

# Chronology of Albert Schweitzer's Life

## 1875—Early Years

**January 14, 1875.** Albert Louis Philipp Schweitzer was born at Kaysersberg, Haute Alsace (then under German rule; today it is in the northeastern part of France on the German border), to Adele Schillinger Schweitzer and Louis Schweitzer, a Lutheran pastor.

**1880–84.** Educated at the local school in Günsbach, the village where he lived.

**1884–85.** Educated at Realschule at Münster, Upper Alsace.

**1885–93.** Educated at Gymnasium at Mulhausen, Upper Alsace.

**October 1893.** Went to Paris to study the organ with C. M. Widor, famous organist and writer on music.

**November 1893.** Began studies at the University of Strasbourg, where he studied theology, philosophy, and music theory.

**April 1894.** Entered the military in the 143rd Regiment. Service completed in April 1895.

## 1895—Twentieth Year

**1896.** Made commitment to serve humanity beginning at the age of thirty.

**1896–99.** Studied at the Sorbonne and the University of Berlin; also studied organ in Paris and Berlin. Began giving organ concerts.

**Fall 1897.** Wrote his thesis for his degree in theology, “The Idea of the Last Supper in Daniel Schleiermacher, Compared with the Ideas of Luther, Zwingli and Calvin.”

**May 6, 1898.** Passed his oral and written exams before the faculty of theology. Subsequently, he received the Goll Scholarship in theology.

**Summer 1898.** Continued his studies in philosophy at the University of Strasbourg.

**Fall 1898–spring 1899.** Studied at the Sorbonne in Paris where he continued being mentored musically by Widor. Here he studied the original texts of Kant in order to trace the evolution of his thought.

**March 12, 1899.** Returned to Günsbach, where he worked on revising his manuscript on Kant.

**April–July 1899.** Continued his philosophical studies in Berlin as well as his studies in the organ.

**July 1899.** Returned to Strasbourg, where he successfully completed his exam in philosophy, earning him a PhD.

**December 1899.** Hired by St. Nicholas church in Strasbourg, where he worked on his thesis in theology on the historical origin of the Last Supper. At the end of December, he published the book *The Religious Philosophy*

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*of Kant from the "Critique of Pure Reason" to "Religion within the bounds of Mere Reason."*

**July 15, 1900.** Passed his second set of theological exams.

**July 21, 1900.** Graduated magna cum laude with a doctorate in theology.

**September 23, 1900.** Ordained as a minister at St. Nicholas church.

**1902.** Appointed privatdozent at the University of Strasbourg, where he gave lectures before the faculty on the structure of the gospel of John.

**October 1, 1903.** Received a permanent position as principal of the St. Thomas Theological Seminary.

## 1905—Thirtieth Year

**January 14, 1905.** At age thirty he made the decision to study medicine and go to Africa.

**1906.** Began medical studies at the University of Strasbourg.

**June 18, 1912.** Married Hélène Bresslau.

**February 1913.** Completed internship and received MD degree.

**March 26, 1913.** Left for Africa. Arrived at Lambaréné, Gabon, in French Equatorial Africa, where he built his first hospital.

**1914.** With the outbreak of WWI, French authorities considered him an enemy of the state. He was interned at Lambaréné but was allowed to continue practicing medicine.

## 1915—Fortieth Year

**September 1915.** After years of searching, he found the phrase “Reverence for Life” while traveling on the Ogowe River, which summed up his philosophy.

**September 1917.** The Schweitzers were transferred to France, where he and his wife were interned in prisoner-of-war camps at Garaison and later at St. Rémy. During that time he contracted dysentery.

**July 1918.** Returned to Alsace in poor health and learned that his mother had been killed.

**January 14, 1919.** Daughter Rhena, his only child, was born.  
**1919–23.** He recovered his health, lectured widely in Europe, practiced medicine, gave organ concerts, preached, wrote, and published, including the two-volume *Philosophy of Civilization*.

**February 1924.** Wrote *Memoirs of Childhood and Youth*.

**1924.** Returned to Africa.

## 1925—Fiftieth Year

**1926.** He rebuilt hospital at new location.

**1927–39.** He made trips to and from Africa. Lectured widely and played organ throughout Europe to raise funds for his hospital.

## 1935—Sixtieth Year

**February 1935.** He returned to Africa for the fifth time.

**September 1935.** Returned to Europe to give concerts, raise money for the hospital, and make organ recordings of Bach.

**February 1937.** Returned to Africa for his sixth visit.

**1939–44.** Returned to Europe briefly for twelve days and then made his seventh trip to Lambaréné where he stayed during World War II. Mrs. Schweitzer joined him after her escape from Europe.

## 1945—Seventieth Year

**1948.** He returned to Europe for the first time since WWII.

**July 1949.** Made first and only trip to the United States.

**October 1949.** Took eighth trip to Africa.

**June 1951.** Returned to Europe to visit Mrs. Schweitzer and give concerts and lectures.

**December 1951.** Made his ninth trip to Africa.

**July 1952.** Returned to Europe to give lectures and concerts to raise money for his hospital.

**December 1952.** He made his tenth trip to Africa.

**November 1953.** Awarded the 1952 Nobel Peace Prize.

**November 1954.** Accepted the 1952 Nobel Peace Prize and delivered an address in Oslo, Norway.

## 1955—Eightieth Year

**May 1955.** Made his eleventh trip to Africa.

**December 1955.** Made his twelfth trip to Africa.

**May 30, 1957.** Hélène Schweitzer died in Switzerland.

**December 4, 1957.** Returned to Lambaréné for the thirteenth time. Brought his wife's ashes, which he buried on the hospital grounds.

**1958–63.** Worked for nuclear test ban treaty. A period of great expansion for his hospital.

**May 6, 1963.** Endorsed a US Senate bill to reduce laboratory animal experiments.

**August 1963.** Wrote to President Kennedy regarding the nuclear test ban treaty.

## 1965—Ninetieth Year

**January 14, 1965.** He celebrated his ninetieth birthday.

**August 28, 1965.** Designated his daughter to be administrator of the hospital.

**September 4, 1965.** Died at 10:30 p.m. in his bed at Lambaréné at age ninety.