of the Messiahship and Passion. The latter part of the book was translated into English in 1913 under the title *The Mystery of the Kingdom of God*. The whole work attracted at first but little notice. It contains, however, the material on which Schweitzer's later 'thoroughgoing eschatology' was based, and is very important for a full understanding of his position. That this young theologian had a position, and one that was well worth considering, was hardly recognized until 1906 when he issued his famous *Von Reimarus zu Wrede*, to be afterwards translated under the title *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*. This at once made a great stir, not only by the range and trenchancy of its criticism, but by the originality and even audacity of its historical reconstruction. It cut clean across the work of the liberal and religious-historical schools and proceeded to rebuild among the ruins with fresh material and on a new foundation. 'The Jesus of Nazareth who appeared as the Messiah, proclaimed the morality of the Kingdom of God, established the Kingdom of Heaven on earth, and died in order to consecrate His work—this Jesus never existed. It is a figure sketched by rationalism, enlivened by Liberalism, and dressed up by Modern Theology in the clothes of historical science.' This is not the place to criticise Schweitzer's eschatological theory in any detail. It greatly stimulated the process of *Leben Jesu Forschung*, and certainly cleared the ground of a good many prepossessions. But it has not settled anything, and is generally held to be as one-sided and extreme as some of the positions it seeks to combat. In particular his interpretation of the teaching of Jesus in terms of eschatology as an interim ethic has failed to command anything like general assent. At the same time Schweitzer's position has often been interpreted in a more negative sense than he would himself allow. He has not always been given credit for the profound religious intention underlying his work, and for his passionate desire to rescue the story of Jesus from the dogmatic trappings which have too often obscured it, and to bring it into living relations to the needs and thoughts of men. He writes: 'Jesus' deed consists in the fact that His original and profound moral nature took possession of the late-Jewish eschatology and so gives expression, in the thought material of the age, to the hope and the will which are intent upon the ethical consummation of the world. All attempts to avert one's vision from this *Weltanschauung* as a whole and to make Jesus' significance for us to consist in His revelation of the "fatherhood of God," the "brotherhood of man," and so forth, must, therefore, of necessity, lead to a narrow and peculiarly insipid conception of His religion. In reality He is an authority for us not in the sphere of knowledge, but only in the matter of the will. His destined rôle can only consist in this, that He, as a mighty spirit, quickens the motives of willing and hoping which we and our fellow-men bear within us, and brings them to such a height of intensity and clarity as we could not have attained if we were left to ourselves and did not stand under the impression of His personality, and that He thus conforms our *Weltanschauung* to His own in its very nature in spite of all the diversity of thought material and awakens in it the energies which are active in His.'

It was while Schweitzer was teaching in Strasbourg that he heard and responded to the call to more active service. Two doctor friends, missionaries in Central Africa, had died, and he was conscious of a summons to fill their place. There was a work of Christ to be done among suffering African natives, and few to do it. Why should not he? Therefore, while still a *privatdocent* in the University, he carried through a full medical course with distinction. After a post-graduate course in tropical medicine in Paris, he sailed with his devoted wife for Lambarene on the Ogowe River in French Equatorial Africa. He went out at his own charges, but was given a house and hospital by the Paris Mission Evangelique. There he did a wonderful work single-handed, paying special attention to leprosy and sleeping sickness, until it was interrupted by the War. He has told the story of it in a fascinating book, *Zwischen Wasser und Urwald* (*On the Edge of the Primæval Forest*). Here let him speak for himself. 'Lately I had a rare case to operate

on which many a famous surgeon might envy. An elderly man, living between N'Gowo and Lambarene, suddenly felt a swelling as big as your fist rising under his lowest rib, rather towards the back, accompanied by sudden pain in the body. "That is a rupture," he said to his friends. "Take me quickly to the doctor or I'm lost." They rowed the whole night and got to me about ten o'clock in the morning. I could only confirm his impression and made up my mind to perform the rarely attempted and still more rarely successful operation the same afternoon. How willingly would I have left it to an experienced surgeon! It was with trepidation that I went to work. The case exhibited all possible complications. When evening came I had not finished. For the last sutures Joseph had to hold the lamp. The next day I hardly dared go into the dormitory. I expected nothing else than to find the patient dead or dying. With hesitating steps I approached the mosquito netting. But immediately there was poked out from it a woolly head, and cheerfully grinning countenance. "Doctor, no more stomach-ache, no more stomach-ache!" At the end of a fortnight he was able to return to his village.'

'The operation is finished, and in the hardly lighted dormitory I watch for the sick man's awakening. Scarcely has he recovered consciousness when he stares about him and ejaculates again and again: "I have no more pain! I have no more pain!" . . . His hand feels for mine and will not let it go. Then I begin to tell him and the others who are in the room that it is the Lord Jesus who has told the doctor and his wife to come to the Ogowe, and that white people in Europe give them the money to live here and cure the sick negroes. Then I have to answer questions as to who these white people are, where they live, and how they know that the natives suffer so much from sickness. The African sun is shining through the coffee bushes into the dark shed, but we, black and white, sit side by side and feel that we know by experience the meaning of the words: "And all ye are brethren" (Mt 23^8). Would that my generous friends in Europe could come out here and live through one such hour!'

In 1917 Schweitzer left Africa for a time. His work had been greatly interfered with by the War. Both he and his wife were broken in health, and no more money for the hospital was forthcoming. After a period of rest he spent some time in this country and in Europe lecturing and giving organ recitals and so raising the funds needed to continue the work at Lambarene. He thus spent a few weeks at Oxford and gave the Dale Lectures at Mansfield College. These have since been published in two volumes, one entitled *The Decay and the Restoration of Civilization*, and the other *Civilization and Ethics*. Schweitzer's method in lecturing was surely unique. The lectures were written out in full in German, and delivered *ex tempore* in faultless French and with great rhetorical power and earnestness. They set forth a philosophy of civilization, wide in its historical sweep, constructive as well as critical, and full of spiritual insight. Schweitzer contends that civilization must have an ethical foundation. 'Civilization originates when men become inspired by a strong and clear determination to attain progress and consecrate themselves, as a result of this determination, to the service of life and of the world. It is only in ethics that we can find the driving force for such action, transcending as it does the limits of our own existence.' 'The future of civilization depends on our overcoming the meaninglessness and hopelessness which characterise the thoughts and convictions of men to-day, and reaching a state of fresh hope and fresh determination. We shall be capable of this, however, only when the majority of individuals discover for themselves both an ethic and a profound and steadfast attitude of world- and life-affirmation, in a theory of the universe at once convincing and based on reflection.' The two volumes referred to above are only the first half of what will ultimately be a monumental work, covering the whole range of man's community life. It represents the result of much lonely meditation in the African wilds, and perhaps it suffers from the author's lack of contact with modern conditions. He sets out on a challenging and adventurous quest and writes always with a sombre enthusiasm which compels attention and respect. 'It is my desire to be a forerunner, preparing the way for a new renaissance, and to fling my faith in a new humanity like a burning firebrand into the gloomy darkness of our times. I take courage to do so because I believe that I have succeeded in finding a basis for the disposition to act humanely, considered hitherto as merely a noble but unrelated impulse, in a world-view derived from elemental thought and capable of being comprehended by every one. Thus it possesses a convincing power which it did not enjoy previously, and is susceptible of harmonious union with actuality in an energetic and thorough manner and of becoming effective in such a union.'

During Schweitzer's stay in Europe his missionary work became better known and evoked much interest and sympathy. When the time came for him to return to Africa, though his wife was compelled to

remain behind, he was able to take with him other helpers, and re-establish his hospital work on a much larger scale. He has now a staff of two doctors and several nurses. Last year he returned home again for another furlough, part of which he intends to spend in lecturing and organ playing in order to supply the sinews of war. He hopes to visit England again in the spring. He has a thrilling story to tell of work accomplished, and we may look forward also to becoming further acquainted with the results of his meditations in philosophy and music.

It is very difficult to give any adequate impression of this many-sided man, even when he is allowed to speak mainly for himself. In appearance he is sufficiently striking; tall, dark and handsome, with thick hair and moustache, and piercing, stormful eyes. Physically he is very strong, with a powerful frame and the broad sinewy hands of a surgeon. He talks eagerly and rapidly on all kinds of subjects. While intensely interested in everything that really counts and makes for life, he is very impatient of the frills and excrescences on which so many people spend their time. Life for him is an intensely serious business, and he has no use for those who simply play with it. There is in him, too, a strong vein of humanitarianism based on an intense feeling for the sacredness of life. He has all a strong man's sympathy with suffering, and in dedicating his powers to its alleviation he has followed a deep-rooted instinct. His critical scholarship has not with him, as is so often the case with others, meant any real loss of religion. Indeed, it seems to have intensified the desire for real religious expression. This has been found, most characteristically, not in the usual channels of devotion and worship, but in a self-sacrificing dedication to the service of man. The most radical critic of the New Testament story has found in Jesus Himself something that transcends all man's thought of Him, an attractive and compelling force that alters all life's values and sums up all its duties in the command 'Follow me.' It was in response to this command that Schweitzer went out to Africa not merely that he might heal men's bodies, but also to bring to their souls something of the light and hope and peace that men can find in Jesus Christ and in Him alone. The oft-quoted words with which he closes his great book reveal the secret of his own life and work and are a challenge to all Christians: 'He comes to us as One unknown, without a name, as of old by the lakeside He came to those men who knew Him not. He speaks to us the same word: "Follow thou me!" and sets us to the task which He has to fulfil for our time. He commands. And to those who obey Him, whether they be wise or simple, He will reveal Himself in the toils, the conflicts, the sufferings, which they shall pass through in His fellowship, and, as an ineffable mystery, they shall learn in their own experience Who He is.'

The Shepherd of Hermas in the West.

By J. Rendel Harris, Litt.D., LL.D., D.D., Birmingham.

It is more than thirty years since I published a tract under the title *Hermas in Arcadia*, with the object of showing that the scenery described in one of the *Similitudes* of Hermas was genuine Arcadian scenery, reminiscent no doubt of the native land from which Hermas and his brother Pius had been exported by the trainer who reared them for the Roman slave market. At the present time there appears to be a revival of interest in Hermas in various quarters; it began, perhaps, with his Christology, under the lead of Professor Kirsopp Lake; it has been accentuated by the suggestion of possible connexions with the so-called Hermetic literature on the one hand, and by the recovery on the other hand of further fragments of the Greek text in papyri. I now propose to make a trifling contribution to the history of the Latin Hermas in Western Europe, and, surprising as it may sound, in Britain itself.

Although Hermas is, properly speaking, a Greek Father, by origin and education, and belongs to the Roman Church at a time when it was still more Greek than Latin, there is no doubt that the Latin translation of his works had a wide circulation. There are two versions, one existing in many copies, the other in a single copy, known as the Palatine Version, and believed to be a product of some church or school in Southern Gaul. Apart from actual texts or quotations from such, there are a number of natural references to the *Shepherd*, on