

F. G. Immink), that the theological kernel of the doctrine of divine simplicity is still subscribed to by all these theologians. This theological kernel, so-mentioned, is the ‘insistence ... on the full, personal and essential, *identity* of God in all of his perfections, relations and actions’ (p. 739). While it is hard to refute te Velde’s lengthy demonstration that some form of divine simplicity remains a bulwark of a Reformed doctrine of God, from the Reformed orthodox to Karl Barth to the Utrecht School, the conclusion is a bit flattening. The doctrine of divine simplicity has never been univocal, even among the Reformed orthodox, and one would only expect the most ardent tri-theist to deny it outright. In the context of te Velde’s thesis, then, it seems that if one’s methodological choices do substantially modify the conceptual framework one is allowed to employ when articulating the doctrine of divine simplicity, then an avenue is also provided to substantially modify the doctrine of God itself. Such a modification seems to occur in both Barth and the Utrecht School, even if they adhere to, for example, a loose version of the doctrine of divine simplicity. Even so, te Velde has produced an important study on the doctrine of God in the Reformed context, and for anyone interested in studying multiple aspects of the doctrine of God in Reformed orthodoxy, Karl Barth, and the Utrecht School this monograph is essential. Although it is difficult to see how the overall conclusions fit together at times, the individual sections are illuminating and instructive, deserving to be read slowly and carefully.

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*Albert Schweitzer in thought and action. A life in parts.* Edited by James Carleton Paget and Michael J. Thate. (Albert Schweitzer Library.) Pp. x+490. New York: Syracuse University Press, 2016. £67.75 (paper). 978 0 8156 3464 5

*JEH* (69) 2018; doi:10.1017/S0022046917001932

The volume reflects well its subtitle, ‘a life in parts’, by seeking to bring together the many dimensions of Albert Schweitzer’s intellectual trajectory and humanitarian activity. The volume is timely, for Schweitzer has long been the object of polemical debate, and in recent years his reputation has sagged so severely that it has been difficult to come to a balanced appreciation of his life and legacy. How does one assess a figure who was deemed by many to be the ‘greatest man in the world’ in the late 1950s and who is now often written off as an anachronism? Heralded as the ‘grand docteur’ who healed the multitudes in Africa and campaigned against nuclear disarmament, he is also condemned for clinging to colonial paternalism in the midst of African independence. This volume provides a measured appreciation in three important ways. It addresses some of the most difficult aspects of Schweitzer’s theology, discusses his philosophy – especially his famous idea of the ‘reverence for life’ – and finally analyses the context in which his life and work developed.

As Carleton Paget explains in his excellent introduction, Schweitzer preferred to be thought of as a philosopher, but history has been kinder to his theological works. And yet, he spawned no ‘theological school’ and has always been seen, as Karl Barth remarked, as the most ‘problematic of theologians’. These selections reveal how troubling but fecund his theological treatises were. On the one hand,

he was the beneficiary of 'liberal', 'critical' theology, but on the other he lambasted that same tradition for sanitising Jesus, a 'world-historical personality'. Schweitzer was intent on recovering the sense of ethical urgency that underpinned Jesus' Jewish apocalypticism and eschatology. It was, Schweitzer claimed, Jesus' 'foreign-ness', rooted in the Old Testament traditions, that made his ethical message so imperative. Jesus was not some bourgeois moralist for conventional society, but a man whose indomitable will could still inspire across the centuries. Jesus' will was both life-affirming and inescapable, and for Schweitzer absolutely central to his preoccupation with developing his own 'ethical personality'. As several of the investigators in this volume suggest, such formulations owed much to Schopenhauer and Nietzsche, even if Schweitzer used their work as foil to develop his own 'Jesus mysticism'. The authors here argue that for all the untidiness of Schweitzer's theology, he lent an unwonted immediacy to Jesus' ethical message that encouraged an attitude of moral activism that went beyond mere intellectual understanding. Even if Schweitzer himself could not smooth away the paradoxes or contradictions raised by of his critics, these studies show how his particular view of Jesus – and his horror at the decadence and decline of European civilisation – inspired his own mission. It required, in Schweitzer's eyes, a kind of atonement and rebuilding – hence his decision to work as a doctor-missionary in one of the most benighted parts of the 'dark continent'.

Equally interesting are the selections which focus on Schweitzer's relationship to other world religions. Like most of his contemporaries, he believed absolutely in the superiority of Christianity, despite his rare and unequivocal recognition of the importance of Jewish eschatology in shaping Christian ethics. He was particularly scornful of Islam (the missionary competitor in Africa) and condemned what he called Brahminism as a form of life-denying priestcraft infused by asceticism. Perhaps strangely, he had more time for what he called Hinduism, and its populism which he believed had brought Indian religious thought to the subcontinent's masses. He is unusual among Western commentators on 'oriental' religions for his condemnation of Buddhism, often seen as the 'enlightened' manifestation of a reformation against Brahmin obscurantism. For him, however, the Buddha's search for nirvana underscored the life-denying aspects of oriental thought, in contrast to his own preoccupation with ethical activism. Schweitzer's judgements were haphazard, often ill-informed, and keen to reiterate the superiority of ethical monotheism as part of the development progression of Western civilisation. Perhaps the chapters dealing with these subjects do not sufficiently deal with Schweitzer's blinkered evaluations. However, they do describe how, in this morass of misunderstanding, Schweitzer was unusual in seeking a morality that went beyond Kant and human deontological ethics, to encompass animals and the natural world. This notion of the 'reverence for life' owed much to Jainism, Hinduism and Confucianism, in which Schweitzer accepted 'oriental' precedence in encompassing non-human creatures within an ethic of compassion and responsibility. This notion, an attitude rather than a philosophical dictum, was perhaps one of Schweitzer's most important contributions, and underlay the ecological pre-occupations that his time in Africa fostered.

The volume's third section provides a significant contribution to understanding better the diverse contexts in which Schweitzer worked. We learn, for example,

about his Alsatian regional identity, and how he disapproved of both French and German nationalism, and yet wished to act as a bridge between these two nations' cultures. His scholarly mission was Germanic, but he chose – against intense and enduring opposition – to work in French Africa. He was a maverick Christian in many ways, with little interest in doctrine, and yet he was devoted to his role as preacher. Despite his 'Jesus mysticism', he remained a devotee of the Enlightenment. As his sojourn in Africa lengthened, he became ever more committed to a discourse of 'civilisation' that recalled the eighteenth century, while in earlier reflections this term had denoted his disgust for a decadent and ethically deformed mass European society. Indeed, as Michael Thate has suggested in an excellent article on Du Bois and Schweitzer, at times it seems as if Schweitzer was chiefly concerned with developing his 'ethical personality'. More than any other contributor, Thate takes on board the contradictory legacy of colonialism, and the impossibility of separating Schweitzer's hospital care from the dynamics and structures of a coercive imperialism. The question remains why he became such an adored figure in both Germanies after the war. Schweitzer came to represent the 'good German', the man devoted to an untainted notion of *Bildung*, admired in the East as critic of nuclear weapons and championed in the West as a symbol of humanitarianism. Nils Oermann describes his great moment of fame at the end of the 1950s when his 'reverence for life' was widely publicised and his reputation exalted beyond measure. And yet, there are still many questions as to why he became a 'superstar' in America, how his service in Africa might relate to America's religious politics (especially *vis-à-vis* Unitarianism) and perhaps America's own shifting race relations. In this context, Schweitzer's hospital may well have seemed like a conservative, but humanitarian, intervention that prescribed a cautious and paternalist pace to emancipation. These are only guesses, but they reveal how this suggestive volume – with its ample scholarship – has not yet exhausted Schweitzer's multifaceted impact.

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*'Intimately associated for many years'. George K. A. Bell's and Willem A. Visser 't Hooft's common life-work in the service of the Church universal, mirrored in their correspondence, I: 1938–1949; II: 1950–1958.* By Gerhard Besier. Pp. xviii + 575; xvi + 577–1158. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015. £136.98. 978 1 4438 8273 6  
*JEH* (69) 2018; doi:10.1017/S0022046917001841

When he contemplated the writing of an autobiography towards the end of his life George Bell found that he was unsure whether it should be written as an ecumenical or an Anglican narrative. The Presbyterian Kenneth Slack, to whom he expressed his dilemma, urged that it must surely be the latter. Yet Bell's reflection strikes a chord. Where did his essential contribution lie, after all? He was too much the internationalist to be the predictable English bishop, too much involved in politics to be wholly the conventional ecclesiastic, and too much a Christian for other