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## *Albert Schweitzer and the Liberal Conscience*

When I described Albert Schweitzer, in the *New Reasoner* No. 1, as a "racially-prejudiced paternalist," some readers appear to have been surprised, particularly since Schweitzer, just about that time, appealed to the world to give up the H-bomb race. This appeal seemed perfectly in character to those who see him as a twentieth-century saint. They remember his earlier words :

We must substitute the power of understanding the truth that is really true for propaganda; a noble kind of patriotism which aims at ends that are worthy of the whole of mankind, for the patriotism current today; a humanity with a common civilisation for idolized nationalisms; a restored faith in the civilised state for a society which lacks true idealism . . . a faith in the possibility of progress, for a mentality stripped of all true spirituality.

This *is* perfectly in character; but the man who speaks in these humanitarian tones is also the man who said :

The negro is a child, and with children nothing can be done without the use of authority. We must, therefore, so arrange the circumstances of daily life that my natural authority can find expression. With regard to the negroes, then, I have coined the phrase 'I am your brother, it is true, but your elder brother.' (*On the Edge of the Primeval Forest*, p. 95).

This latter aspect of Schweitzer's character and outlook has, indeed, already been pointed out by John Gunther in *Inside Africa*, and in an *Observer* 'Profile'; two vignettes which have done much to sow seeds of doubt in many people's minds about the nature of Schweitzer's saintliness. What is the answer? Is it that he is a man with 'two sides' to his character, like the Stalinists' metaphysical view of Stalin, the 'bad' being something accidental ("mistakes") and detachable? I believe, rather, that different facets of Schweitzer's character and thought appear in different situations, but that these facets are equally parts of one consistent whole, and further, that the analysis of the particular problem of Schweitzer sheds a good deal of light on the inadequacy of the whole liberal position, and on its present moral crisis. For internally consistent as Schweitzer's philosophy may be, there is an enormous gap between his philosophy and the moral demands of the real world. This leads him into a series of false moral positions, so that the practical standpoint to which his religious ethic leads him is in the end indistinguishable from that of the settler-racist. One must remark that if

this is consistent Christian sainthood, there is something sadly wrong with the basic Christian position.

The story of Schweitzer's career is a striking one (and I will not dwell on his positive achievements, for they are well-known). His academic work covers several spheres; often studying several subjects at once, he equipped himself as philosopher, theologian, musician and medico, and has made major contributions in the first three fields. As an organist, he is world-renowned. His works on Bach, on organ-building, his *Quest for the Historical Jesus*, and his study of Saint Paul, are his best-known academic works; but most of this prodigious labour was accomplished, and left behind, by 1913, before he even commenced the mission-work in French Gaboon, West Africa, for which he became even more famous. Honours have been showered upon him: the Nobel Peace Prize, the Wellcome Medal of the Royal African Society, Membership of the French Academy, the O.M., an honorary O.M. in Western Germany (the highest civil honour), a Gold Medal from the Paris City Council, and so forth and so on. Around Schweitzer there has grown a large, mostly very dull, repetitive, and ill-written hagiographical literature, produced by those Schweitzer "addicts," as Gunther calls them, who speak of him with an "almost frightened reverence." Most of this literature consists of undiluted adulation of everything the Doctor does. The faint suspicion that there might be less positive features of the Doctor's work therefore came as a shock to many. But this was the beginning of the real quest for the historical Schweitzer.

To renounce such a brilliant career and turn to the extremely arduous work of missionizing in West Africa was no light matter this extreme act of renunciation was motivated by a powerful Protestant conscience. (Schweitzer's father was an Evangelical pastor and his mother the daughter of a pastor). His conscience had already driven him to high academic achievements, even in fields which he found difficult. But if a stern sense of duty drove him thus far, it was his concern as a theologian with atonement that drove him even further - to Africa. Some consideration of Schweitzer's religious ethic (not so much his theology) is needed to understand his strange career. And I suggest that valuable insights can be gained by examining his ideology in the light of the ideas developed by Max Weber, under stimulus from, complementing, and filling out the work of Marx, on the relationship between Protestantism and capitalism (though, as far as Weber was concerned, his work was in conscious opposition to Marx). Marxist work on religion has for too long been confined to a very crude demonstration of the class affiliations of religious leaders and movements. Ideology - here theology and 'ethic' - has been virtually ignored, so that inevitably most of the posi-

tive research into religion has come from non-Marxists. Even if the ethic of Protestantism derives from a particular set of social relations under capitalism, this ethic becomes itself an autonomous force, divorced from its original setting. For a man like Schweitzer, the religious ideal guides his practical actions; his consciousness is focussed upon this, not upon capitalism, the economic and political seed-bed of this particular religious trend. He is not, that is, as vulgar mechanical materialists and rationalists depict religionists, a mere conscious defender of the bourgeoisie, rationalizing his defence in religious terms, but one whose social being, and in particular his ideological researches, have led him to this special view of life.

Africa provided an ideal field for a man searching to work out his responsibility to God in his life on this earth. Perhaps this does not sound at first like the Protestant Ethic delineated by Weber, with its stress upon men acting out the roles which they were 'called' upon to play in human society in the most deliberate and rationalized way. Weber saw this ideology as peculiarly appropriate to the rising bourgeoisie of Reformation Europe, since it placed the seal of divine approval upon the successful carrying out of business activities. But Schweitzer did not stay in his academic profession: he opted out of it. He exercised *enterprise* because he felt impelled by a higher "calling" to become a missionary; but in his extremely deliberate following out of this path, his renunciation of the world, his utter self-dedication to the detailed, back-breaking and soul-destroying work of literally building a mission-station, one can see the rationalized, thorough-going, almost cold-blooded dedication to a given course of life that characterises the 'Protestant Ethic'. His extraordinary directness, both in formulating and carrying out ideas, shows itself in the extreme simplicity of his prose-style. (Indeed, there is, with all his profundity of learning, an odd extreme naivete, let alone simplicity, without which so many of the attitudes discussed below could not have developed). His sense of personal responsibility for the fate of his fellow-men is characteristically Protestant: no confessional to shrug off sin and responsibility here. He is in direct unmediated contact with God, and *he* is responsible to Him, not to the Mother Church, or to Christ's Vicar on earth, Schweitzer's great stress on atonement, on the other hand, is less typically Protestant; it is a guilt-ridden, uncomfortable belief, forever urging him on to action. And the great characteristic of this particular theology is that it results in *activity* on earth. There should be no gulf between an 'ideal' morality and the undesirable compromises that real life suggests to us: to believe is to do. And to do is to act in relation to one's fellow-men, to relieve them in

their sufferings, not merely to pray and to comfort.

Small wonder that Schweitzer made the impact he did. As Gunther remarks: "nobody can be more obstinate, more dogmatically purposeful, than an Alsatian theologian." The ethic that drove the Calvinist bourgeois to throw himself into the improvement of his business impels Schweitzer to throw himself into the task of improving his fellow-men. With the decline of capitalism and religion, this ethic has died as an ethic with important secular implications (save for the Quakers); it now survives in 'spiritualized' form amongst a few fundamentalists and in the missions.

The universalism of his creed appears clearly in Schweitzer's conception of the Fellowship of Pain - that bond of suffering that unites men whatever else divides them. Not only does a sincere Christian have to strive to diminish suffering, but also to atone for happiness, to renounce the soft world. Are there Catholic undertones in the theology of one whose village church was used by both Protestants and Catholics, and who professes a universalistic, unorthodox creed?

Such uncomfortable, activist doctrines come too perilously near the Christianity of Christ for the Christians of the Establishment. Schweitzer found himself at theological odds with them: only his eminence ensured his acceptance by the Paris Missionary Society; which backed his African venture, for his theology was far from orthodox. In the end, he was accepted only on condition that he confine himself to medical matters, and kept out of things spiritual. And he has consistently criticised theologians like Barth who regard religion as a thing between God and Man, something unconcerned with the relations between man and man.

In his formal works, this unorthodoxy became explicit. He attacked metaphysical theologians who accept no development of the fixed, literal Word; he rejected equally psychoanalysts and others who tried to reinterpret the Christian message subjectively in terms of modern thought and experience. But early Christianity, he believed, bears upon it the stamp of its time, and this cannot be removed: Christ made His pronouncements - the essence of which remains true and divinely-revealed - at a particular point in time and space. Some of this, Schweitzer says, we can no longer accept; and the expectations of the Coming of Elijah, the Tribulation, the Messiah and the heavenly kingdom, with the end of the world, the Day of Judgement and the Resurrection - all of which Jesus expected in his lifetime - these were false expectations. He was wrong, believes Schweitzer, because the cast of his thought was conditioned by his life as a Jew in a Roman colonial province; we must now reject this particular messianic dream, but retain what is abiding and eternal in the message.

Such theological radicalism was ill-received. The *Quest* was greeted with "passive hostility by liberals and conservatives alike," remarks Seaver, one of his hagiographers (*Albert Schweitzer, the Man and his Mind*, A. & C. Black, London, 1955): a "conspiracy of silence" was maintained in the face of its outrageous ideas. For though Schweitzer accepted the historicity of Jesus, and His position as the Son of God, and although he believed that the Truth of the Word remained whatever knowledge science accumulates, he had dared to suggest that even the Son of God was a fallible creature of his time. This relativism, for all its limitations, was a shock to orthodox, metaphysical theology. No doubt many felt that if Schweitzer had not opted to go to Africa, it might have been necessary to export him. Unorthodox too, was the universalism of his creed. His experience of the village church in Gunsbach was not without its consequences, nor was his 'dual citizenship' of France and Germany without effect (despite his internment in World War I). Schweitzer's Christianity is little concerned with formal church boundaries and dogmas; his precepts apply, not only to human beings, but - as with many of the Eastern religions in which he is well-read - to non-human life. "Reverence for Life" implies an almost Franciscan reverence for the antelopes, chimpanzees, and other animals that he keeps around the mission-station at Lambaré.

The modern theologians of the Establishment and the apostles of 'realized eschatology,' successors of Origen and Augustine who first taught the masses that the early Christian dream of a Kingdom of Heaven is a remote dream, not an immediate possibility; that it can only be passively waited for, not actively fought for; that it will be in Another Place, not on this earth; those theologians who have been pleased to help in drawing a veil of decent obscurity over the history of early revolutionary Christian sects, were ill-pleased, too, when Schweitzer posed them a few awkward questions. "You tell us," he suggests, "that the millennial dream is an error, that the Kingdom of God is already here, having been initiated by the foundation of the Church (or some other event, according to brand of Christianity). Why, then, do you still pray for the coming Kingdom of God?" But it is worth noting that he, too, rejects the millenarian aspects of popular heretical Christianity (so evident in Norman Conn's recent book, *The Pursuit of the Millennium*) as firmly as do the orthodox, for such doctrines are dangerous.

The ultimate kernel of Schweitzer's philosophy is unambiguously Mystical, despite these rationalistic tilts at orthodoxy. "My knowledge is pessimistic, but my willing and hoping are optimistic": faith is ultimate (but, be it noted, a faith with positive practical

implications for his fellow-men). This separation of faith and knowledge derives from the ultimately irrational acceptance of divinely-given dogma which is inadequate as a guide to moral action, and which can only be made internally consistent by omitting large fields of human action from its view. " We must renounce all pretence of knowing the meaning of the world " - but still insist on a life-affirming and world-affirming ethic. " No knowledge opposed to faith, P.W.) and no hope can give our lives either stability or direction " :

The more we try to see into the development of things . . . the more we become conscious that to each epoch there are certain set limits of knowledge, before which it has to come to a halt, and always at the very moment when it was apparently bound to advance to a higher and definite knowledge that seemed to be just within its grasp. The real history of progress in physics, philosophy and religion, and more especially in psychology, is the history of incomprehensible cessations, of conceptions that are unattainable by a given epoch, in spite of all that happened to lead it up to them - the thought that it did not think, not because it could not do so, but because there was some mysterious command upon it not to do so. *J.S.Bach*, Vol. 1, p. 48).

There we have it: plain irrationalism, but within these confines a consciousness of relativity, of development, occasional dialectical and rationalist-critical sparks, that in the dark world of theology: shone like blinding rays.

But, you may say, what has all this to do with his work at Lambaréne? It has everything to do with his African labours, for his self-imposed exile was entirely an intellectual choice. Furthermore, without the stimulus of this special theological world-view, he could not have survived very long. Only by understanding the depths of intellectual passion aroused in Schweitzer by his religion can one understand his life. The suppression of his spontaneous feelings in the face of daily reality in accordance with the ethic dictated by love of God is an arduous operation which he successfully performs. For his morality is derived from his faith : his religion *makes him* love his fellow-men. It is pure idealism : it is not because he lives with and loves his fellow-men, not out of the stuff of human relations in society, that he builds his ethic of love. The opposite is true. He lives with them, and loves them, because his faith tells him he should. He makes real life conform to abstract ideals. Only his Christianity keeps Schweitzer going, not merely in the face of the enormous physical and material difficulties which his biographers emphasize, and which he has now largely overcome, but in face of the *hatfulness* to him of life in Africa, and especially the hateful-ness of Africans. He 'loves' them because his religion demands it, and he acts out compliance with a religious code so demanding that

he must not, cannot, *resist* being a total Christian, and acting like This is the root contradiction in his life and work : it naturally leads to some appalling results.

In reality he cannot understand Africans at all, nor abide them. He does not want to, nor does he see any need to, establish human relationships with them, and as a result is entirely estranged from them. Only very rarely, in basic human situations (death, the agony of the operating-table, etc.) does he write of Africans as human beings, as personalities. The usual word he applies to them is " savages." Africa, as a country, is a land of " terrible prose." For this reason, he remains very ignorant of it and its peoples. He retains out-of-date notions, large and small, about Africa because, firstly, he is a dogmatic Alsatian theologian, who, when convinced he is right, is immovable, but further because he basically so hates the place and its " savages " that he does not want to know, to learn, to modify attitudes which he has now lived with for forty-odd years. His relationships with Africans, therefore, are not built out of efforts at reciprocal understanding or interchange, but out of one-sided dictation of the ' correct' morality - dictation by him.

The " savages " know that this mission is built on the site of the far-from-" savage " palace of an African Sun King (more "savage"-sounding if you forget *Le Roi Soleil*), or that this and many other civilizations were destroyed by the Whites and especially by the European missionaries who preceded Schweitzer by some centuries (see Basil Davidson's *African Awakening*, and de Graaft-Johnson's *African Glory*). And it was the Ogowe watershed, too, where Schweitzer lives and works, that provided so many of the slaves during the subsequent centuries when African civilizations were smashed and ruined, and their peoples enslaved by the tens of millions.

How can Schweitzer know when he does not even speak any African language (though he knows French, German, Alsatian, English and three dead languages) : when he has to use an interpreter? How can he know, when, as he says, he never walks to their villages? Just as he obstinately and ignorantly believes in outmoded physical 'facts' about Africa as a country - he lectures on the vital necessity of sun-helmets (about which any member of the 8th Army could enlighten him), and has never been to Brazzaville, the Gaboon capital, 420 miles away, nor flown by air - so too, he is ignorant of Africa's human beings. He insists that they cannot use wheelbarrows, when a few miles away they are driving bulldozers\*. Just like any ignorant settler he thinks that bridewealth

(\*see G.W.M. Gell's article on Schweitzer in the July 1957 issue of the *Hibbert Journal*, which was drawn to my attention after the first draft of this article had been written.

is wife-purchase; that witchcraft is utterly irrational and the product of confused thinking; that Africans worship 'fetishes'; that their disputes and litigation are only "barren argumentation" and "palaver"-rigmoroles; that African women are completely exploited by their menfolk; that Africans have a "child-like" mentality: that they are absolutely unable to understand that anything can be valuable, and so forth and so on — a thousand and one major and minor pieces of nonsense and misconception.

How can he know any better when he is completely separated from the Africans by an enormous gulf of prejudice? According to Schweitzer, Africans are unreliable, lazy, unhealthy, untrustworthy, thievish and so on. The catalogue of their deficiencies, naturally, is always from the employer's angle - they steal, are bad personal servants, they do not work hard, they expect money and food for nothing, etc. Of course all this is partly true, but it hardly needs emphasizing within the covers of this journal that all this is inevitable given the oppressed and inferior position of Africans in French West African society. So, just like any Kenya settler, Schweitzer writes page after bitter page bemoaning these things, how his tools get stolen, his chickens eaten, how work is skimmed, etc., etc., etc. He has never made any attempt to understand how deception, laziness, theft, etc., can become necessary or at least fruitful protective devices under colonial conditions. He has never grasped the real significance of the code most clearly defined by a young Swazi educated at a mission school :

- (1) The first thing to remember is that we do not know the hearts of Europeans.
- (2) Show respect; if necessary, agree to lies.
- (3) Never forget to fear the White, for if you fear him, you will be ready when he deceives you.
- (4) Listen carefully to what he says and watch what he does and you will learn a lot.
- (5) Most Europeans and most Natives deceive, but no European can feel the pain of a native.
- (6) Europeans hate us and show us no respect (from Hilda Kuper's *Uniform of Colour*).

Here is the ultimate estrangement of man from man and from natural human relations: the Schweitzers think that you can never know what goes on in those 'curly black noddles,' to use the common settler phrase, and the African thinks you can never 'know the hearts of Europeans.' But, of course, Schweitzer thinks like a settler because so many of his opinions are taken straight from the settler's mouth. In his autobiographical works, he naively describes how he was told what to think by 'old Africa hands' on his voyage out - and he has continued to do so ever since. His authority for opinions on native attitudes and customs is frequently some settler or colonial official - "conversations with the best and most

experienced [sic] of the white men in the district." For if you do not talk to Africans, you talk only to settlers, officials, traders, and you begin to absorb their attitudes.

Despite the universalism of his 'Reverence for Life,' then, he is probably, as Gunther says, "fonder of the animals in Lambarene than the human beings." His harshness towards the human beings is indubitable: when Africans are called before him to state the facts of a quarrel, the Doctor, "with his eyes closed" (because he is bored with their "barren argumentation," P.W.) tells them what his ruling is - 'Do this,' or 'I want no more of that' - without permitting apology or explanation" (*Gunther*, p. 699). And if by chance the European himself makes an error, he should never admit it or apologize to a native. Authoritarianism flavoured with paternalism is the basic relationship-pattern between Schweitzer and Africans, so that, when dealing, as Seaver remarks, in this "summary way" with litigants, he "exercises over them an impersonal authority almost as great as that of a District Commissioner." Significantly, he has acquired a reputation among Africans as being "something of a military character," and is nicknamed 'Captain.' Like every settler, he has a paranoiac fear of thieves. Gunther was "sharply disillusioned" to find "in this community dedicated to good works, that there should be so much overt distrust. *Everything* at Schweitzer's is kept rigidly under lock and key. We even had to give up our key to the roomboy each morning when he made up the room. The servants are not permitted to carry keys." His obsession with stealing leads him to put on the first page of every manuscript he writes, the cynical 'Dear Thief, if you happen by chance to find this, please return to the above address, and you will have my eternal gratitude.'

Like all *colons*, spiritual or lay, Schweitzer likes the "unspoiled" African, the laughing child of Nature, and hates educated Africans. He vociferously insists that African education should contain a large component of practical work with the hands. This in itself is nothing appalling, but in the context of Schweitzer's racism, and his conception of what African life ought to be like, it is clearly of a piece with his backward view of educated Africans as 'unnatural' products. But whether 'spoiled' Africans, or 'children of Nature,' one must always be severe and never trust them: the two guiding principles. For these reasons, Schweitzer kept the news of the 1914 War from Africans at Lambarene, forbids them to have guns, etc., etc. He believes, too, in controlling every detail of their lives. "Being real savages," he says, "they cannot buy mosquito nets because they are poor, but would sell them for gewgaws if they could" (*More from the Primeval Forest*, p. 48). This utter contempt for

Africans is the expression, then, of deep racism: it is astonishing indeed, that no sign of any inkling of the deep changes taking place in Africa and Africans appears in his works. The "savages" are as benighted today as before; the only changes he notes are for the worse, e.g. more and more educated Africans. No-one, after all can understand what goes on in their minds: they "take it into their heads" to go off to their villages without a word of explanation to their employers. All is irrationality. But his faith keeps him to the hateful task. At times his saintliness gives under the strain: "What a blockhead I am to come out to doctor savages like these!" His equally racist biographer, Seaver, speaks in the authentic voice of the master when he cites with approval "When in Africa he saves old niggers; when in Europe he saves old organs" - that what his friends say of Schweitzer, and it is aptly and truly said. By his friends shall ye know him.

His universalistic Reverence for Life, then, is a little short as far as African human life is concerned. He himself realizes that he "arrogant" and "lacking in love," that he has "hated, slandered and defrauded." His authoritarianism appears not merely in relation to Africans, however. This is the authentic authoritarian personality, albeit with soft spots. He cannot forbear lecturing all about him on the thousand and one fixed ideas he possesses. His invitation to the Gunthers to visit Lambarene "ended with a medical homily advising us not to eat underdone meat while in Africa and always to wash our hands after shaking hands with a native" (p. 713). This didacticism is partly the fruit of years of power, authority and privilege (despite the hardships) in Africa - but this is common to all Whites more or less. There is more than this in Schweitzer's case. Just as faith and conviction drove him to abandon his home, his friends, and the culture in which he was such a shining light, so faith and conviction drive him to ram his message down the throats of others. Hence, on the one hand, his trivial lectures about sun-helmets and meat to all and sundry, and on the other, his perpetual hectoring, badgering and missionizing of the Africans, a "captive audience" if there ever was one.

Schweitzer *knows* what is right; it is revealed to him, and he is responsible for its implementation, responsible, through his conscience, to God: the only question is not what is right, but how to get the blockheads outside his skin-boundary to understand and to obey. Of course, the least understanding are his black subjects. Hence the irascibility with those who will not see. Unfortunately he is basically as wrong in his general orientation to life, as he is in his belief in sun-helmets. There is no need for Schweitzer to *learn*, only to order. But, with deficient human material, in a world

where there are but few Schweitzers, men are so stupid that it becomes necessary that their "fundamental rights be abridged," as he puts it. Less of this democracy nonsense, and more orders. The result? . . . . .

A group of lepers stood by. They were ... the worst workmen I have ever seen. They used their spades ... with about as much animation as corpses. If they had spines, they were made of blotting paper. They were not too ill to work, but just plain' lazy, as well as numb with boredom and indifference, dazed like zombies. Schweitzer strode amongst them with explosive and hortatory grunts. He argued, threatened, and cajoled. He took a spade himself. Then he chanted a kind of tune, to mark time for the digging 'Allez-vous OPP-upp-OPP! Hupp, upp, Hup, upp, OPP!' (*Gunther*, p. 709).

This pathetic clowning and inhuman relationship to the Africans is the bitter fruit of "Reverence for Life" in action. And his relationship to his European staff is equally unsatisfactory. Gell tells us that half of them are in "more or less permanent, if private, revolt," while the rest think of themselves as administering "a sort of benevolent concentration camp."

The naivete and inadequacy of his own values corrupts and dehumanizes his whole work. Of Africans, he asks only that they should not lie or steal, that they should value property and be kind to animals. A limited canon, that Africans themselves can only smile at. A whole world of human activities is excluded. In practice, therefore, Schweitzer accepts French colonialism, the State, etc., etc. He is not critical of these things - but strains at a gnat when Africans steal bananas. The society that produces the banana-stealers needs no radical improvement in his eyes. If he were an official, he says, his attitudes would be the same as they are today. Official and missionary in one.

The autonomy of the authoritarian personality is reflected in his attitudes to offers of aid. It is not *merely* a sturdy concern to preserve his own and his subjects' self-reliance that makes him reject generous offers of aid from millionaires. (There is still no running water, hot water, electricity (except for operating), motor-boat, chapel, etc., at Lambarene, and much of the medical equipment is "primitive"). Schweitzer wants to remain dependent upon the widow's mite, it is true (he financed much of the early work from his European organ-recitals and lecture-tours). He refused to employ a contractor for rebuilding because of the moral value of working for Yourself and others. He refuses to give Africans decent hospital beds because they are "not used to it" and might develop "unnatural" wants, etc., etc. Is this *only* self-reliance, or a religious asceticism which sees virtue in 'atoning' the hard way, coupled with a static view of African living-standards and wants, an idealization of pov-

erty, and a conception of *his own* responsibility to God and to his conscience to do things *his own way*? The last attitude, I feel, stemming from his perversion of the Protestant Ethic of personal accountability is far more important than is generally recognised. He completely neglects that other vital part of the original Protestant Ethic, the democratic "sovereignty of the local sacramental community" (*Weber*). The Africans are going to have good done to them in his way, not other people's, whether they like it or not.

And change which takes place in any other way is bad. Thus he dislikes forced labour, and the industrialization of Africa, and wishes to preserve the peasant-economy; but he is far more caustic about African nationalism, political 'agitators,' and strikes, which last he attributes to the "free-and-easy ways Africans have been encouraged to assume." The same sentiments can be heard in any Nairobi or Johannesburg bar any night. But Schweitzer is an eminent Christian; his settlerism, therefore, is tempered with limited criticism of the African scene — he is against forced labour, "except where necessary." He is against it as a substitute for tax-money, but not against taxation of those, who, by European standards, are too poor to be taxed. (Taxation breeds 'responsible' attitudes in the taxed). Africans should have the right to move their habitation, the right to land -- but they should produce for consumption before cash, i.e., remain tied to standards little beyond subsistence-agriculture for the foreseeable future. He is for the right of Africans to have access to formal justice, - by which he means strengthening the chiefs; for education, but a 'practical' and not 'over'-intellectual education, and so on. Timber profits on the Ogowe "are modest considering the amount of money invested and the hard, comfortless conditions of life," but wages are too high. "It is absurd to talk of exploitation by the timber-merchants ... if that means that wages are too low. The work that these primitive humans do often bears no relation to the wage which has to be handed out to them." Theirs is the highest ratio of cost to work done in the world.

This is the typical outlook of a not-very-liberal of 30 years ago, but of the last-ditcher today (outside straight *apartheid*). As for giving Africans self-rule. "Look at Liberia!" he bursts out: the classic argument. Only a very slow development over centuries can bring Africans up to the desired level. And improvements have to be introduced from above, for the "savage" only moves under patriarchal authority! Lambarene is the microcosm of this Christian patriarchal society, with Schweitzer as patriarch. "You will see," he says. "that our establishment is organized patriarchally. I am of the opinion that a patriarchal establishment is in every way the best one to adopt in the colonies."

His Protestant zeal thus leads him to an authoritarian position; it may well be in part, also, the product of his upbringing in rural Alsace, for there is much of the peasant in his make-up, a facet of his character no doubt re-activated by his life in Africa. Even in Europe, he believes, the periods of progress have been periods of "enlightened, benevolent despotism." This combination of dogmatic Christianity and missionary-colonialism makes him doubly authoritarian, but it means, too, that his intellectual view of life is often out of tune with his feelings and spontaneous reactions. He went to Africa because he 'loved' his fellow-men; his 'love' keeps him there; but it is an abstract, rational 'love,' an intellectual construct; it is love for an abstraction 'Man,' for in reality he hates *men*. Though he loves Man, he hates the reality in front of him: idle, thieving, smelly, untrustworthy savages. Made worse by the timber-trade, which has turned them into "human animals," obsessed by desire for mere material things, including drink, only the strongest intellectual Christianity keeps Schweitzer 'loving' these individual examples of 'Man.' His humanity is thus a particularly dehumanized one, and in the end is a total failure. At the very dinner where he was presented with the Nobel Peace Prize, he 'entertained' the company by witty racist comments on the subject of the natural indolence of the negro. "He kept everybody in fits of laughter when he commented: 'Well, I suppose they do observe the Biblical injunction: "By the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat bread." One can do an awful lot of sweating in Lambarene without lifting a finger" (*Seaver*, p. 179). In Oslo, too, he deeply offended the Bandung world by references to the dangers of nationalism in newly-independent countries as a threat which might interrupt "a long history of peace" in those regions. (Most major Indian newspapers refused to print it).

Yet Schweitzer is a success, a 'moral giant,' a "lesson to our century," a "jungle saint." True, occasionally wistful comments indicate that he himself realizes that all is not quite perfect in his approach:

I dare say we should have fewer difficulties with our savages if we could occasionally sit round the fire with them and show ourselves to them as men, and not merely as medicine-men and custodians of law and order in the hospital. All three of us ... are really so overwhelmed with work that the humanity within us cannot come out properly.

A saint with no humanity. Schweitzer's verdict on Schweitzer.

And of his medical work, he acknowledged ultimately that only by government action on a large scale, and not by ineffective mission-charity, could sleeping-sickness on the Ogowe be wiped out. But it is not merely mission-medicine, but missions and the liberal ideology

which goes with them that is incapable of responding to Africa's needs.

Despite all this, he has become one of the major symbols of our age, and is seen as the embodiment of positive, humanitarian, lofty and spiritual values. At the very lowest level, he appeals to those middle-aged ladies who are the backbone of missionary societies. He represents for them the self-abnegation, the renunciation of the world, and the high cultural standards of the ideal missionary. But for such ladies almost any missionary would fill the bill, and Schweitzer is merely the supreme example. Schweitzer's appeal to our generation is much wider than this. He appeals to the non-religious and the hard-boiled as much as to the mission-supporters. Typically, a recent *New Yorker* cartoon depicts a couple preparing for a cocktail party, the man in a dinner jacket with a cocktail shaker in his hand, saying: "O.K. Albert Schweitzer didn't give in to the rat race. Name three others." What kinds of aspiration! are projected, then, upon Schweitzer? One can point to the vicarious satisfaction he gives to thousands who compensate for their own inactivity or felt inability to do anything real to change the lowly condition of their fellow-men; they are relieved of their psychological burdens by the consciousness that a 'saint' is doing it for them, while they relax in virtuous comfort, and praise him. The impetus that drove men to 'social work' in the East End at the turn of the century has largely worked itself out as far as the East End is concerned. Yet there is still a need to work out all kinds of guilt, especially that guilt which arises from the tension between a consciousness of the inhumanity of class society and the failure to translate that consciousness into action. Since the transformation of society cannot be achieved without moving forward to a revolutionary position, and since the working-class, now equipped with its own means of self-expression, consciously resents and rejects upper-class patronage, mission-work in the East End becomes less and less possible. Serious missionary-work in capitalist society today must, as the French worker-priest movement has shown, lead to the involvement of the cleric in the socialist movement. But there is still a convenient surrogate for the old-fashioned liberal conscience. For those who seek to avoid the clash with the established order that serious "mission-work" amongst the proletariat would entail, the colonial world lies to hand as a realm where conscience-salving liberal paternalism - of a quite ineffective kind - can be practised. Such a compromising position leads to further moral decay, for the very existence of missions holds back advance. In many colonies, missions control over 90% of the schools and most of the medical services. Government is only too glad to subsidize them, for this relieves them

of the financial, moral and political responsibility for education and health services. The existence of the missions is a substitute for real health and education services, and is a permanent excuse for not providing them. No matter how sincere the individual missionary, he becomes, inevitably, a semi-civil-servant, identified, and often willingly and consciously, with Government, and assisted by it. The mission is frequently the real *secular* power in many colonial areas, and often acquires vested economic interests in the colonial system. (In New Guinea, for example, some missions own plantations from which they finance their spiritual work. Hence the signs reading

Most Sacred Heart of Jesus Ltd."). And missionaries, wrapped up in daily mechanical administrative tasks, soon assume the habit of authority common to Whites in other occupations. It is easier to order than to explain and persuade, or to educate and train others. This social situation breeds thousands of petty Schweitzers, all hectoring the Africans in the name of Christianity. The gulf between their intentions and the reality arises from the compromised position they occupy. Before long, they lose hope of making converts, and concentrate on material charity. Only the very few are strong enough to resist: these become Huddlestons; the rest line up behind the Archbishop of Canterbury. Yet missionaries play a major part in dissolving the traditional pattern of social relations in Africa; they open up new avenues of African self-expression through the independent African Christian churches, messianic cults, and other forerunners of nationalism which come into being in opposition to mission-Christianity. The ultimate irony is that the Schweitzers themselves breed these revolutionary heretical sects. By erecting a wall between themselves and the Africans, they ensure that African Christianity will become an anti-European Christianity.

The liberal conscience, then, cannot be soothed by excursions into Africa. But the liberals who send the missionaries there, and those who project their finer hopes upon such unsuitable bearers, are unaware of the reality of mission-life. They believe that fine things are being done. In a world where disillusionment is deeply-rooted, and particularly in the sterile era that followed World War II, some of the most sincere and positive of humanity's aspirations have been focussed upon figures like Schweitzer. Distrustful of secular, especially political, leadership, fearful of the bomb, sickened by mass atrocities, convinced that communism means concentration camps and socialism Crippsian austerity, they turn - frustrated, but despairingly hoping to salvage something - to figures like Schweitzer. Not for nothing has there been a minor religious revival: but this is not merely a commentary upon the frustration of hopes, but also

very positive demonstration that man's search for truly human

social relationships persists, even if experience has dealt some vicious blows of disappointment. They have had to turn to such unworthy vehicles of their aspirations as Albert Schweitzer. It is important, in particular, to see the very positive elements in this very fruitless worship of Schweitzer. He has stood for the heroic, the noble, and the courageous and the disinterested in an age when these qualities seemed to be disappearing. The tremendous popularity of stories about the last war is evidence of the vitality of this feeling. It is not just the excitement of the action-novel or film that people find satisfying, but they also feel a sense of the heroic and of the heights of human bravery, a sense which the war stimulated, but which has become dim once more; this aspiration is reactivated only in the fantastic identification with war-heroism. The very fact that Schweitzer has become such a symbolic figure is expressive, too, of the desperate search for an answer to burning problems, an answer which no existing movement is giving, particularly in the political field. For if religion is the opium of the people, it is also "*the heart of a heartless world.*" And this misplaced trust and hope in the twentieth-century saints from Gandhi to Schweitzer may well contain more positive and serious human consciousness than much of the oh-so-brave, clever-clever sniping at the Establishment that is so fashionable at present. For a vague discontent with the Royal Family is not enough : the current 'anti-Establishment' vogue may well be symptomatic of deeper and more serious changes which may lead to something fruitful, but in itself it contains no theoretical answer to present problems, and may equally degenerate into a sterile, anarchistically-cynical' resentment.'

To remove the sores on the body politic which the snipers find so depressing a sight, and to provide a proper channel for creative human thought (now so misdirected by people like Schweitzer), a radical operation is needed. For these changes cannot be effected without fundamental changes in men's production relations, and without entering the political struggle. A true humanism must be a revolutionary materialist humanism if it is not to become as compromised, corrupted and dehumanized as Schweitzer's.