

CREDO

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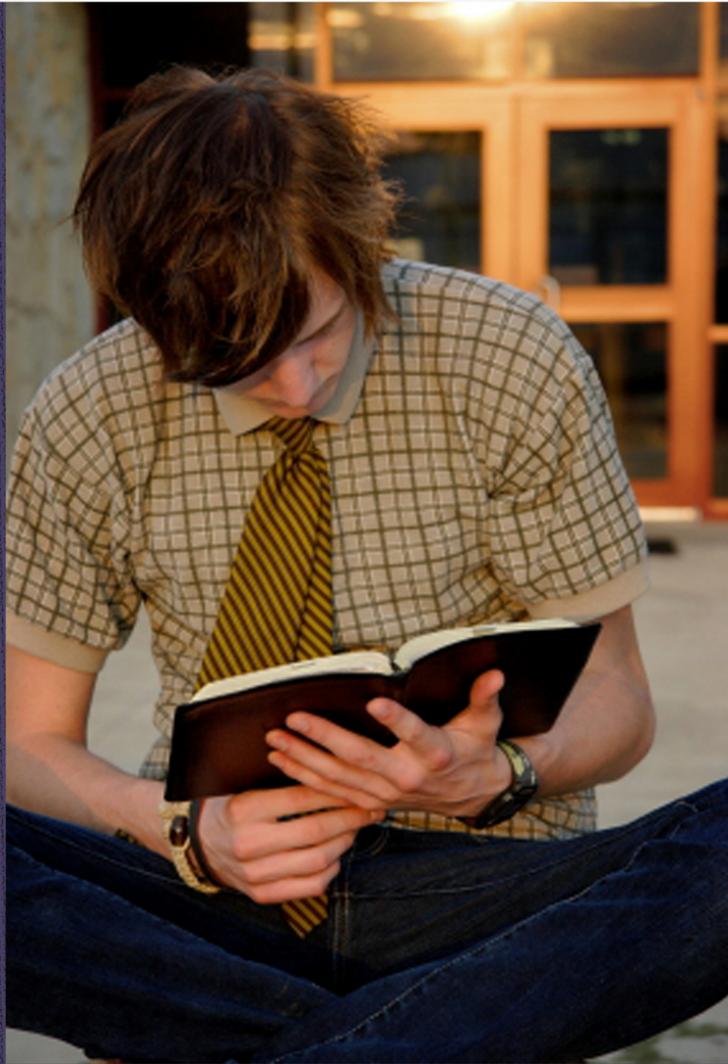
Francis Schaeffer at 100

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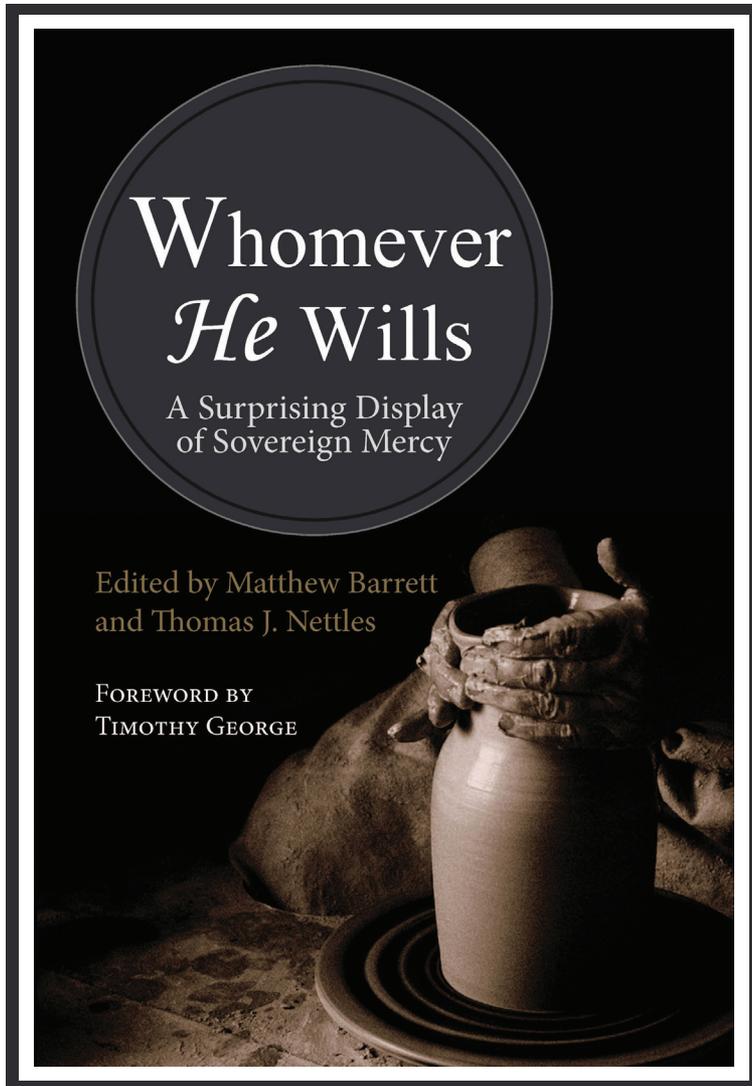
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— **MICHAEL A.G. HAYKIN**, Professor of Church History, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

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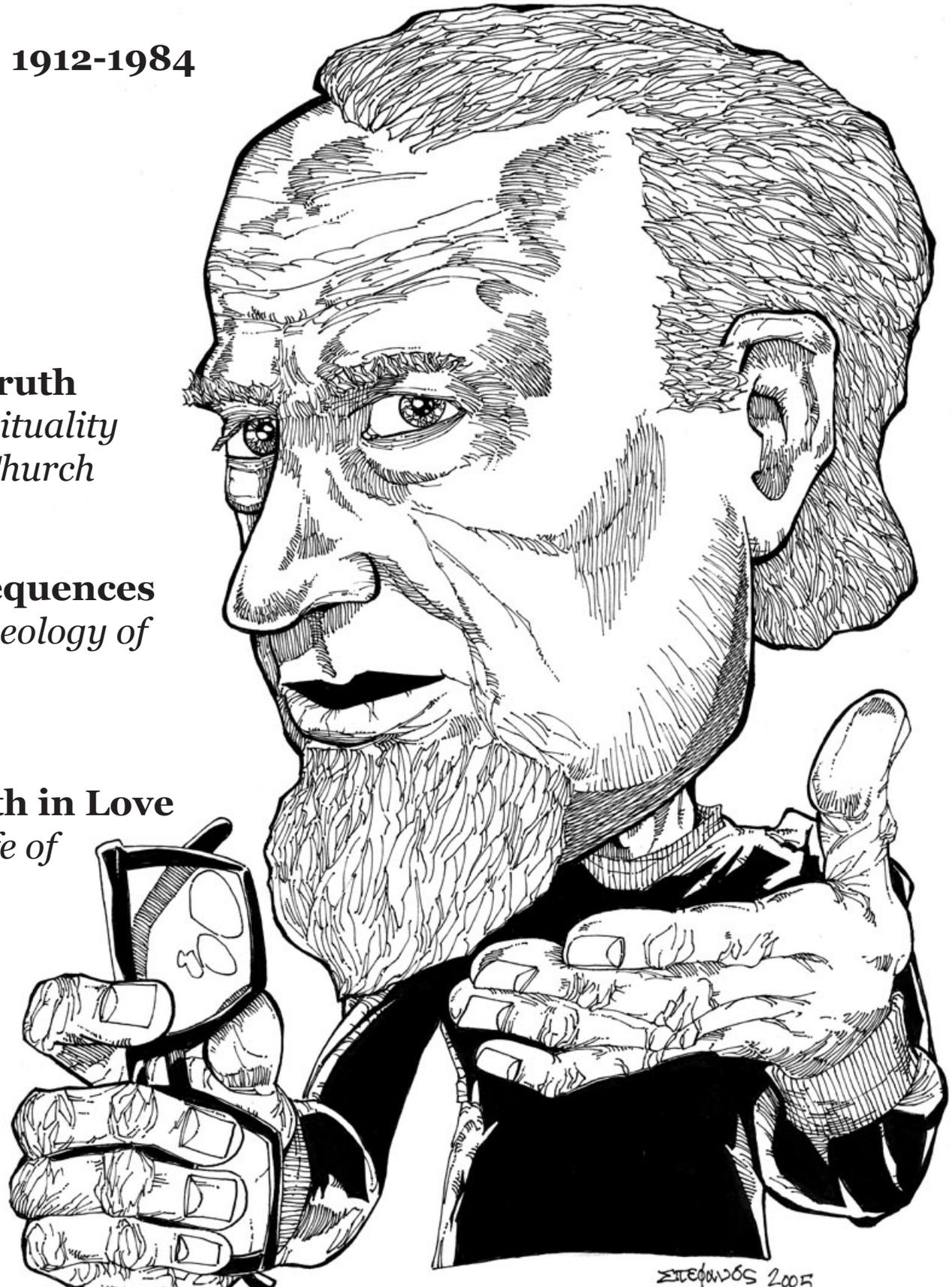
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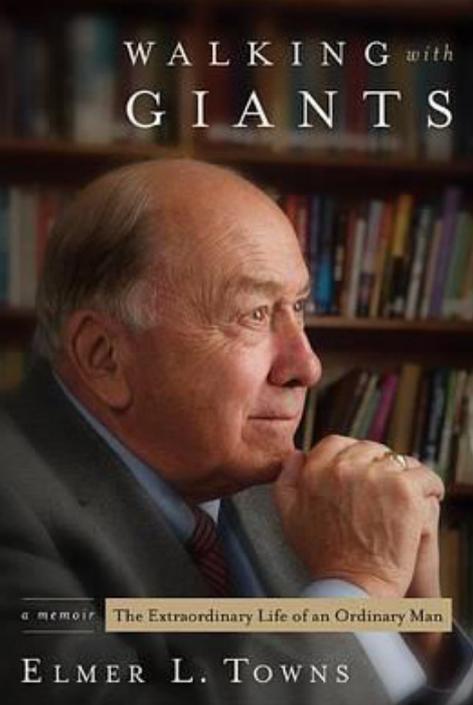
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THE RISE AND
DECLINE OF
WESTERN
THOUGHT
AND CULTURE



HOW SHOULD WE THEN LIVE?

Francis A. Schaeffer

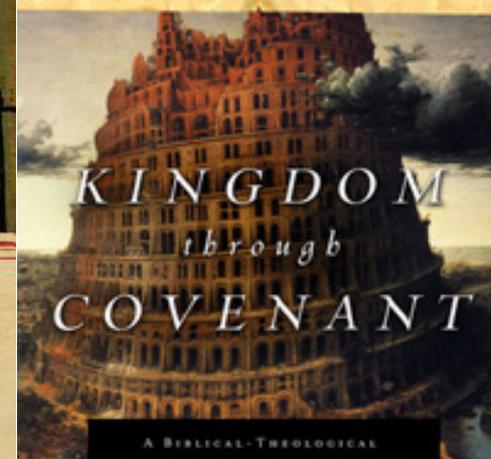
L'ABRI 50TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION



THE ROOTS OF THE REFORMATION

Tradition, Emergence and Rupture

G. R. EVANS



KINGDOM through COVENANT

A BIBLICAL-THEOLOGICAL UNDERSTANDING OF THE COVENANTS

PETER J. GENTRY
STEPHEN J. WELLMUM

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Francis Schaeffer at 100

T

he year 2012 is the 100th anniversary of the birth of Francis Schaeffer (1912-1984). It is difficult to think of an evangelical figure in the 20th century who so seriously engaged the philosophies and ideologies of the secular world and set them over against the Christian worldview than Francis Schaeffer.

But Schaeffer was no ordinary evangelical. The man wore knickers and knee high socks when he lectured, sporting not only long hair but a goat's-chin beard! Most importantly, Schaeffer did not fear man, but feared God. Not only did he engage secular worldviews, but he confronted his fellow evangelicals, even rebuking them for doctrinal concession and compromise.

As many have observed, it is not an overstatement to say that the Schaeffers transformed, reshaped, and in many ways reformed American evangelicalism. Those writing in this new issue of Credo Magazine are proof, each writer bearing testimony to how Francis Schaeffer has made a monumental impact on how we understand and articulate the Christian faith and life in the world of ideas.



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10 Questions

Jason Meyer talks about his new role at Bethlehem Baptist Church as John Piper's successor as Pastor for Preaching and Vision.

You were recently chosen to be John Piper's successor as the Pastor for Preaching and Vision at Bethlehem Baptist Church. How has this transition been for you and your family?

The entire process has been strangely life-giving when I pause to consider all the rigors and demands that have come with it. The Lord has graciously given us a sweet disposition of trust in his fatherly care. He has been leaning in on us, and we have felt the warmth of his countenance. It has been faith-building because our confidence does not rest in anything in us, but in the nearness of His presence and the promise of His sustaining grace.

When did you first hear of John Piper and how did you become connected to Bethlehem in the first place?

The connection stretches back to two people: Sam Crabtree and Gary Steward. One of my friends,

Gary Steward, introduced me to John Piper's ministry back in my Sophomore year of college. Sam Crabtree, an assistant pastor at the church Gary and I attended, had introduced him to Piper's ministry.



Gary convinced me to read *Desiring God*, and as Gary once put it "the book scratched an itch that we did not know we had." Gary later went to Bethlehem to be part of the first class

of The Bethlehem Institute, a two-year training program at the church for vocational elders, which I joined the following year. Sam Crabtree had already come to Bethlehem to be an executive pastor by this point. I now serve with Sam in caring for the flock at Bethlehem. It is a sterling example of God's kind providence to see how our Good Shepherd leads us in paths for His name's sake that are so carefully interconnected!

What initial goals will you have for your transition into your new role at Bethlehem?

One of my primary goals in the first part of my transition is to get to know Bethlehem's staff and elders. As C. S. Lewis memorably put it: Aslan is on the move. He is certainly on the move in our current process, but he has also been on the move for some time at Bethlehem. The Chief Shepherd has led Bethlehem's undershepherds for a long time now. Jesus will lead his church at the helm and I am joining a team and serving a flock that are gifts of his grace. I want to know these gifts well. Ronald

Reagan once said that he always reminded himself in the oval office that it was not his office – it was the office of the people. I am entering with the same mentality. How can we serve the flock entrusted to our care as undershepherds and be more faithful to the leading of our Chief Shepherd?

What role models do you have for your pastoral ministry?

I find myself quoting George Whitefield, Martyn Lloyd-Jones, and John Piper more than any other preachers, though time would fail me if I had to list all of my influences. My doctoral father, Tom Schreiner, also has had a deep impact upon me.

Do you think that everyone who aspires to be a preaching pastor should pursue a Ph.D.?

I think a Ph.D. is a good aspiration for preaching pastors, but the issue of God's call must be central. I could mention many benefits for one's development in going through a doctoral program, but desiring these benefits does not constitute a calling. God will not lead someone to something without also giving them the grace necessary to lead them through it. A Ph.D. is intense and I have seen it put such a great strain



on some families that some came out with a significant measure of family brokenness. God will lead some preaching pastors to get a Ph.D., but he will not lead everyone in that direction and those that do not get Ph.D.s are certainly not second-class pastors because of it.

What's your favorite biography? Are there any books you consider to be "must-reads" that are often overlooked?

If I had to limit myself to three biographies they would be Arnold Dallimore's two-volume biography of George Whitefield, Iain Murray's biography of Martyn Lloyd-Jones, and Spurgeon's autobiography. My favorite of the three is Dallimore's biography of Whitefield.

In terms of "must-reads" that are often overlooked, I think we are sometimes in danger of reading

summaries of some of the seminal theologians rather than reading them directly. Here I would mention two examples: (1) Martin Luther's commentary on Galatians (no one understood sola fide like Luther), and (2) John Owen's *Communion with God* (Owen is a great guide in terms of how to have a distinct relationship with each member of the Trinity). I find that theologians like these stir my soul because they met God in an experiential way and they write in a way that guides me into the same experience. Theology that is dry is a contradiction in terms when one considers the wonder of scaling the heights and plumbing the depths of the love of God in Christ.

Are you a reader of fiction? Can preachers (and Christians in general) profit from reading fiction?

I love to read fiction – especially

I FIND THAT THEOLOGIAN'S LIKE MARTIN LUTHER AND JOHN OWEN STIR MY SOUL BECAUSE THEY MET GOD IN AN EXPERIENTIAL WAY AND THEY WRITE IN A WAY THAT GUIDES ME INTO THE SAME EXPERIENCE. THEOLOGY THAT IS DRY IS A CONTRADICTION IN TERMS.

fiction that is epic and sweeping in nature. I marvel at the gifts that God gives to people like Tolkien and Lewis when they create alternate worlds that one can almost visit as they read about them. This capacity is certainly a reflection of God as Creator, and it causes me to worship Him. Piper once told our preaching class that “an idle imagination is the birthplace of boring sermons.” Good fiction can fire the imagination like few other things.

Most people don't know that you played basketball in college. What position did you play and who is your favorite NBA player today?

I only agreed to join a college basketball team my last year of college, because basketball had been an idol for so much of my life and I wanted to make sure that I had my priorities in order first. I enjoyed the turn-around effect that I saw my last year. Basketball had always drawn my heart away from God, but now I could use it to draw other people's hearts closer to God as I led a Bible study for some of my teammates. I played shooting guard in college and small forward in high school. In terms of favorite players, I do not watch basketball enough anymore to pick out a favorite, but I marvel at the smooth shot of Kevin Durant

and the sheer athleticism of Blake Griffin and LeBron James.

I have heard that you have a famous cat named Whitefield. Why is he so special?

My cat Whitefield is not regenerate and cannot say “Mesopotamia” in a way that makes me swoon (in fact he can't say it at all!), but he does have one of the best cat personalities I have ever seen. Having a cat named after a famous Christian has also provided many opportunities to talk with others who have done similar things like named their cat “Spurgeon” or even named their Guinea Pig “TULIP.”

Desiring God ministries has become a global ministry in many ways. What are your aspirations for the future?

I think answering this question necessitates a distinction between a global ministry and global recognition. On the one hand, we should all yearn for a global ministry that trumpets the need to see Christ named where he is not named. In that sense, I want a global ministry more than anything! I love our global outreach ministry at Bethlehem, and I want to continue to shepherd it. On the other hand, yearning for global

recognition is spiritually dangerous. It can flower into a fatal flaw that has led some to compromise their message and actually contend with God for the supremacy that belongs to him alone. It is far better to aspire to faithfulness and obedience as an unworthy servant who simply does what he is commanded (Luke 17:10). God can give global recognition to whomever he wills; I do not think it is something we can plan or will. I am a firm believer that “a person cannot receive even one thing unless it is given him from heaven” (John 3:27). For John the Baptist, this meant taking a decreasing role with a fullness of joy that gladly confesses “He must increase, I must decrease” (John 3:30). My main motivation is epitomized by something Whitefield said when he gave the reigns of leadership of the Methodist movement to Wesley. His followers warned him that his name may be forgotten because of what he had done. He replied by saying, “My name? Let the name of Whitefield perish if only the name of Christ be glorified.” The singular passion of a faithful Christian minister is to make much of the name of Christ. I want his name to have global recognition in my ministry, not my name!

From the Horse's Mouth

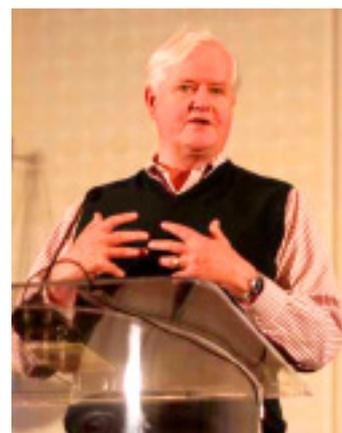
How has Francis Schaeffer



William Edgar

Professor of Apologetics
at Westminster Theological
Seminary

Francis Schaeffer led me to the Lord. I stumbled up the mountain to l'Abri and after a long conversation with this remarkable advocate, I knew Christianity was true. Even to the present, when I am explaining the Gospel to someone, I rehearse in my mind's eye Dr. Schaeffer's incisive way of getting to the question-behind-the-question, and try to do likewise. Most of all, it was his radiant love for the heavenly Father that has stayed with me and continues to inspire me to this day.



Os Guinness

Author of *The American Hour*, *Time for Truth*, *The Call*, *Invitation to the Classics*, *Long Journey Home*, *Unspeakable*, *A Case for Civility*, *A Free People's Suicide*

My two most important living mentors have been Peter Berger and Francis Schaeffer. I am in debt to the former for his profound and magisterial sociological thinking, which has shaped the entire way I understand the world. What I owe Schaeffer is the example of his vision and passion. He thought freely about the whole of life under God, and he always loved God, people and truth passionately in a way that has marked me forever. I will never forget, for example, how his voice often broke when he spoke of the awesome truths of God that overwhelmed him. Of course, when I speak of my debt to Schaeffer, I always include his remarkable wife Edith. We shall not see her like again.

Francis

impacted your life and ministry?



Stephen J. Wellum

Professor of Christian
Theology at The
Southern Baptist Theo-
logical Seminary



Bruce A. Little

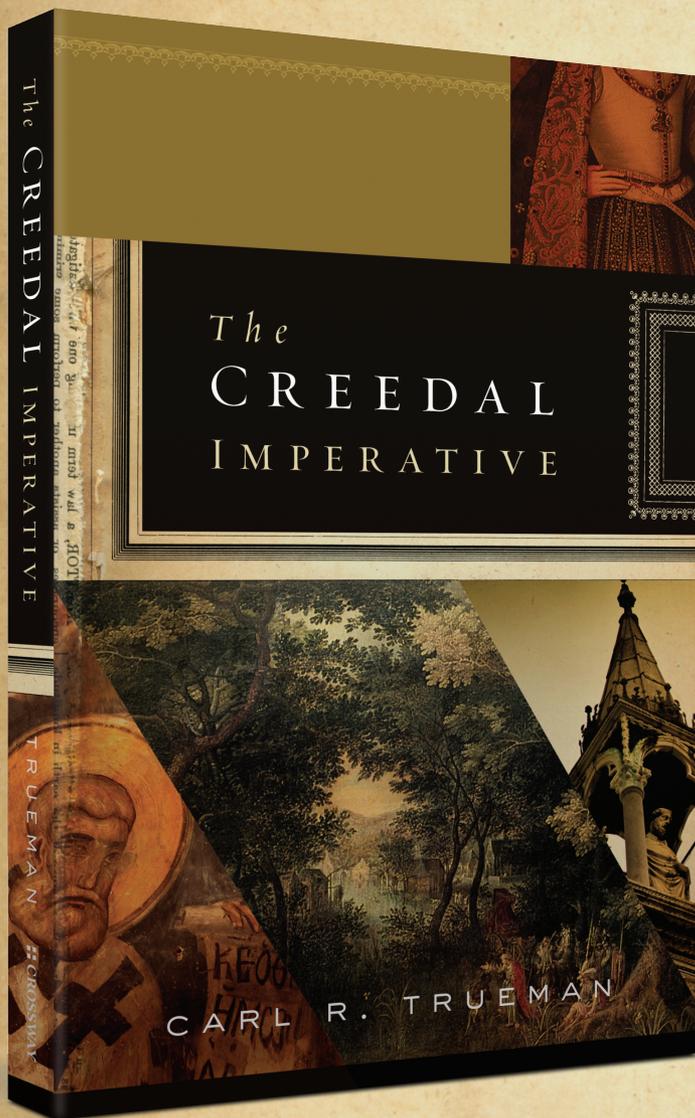
Editor of *Francis
Schaeffer: A Mind and
Heart for God*

First, Schaeffer's personal commitment to the truth of God's Word, his willingness to stand in the gap, and his attempt, along with Edith, to live out the gospel in his life no matter the cost, challenged me to take seriously my commitment to Christ and the gospel. Second, his presenting the "big picture" of Christian theology leading to worldview formation and showing the interconnections between doctrines and their implications for our lives, helped me to see the importance of thinking theologically and bringing every thought captive to Christ's Lordship. Third, his repeated emphasis on "ideas have consequences" helped me see that everyone has a worldview rooted in ideas, that competing ideas and worldviews are not equal, that false ideas lead to disaster both intellectually and practically, and that it is only the truth of the gospel upon which we can stand and build our lives, families, and society. Fourth, his courageous fight for the authority of Scripture and the inerrancy of God's Word as a watershed issue in Christian theology, helped me see the utter importance of proclaiming and defending the whole counsel of God rooted in an authoritative Bible.

I was introduced to the writings of Francis Schaeffer in the late 70s about fifteen years after becoming a Christian. It was Schaeffer who opened my understanding of the gospel as having implications for all of life and not just about going to heaven when I died. It was spiritually enriching to begin thinking of the truth of Christ not just as religious talk about something that was waiting for me in heaven, but about the present reality in which all men live over which Christ is Lord. I will be forever grateful that Schaeffer taught me not only how to think, but the importance of thinking about what I believe and why I believe and then to consider the implications of my beliefs for all of life.

Schaeffer

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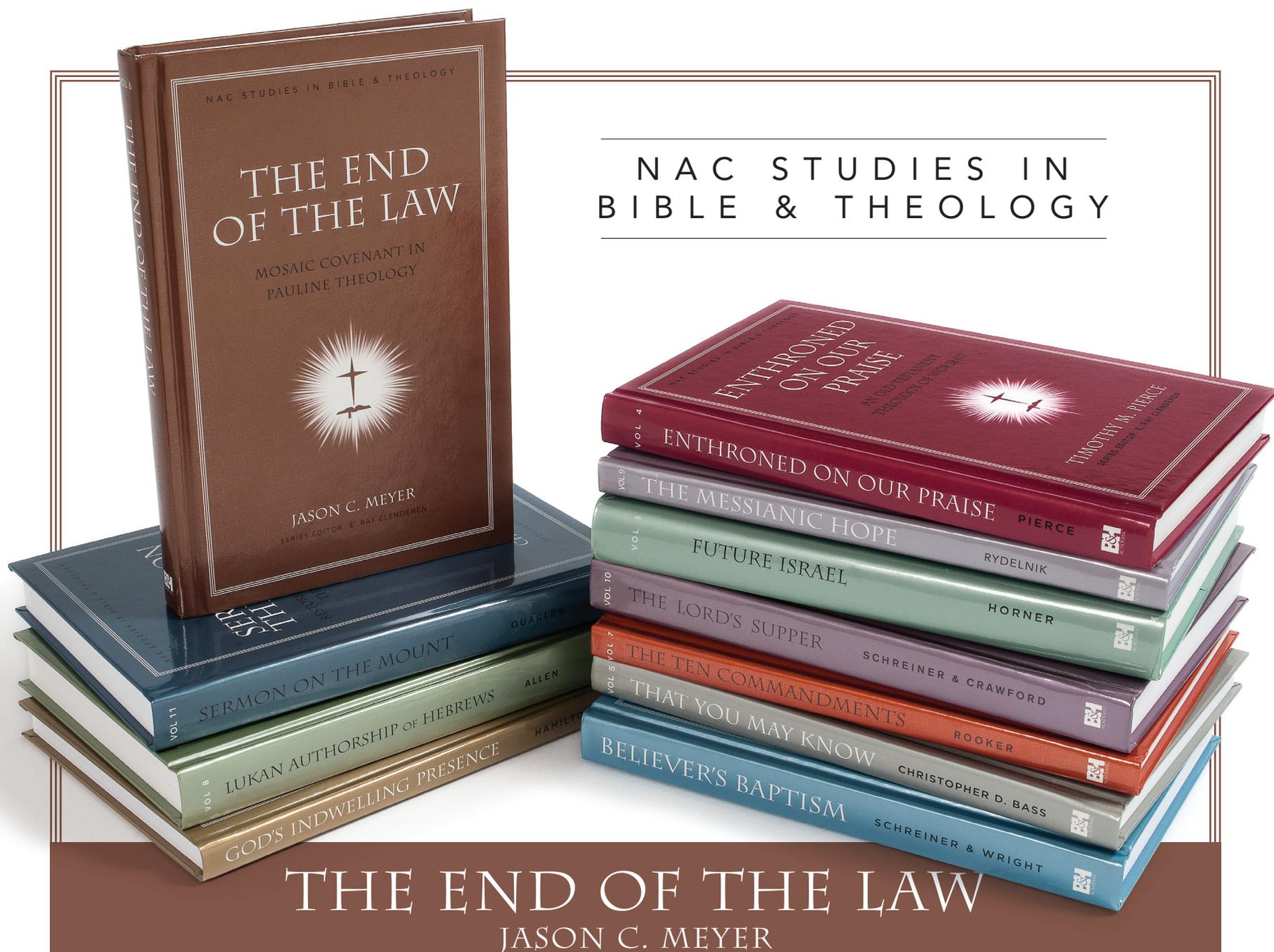
“In its creeds and confessions, the church affirms its allegiance to the God of the gospel and commits itself to think, speak, and govern its life in ways shaped by the gospel. This lively book, full of vigorous argument and biblical good sense, tells us why.”

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THE END OF THE LAW

JASON C. MEYER

"For the last forty years of my ministry no biblical issue has proved more recurrent or more vexing than the nature of the Mosaic law as it relates to the gospel and the new covenant. The pastoral implications for how you preach the gospel, aim at sanctification, comfort strugglers, give assurance, and admit people to membership in the church, are huge. Jason Meyer is a good guide. I found myself writing "YES!" in the margins repeatedly. And there were enough "Aha" moments of fresh discovery to make me want to keep going. I thank God for this younger scholar. His book is a precious gift to the church."

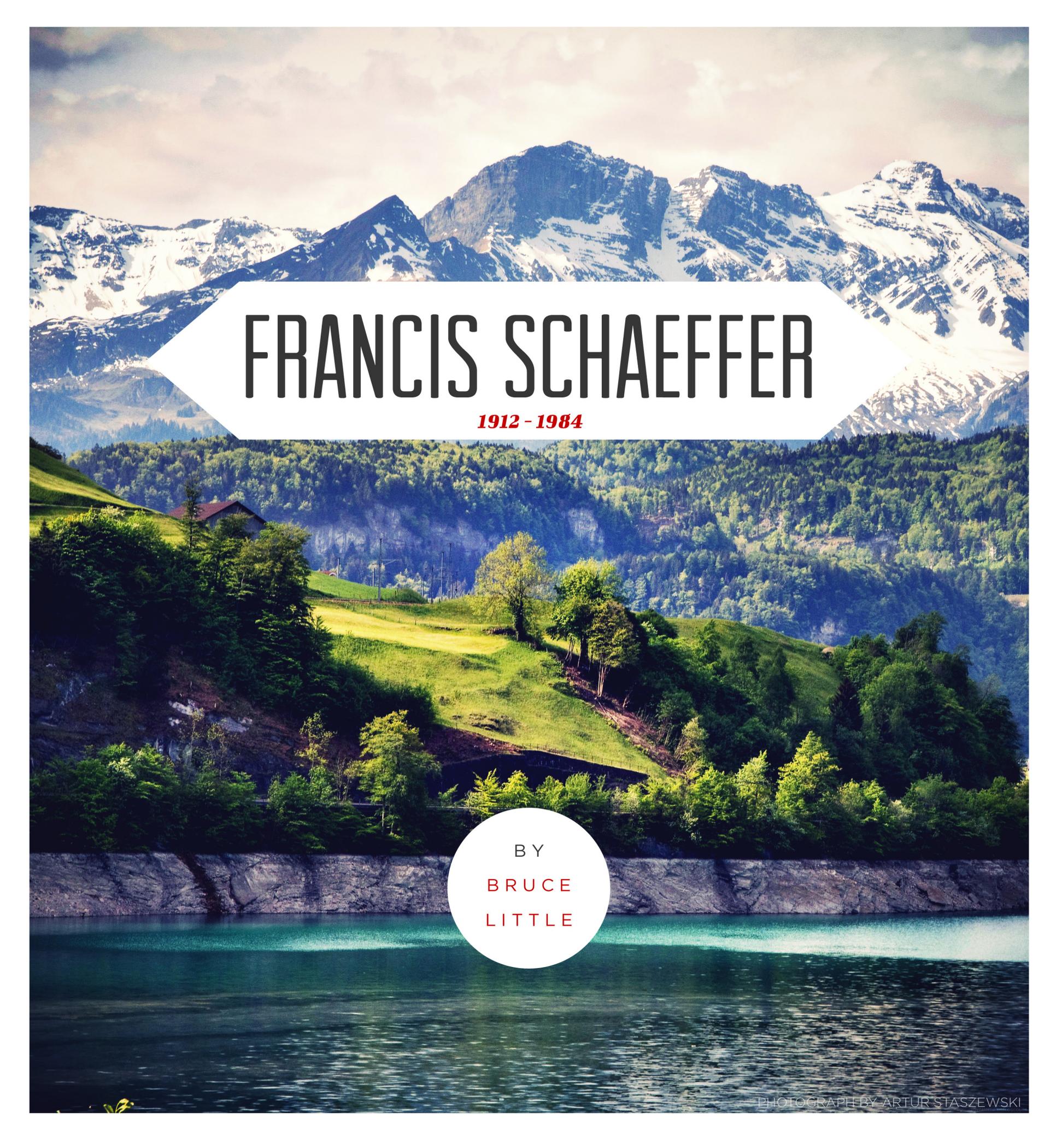
—JOHN PIPER

Commonly understood as the first theologian of the Christian faith, Paul set forth the categories by which we describe our relationship with Christ. Did he understand the new covenant Jesus announced at the Last Supper primarily as a replacement of the old Mosaic covenant God made with Israel, or as a renewal and completion of the old? Jason Meyer surveys the various differences that have been argued between the two covenants in *The End of the Law*, carefully and inductively performing a semantic, grammatical, and contextual analysis of all the Pauline texts dealing with covenant concepts.

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FRANCIS SCHAEFFER

1912 - 1984

BY
BRUCE
LITTLE

FRANCIS A. SCHAEFFER (1912-1984) WAS BORN IN GERMANTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA ON JANUARY 30, 1912 TO FRANZ A. SCHAEFFER III AND BESSIE WILLIAMSON AND SPENT MOST OF HIS ADULT LIFE WITH HIS WIFE EDITH AND THEIR FOUR CHILDREN (PRISCILLA, SUSAN, DEBORAH, AND FRANK) IN SWITZERLAND WHERE EVENTUALLY THE WELL-KNOWN WORK OF L'ABRI FELLOWSHIP WAS ESTABLISHED (1955). THE SCHAEFFER'S YOUNGEST DAUGHTER DEBORAH RECOUNTS THAT OFTEN THEIR FATHER WOULD REMIND THE CHILDREN HOW FORTUNATE THEY WERE TO HAVE LIVED IN EUROPE. IN FACT, SHE EXPRESSES WITH GREAT FONDNESS THE RICH FAMILY LIFE THEY ENJOYED TOGETHER LIVING IN EUROPE.

Raised in a working-class neighborhood, after graduating from high school, Schaeffer attended Drexel Institute looking at a career in engineering. His life, however, turned in a different direction within a year as a consequence of his becoming a Christian.

A GROWING TENSION

At the age of eighteen (Sept, 1930) Schaeffer committed his life wholly to Christ at a tent meeting. He had read the Bible through over a period of some months (a yearly custom he would continue throughout his life as evidenced by the markings in his Bible) and was convinced that the Bible dealt with life seriously and honestly. He was struck with the forthrightness with which the Bible offered answers to the questions of life. For Schaeffer, the answers the Bible gave treated life as it really was, complicated and difficult at times but gave answers true to the reality of the universe. The Bible was not about a pretend world, but about the reality in which all humanity lived and explained how things were so out-of-joint and unfair. Precisely because this world was so unfair Schaeffer would repeatedly say that that was why he was a Christian. The truth of Christianity teaches that al-

though humanity lives in the midst of a tragic situation because of sin there is a real answer in Christ that gives hope to the human heart.

While attending Drexel in the fall of 1930, Schaeffer experienced a growing tension in his soul. Late that summer at a tent meeting, he had given his life wholly to Christ. On that night, he left the meeting with a renewed sense of joy but in time it would also bring a growing sense that God was leading him to prepare for Christian ministry. The tension developed between honoring his father and mother, who at that time were of the opinion that pastors were not much use to society, and preparing for precisely that station in life. However, true to his commitment to live wholly for the Lord, he realized he must take proper steps in that direction.

Upon turning nineteen (Jan 30, 1931), he stopped attending evening classes at Drexel and enrolled in Latin and German classes at a local high school. In the fall of 1931 he entered Hampden-Sydney College focusing on pre-ministerial studies. As the story is told by Edith in her wonderful book, *The Tapestry*, the morning Francis left for Hampden-Sydney was a most difficult day in the life of both father and son. His dad was clear that becoming a pastor was not what he had in mind for his son, nevertheless at that early morning meeting, just before his dad left for work and Francis left for Hampden-Sydney, his father agreed to pay for the first semester of college. That morning as Schaeffer left for Hampton-Sydney he demonstrated that his commitment made almost a year before to give himself whole to Christ was no mere emotion of the moment. Moreover, his humble resolve to study for the ministry had a positive impact on his dad who later came to faith in Christ.

At Hampden-Sydney Schaeffer continued a life committed to Christ by faithful study and sustained witness although most students were more interested in the party life than salvation. But nothing deterred Schaeffer in his witness and commitment to follow the Lord's leading in his life. In 1935 he graduated from Hampden-Sydney *magna cum laude* which proved no small accomplishment.

ment considering the fact he was dyslexic.

A PATH NONE COULD HAVE IMAGINED

In the summer of 1935, he married Edith Seville, daughter of missionary parents who had served with the China Inland Mission. That fall Francis entered Westminster Theological Seminary in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania to train for the ministry. However, in 1937 Schaeffer, along with Vernon Grounds and others, transferred to Faith Theological Seminary which had just been founded by Carl McIntire and Allan MacRae. In a letter to R. Laird Harris announcing his desire to make application to this new seminary which first held classes at Faith Bible Presbyterian Church in Wilmington, Delaware, Schaeffer expresses his high expectations for this new seminary. He notes the school's clear pre millennial position, its commitment to scholarship, spiritual life, and evangelism with an uncompromising (his word was militant) defense of God's Word was the balance for which he had been looking.

Schaeffer also joined Carl McIntire's International Council of Christian Churches (ICCC). That relationship continued until sometime later, after Schaeffer moved to Europe, the relationship (both personally and organizationally) would come to an end. McIntire had established the ICCC as a conservative counter to the liberal Federal and World Council of Churches which was what initially drew Schaeffer to the organization.

Schaeffer was among the first students to graduate from Faith in 1938. Furthermore, he was the first to be ordained in the newly formed Bible Presbyterian Church. For the next ten years, before going to Europe, he served pastorates in Grove City, Pennsylvania and in St. Louis, Missouri. Eventually Schaeffer would leave the Bible

Presbyterian Church and join the Reformed Presbyterian Church, Evangelical Synod which was a precursor of the Presbyterian Church in America. According to Edith, after serving at a Bible Summer Conference camp in New Hampshire, their desire was to go to New England and open closed churches (in fact, they would in the years to come pray for New England). As their story unfolded quite a different path lay ahead for the Schaeffers - a path none could have imagined.

1947 found the Schaeffers serving in a Presbyterian church in St. Louis. That spring at a meeting of the Independent Board of Presbyterian Foreign Missions, it was decided that Schaeffer should go to war-torn Europe to assess the situation and make recommendations for establishing a children's work. Schaeffer had always had a deep interest in evangelizing and teaching children, a fact often missed by those familiar with his later work at L'Abri. In fact, Schaeffer, with the encouragement of Dr. Lathem, had created a children's program named Children for Christ. Started in 1944, by 1945 it had achieved a national status. A tract explaining the ministry described it as "a complete, integrated program for the entire children's work of the local church or mission." Schaeffer's trip to Europe

would not only look to establish chapters of Children for Christ, but as a secretary for McIntire's ICCC he would encourage church leaders to join ICCC.

In the January 6, 1949 issue of the *Christian Beacon*, Schaeffer writes that on July 6, 1947 he left from "La Guardia Field with my mother and wife constituting the farewell committee, I felt as though I was being shot to another planet. I will never forget that night in Paris, soon after I arrived, when the realization grew upon me of what a failure this effort could be. A considerable



EDITH AND FRANCIS

amount of the Lord's money, supplied by the Independent Board was involved and three months of my life." He recounts how he prayed most of the night, something that would characterize the life of the Schaeffers throughout their lives.

That summer he toured Europe for ninety days traveling to thirteen countries (some more than once) and conducting an average of two interviews a day. In addition he attended various conferences throughout Europe meeting with church leaders trying to persuade them to join the ICC. The enormity of this undertaking both in terms of difficulty of travel and scope of activity cannot be overstated, nor should its impact on Christianity in Europe be understated. Schaeffer's *News Letter* gives a detailed chronicling of those days which reveal the arduous nature of the trip as well as its amazing scope. Furthermore, Schaeffer's account of those ninety days in Europe reveals his acute sense of God's leading presence and sustaining power throughout. Still the body is only flesh and such events try the limits of one physically and emotionally. In fact, Edith notes that on his return he was physically and emotionally exhausted.

L'ABRI

With the trip now a deeply embedded memory, in 1948 Schaeffer and his family moved to Champry, Switzerland where they began the children's work—Children for Christ. In an interview, Deborah Schaeffer Middelman noted that her dad and mom spent six months of the year traveling from Norway to Portugal teaching leaders how to teach children the truth of Christianity. On February 14, 1955, however, they received word from the authorities that they were to leave the staunchly Roman Catholic community of Champry. The official action taken cited as Schaeffer's unacceptable religious influence on the community. At some point, Schaeffer had led an agnostic in the community to Christ, hence the complaint of religious influence. According to the timeline in the front of Schaeffer's Bible, they moved to Huemoz in the Swiss Alps on March 31, 1955 where the L'Abri (Fr for shelter) Fellowship would soon begin.

The story of L'Abri is quite another story in itself and Edith Schaeffer has done a marvelous job telling that story in a book by that title and in her book *The Tapestry*. The truth is, maybe thousands came to L'Abri during the days of Schaeffer, many of whom came to faith in Christ. It was a place where the Truth of the Bible was discussed in light of the realities of life and the Chris-

IT WAS A PLACE WHERE THE TRUTH OF THE BIBLE WAS DISCUSSED IN LIGHT OF THE REALITIES OF LIFE AND THE CHRISTIAN LIFE WAS LIVED OUT IN THE CONTEXT OF COMMUNITY.

tian life was lived out in the context of community. In an interview with Jane Stuart Smith, she tells of her first encounter with the Schaeffers when she was still an unbeliever, recalling how struck she was with the sense of family and Christian authenticity. Later Schaeffer led her to Christ and eventually she gave up a very promising career in opera to work at L'Abri for the next forty years. Part of that time she served as Schaeffer's international secretary.

1955 proved an eventful time for Schaeffer. On June 5, after much prayer Schaeffer resigned from the Independent Board to be effective June 30. This came about after a trip to the States where he was alarmed at the lack of love and understanding revealed in those who were standing for the very Truth he held so dear. The other major event came in July when L'Abri received formal/legal status. At this point, the Schaeffers made some significant choices regarding how they would live their ministry. In an interview Randal Macaulay (son-in-law) recalls the commitments made regarding the ministry: (1) they would not publically do fund raising; (2) they would not advertise for people to come; (3) they would

not advertise for helpers; (4) they would not craft a plan for the future of L'Abri.

A SPIRITUAL CRISIS

However, there had been a crucial time in Schaeffer's life (1951-52) that explains not only these four points, but his life and ministry as a whole. It should, however, be pointed out that the Schaeffers never expected everybody should minister under these terms, only that it was how they believed God was leading in their ministry. This in itself speaks volumes to Schaeffer's understanding of the Christian life as a life lived out in the reality of the Holy Spirit. For this part of the story, one must go back to 1951-52 while the Schaeffers were still in Champry. Apart from this event Schaeffer cannot be truly understood or appreciated.

According to the Preface in *True Spirituality*, Schaeffer had what he called a 'spiritual crisis' during those days. It arose out of his sense that personally he had lost some of the reality of Christ in his life since the early days of his conversation. A second concern was what he perceived as a lack of reality of what the Bible said should be evident in the lives of those who named Christ. Schaeffer writes: "That in honesty I had to go back and rethink my whole position". The intense struggle of this time of prayer and searching the Bible yielded the conviction that he had been taught little of the "meaning of the finished work of Christ for our present lives". The Bible was about reality, not just the reality of the world we live in, but the reality of Christ in us as we live out the Christian life in this world. Accordingly, Schaeffer believed it was not enough to stand for the historic truth of Christianity and theological purity of the Church, but it also mattered how one did this. His conclusion was that the reality of Christ meant one would reveal the love of Christ even in controversy.

The weight of these two issues gave form to Schaeffer's

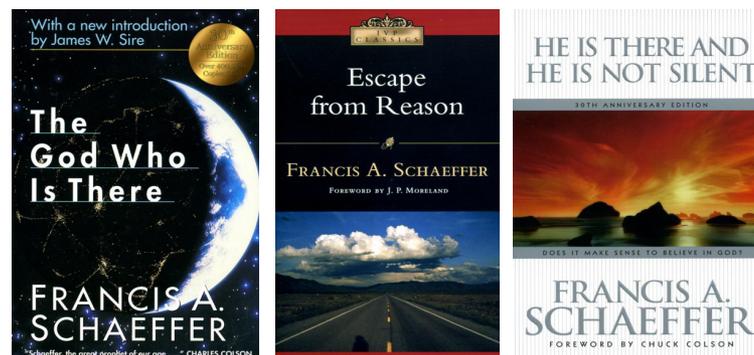
struggle as he sought to come to terms with the reality of Christ and the Holy Spirit in everyday living. His early thoughts on this subject were eventually developed as lectures later resulted in the book *True Spirituality*. Schaeffer claimed that this episode formed "the real basis of L'Abri" and according to his reckoning the resulting book may have been his most important book. It is interesting however that today one seldom hears mention of that book.

Three books serve as the foundation for all his other books, forming a trilogy: *The God Who Is There*, *Escape from Reason*, and *He Is There and He Is Not Silent*. In 1982, the works of Francis Schaeffer were edited by Schaeffer and published in a five-volume set in which the trilogy is in the order in which it was written. This

order reveals the development and foundation of his thinking apologetically and is essential to understanding Schaeffer and his apologetic method (though I think it is fair to say he would not call it a method). Historic Christianity, according to Schaeffer, was creation centered and central to cre-

ation was the fact that God created man in His image. The first apologetic implication of creation was that man had intrinsic worth which meant he was to be treated with respect and love even in his fallen state. Even in his fallenness man had worth and nobility.

This truth moved Schaeffer to take all men seriously and to answer the honest questions of fallen man. He would say that when confronted with another member of the human race, we should first see a human being - not first a Christian or non-Christian. This made all the difference in the world in Schaeffer's apologetics. He had a love for humanity and a deep sympathy for the brokenness of humanity because of sin. He identified with this brokenness and saw others as those with whom he shared humanity in common. In that sense, all of humanity was in the same predicament with only one



ultimate solution who is Christ.

The Christian's apologetic task, according to Schaeffer, is to show man where the point of tension existed between his false presuppositions and the way the world really is. Of course this was not a game for Schaeffer and he urged the Christian always to give the answer as understood in light of historic Christianity and to do so in a loving and compassionate tone. For Schaeffer, the real point of contact with the modern (and post modern mind) was reality. Regardless what presuppositions a man claims

THIS VOICE WHICH HAD BEEN SO STRONG IN THE INERRANCY CONTROVERSY WAS NOW SPEAKING A PROPHETIC WORD TO THE CHURCH IN LOVE BUT WITH AN UNMISTAKABLE TONE OF CONVICTION. HIS CHRISTIAN LIFE WAS ENDING MUCH AS IT HAD BEEN LIVED.

as grounds for his worldview, Schaeffer argued that they can be tested for truthfulness when pressed against the reality in which every person must live. In this, Schaeffer shared a view often expressed by C. S. Lewis.

LIVING OUT THE COMMITMENT

In October 1978, Schaeffer was diagnosed at the Mayo Clinic with lymphoma cancer. In March 1979 it appeared the chemotherapy had done its work and the doctors pronounced his cancer was in remission. From then to his death five years later Schaeffer worked tire-

lessly living out the commitment made back in September 1930. It was a commitment that resulted in, among other achievements, many coming to faith in Christ, the founding of the ministry of L'Abri and authoring over twenty-five books.

Eventually cancer won the day and on May 15, 1984 he passed into the presence of the Lord surrounded by family and the reading of the Word. I saw him at a large university gathering just weeks before his death when he was promoting his latest book, *The Great Evangelical Disaster*. Weak and living on milk shakes, Schaeffer's keen mind and unremitting commitment to Christ and the truth of Scripture was clearly manifest. His remaining strength was given to warn against cultural accommodation by the church which he argued would, if it continued, create a great evangelical disaster. This voice which had been so strong in the inerrancy controversy was now speaking a prophetic word to the church in love but with an unmistakable tone of conviction. His Christian life was ending much as it had been lived.

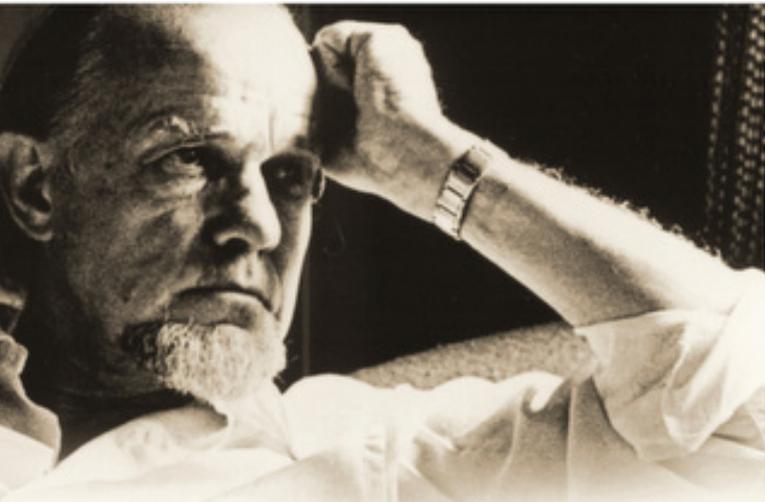
In response to Schaeffer's death his lifelong friend Vernon Grounds spoke with mixed emotions: "Sadness swept over me. Yet absent from the body, Fran was present with the Lord. Death, I reflected, was indeed great gain for him, since he had valiantly fought a long battle with cancer, but his death was a great loss for worldwide evangelicalism. My own surmise, however, is that while many current evangelical luminaries will fade into obscure references in church history, Francis Schaeffer will be recognized as a key figure in twentieth-century evangelicalism" (*Christianity Today*, June 15, 1984). As one influenced by the writings of Schaeffer, I would hope that those who make up twenty-first evangelicalism would prove the words of Grounds prophetic.

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A Scale from 1 to 10

How true was **Francis Schaeffer** to

Cornelius Van Til's Presuppositionalism?



5 | **Scott Oliphint**

Author of *Christian Apologetics Past and Present* (2 vols.)

As the first thinking theologian I read, it was he who drew me to read Van Til. His highlighting of the notion of presuppositions in *The God Who Is There* was revolutionary for me as a new Christian. With respect to Van Til, however, Schaeffer did not explicitly or consistently carry his own theology into the area of apologetics and culture. So, for example, he was weak on the covenantal antithesis (i.e., either “in Adam” or “in Christ”) that accrues to every person, and I can’t remember his ever building explicitly on Paul’s notion of a universal knowledge of God (sense of deity), from Romans 1:18f. These biblical truths are central to Van Til, and seemed relatively non-existent in Schaeffer’s own works.

8 | **John Frame**

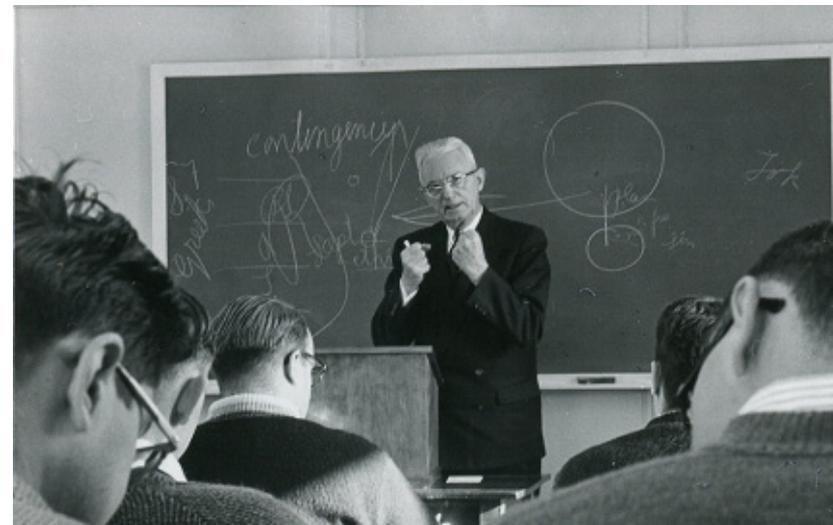
Author of *Cornelius Van Til: An Analysis of his Thought*

Schaeffer considered himself to be a presuppositionalist. He used some arguments more typical of other schools of thought, but what made him an effective evangelist to intellectuals, I think, was his Van Tillianism. He always brought the argument back to basics: the Christian-theistic worldview, vs. “matter, motion, time, and chance.” And his argument was transcendental: Matter, motion, time, and chance is the only alternative to Christianity, and on that basis there can be no beauty, no love, no reasoning. Schaeffer did not cross every “t” and dot every “i” in Van Til’s way, and he was not as profound in his analysis of intellectual history. But on the whole he was more effective in addressing the cultured despisers of Christianity in his day.

5 | **Bryan Follis**

Author of *Truth with Love: The Apologetics of Francis Schaeffer*

At one level, Schaeffer scores 9 for his total acceptance of the utter importance of recognizing the value of presuppositions and as such is very Van Tillian. However, he differs profoundly from Van Til in his view that while there is no common ground with the unbeliever, the Christian can find a point of common contact, and thus he scores a 2. Schaeffer argued that this point of contact arose because the non-Christian was not consistent to his own values and so strayed into the Christian’s territory thus enabling in practice effective communication.



SPIRITUAL REALITY

**FRANCIS SCHAEFFER
ON THE CHRISTIAN LIFE
BY
WILLIAM EDGAR**

Francis Schaeffer (1912-1984) is most often remembered for his apologetics. He had a unique way of persuading all comers that the Christian Faith is true and ought to be embraced. He could expose the inner contradictions of the most rationalistic materialist or the most irrational mystic. Fewer people remember him for his teaching on sanctification, or the Christian life. Regrettably so, because according to Schaeffer himself it was his convictions and practice about spirituality that were at the heart of the work of l'Abri, where so many lives, including my own, were turned around.

THE CRISIS

The Schaeffers moved to Europe in 1948, believing that the crucial battle lines were there. While teaching churches at home and abroad about the dangers of the surrounding culture, its parallels in modern theology, and the urgent need to stand clearly for the gospel, Schaeffer came to discover that something was missing in his life. The way he often put it, he found himself severely deficient in *reality*. He was a believer, but the present work of the Lord in his life was not being felt. As he describes the problem, which he does throughout his writings, his letters and his speeches, the fervor and warmth he had known as a new Christian were on the wane. He entered a serious crisis. In the Introduction to *True Spirituality* he says it this way:

Gradually, however, a problem came to me – the problem of reality. This had two parts: first, it seemed to me that among many of those who held the orthodox position, one saw little reality in the things that the Bible so clearly says should be the result of Christianity. Second, it gradually grew on me that my own reality was less than it had been in the early days after I had become a Christian. I realized that in honesty I had to go back and rethink my whole position.¹

We do not know all the causes that brought him to such a point of crisis. No doubt, there was a cumulative effect.

Schaeffer was unsettled by the criticism launched at him for moving to Europe by his mentor Allan MacRae. Professor MacRae had wished for him not to move to Europe, and had also begun to differ with Schaeffer's hard-line. But Schaeffer was increasingly drawn to the European theater for a number of reasons, including his sense that the historic heartland of Western Christianity was flagging, and leading the rest of the world in an unhealthy direction.²

A more significant lead-up to his crisis was an increasing concern that "The Movement" of which he was a part was not treating outsiders, or even colleagues, with love and respect. While studying at Westminster Theological Seminary, the Schaeffers were drawn to a group that held a strong position on premillennialism as well as a commitment to eschew the so-called "liberties," smoking, drinking, dancing, gambling, and the theater. They were swayed by the leadership of Allan MacRae, J. Oliver Buswell, and the fiery Carl McIntire. Schaeffer joined "The Movement," finished seminary at their newly founded Faith Theological Seminary in Wilmington Delaware, and became the first ordained minister in the new Bible Presbyterian Church. McIntire was the founder of both the ACCC (American Council of Christian Churches, 1941) and the ICCC, (International Council of Christian Churches, 1948), counterparts to the National Council of Churches and the World Council of Churches, which were deemed apostate. But later, they would come to believe their position was overly harsh.

In August, 1948, Schaeffer was an organizing delegate to the ICCC in Amsterdam, which would become the headquarters. Significantly, it was during the meetings of the ICCC that he met Hans Rookmaaker, whose fiancée, Anky Huitker was one of the administrators. Francis and Hans would become the closest of friends. As their friendship grew, they both expressed a growing concern for their mutual spiritual coldness. No doubt some of that stemmed from the separatist mentality of their church traditions. Rookmaaker had joined the *Vrijgemaakt* (Liberated) Churches as a new Christian

in 1945. Although he would always be faithful to that denomination there were times when he experienced some of the same kinds of dryness as his new friend coming from America. At any rate, this growing conviction about the lack of reality in “The Movement” simmered, until it finally burst into a serious crisis of faith.

A third cause, surely not incidental, came as the result of Schaeffer’s encounters with Karl Barth, no doubt the twentieth century’s most influential theologian. Barth distinguished himself by strongly opposing theological liberalism. Liberalism in all its varieties horizontalised the Gospel, making it all too human.

Instead, Barth and the Neo-orthodox movement aspired to reemphasize God’s full transcendence, to the point where at least Barth himself rejected anything resembling natural theology. Schaeffer had been concerned to combat liberalism. But he had not found Neo-orthodoxy (as Europeans tended to call it, “Dialectical Theology” or, sometimes, “Crisis Theology”) to be any improvement. Neo-orthodox theology differed in a number of crucial ways from the historic Christian position. Whereas the traditional Reformed view of election is that God from all eternity graciously chooses his people for salvation, Barth taught that divine election as well as reprobation are not of individual humans. Instead, both center in Jesus Christ, who is God’s elect for all people, and who became condemned for the sake of all people. For all intents and purposes, this had the feeling of universalism about it, something evangelicals at the time rejected. Furthermore, whereas the traditional view of the Bible

is that it is God’s inspired Word, without error in all that it affirms, Barth held that only Christ is the true Word, and while the Bible *contains* God’s Word, it is not to be equated in any literal sense with God’s verbal revelation.³ Though he recognized the differences, Schaeffer characterized both liberalism and Neo-orthodoxy as belonging to “The New Theology,” finding that their “existentialist methodology” is basically the same. If the Bible cannot be equated with the Word of God, then we can only meet him, in effect, by a leap into the dark, a mystical step of faith.⁴

Schaeffer visited Barth with his friend James O. Buswell in August of 1950.

Later, he sent Barth a copy of a paper he had written for the congress in Amsterdam on Neo-orthodoxy, requesting a follow-up visit. Barth refused and wrote a stinging letter accusing the two of “criminology” rather than any authentic attempt at dialogue. Go ahead and accuse me of heresy and repudiate my life-work as a whole, “But why

WHATEVER ELSE LED UP TO HIS CRISIS, IN THE EARLY SPRING OF 1951 HE PUT EVERYTHING INTO QUESTION, AND FOR AT LEAST TWO MONTHS HE BUSIED HIMSELF WITH RETHINKING “THE WHOLE MATTER OF CHRISTIANITY.”

and to what purpose do you wish for conversation?

...Why bother yourselves anymore about the man from Basle, whom you have finished off so splendidly and so totally?” And it goes downhill from there!⁵

Although Schaeffer would stand by his critique, such a condemnation by Karl Barth had to have shaken him profoundly.

Whatever else led up to his crisis, in the early spring of 1951 he put everything into question, and for at least two months he busied himself with rethinking “the whole matter of Christianity.”⁶ He either walked outside or paced up and down the large hayloft in their chalet

in Villars, Switzerland, thinking everything through, as though for the first time. He emerged knowing the Gospel was true and that he could have his longed-for reality. “Finally the sun came out. I saw that my earlier decision to step from agnosticism to Bible-believing Christianity was right.”⁷ Eventually the Schaeffers left “The Movement.” L’Abri became an independent faith mission in 1955. The following year Schaeffer realigned to the new RPCES (Reformed Presbyterian Church Evangelical Synod).⁸

TRUE SPIRITUALITY

According to his own testimony, Francis Schaeffer would build on this fresh encounter with the basics of the Christian faith for the rest of his life. He had found *reality*! During an extended furlough to the States (from May, 1953 to September, 1954), he preached and wrote more and more on sanctification. I was privileged to hear the series a decade later during one of my stays at l’Abri. His talks were put into a specific order, and became the book, *True Spirituality*.⁹

Most of the major emphases in Schaeffer’s approach to sanctification are contained in this marvelous book. At the same time, one may find him exploring these and related themes, giving them special emphasis, in his other books. And it is well to remember that his sermons and his correspondence contain a good deal of material on the Christian life. So, while it would be safe to concentrate on the book, *True Spirituality*, nevertheless, close attention should also be paid to these other sources.¹⁰

We can identify seven overlapping themes in Francis Schaeffer’s approach to the Christian life. Surely there are more. But these are basic. They all fall under the general heading of *reality*.

THE REALITY OF TRUTH

(1) Truth, which he sometimes dubbed “true-truth,” is the backdrop for all that is adrift in modern culture. But it is also utterly basic for the Christian life. Schaeffer stressed time and again that one cannot even conceive

of beginning the Christian life without the foundation of the basic truths of the Christian worldview. Toward the beginning of *True Spirituality*, he states that there can be no Christian life if one is not a Christian. It is impossible to begin living the Christian life before being a believer.¹¹ He stresses that sanctification cannot occur without justification. Always the apologist, Schaeffer emphasizes that conversion is not a “religious experience,” but by acknowledging four ultimate truths, and answering four basic questions:

1. Do you believe that God exists and that he is a personal God, and that Jesus Christ is God – remembering that we are not talking of the *word* or *idea* god, but of the infinite-personal God who is there?
2. Do you acknowledge that you are guilty in the presence of God – remembering that we are not talking about guilt feelings, but true moral guilt?
3. Do you believe that Jesus Christ died in space and time, in history, on the cross, and that when He died His substitutional work of bearing God’s punishment against sin was fully accomplished and complete?
4. On the basis of God’s promises in His written communication to us, the Bible, do you (or have you) cast yourself on this Christ as your personal Savior – not trusting in anything you yourself have ever done or ever will do?¹²

For Schaeffer, entering into the Christian faith meant acknowledging these Gospel basics. Of course, there is more to the biblical worldview than simply these four items. He elucidates some of the most important further implications of the Gospel in various places. Gleaning from various sources, I have come up with seven of them:

- (i) God, the Holy Trinity, is pre-existent.
- (ii) The universe is God’s creation.
- (iii) The fall was a catastrophic event that affected human

beings and the whole world.

(iv) Jesus Christ, God's Son is the way, the truth and the life.

(v) Salvation is God's free gift to anyone lifting the empty hands of faith.

(vi) Sanctification is an ongoing process of dying to sin and living in freedom

(vii) In the great day of the resurrection, believers will be glorified, body and soul.

Of course, becoming a believer does not require an extensive knowledge of Christian doctrine. It is sufficient to understand the four basics above. There will be this life, then all eternity for learning and going deeper into the inexhaustible things of God.

INWARD REALITY

(2) The second principle for Schaeffer's approach to the Christian life is that our internal world is the primary arena for spirituality. Following conversion we must (as he liked to put it) "possess our possessions." (This can be stated in the more traditional language of Reformed theology as "becoming what we are.") So in order to do this, we should understand that sanctification respects the basic biblical anthropology, as Schaeffer understood it. One of the epistemological concepts he worked with in just about every area of his considerations was *ideas have consequences*. He always places the thought world before any words or actions. This runs against much of the neo-Marxist scholarship that flourished around him. Indeed, part of his emphasis was in deliberate contradistinction to neo-Marxism, which so emphasizes the power of culture and social institutions that he believed the freedom of human thought was threatened. Perhaps the two most important exponents of this approach were the Frankfurt School and the

Birmingham School. Both, in their own way, were conservative reactions to the mass culture promulgated by the Nazis and the Stalinists. They have been credited with spawning the more rebellious counter-cultural movements of the 1960s, trends with which Schaeffer was quite conversant.

Accordingly, much in the Christian life is *inward*. Schaeffer means by this that external results stem from an internal conscious decision. Moral battles, he would say, are not fought first in the external world, but in the mind. He discusses this extensively in his chapter, "Freedom in the Thought Life," in *True*

Spirituality.¹³ Here he argues that thought-life comes first, then moral consequences. Using passages such as Romans 1:18ff. and Romans 12:1-2, he maintains that the beginning of moral decadence is in the mind. Commenting on Romans 1:22, he says, "Thus we see the order: first there was an idea in their thought-life, and then came the outward result of the

idea." From Ephesians 4, he argues that Paul deliberately tells us that the inward disposition is first. "But ye have not so learned Christ" (4:20) stresses the "learning" mechanism: "...an internal thing... and then to external results."¹⁴

Although he knew very well that biblical references to the heart meant something broader than simply our thought process, yet "the important fact is that here we are dealing with the internal world."¹⁵ He marshals passage after passage in support of this claim. Of course, he refers to Matthew 12: 33-37, and 15:1-20 where Jesus teaches that it is not what goes into a person, but their hearts that is the source of corruption. He cites the temptation of Eve in the garden as a case where

HOWEVER MUCH THE CHRISTIAN LIFE IS LED BY OUR THOUGHT-WORLD, NEVERTHELESS, THE ULTIMATE FOUNDATION FOR IT IS THE REALITY OF GOD'S WORKING IN US.

the thought world came first, then the action. Perhaps though he stretches things a bit, although credibly, when he cites the story of Joseph (Gen. 37:4ff.) as proving that thinking is first, then action. First, the brothers hated Joseph, breaking the tenth commandment, and only then did that hatred turn into action.¹⁶ Always the apologist, he cites anthropologist Loren Eiseley's statement in *The Epic of Man* to the effect that ancestral man "has entered his own head..." to shore up his argument from Scripture.¹⁷ Another favorite illustration is from the famous fresco in the Sistine Chapel, where Michelangelo illustrates the creation of Adam. God, the creator, is portrayed as the Ancient of Days, with his arm stretched out, having just made Adam after his own image. But, as Schaeffer likes to point-out, Eve is not yet created, yet she appears nestled under God's other arm, signifying that she is already in his thought, before she is actualized.¹⁸

Typically Schaeffer equates the thought process with free-will. Although convinced that the mind can be sinful (known in Reformed theology as the "noëtic effects" of sin), yet he insists that Adam was an "unprogrammed man," meaning that there was no previous disposition to make the wrong choice. He simply followed faulty logic, caused by his own deliberate choice and nothing else. As he puts it, "There was *no prior conditioning*. What we have is the unit of personality making an absolutely unconditioned choice, *in the thought world*."¹⁹ Even when the Holy Spirit comes to indwell us, he acts inwardly.

The point in this emphasis is no doubt to highlight that human beings are utterly significant. Over and over again, he stresses that our human bodies are vehicles through which the thoughts we think play out into the external world.²⁰ It is decidedly not to reduce the Christian life to a subjective world, nor to an Arminian self-determination. Quite the contrary. Schaeffer was philosophically something like a realist. Throughout all his work he defended the objectivity of the Christian worldview. He stressed over and over again that Christ's appearances to people on earth were not mystical

experiences, but historically measurable. For example, he liked to mention that when Christ appeared to Saul (soon to be Paul) on the Damascus road he spoke to him in the Hebrew language.²¹ So, however much the Christian life is led by our thought-world, nevertheless, the ultimate foundation for it is the reality of God's working in us. This leads us to the next point.

THE REALITY OF THE SUPERNATURAL

(3) The third principle is acknowledging the reality of a supernatural universe. Apparently one morning Francis Schaeffer said to his wife, Edith, something like this: what if we woke up one day and all of the passages about prayer and the Holy Spirit had been removed from the Bible. Not excised as the liberal theologians might do it, but really removed by God himself. What practical difference would that make in our lives? Precious little was their answer.²² So they began to live far more consistently in conscious dependence upon prayer, in the reality of the Holy Spirit.

Having said that the primary arena for the Christian life is inward, the complement to that theme is the objectivity of the supernatural universe. An illustration Schaeffer used several times is "The Universe and Two Chairs."²³ Imagine a room where there are only two chairs and two occupants. The first chair is that of *unbelief*; the second, of *belief*. The occupant of the first chair is a materialist. The second is a believer, who patiently reads his materialist friend's books, and appreciates them, but in the end has to tell him that his knowledge of the universe is woefully incomplete. That is because there is an unseen portion of the universe, as well as a seen portion. The Bible describes both, whereas the materialist's books acknowledge only one.²⁴ As he adds to the illustration Schaeffer asks us to imagine that there is a clock on the wall which is stopped. The materialist says the only way to fix it is to climb up and repair it. The believer says there could be another way, by praying to the one who made the clock and the room and the entire universe.

Next, he changes the terms a bit and argues that there

can be two analogous chairs in the room, the “chair of unfaith” and the “chair of faith. So, not only materialists sit in the wrong chair, but Christians may as well. One can be a believer and still sit in the “chair of unfaith.” By that Schaeffer means that one can really be a Christian, and yet fail to think and act functionally as though the universe were truly and even palpably supernatural. The “chair of faith” is occupied by believers who live in the reality of the supernatural.

What does this look like? Prayer and trusting the Lord for guidance are two of the most important consequences. The Schaeffers believed the old

Evangelical slogan: prayer is not preparation for the battle; prayer *is* the battle. Indeed, Edith Schaeffer often talked of the Christian life as a battle, one that is cosmic, the struggle of the forces of evil against God’s purposes. And prayer was at the center of this struggle. Her *Family Letters* are replete with both prayer requests and numerous instructions on how to pray, when to pray, and why it matters. L’Abri is a faith mission. Not as strict as some, who will only pray about their needs, l’Abri will share prayer requests in their communications.

A new roof, the salvation of a visitor, an upcoming trip, these were legitimate subjects for publication, but only as prayer requests.

L’Abri was quite used to seeing concrete, often dramatic answers to prayer. One incident is well-known in missions circles. When the Schaeffers had been evicted from the Canton de Valais for reasons of “religious influence” (villagers were being converted) their only chance to stay in Switzerland was to move to the Protestant Canton of Vaud. There they did find a wonderful chalet in the village of Huémoz. However, it was for sale, not for rent. So they prayed to the Lord that he would send them a sign, specifically \$1,000, as a confirmation that they were meant to purchase the

chalet. The next morning, in the mail, they opened a letter from a supporter, containing exactly \$1,000. The letter explained that their friend had been visited in the night with a peculiar sense of urgency and so went through the snow to the post box. Other answers were less dramatic, but no less significant. At one point Priscilla, their oldest daughter, was having trouble with her math in school. Algebra was the problem, and she needed a tutor. And so they prayed about it. The next day a certain Czech refugee came to ask the Schaeffers’ help with his wife’s spiritual problems. They were able to do that. Out of gratitude, he asked if there was anything

he could do for them. He was a math teacher...²⁵ More than these concrete examples of answers, prayer characterized all of the life at l’Abri. Every Monday is set apart as a day of prayer at every l’Abri branch. The typical pattern is to spend several hours in the morning after breakfast, first to read some Scripture, or a passage from a Christian book, then to engage in serious, extended prayer. At lunch discussion revolves around the significance of prayer. Prayer goes on in the afternoon, often inspired by the text that was read in the morning.²⁶

WHAT IF WE WOKE UP ONE DAY AND ALL OF THE PASSAGES ABOUT PRAYER AND THE HOLY SPIRIT HAD BEEN REMOVED FROM THE BIBLE?

MYSTICAL REALITY

(4) Some may be surprised to hear Francis Schaeffer speak of mysticism in any positive way, since he so often denounced it as an irrational vice of modern thought. In *True Spirituality* he contrasts the two kinds of mysticism. On the one hand, he deplores the type of mysticism which is simply resignation. Marcus Aurelius and Carl Gustav Jung, he tells us, only knew of such a submissive, involuntary mysticism, a conformity to the way things are. By contrast, when we understand that the dead, now risen Christ really lives in the believer, we can truly talk of mysticism. “Here is true mysticism. Christian mysticism is not the same as non-Christian mysticism,

but I would insist that it is not a lesser mysticism. Indeed, eventually it is a deeper mysticism, for it is not based on contentless experience, but on historic (sic.), space-time reality – on propositional truth.”²⁷ He notes that, with John Calvin, it is proper to speak of a “mystical union with Christ.”²⁸

Schaeffer often talked about our “mystical union “ with Christ leading to a “mystical union of saints.” There ought to be a special spiritual bond between those who belong to Christ, one that cannot be duplicated in the wider world. He is careful to avoid the idea of an amorphous spiritual community. But he strongly emphasized that we as believers have an attachment to one another that is far more than simply a fellowship, or a club of like-minded people.

The mystical union with Christ issued in a spirituality which constantly (moment-by-moment) drew on the power of the risen Lord. In distinction from worldly mysticism, true mysticism is a matter of “active passivity.” This was his way of expressing the way only Christ’s power can bring grace to the believer, and yet there had to be our appropriation. One of Schaeffer’s favorite illustrations of this was the story of Mary, who was told she would give birth to the Messiah. He argues, she could either have refused the privilege, or attempted to achieve the miracle in her own strength. Instead, she said, “Behold, I am the servant of the Lord; let it be according to your word” (Luke 1:38). Schaeffer comments, “Consciously the power must not be from myself. It is the power of the crucified, risen, and glorified Christ, through the agency of the Holy Spirit, by faith.”²⁹

REAL HEALING

(5) The second major section of *True Spirituality* deals with healing. The entire portion is called, “Freedom Now from the Bonds of Sin.” First, Schaeffer looks at what we might call psychological problems. He titles it, “Man’s Separation from Himself.”³⁰ With characteristic poignancy he attacks the tyranny of the conscience. One may take sin and guilt too lightly. But often Christians

take them so seriously that they fail to measure the power of the Lord, of the present effectiveness of the blood of Christ, to forgive and to restore to life. Though perfect healing is reserved for the new heavens and new earth, there can be *substantial healing* now.³¹ This expression occurs repeatedly in Schaeffer’s writings, sermons and letters.

Schaeffer describes the Christian life as a response to attacks coming from the outside, then through the senses, then affects me, until I can yield myself to God, actively, as Mary yielded herself to the virgin conception. It is a battle of ideas, not of externals. The main “idea” is love, which is inward. We respond in love, to the Infinite-personal God who is there. “If Christians can only learn this, very many problems concerning the Christian life would assume a different perspective.”³² Thus, we have the opportunity to move from our psychological problems to a place of healing. As rational and moral beings, we have sinned and become separated not only from God, but from ourselves. As we deny God both intellectually and in our moral conduct, we have no God to go to, but neither do we have any place to hide, since we are “stuck” with being created in God’s image. But by the grace of the Gospel, we may turn, find forgiveness, and begin to commune with God. And we now can say “thank you” to him. As we do, we find the way toward integration.

Real guilt is placed in a completely rational framework, and it is met within the framework, with intellect and feelings of morality meeting each other, without any fracture between them. With all rationality in place, and consciously in place (on the basis of the existence of God and the finished, substitutionary work of Jesus Christ) my real guilt is not overlooked, but is accepted as my responsibility because of my own deliberately doing what I know to be wrong. Then it is reasonably, truly, and objectively dealt with in Christ’s substitutionary work. Now I can say to my

conscience, be still!

Schaeffer goes on to explore ways to overcome the psychological problems associated with the bondage to sin. One of them is fear.

Schaeffer's approach to fear is far removed from much of the (often properly) therapeutic treatment it receives in ordinary psychology. Instead, it is heavily philosophical, although not without psychological consequences. Fear, he argues, comes from three areas: fear of the impersonal, fear of non-being and fear of death. Fear may be expressed in a relatively small dose, or in "the horror of great despair." If we really live out the Christian position we claim we have, these basic fears should subside. This is because God is really there. We can know this, not by a leap into the dark but by a rational acknowledgement of the truth.³³

This same approach can lead us to victory in every kind of psychological problem. While we have wonderful rational answers for the major issues we face, the ultimate answer is not the intellectual answers, but God himself. He is our "ultimate integration point." Any substitute for this is idolatry. Money? Sex? The church? Theological discussion? All these are good, but none can function as a sufficient integration point. Only the Infinite-Personal God can be that. While the insights of psychology are very useful, only living according to the Word of God can lead to human healing. The faithful pastor in an old village who may never have heard the word "psychology" is nevertheless leading his people to healing when he admonishes them to conform to the Word.³⁴

THE FAITHFUL PASTOR IN AN OLD VILLAGE WHO MAY NEVER HAVE HEARD THE WORD "PSYCHOLOGY" IS NEVERTHELESS LEADING HIS PEOPLE TO HEALING WHEN HE ADMONISHES THEM TO CONFORM TO THE WORD.

Schaeffer considers the corporate dimension of healing, not stopping at the individual issues. Here again, he prescribes beginning with a healthy relationship with God, who is Personal and communes at the "high level" of the Trinity. And while our relationship with God is not one of equal-to-equal, our relationship to our fellow human beings is. We are the same flesh and blood. And yet because God is Personal, we can and must live in the reality of what is personal even in our community relations. Schaeffer chides the church for often failing to live in the reality of the personal. Echoing his discovery during his crisis, he explains that we can be right, and yet wrong. Right in doctrine, but wrong because we put the love of self first, rather than the love of God and of neighbor.³⁵

Schaeffer argues for the fundamental equality between human beings. He explains that there is an official or legal relationship to be respected. But that should not mask

the fact that whatever one's office, every human being is alike. This goes for the parent-child relationship. It is right to honor one's parents, but that in itself is not enough. Parent and child are both creatures of God and on the same footing in an important sense. It also goes for the citizen relating to those in authority. And so for the church as well. Again, he underscores the need to go beyond simply correct doctrine and proper discipline, but to cultivate true love, observable love.³⁶ If I have offended my fellow human being I need to come first to God and ask his forgiveness, and then to my neighbor and clear-up the hurt. And all of this can work because of the reality of the Holy Spirit's presence in the life of the Christian and the church.³⁷

Schaeffer believed strongly that the church needs reformation and revival. Usually for him these terms are synonymous. At other times, the term “reformation” meant a deeper transformation of culture, whereas revival was equivalent to “awakening.” He praised the revivals in Wesley’s and Whitefield’s time as producing both personal renewal and social improvement. The Protestant Reformation itself was an important model for Schaeffer. He argued that the Reformation in Europe brought us democracy, a system of checks and balances, cultural renewal, particularly in art and music, and many other benefits. Schaeffer admits there were important lacuna in what the Reformation produced, particularly race issues, including slavery, and a poor sense of financial stewardship. Nevertheless there were great advances, and we need the spirit of reformation for our own times.³⁸

REAL PROGRESS, BUT NO PERFECTION

(6) One of Schaeffer’s constant emphases when dealing with the Christian life is that “substantial progress” is promised, but never perfection. One of his favorite sayings was, “If you want perfection or nothing, you’ll get nothing every time.” He regularly spoke against utopianism of any kind.³⁹ While he could cite John Wesley with admiration he warned against Wesleyan perfectionism. In *True Spirituality* he explains that the earlier Wesley taught that sinless perfection could be attained in this life. Later, Wesley understood that such a state was not possible. Schaeffer always sympathized with Wesley’s aspirations to know the present reality of the finished work of Christ.⁴⁰

Schaeffer was so concerned about perfectionism that he wrote a polemical booklet addressing it, among other forms of wrong-headed mysticism. Titled *The New Super-Spirituality*, he argues that a new set of questions has pervaded l’Abri which need to be addressed: “the new Platonic spirituality.”⁴¹ Particular movements include what he calls the new Pentecostalism

(presumably the charismatic movement, though he never names them such), and the Children of God, a cult that was rising in prominence in the early 1970s. As usual, he believes this phenomenon comes from the world outside but now has infiltrated the Christian community. He explains that the classical Pentecostal Church may have had certain mistakes (“we all make mistakes,” he adds), yet the movement was solid on the authority of Scripture and the need to preach the gospel. By contrast, the new Pentecostals require more than a credible profession of faith. They require certain signs of spiritual reality. He is careful to say that all of us should know something of the reality of the presence of the Spirit, but the new Pentecostals catalogue experiences into various signs and visible evidences of belonging to God. Again, he refrains from naming these signs, although it seems clear that he is referring

IF YOU WANT PERFECTION OR NOTHING, YOU’LL GET NOTHING EVERY TIME.

to the special charismatic gifts. He comments that those who belong to the cults, such as the Children of God, often grew up in legalistic evangelical churches, experienced freedom from that background, but then returned to something even more legalistic. Such a journey is parallel to the non-Christian who hates bourgeois values, rebels against the establishment, but then soon become “the new bourgeois.”⁴²

Perfectionism rears its head in other areas of life. One of them is marriage. Schaeffer believed that perfectionism is one of the most prevalent reasons for marital problems. A husband demands of his bride to be beautiful, always available, the perfect mother, etc. A wife requires her husband to be the perfect spiritual leader, the provider, and a tender lover. When this kind of idealism is the standard, failure will occur at every point. In a thoughtful blog, Sue Edwards recounts her frustration at her husband’s often coming home late, and forcing the dinner to get cold, with grumpy children. Until she recalled the Schaeffer’s war against perfectionism. The family arrived at a compromise, and things worked out well. She goes on to say that she

knows the strengths and weaknesses of both candidates in the American Presidential race of 2012, but will vote for her man, despite his obvious weaknesses.⁴³

REAL COMMUNITY

(7) Finally, a consistent emphasis in the Schaeffers' teaching and ministry is the importance of community. The Christian life is not only individual but corporate. As a Reformed evangelical, Schaeffer believed in the church. At the same time, he was sharply critical of much in the church. Indeed, many people left l'Abri with a kind of wariness about the organized evangelical religion. Why this suspicion of the church? Arguably, for one thing, Schaeffer had experienced such a spiritual depth in the community at l'Abri and the International Presbyterian Church that by contrast other places of Christian fellowship paled. He found that with all of its zeal for orthodoxy in doctrine, the church had not matched it with "orthodoxy of community."⁴⁴ Instead, believers should always be there for one another, regardless of their background or race. For another, he was often angry at the complacency of the church, much in the way the prophets, and Jesus himself were irate at those who claimed to be believers.

Naturally, the liberal churches were simply heretical, having slouched into liberalism and denied the gospel. But, as well, the evangelical church was often in for a drubbing because it failed to live up to the spiritual ideal Schaeffer cared so deeply about. Sometimes the criticism was quite extreme. For example, in the sermon, "The Lord's Will in the Lord's Way," he accuses much of the evangelical church of being far more of a problem than liberalism, even than communism:

The *central* problem of our age is not liberalism or modernism, nor the old Roman Catholicism or the new Roman Catholicism, nor the threat of communism, nor even the threat of rationalism and the monolithic consensus which surrounds us. All these are dangerous but not the primary threat. The real problem is this: the church

of the Lord Jesus Christ, individually or corporately, tending to do the Lord's work in the power of the flesh rather than of the Spirit. The central problem is always in the midst of the people of God, not in the circumstances surrounding them.⁴⁵

Schaeffer was not only critical, however. He had very high ideals for the community of the saints. He defines the church as a "brotherhood of believers," the true communion of the saints.⁴⁶ Three important consequences follow from this definition. First, each member of the body should be of spiritual help to the others, regardless of race, language, or culture. Second, members should be ready to provide resources for anyone in need. And, third, fellowship and companionship should be faithfully practiced. Schaeffer emphasized that this should never be forced, but voluntary. He takes issue with one interpretation of Acts 4:32-37 and 5:4, which says this radical sharing was a requirement. Unlike communism, where all wealth is forcibly redistributed, the early church shared voluntarily.⁴⁷

One of Schaeffer's strongest statements about reality in the church is in *The Church before the Watching World*.⁴⁸ There he describes how the church can commit spiritual adultery by becoming liberal or Neo-orthodox. He recounts the history of the shifts in the major denominations. Some, including himself, left these bodies. Others stayed. Both were evangelicals, but with differing strategies. But then he reckons there was coldness on both sides. Neither side properly practiced "real, observable love" As they should have.⁴⁹ As he did in various books, he always outlined the need to stand for solid doctrine, but also for the exhibit of love for one another. He explains that when Christians differ, there needs to be reconciliation. He recounts his own failures in handling certain disagreements.⁵⁰ There can be reconciliation as long as Christians openly admit their failures and continue to confess their essential oneness. As Edith Schaeffer confirms in *The Tapestry*, they had been over-zealous and harsh, not always exhibiting

regret, tears and compassion. L'Abri was an attempt to move in a different direction.⁵¹

One concept Schaeffer developed which is meant to further the cause of working together, even with people who do not share the same beliefs across the board is “co-belligerence.” He made a distinction between being an “ally,” which means sharing Christian basics, and a “co-belligerent,” which means that while we may not share those basics, we can agree on doing battle for the same cause on a particular issue. For example, Protestants and Roman Catholics can stand side-by-side against abortion on demand.⁵²

CONCLUSIONS

Our far too brief account of the Christian life according to Francis Schaeffer has revealed a number of paradoxes. They are complementary emphases rather than contradictory ones. Both sides of the paradox aspire to *reality*. For example, he stressed the need to recognize the full reality of the supernatural, while at the same time acknowledging the reality of the hard, fallen, dirty world of the present. Prayer and divine guidance were fundamental to sanctification, but perfectionism is to be rejected as not taking the reality of sin seriously enough. He also believed that at the heart of the Christian life was a combination of true submission to almighty God with the significant choice to obey. The concept of “active passivity” is meant to encapsulate this tension. Unlike Arminian self-determination, there had to be true surrender to God’s will. But unlike quietism, our choice makes a difference. Nothing could deter Schaeffer from defending the significance of the human being. The Christian life is meant to be properly inward, without being either rationalist or Platonic. Our thought-process matters, just as God’s thought-process matters for him. But that does not mean we are autonomous, rationalistic beings. Nor does it mean we can float into a sort of heavenly irrationality.

Schaeffer’s approach to the Christian life was bold and fresh. His views are difficult to label. Whenever something he says might appear rationalistic or man-

centered, he is found to stress our creatureliness and our utter dependence upon God. Whenever he might appear Wesleyan, or touting the “higher life,” he argues for progressive, “moment-by-moment practice until the Second Coming of Christ. Francis and Edith Schaeffer believed themselves to be called to exhibit the existence and present reality of God for the twentieth century. Accordingly they cared about the soul and the body, the heavenly realm and the earthly battle. Their voice was powerful in their day. It still is, more than ever.

ENDNOTES

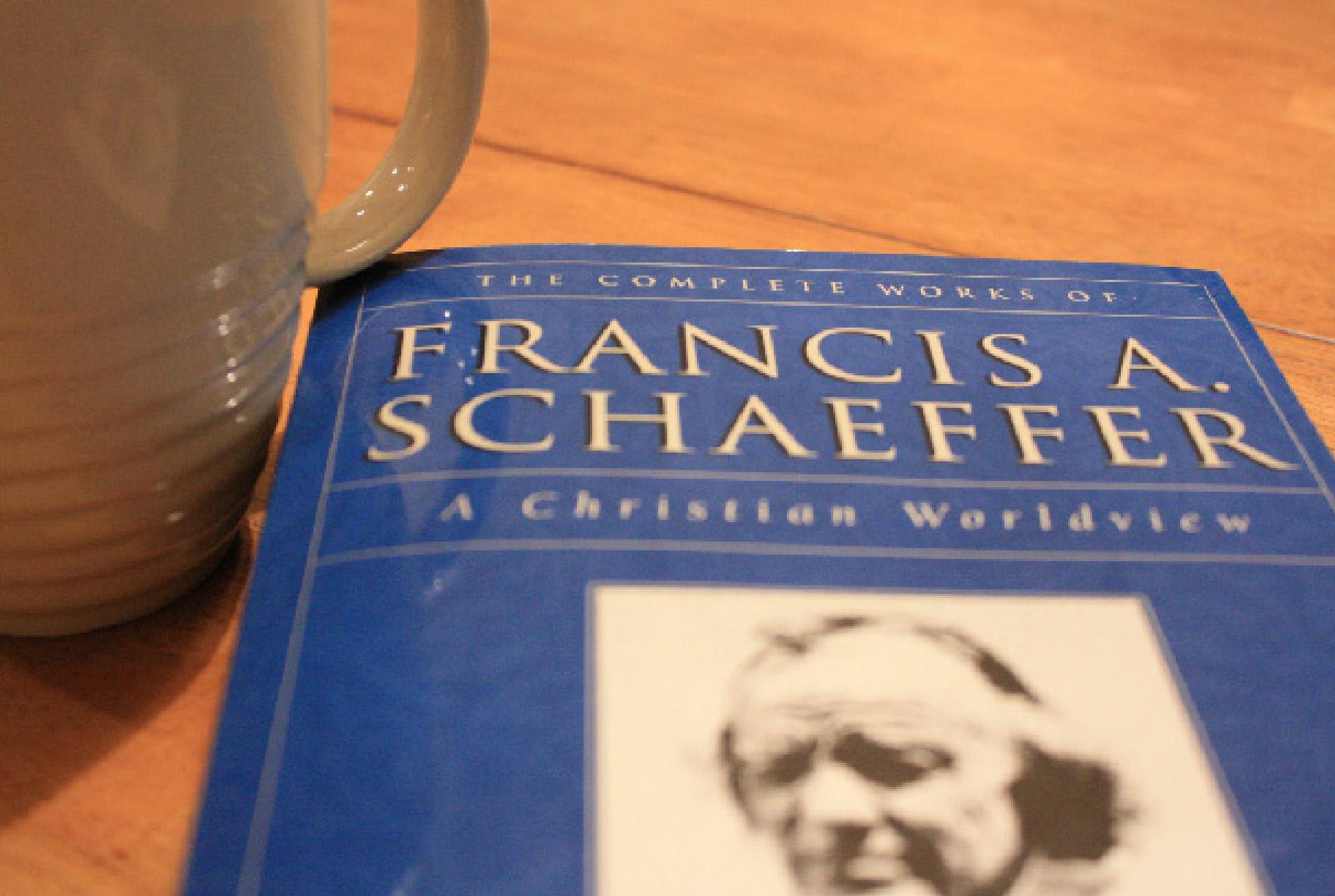
- 1 Francis A. Schaeffer, *True Spirituality*, The Complete Works, vol. III (Wheaton: Crossway, 1985), 195.
- 2 See Barry Hankins, *Francis Schaeffer and the Shaping of Evangelical America* (Grand rapids: Eerdmans, 2008), 26.
- 3 Some seasoned Barth scholars find this distinction over-simple. But a look at Barth’s *Church Dogmatics I/2*, tr. and ed. by G. W. Bromiley and T. F. Torrance (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1956), 457, 520, ad loc., shows us the relationship of the Lord himself to his Word is at least ambiguous.
- 4 See *The God Who Is There* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1968), 51-62. For those wishing to explore the details and perhaps some of the critical response to this approach, see the sympathetic biography by Colin Duriez, *Francis Schaeffer: An Authentic Life* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2008), 170-173. For a slightly less sympathetic but still useful examination, see, Ronald W. Ruesegger, “Francis Schaeffer on Philosophy,” in *Reflections on Francis Schaeffer*, ed. Ronald W. Ruesegger (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 115-120.
- 5 The letter is dated, September 3, 1950, cited in Duriez, *Francis Schaeffer*, 101.
- 6 He did not describe this crisis in any kind of detail, partly because he was not given to a lot of autobiography, and partly because the heart of his experience was deeply personal. See Edith Schaeffer, *The Tapestry* (Waco: Word, 1981), 354-355.
- 7 Francis A. Schaeffer, “Why and How I Write My Books,” in *Eternity Magazine*, March 24, 1973, 64.
- 8 The Bible Presbyterians had split in two; Carl McIntire led one group into the “Collingswood Synod,”

and the other was the RPCES, which group eventually merged with the PCA (Presbyterian Church in America) in 1982. The Schaeffers created a new body, the IPC (International Presbyterian Church) in order to have a solid denomination available to Europeans. Francis Schaeffer had ministerial credentials in both the RPCES and the IPC.

- 9 First published in 1971 by Tyndale House.
 10 See, *Letters of Francis A. Schaeffer: Spiritual Reality in the Personal Christian Life*, ed. Lane T. Dennis (Wheaton: Crossway, 1985). One may find a personal insight into Schaeffer's spiritual crisis and his victory in the letters of Part I, "The Reawakening of Spiritual Reality."
 11 *True Spirituality*, 3ff.
 12 *The God Who Is There*, I:147.
 13 *True Spirituality*, chapter 9, 106-122.
 14 *Ibid.*, 108. Schaeffer used the King James in most of his sermons and writings.
 15 *Ibid.*, 110.
 16 *Ibid.*, 111.
 17 *Ibid.*, 112.
 18 *Ibid.*, 115.
 19 *Ibid.*, 113. Italics in the original.
 20 *Ibid.*, 117. "How great is man! We think, and through our bodies the reality flows out into the external world."
 21 *Ibid.*, 34.
 22 See, Schaeffer, *The Tapestry*, 356
 23 See, for example, *Death in the City* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2002), 139-158
 24 As an important aside, Schaeffer notes that the word *supernatural* here is not a good one, since it gives the impression that there is something unnatural, or not normal about the unseen world.
 25 See Edith Schaeffer, *With Love, Edith: The l'Abri Family Letters, 1948-1960* (New York: Harper & Row, 1988), 276.
 26 "Day of Prayer," from *Speak What We Feel*, July 9, 2008 [<http://reneamac.com/tag/labri/>].
 27 *True Spirituality*, 44-45, 54-55.
 28 *Ibid.*, 68.
 29 *True Spirituality*, 58-59.
 30 *True Spirituality*, 93-147.

- 31 *Ibid.*, 106.
 32 *Ibid.*, 121.
 33 *Ibid.*, 138-140.
 34 *Ibid.*, 145.
 35 *Ibid.*, 153.
 36 *Ibid.*, 154-157.
 37 *Ibid.*, chapter 13.
 38 See Francis A. Schaeffer, *How Should We Then Live? The Rise and Decline of Western Thought and Culture* (Old Tappan, NJ: Fleming Revell, 1976), 112-116.
 39 See, for example, *No Little People*, Wheaton: Crossway, 2003, 51
 40 *True Spirituality*, 94, 102. For a full treatment of Wesleyan perfectionism, see J. I. Packer, *Keep in Step with the Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2005), 110-119.
 41 Francis A. Schaeffer, *The New Super-Spirituality* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1973), 23, ad loc.
 42 *Ibid.*, 35.
 43 http://blogs.bible.org/tapestry/sue_edwards/perfection_or_nothing_you_get_nothing.
 44 See, *The mark of the Christian*, Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1970, ad. Loc.
 45 Francis A. Schaeffer, *No Little People*, Wheaton: Crossway, 2003, 66.
 46 See, Francis A. Schaeffer, *Twenty-Five Basic Bible Studies*, Huémoz-sur-Ollon, L'Abri Fellowship Foundation, n.d., 36-38.
 47 *Ibid.*, 37.
 48 Francis Schaeffer, *The Church before the Watching World* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1971).
 49 *Ibid.*, 79.
 50 Francis A. Schaeffer, *The Mark of the Christian* (Downers Grove: Inter-varsity Press, 1970), 25-35
 51 Edith Schaeffer, *The Tapestry*, Waco: Word Books, 1981, 317.
 52 Duriez, *Francis A. Schaeffer*, 192.

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SO LIKE SCHAEFFER

How important was the Word of God, the gospel, and the book of Romans to Francis Schaeffer?

Udo W. Middelman
gives an answer

Thinking back on your time with Francis Schaeffer, what did you appreciate about him the most?

His commitment to truth, even when he had to change his mind from earlier understandings. He had a readiness to reconsider. He really believed that “there is only one reason to be a Christian, and that is that one is convinced that it is the truth of the universe.”

You wrote the introduction to Schaeffer’s volume, *The Finished Work of Christ: The Truth of Romans 1-8*. How did Romans 1-8 define Schaeffer as a theologian and what is it about the work of Christ that Schaeffer saw as so

essential?

He saw Romans as a completed Pauline sermon of what was interrupted in Athens (Acts 17). In contrast to Roman Catholic theology, for Schaeffer the work of Christ was finished in the sense that in Christ God provides salvation without our contribution or merit (the free gift). The work of Christ is also finished in that here is the reality of what was promised to Adam and Eve in Genesis 3:15. However, it is not finished in the sense that the work of redemption is not yet complete, as we wait for the return of Christ and the resurrection of the body. Only then will Christ's work be accomplished fully. Therefore, we cry out, "How long oh Lord?" as Revelation reminds us!

What was so unique about how Schaeffer applied God's Word to his twentieth-century cultural context?

Schaeffer believed Scripture to be the key to understanding people, social, political and ethical concerns. Rather than merely looking at the moral dimension, he also understood the intellectual dimension of man's exposure to the real, now fractured and broken, world. He had compassion, knowing that without Scripture's clearer light it was indeed reasonable to NOT believe God or in God. Furthermore, for Schaeffer, Scripture had been de-authorized by philosophy first, then by the church's theologians as well as by a fundamentalist narrow outlook on culture and creation.

One of the big issues in our own day is the centrality of the "gospel." How central was the gospel to Schaeffer's Christian worldview and how did Schaeffer seek to teach and apply the gospel in his own day?

It was the central outlook, yet seen as starting with the first verse in the Bible. The good news is the existence of a personal God (*God is a person*: he thinks, feels, acts, which only persons can do). The second point of the good news is that there is an explanation for evil in

the historicity of the Fall: Things are now out of order, fractured, truly damaged without it being in some form the will of God or his plan for creation. The third point is the fact that God runs after us, Adam first, and then through the prophets; He sent Christ and now maintains us through the Holy Spirit. The fourth point is that true moral guilt has been taken on by the judge, who declares us free from that guilt and sets before us a real physical life in the resurrection, giving us hope of life (1st Thess 1:9ff).

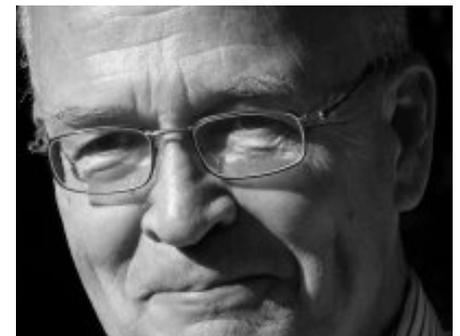
Francis and Edith were quite the team. Tell us, what was their relationship like during those L'Abri years and in what ways would you say Edith is a model for Christian women today?

They had a normal relationship with ups and downs. They would reject being in any way a model and thought that looking for models is a mistake anyway. They were husband and wife, parents with warts and all. They depended on each other, and worked well together. Edith was a creative person, Francis the thoughtful inquirer who appreciated beauty in things and people.

If you could recommend just two books by Schaeffer, what would they be and why?

That depends on the readers: *How Should We Then Live* is a summary of his cultural/philosophical understanding of our history. *He Is There and He Is Not Silent* is an intellectual argument for the unique sufficiency of Christianity to answer basic questions. *No Little People* is a series of typical sermons that apply the intellectual insight to the life of believers. I would also advise reading Colin Durriez's biography of Schaeffer, *An Authentic Life*.

Udo W. Middelman worked with Dr Schaeffer as Associate Pastor. He is the President of the Francis A. Schaeffer Foundation.





PHOTOGRAPH BY MATT BUAME

In Spirit & In Truth

Schaeffer, True Spirituality & the Emergent Church

by

Bryan A. Follis

Francis Schaeffer was sometimes described by his publisher's publicity machine as one of the greatest Christian thinkers of the twentieth century (which he wasn't) and was idolised by many Evangelical Christians who saw him as a modern day prophet and who took his teaching as the final word on any subject. Then there are those who view Schaeffer as some sort of monster (which he wasn't) who is responsible for the launch of the Christian Right in the USA and what they see as all its subsequent mistakes and problems. When you mention Francis Schaeffer's name, emotions can run high with some adoring him and others despising him. Therefore, it can be very difficult to have a rational (never mind an objective) discussion about his contribution to Evangelical Christianity and society at large.

However, it is important to remember that while Schaeffer is now best known (for good or bad) for popularising the idea of a Christian world-view and for calling Christians to actively engage with their society, this only forms a small part of the man's ministry. Indeed I would argue that the later phase of Schaeffer's ministry does not bring us to the heart of who he was, what he believed and sought to share nor how he remains most relevant to us in 2012.

I therefore want to step back from the culture wars and Schaeffer's role to consider the man and in particular his faith in Christ and how he wanted to grow in that relationship by nurturing his personal spirituality. Rather than detailing the profound spiritual crisis Schaeffer went through in 1951, I wish to pick up the story following Schaeffer's crisis of faith, to highlight some of the lessons he learned, to examine how he attempted to maintain his walk with Christ and to evaluate how his teaching on spirituality compares with some contemporary Emergent church writers.

JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH

It is extremely important as we discuss Schaeffer and his teaching on spirituality that we grasp that his spiritual crisis in 1951 did not result in him repudiating what he

had previously believed or taught as a pastor with the Bible Presbyterian Church. Schaeffer did not become a mystic nor advocate that everyone have a strange inner experience as a means of encountering the Divine. Instead, Schaeffer remained utterly committed to the absolute need for each individual to come to personal faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour. He continued to look to the cross of Christ as the basis of our salvation and taught that as we trust in Christ's sacrificial death to cover our sin that we experience forgiveness. Indeed Schaeffer understood salvation in terms of antithesis and (unlike the liberal theologians) he regarded the point of justification as the absolute personal antithesis. As he later wrote in *The God Who Is There*, when "a person casts himself on Jesus Christ as Saviour, at that moment he has passed from death to life, from the kingdom of darkness to the kingdom of God's dear Son."

Throughout his subsequent ministry, Schaeffer retained this strong commitment to the necessity of a person experiencing justification in order for him or her to enjoy salvation. He also remained committed to explaining this in terms of Christ dying on the cross as a substitution in our place to atone for our sinfulness. In fact, so strong was his commitment to substitutionary atonement that Schaeffer has been criticised by some authors (such as Burson and Walls) for understanding salvation primarily in terms of legal justification and expressing it in rational doctrinal terms. Schaeffer's approach is in marked contrast to Brian McLaren who has a character in his book, *The Story We Find Ourselves In*, who refers to substitutionary atonement as sounding like "divine child abuse." As D. A. Carson has observed, "McLaren's claim to be 'biblical' rings a trifle hollow when crucial elements of what Christ accomplished on the Cross, as taught by Scripture, are handled so cavalierly."

As we discuss Schaeffer's spirituality, we need to understand that for him Christ's death on the Cross in place of us was essential to secure our salvation. On the basis of Scripture, Schaeffer believed and taught that

without faith in Christ's sacrifice, you cannot become a Christian. Yet through his spiritual crisis, Schaeffer now came to see the importance of sanctification (i.e., becoming more like Jesus Christ) alongside justification. He recognised that while justification brings us within a proper legal relationship with God, God's dealing with us is not primarily legal but personal because God always deals with us on the basis of a personal relationship. Thus once, by God's grace, we have come into a relationship with God, that relationship was to have a reality in the present time. In his book, *True Spirituality*, Schaeffer wrote that the "true Christian life, true spirituality, does not mean just that we have been born again. It must begin there, but it means much more than that. The true Christian life, true spirituality in the present life, means more than being justified and knowing I am going to heaven... it means we are to love God, we are to be alive to Him, we are to be in communion with Him, in this present moment of history."

DOCTRINE AND EXPERIENCE

It was this new emphasis on the importance of spiritual reality in the present life on a moment by moment basis which was to be a key characteristic of Schaeffer's spirituality. While, as explained above, Schaeffer was totally committed to the importance of doctrine and propositional truth within Christianity, he also acknowledged that doctrine was not an end in itself. The purpose of right doctrine was to enable us to be in a right relationship with God and to love Him with our hearts and minds and souls. Without this proper outcome, doctrine would lead to a dead scholasticism. Speaking at the first Lausanne Congress in 1974, Schaeffer argued that "dead orthodoxy with no real spiritual reality must be rejected as sub-Christian." For

THE TRUE CHRISTIAN LIFE, TRUE SPIRITUALITY IN THE PRESENT LIFE, MEANS MORE THAN BEING JUSTIFIED AND KNOWING I AM GOING TO HEAVEN... IT MEANS WE ARE TO LOVE GOD, WE ARE TO BE ALIVE TO HIM... IN THIS PRESENT MOMENT OF HISTORY.

Schaeffer, true Christianity was to involve a moment by moment, increasing experiential relationship to Christ.

Until his death, Schaeffer remained opposed to theological liberalism which denied the authority of Scripture and the necessity of Christ's sacrificial death. For him, liberalism was not just a different interpretation of historic Christianity but rather was heretical and an enemy of the true faith. However, following his spiritual crisis, Schaeffer now recognised that some fundamentalists could also be heretical given their failure to live out the faith in the present moment day by day. Outraged though some of his former fundamentalist colleagues were by such a suggestion, I believe that

this insight by Schaeffer is extremely perceptive and it helps correct an imbalance which had arisen among sections of the evangelical church. For a man so well known for his apologetics – and who has even been heavily criticised by some evangelicals for being too rationalistic in his approach to the Christian faith – it is interesting that Schaeffer speaking to students at L'Abri in 1960 stressed the importance of experience.

He warned against viewing salvation and knowledge of God in purely intellectual terms and declared: "We must jump the fence from where we are, if we have only believed these things as a sort of mental assent, into the experience and practice of it, and then we get hold of the reality of it."

Yet Schaeffer never lost his confidence in the doctrinal truths of the faith and he maintained that it was "crucial" that knowledge precede faith. Indeed he argued that only the faith which believes in God on the basis of the knowledge of Him as revealed in the Scriptures could be regarded as true faith. Schaeffer had no place for a vague spiritual mysticism but instead saw Christ as

true Christian mysticism. However, it was a mysticism located in verifiable propositional truth which enables the spiritual relationship with Christ. This relationship with Christ was for Schaeffer, as just mentioned, true Christian mysticism but in it, as he wrote in “True Spirituality”, one is not asked to deny the reason, the intellect...and there is no loss of personality...it is Christ bringing forth fruit through me.”

As one reads the growing number of books by leaders of the Emergent church, one is struck by their assumption that the old certainties of the past are misplaced; by their desire to reject the “absolutism” which they feel has plagued Western thought; and by their willingness to avoid doctrinal certainties by instead giving an emphasis to feelings and affections over linear thought and rationality. As Brian McLaren views the cross as a mystery; as he presents the Bible as a story we enter into but sidesteps issues of how it is true; as he fails to unpack biblical teaching about homosexuality; and as Rob Bell explains away the reality of hell, you can be left wondering just what is Biblical and evangelical about the Emergent Church. No wonder Carson warns in *Becoming Convergent with the Emerging Church* that “there is a danger in constantly exploding the certainties of the past: if we are not careful, we may be left with nothing to hang on to at all.” Schaeffer’s approach to spirituality provides for experiential reality but it is a reality grounded in doctrinal truth and as such it allows us to worship Jesus Christ in spirit and truth (John 4:24).

SPIRITUAL REALITY

As stated above, for Schaeffer, true Christian mysticism was Jesus Christ bringing forth the fruit of His Spirit within us. The way in which Schaeffer had spiritually dried up while serving in full-time Christian ministry and with his corresponding loss of joy in Christ; the bitterness displayed by many within the fundamentalist movement and their lack of love; along with no obvious dependence by many senior Evangelicals upon the leading of the Holy Spirit convinced Schaeffer about the need to emphasise spiritual reality. Drawing upon Scripture, Francis Schaeffer was profoundly challenged

by both Romans and Galatians with the call for Christians to live in the present moment in the reality of their relationship with Jesus Christ. He was struck by the verse “I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Gal. 2:20). Schaeffer believed that the Christian who had entered into a relationship with God the Father through faith in the atoning work of Christ his Son had to recognise that they had died to self (or Self with a capital ‘S’) and so should now live day by day and moment by moment in a way that honoured God.

Schaeffer was very concerned that the lack of spiritual reality among evangelical Christians damaged the credibility of the gospel’s truth claims in an age which now even questioned the very nature of truth. He took seriously the call for Christians not to grieve the Spirit by living in a sinful and selfish way but rather to walk in step with the Spirit and so honour God in the spiritual battle in the heavenlies and also to so commend the gospel in this world. Schaeffer felt that many Christians had been shaped by the values of the world around them and had adopted, albeit unknowingly, a naturalistic mind-set which had lost the sense of God’s supernatural world in their everyday life. So he was keen for Christians to grasp afresh that there was both the seen/physical world and the unseen/spiritual world and that there was a cause and effect relationship between these two worlds. Angels rejoice over a sinner who repents while the Spirit is grieved by our envy, ambition, hatred or sexual immorality.

In this relationship between the seen and unseen world, cause and effect worked both ways as God intervened in the seen world in response to his children’s prayers. Schaeffer therefore gave a strong emphasis to the importance of prayer and said that as we prayerfully turn to God, he would bring forth through his Holy Spirit his fruit within us. In *True Spirituality* Schaeffer argued that as “Christ as the bride-groom brings forth fruit through me as the bride, through the agency of the Holy Spirit by faith, He opens the way for me as a

Christian to begin to know in the present life the reality of the supernatural... We do not need a dark room; we do not need to be under the influence of a hallucinatory drug; we do not need to be listening to a certain kind of music; we can know the reality of the supernatural here and now.”

This is a very different spirituality from that promoted by some within the Emergent Church. First, Schaeffer saw spirituality not in terms of an inner personal experience providing self-fulfilment but rather in dying to Self and living for Christ. In practice this meant a life of servant-hood and for Francis and Edith, as they opened their home to all visitors with the establishment of L’Abri in 1955, it meant considerable sacrifice. I have

not found the same call to self-denial, to service or to sacrifice in the literature of the Emergent movement. Nor have I heard about too many of their leading writers and conference speakers living such a life of sacrificial love. Second, Schaeffer maintained that we could have this spiritual experience “with all the intellectual doors and

windows open.” In other words, God in his Sovereign power could bring forth his fruit in us without us having firstly to undergo certain emotional experiences which have been induced by certain types of sustained worship or from meeting in a darkened room illuminated only by candles as we sit around on bean-bags and drink coffee. Third, Schaeffer has clearly drawn directly upon Holy Scripture for his renewed emphasis on the importance of a present time spiritual reality. Although Schaeffer, as he himself acknowledged, was also greatly influenced by evangelical devotional writers from previous generations (such as Andrew Murray and Amy Carmichael), he tested their writings against Scripture and it remained utterly supreme in all matters of faith. By contrast, I find the writers in the Emergent movement a little too quick

to embrace spirituality (no matter how mystical) from any and every Christian tradition and to accept practices and spiritual disciplines (no matter how different from Scriptural spirituality).

CONNECTING WITH CULTURE

No doubt by stressing the need for spirituality to be clearly rooted in Holy Scripture and grounded in evangelical doctrinal truth, some will accuse me of being a theological reactionary out of touch with current cultural and social trends. Some may wish to suggest I am just locked into a modernist mind-set and unable to grasp how my understanding of truth is shaped and controlled by the Enlightenment. They will want to depict the Emergent church as merely

attempting to engage with contemporary culture and present the Christian message in a way that resonates with those influenced by post-modernism. However, I myself am very keen that as Evangelicals we do not fear change nor begin to worship our own traditions. I am also very keen that as Evangelicals

WE MUST JUMP THE FENCE FROM WHERE WE ARE, IF WE HAVE ONLY BELIEVED THESE THINGS AS A SORT OF MENTAL ASSENT, INTO THE EXPERIENCE AND PRACTICE OF IT, AND THEN WE GET HOLD OF THE REALITY OF IT.

we do not become prisoners of Enlightenment rationalism (albeit in an evangelical lite version). Above all, I am very keen that we in the evangelical church do indeed reach out with the gospel of Jesus Christ in culturally sensitive ways which connect with a new generation. And that is why I believe the spirituality of Francis Schaeffer has much to commend to us in this present time.

Given the significant shift within the West towards the mystical and the experiential and a marked distrust within our society of exclusive truth-claims, there are many within the Emergent Church who feel that a Christianity which has no place for the mystical and the numinous will not create a relevant gospel. Thus

Emergents stress that the church must accept that post-modern people are more likely to come to faith in Christ through spiritual experience than through prior intellectual assent to doctrine about him. However well meant this attitude may be, there is a real danger about the Emergent church drifting towards abandoning the gospel message as historically given and understood. Yet there is also another danger in that those of us within the Reformed community, who are concerned about this drift can so easily over-react, we might give such an emphasis to doctrine that it becomes an end in itself, and that we might lapse into a dead scholasticism and pride ourselves on being so counter-cultural in our worship that our Sunday Services become like museum exhibits from a previous age. In his teaching on spirituality, Schaeffer provides a proper balance (and not merely a compromise) between these two dangers. Following his spiritual crisis and returning afresh to study Holy Scripture, Schaeffer sought thereafter to retain a total commitment to the truth claims of Christianity and at the same time give a new emphasis to living out those truths moment by moment through the power of the Holy Spirit.

It is a biblical balance that allows us to present unashamedly the gospel of Christ as a truth to believe but also to commend that truth to outsiders by actually living it out in daily life. Strongly influenced by John's gospel and his First Epistle, Schaeffer maintained that the Spirit of truth must be demonstrated by love for "... love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God" (1 John 4:7). Thus we are to teach and share with people the truth claims of the gospel and pray for their conversion by the Holy Spirit but also maintain a life of witness. In this life of witness, we are to have a love for each other within the Christian community which is so radical and so deep that it transcends normal human kindness or just 'nice' behaviour. Yet this is costly for it requires us to die to Self, to daily take up our cross and Christ. Humanly speaking, given our fallen sinful nature with its pride and conceit, this is impossible. Indeed, the radical transformation needed in our attitude, in our character

and in our behaviour can only become possible by God's grace. This of course brings us back to Schaeffer's earlier point about the need to constantly draw upon God's Spirit as he brings forth his fruit within us and then to demonstrate this spiritual reality in our lives moment by moment.

LIVING OUT THE TRUTH

Schaeffer did not just talk about spirituality – as many do today – but he practised it. In his own life and in his subsequent ministry at what became L'Abri and then in his writing and speaking, Schaeffer sought to maintain a spiritual reality moment by moment. In practical terms this meant relying directly upon the Lord through prayer, asking him to provide for the ministry in terms of money, to draw in whoever should come as visitors, and to raise up those needed to serve on staff. Schaeffer declined to appeal for funds (no matter how difficult things sometimes became); he refused to over-plan the ministry with a grand strategy; and he continued to treat individual people as significant (regardless of their race or social standing) as being made in the image of God. No wonder it was said by many students who had visited L'Abri that they could not "shake off what they saw." For with Francis and Edith Schaeffer, the truth of Christ was faithfully taught and explained with cultural sensitivity but also demonstrated with a ministry of hospitality and sacrificial love. What a model but also what a challenge for us today who profess to love Christ and his truth! May God grant us grace to defend and share his truth but also the grace to live out his truth in a manner that honours him and commends his truth to a lost and unbelieving society.

FOR FURTHER READING

True Spirituality (1971) by Francis Schaeffer

The Letters of Francis Schaeffer (1985) edited by Lane Dennis

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The [Watershed] of *Evangelicalism*

by Francis Schaeffer

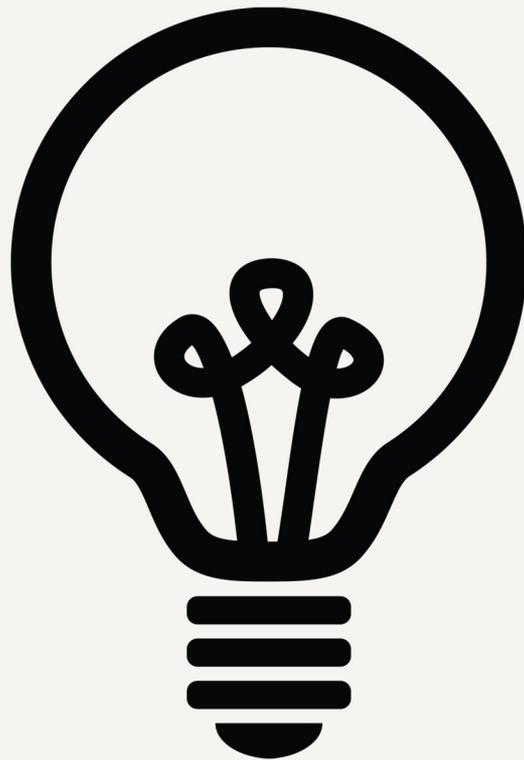
[D]oes inerrancy make a difference? Overwhelmingly; the difference is that with the Bible being what it is, God's Word and so absolute, God's objective truth, we do not need to be, *and we should not be*, caught in the ever-changing fallen cultures which surround us. Those who do not hold the inerrancy of Scripture do not have this high privilege. To some extent, they are at the mercy of the fallen, changing culture. And Scripture is thus bent to conform to the changing world spirit of the day, and they therefore have no solid authority upon which to judge and to resist the views and values of that changing, shifting world spirit.

We, however, must be careful before the Lord. If we say we believe the Bible to be the inerrant and authoritative "Thus saith the Lord," we do not face the howling winds of change which surround us with confusion and terror. And yet, the other side of the coin is that if this *is* "Thus

saith the Lord," we must live under it. And without that, we don't understand what we have said when we say we stand for an inerrant Scripture.

I would ask again, Does inerrancy really make a difference — in the way we live our lives across the whole spectrum of human existence? Sadly we must say that we evangelicals who truly hold to the full authority of Scripture have not always done well in this respect. I have said that inerrancy is the watershed of the evangelical world. But it is not just a theological debating point. *It is the obeying of the Scripture which is the watershed! It is the believing and applying it to our lives* which demonstrate whether we in fact believe it.

This is an excerpt from *The Great Evangelical Disaster*, in vol. 4 of *The Works of Francis Schaeffer*, page 341. Used by permission of Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers, Wheaton, IL 60187, www.crossway.org.



IDEAS HAVE CONSEQUENCES

**LESSONS FROM THE THEOLOGY
OF FRANCIS SCHAEFFER**

by Stephen Wellum

WHY STUDY FRANCIS SCHAEFFER?

Why study Francis Schaeffer? The answer to this question is that there is probably no single figure that has affected and impacted evangelicalism in the latter half of the 20th century than Francis Schaeffer. For this reason alone, we need to take him seriously. Michael Hamilton in commenting on the impact of Schaeffer on evangelicalism says this about his life and work:

When Francis Schaeffer first appeared on the American scene in 1965, evangelicals hardly knew what to make of him. He was 53 years old. His Christian faith had been formed in the furnace of the fundamentalist-modernist controversies of the 1930s, and he was a card-carrying member of the impeccably fundamentalist Bible Presbyterian Church. He defended passionately the idea of the inerrancy of Scripture, a doctrine that had already seen some slippage in evangelical circles.

Yet this was no ordinary fundamentalist preacher. He and his wife, Edith, had lived for ten years in a student commune they had started in the Swiss Alps. When he lectured, he wore an alpine hiking outfit—knickers, knee socks, walking shoes. By 1972 he had added to his already singular appearance long hair and a white tufted goat's-chin beard. Most curious of all, he seldom quoted from the Bible. He was more apt to talk about the philosophical importance of Henry Miller (then regarded as the most pornographic writer in American letters).

During the next two decades the Schaeffers organized a multiple-thrust ministry that reshaped American evangelicalism. Perhaps no intellectual save C. S. Lewis affected the thinking of evangelicals more profoundly; perhaps no leader of the period save Billy

Graham left a deeper stamp on the movement as a whole. Together the Schaeffers gave currency to the idea of intentional Christian community, prodded evangelicals out of their cultural ghetto, inspired an army of evangelicals to become serious scholars, encouraged women who chose roles as mothers and homemakers, mentored the leaders of the New Christian Right, and solidified popular evangelical opposition to abortion.¹

In addition, we may provide further justification for our investigation of Schaeffer by noting his significance and impact in three important areas: the personal, theological, and social.² In terms of the personal, Schaeffer's initial impact was not made institutionally, that is, through academic, educational institutions or even through the publishing industry. Rather, his greatest influence was made more indirectly, through his own personal contact with individuals whom he came to know and whose lives he changed. His influence, in other words, was not being part of the evangelical establishment, but instead being quite independent of it. For Schaeffer, personal evangelism and discipleship were no cliché. It was through his life

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and ministry at L'Abri in Switzerland, far removed from America, that he and his wife, Edith, touched the lives of countless numbers of individuals—many of whom would later become key future evangelical leaders. Certainly, for those of us who aspire to influence men and women for the gospel, it would be wise for us to learn lessons from the life of such a man and to discover afresh the importance of the personal touch in our interaction with people.

Theologically, we may note Schaeffer's significance by

the fact that he was instrumental in calling evangelicals to once again take seriously key truths that were tending to be de-emphasized or even being denied. In particular, Schaeffer challenged evangelicalism to re-assert its commitment to the concept of truth, or as he stated it—“true truth”—in light of a growing emphasis in academic theology, the church, and the general culture towards a denial of truth and a full-orbed pluralism. That is why he

Francis Schaeffer's last work, The Great Evangelical Disaster (Westchester: Crossway Books, 1984) was published just months before he died of cancer. In this work he sought to warn and plead with the evangelical community not to compromise biblical authority and the exclusivity of the gospel. He even named various names of those whom he believed had compromised at these points, while at the same time calling for a new generation of Christians to take a stand as "radicals for truth" in our time. The Great Evangelical Disaster was re-published in The Complete Works of Francis Schaeffer, 4: 301-411.

championed, literally to his death-bed, the need to affirm without equivocation the full authority and inerrancy of Scripture as well as such crucial issues as: the historicity of Genesis 1-11, the doctrine of creation, the centrality of the doctrine of God, and the exclusivity of Jesus Christ as the way, the truth, and the life. It is also why he stood so strongly against the theology of neo-orthodoxy that was beginning to be embraced by some evangelicals because he believed that if it were accepted it would undercut the truth and veracity of the gospel. Probably today more than any other day we need to think through the theological challenges that Schaeffer left us with. Was he right? And if so, are there lessons today that we may learn from him as we attempt to stand for the truth of the gospel?

Socially, Schaeffer is also an important figure for our consideration. In the 1970s when evangelicals were doing little on the social front, he almost single-handedly challenged millions of evangelicals to take an active role in shaping their society and its values in addition to giving them a theological warrant for doing so. As Brown observes, “The 1973 decision of the United States Su-

preme Court mandating abortion on demand, *Roe v. Wade* was a kind of spark in the powderkeg for Schaeffer.”³ For a long time, Schaeffer had been warning people that the worldview of the post-Christian west was heading to a de-valuation of human beings, and thus for him, the *Roe v. Wade* decision was a decisive call to action. In 1979, he along with C. Everett Koop and his son, Frank Schaeffer, produced the film series *Whatever Happened to the Human Race?* that was instrumental in mobilizing sleepy evangelicals to action, and challenging them to get involved in the political arena. It is not an exaggeration to say that the rise of Crisis Pregnancy Centers, the Christian Action Council, and even the Moral Majority, were directly linked to the influence of Schaeffer.

But there is one last reason why we need to study the life and thought of Francis Schaeffer and it is this: the mixed reaction to him from evangelical scholars provides a window by which we may view an ever increasingly divided evangelicalism. Lane Dennis, in commenting on various critics of Schaeffer’s thought who have called it everything from “sophomoric bombast,” “simplistic,” and “atrophied” to a “puerile concatenation of unsupported judgments,” notes that “one doesn’t usually hear these kind of adjectives in polite or scholarly conversation; apparently Schaeffer has touched a raw nerve.”⁴ Interestingly, Dennis observes that this kind of reaction seems

*“Neo-orthodoxy” is a theological movement beginning in the early 1920s and continuing to this day, even though its primary influence in the larger theological world was from the 1920s to the 1970s. It is associated with a number of theologians such as Rudolf Bultmann, Emil Brunner, Reinhold Niebuhr, and Paul Tillich, but it is most famously associated with the theology of Swiss theologian Karl Barth. For more on neo-orthodoxy see, David F. Ford, ed., *The Modern Theologians*, 2d ed. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1997), 21-102; C. A. Baxter, “Neo-Orthodoxy,” in *New Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Sinclair Ferguson et al. (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1988), 456-57.*

to come mostly from academicians within evangelical colleges, rather than from evangelical scholars of secular schools.⁵ Why? Why the negative reaction from certain

quarters of evangelicalism, especially from the academics? Some answer this question by stating that Schaeffer was not a real “scholar” and that is the reason for some of the negative reaction. However, for a variety of reasons this answer will not do. Rather, it seems that Michael Hamilton is more on track when he argues that the diverse reactions to Schaeffer, both negatively and positively, reflect a major seismic divide within evangelicalism, which is now more evident today than it was in Schaeffer’s day. Schaeffer represents, in the words of Hamilton, “the rougher edge” of evangelicalism in contrast to Billy Graham and others who represent a “smoother edge.” The “smoother edge” is the part of evangelicalism that represents within evangelicalism the “moderate middle”—a middle that attempts to defuse controversy and wish the best for everyone, who seem to be willing to cooperate with anyone who will let them preach the gospel.⁶

On the other hand, Schaeffer represents the side of evangelicalism that is willing to work with others for common social causes as cobelligerents but not when it comes to the proclamation of the gospel. It is a side that is truth driven, so much so that it recognizes that seemingly “minor” shifts of doctrine are significant and thus must be taken seriously. It is a side that calls for a “loving confrontation” in matters of truth and life; otherwise compromise to the gospel will take place. It is a side of evangelicalism that this author is convinced we need to identify with today. That is why, in a time in which evangelicalism finds herself divided over so many issues, including some major doctrinal ones, it is wise to reflect on the life and thought of Francis Schaeffer—a servant of the Lord who stood firm for the gospel in his generation so that we may better learn how to do so in our generation.

I. IDEAS HAVE CONSEQUENCES

One of the great legacies of Francis Schaeffer’s work was to show us that “ideas have consequences.” Even though he was not entirely correct in all of his analysis of intellectual history, Schaeffer was exactly right that western society has seen a “line of despair”—a slow process by which ideas trickle down from philosophy to art, music, the general

culture and, finally, theology. The cultural mess we live in did not come from nowhere; rather it has a long history. As Schaeffer reminded us over and over again, there is a flow to history as ideas work themselves out—both for good or ill.

In addition, Schaeffer taught us that to understand our present time, we must also grasp the flow of intellectual history that has preceded us, and the effects it has had and will have on us as people eventually act on their beliefs. In fact, Schaeffer warned us, if we do not think through this intellectual history, we will not only misunderstand our own times, but we will also have nothing constructive to say to our present age. We will inevitably be like the proverbial frog in the pan of water that is sadly oblivious to the fact that the water is being slowly heated and that if he does not jump out of the pan immediately then certain destruction will result.

For Christian leaders, pastors, and teachers, this lesson is of utmost importance. If we are to remain faithful to our Lord and to his people; if we are to have something worthwhile to say to our generation; if we are to be those who truly understand their times and speak to the pressing issues of the day, then it will require nothing less than a profound understanding of the day and age we are called to serve and minister in, as well as a wholehearted devotion to the Lord and his Word. In this regard, Schaeffer often loved to quote the famous statement attributed to Martin Luther, even though it is difficult to demonstrate that Luther actually said it. Regardless, the truth of the statement is something Christian leaders must take seriously.

If I profess with the loudest voice and clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God except precisely that little point which the world and the devil are at that moment attacking, I am not confessing Christ, however boldly I may be professing Christ. Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is proved, and to be steady on all the battlefield besides, is mere flight and disgrace if he flinches at that point.⁷

This was not theoretical for Schaeffer. For him, this was a matter of life and death. We must grasp, he warned, the importance of “ideas” in order to understand our times aright. For if we do not we will be swept away by the “spirit of our age” without our even being aware of what has happened to us.

THE BATTLE OF THE DAY: THE IDEA OF TRUTH

What, then, for Schaeffer was the key “idea” to be grasped today? From an analysis of intellectual history, what should the church learn in order to remain faithful to the Lord today? What is our battle? For Schaeffer, the answer is beyond dispute; our battle today is a battle for the very idea and concept of truth. Schaeffer states:

The present chasm between the generations has been brought about almost entirely by a change in the concept of truth.

Wherever you look today the new concept holds the field. The consensus about us is almost monolithic, whether you review the arts, literature or simply read the newspapers and magazines such as *Time*, *Life*, *Newsweek*, *The Listener* or *The Observer*... It is like suffocating in a particularly bad London fog. And just as fog cannot be kept out by walls or doors, so this consensus comes in around us, until the room we live in is no longer unpolluted, and yet we hardly realize what has happened.

The tragedy of our situation today is that men and women are being fundamentally affected by the new way of looking at truth, and yet they have never even analyzed the drift which has taken place. Young people from Christian homes are brought up in the old framework of truth. Then they are subjected to the modern framework. In time they become confused because they do not understand the alternatives with which they are being

presented. Confusion becomes bewilderment, and before long they are overwhelmed. This is unhappily true not only of young people, but of many pastors, Christian educators, evangelists and missionaries as well.

So this change in the concept of the way we come to knowledge and truth is the most crucial problem, as I understand it, facing Christianity today.⁸

In the current literature, whether that is philosophical, scientific, literary, or theological, the term “postmodern-

EVEN THOUGH SCHAEFFER NEVER USED THE WORD “POST-MODERNISM”—SINCE IT WAS NOT YET IN VOGUE—HE CERTAINLY WARNED US OF THE IDEA AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

ism” is often used to describe what Schaeffer was referring to. Even though Schaeffer himself never used the term, he certainly anticipated and described it long before its popular use.⁹ Schaeffer had a knack of doing this. He often could “see” where ideas were going because he took seriously the maxim, “ideas have consequences.”

In today’s use of the term “postmodernism” it has come to mean a mindset that is tightly linked with a denial of truth in any objective, universal sense. It is often contrasted with “modernism” which reflects much of the Enlightenment spirit—a spirit, interestingly enough, that borrowed much from Christianity. Like Christianity, it too believed that truth was objective and universal and that reason could gain truth by research and investigation. However, unlike Christianity, it sought to discover truth apart from dependence upon God and his spoken Word. Instead of following the Christian motto of “faith seeking understanding” and underscoring the

priority of divine revelation, modernism sought to follow the agenda of “I understand in order to believe.” In this sense, then, modernism sought to subsume all truth claims, whether philosophical or religious, under the “authority” of human reason independent of God’s Word.

Postmodernism, on the other hand, is really modernism that has traveled its road to its logical end, and is thus much more epistemologically self-conscious of its starting points and results. In this sense, postmodernism takes seriously the Enlightenment project centered in the autonomous self. But then, ironically, it rightly concludes that if the Enlightenment view is correct, truth could never be universal. Why? The simple reason is because finite human beings and communities are too historically situated and sociologically conditioned to ever yield a “God’s eye point of view,” i.e., an objective, universal, unbiased viewpoint. Truth, in the end, cannot be what modernism hoped it was; rather it must be perspectival, provisional, and ultimately, what the community most values, i.e., pragmatic. Of course, if postmodernism is true, in contrast to the beliefs of modernism, then any claims of individuals or communities to know “the truth” is necessarily wrong—an interesting irony indeed. Postmodernism, at its heart, is a distrust of anyone who says, “That’s the way it is” or “This is the truth,” and as such, it tends to a full-blown pluralism, relativism, and skepticism. As D. A. Carson reminds us, today “the only absolute creed is the creed of pluralism”—i.e., everyone’s viewpoint is welcome whether it pertains to philosophical, moral, or religious matters.¹⁰

Even though Schaeffer never used the word “postmodernism”—since it was not yet in vogue—he certainly warned us of the idea and its consequences. In fact, it was this “idea” that he labored so long and hard in his books and lectures for us to understand and grasp. At the heart of so many issues that confront the church, he argued, is an epistemological shift that has taken place in western thought and culture, a shift that we now call postmodernism, a shift away from truth, or what he called “true truth.” And, he also warned us, if we do not understand this shift and take it seriously and confront it, we will not be fighting the battle of our day as good soldiers of Jesus

Christ. In the end, our teaching, preaching, apologetics, and evangelism, will fall on deaf ears since it will not address adequately our generation as it should. Our generation will either hear the presentation of the gospel as a relic of a by-gone era or in the categories of a postmodern society, thus relativizing the gospel. Ultimately what is at stake today, maintained Schaeffer, is an entire worldview battle. No longer is the battle for the gospel over this or that point, but over the whole structure and framework—a battle of life and death proportions and consequences.

It is this last observation that needs to be learned afresh from Schaeffer. Schaeffer’s great concern was for the proclamation of the gospel and the building up of the church. He wanted to speak faithfully to his generation in such a way that the gospel was heard for what it really was. That is why he labored to help people understand intellectual history—not for curiosity’s sake—but for the purpose of better understanding the times. In all the legitimate discussion and debate over the accuracy of Schaeffer’s interpretation of such people as Thomas Aquinas, Georg Hegel, Søren Kierkegaard, various artists and musicians, and even Karl Barth, most acknowledge that Schaeffer’s overall analysis is correct—an analysis that has been too often forgotten in both its theory and practical implications. Regardless of all of the details, Schaeffer was right to stress the incredible epistemological shifts that had taken place in western society, shifts that have incredible practical consequences. Let us briefly highlight three of those practical implications that Schaeffer warned us about that are of particular importance for the church today.

THE SHIFT TO EXPERIENCE

With the loss of truth there is an increasing shift to experience, but an experience that is often devoid of content and truth. In his analysis of western thought, Schaeffer argued that modern man increasingly began to view the world in a naturalistic way.¹¹ In science, there was a shift from viewing the uniformity of natural causes in a controlled system by which God continually sustains that system and can even intervene in it if he so chooses, to a closed system that shuts God out of the system. In philos-

ophy, especially in the west, there was a growing Enlightenment push towards “rationalism,” that is, a mindset that sought to employ human reason in such a way that it increasingly acted independently of divine revelation in order to yield a unified world and life view. But, as Schaeffer claimed these shifts eventually led to a dichotomous view of reality, what he called “the lower and upper story,” as evidenced in such dialectics as the “nature-freedom” and “phenomena-noumena” divide of Immanuel Kant.

The term “rationalism” can mean many things to many people. To some it is a term that refers to a school of epistemology known as “Continental Rationalism” in contrast to other schools such as “British Empiricism” or Immanuel Kant’s “Transcendental Idealism.” To others, it simply means a person who overemphasizes the use of reason. However, for Schaeffer he is using the term to refer to “any philosophy or system of thought that begins with man alone, in order to try to find a unified meaning to life” (The God Who Is There, 1:200). In other words, “rationalism” refers to a mindset, an approach to philosophy that views human beings as the final authority in matters of truth and reality, which he then sets over against Christianity that views God and his Word as the final authority for matters of truth and life.

The problem, however, with these dialectical views of reality, Schaeffer contended, is that they leave us with a terribly divided view of the world. Human reason acting independently of divine revelation has no way of reconciling how in the “lower story” (i.e., the realm of “nature”) this naturalistic, determined, cause and effect impersonal world can give a rational grounding to the “upper story,” (i.e., the realm of “freedom”) in which we try to find meaning, values, purpose, and freedom. And so what do human beings do? Do they live consistently with the implications of what their reason leads them to conclude in the “lower story”—that

GIVEN THE TENDENCY OF OUR GENERATION TO APPEAL TO EXPERIENCE, WE MUST BE CAREFUL THAT WE ARE NOT CONFORMED TO OUR AGE. IT MATTERS GREATLY WHAT WE BELIEVE AND ULTIMATELY, WHOM YOU BELIEVE IN.

they are determined and meaningless? Well, some try to. But, as Schaeffer observed, and what Scripture teaches, is that because this view of reality is wrong and all people are made in God’s image, it is nigh impossible to live with such a view. Instead, what people do in practice is to give up the possibility of uniting these dichotomous realms, that is, they give up the hope of truth in the sense of a unified worldview, and then they make the move towards irrationality. They argue for meaning, values, purpose, and freedom, but apart from a rational base. They live by “faith” but a faith that has little or no content and rational grounding. They place in the “upper story,” as Schaeffer emphasized repeatedly, a focus on experience, but an experience that is open to anything; an experience that can be as diverse as drugs and sex in the 1960s to new age spirituality in the 1980-90s and into the 21st century.¹² Thus, for Schaeffer, the best way to characterize “post-modern” people (or as he stated it, “modern, modern”) is that they are those who live with the dichotomy between the “lower and upper story.” For him, this was not just a clever statement; it was at the heart of the matter.

So what practical implications does this have for us today? One massive implication it has, Schaeffer claimed, is in our evangelism. In our proclamation of the gospel today, we must constantly remember that we are preaching to people who live with the dichotomy. And unless we anticipate how they will hear what we are saying, we run the risk of not communicating to them properly and even making

converts who “believe” in Jesus as just another “upper story” experience divorced from truth, rationality, and reality. In fact, Schaeffer’s critique of evangelicalism, both theologically and practically, was centered on this exact point.

On the one hand, he was concerned that evangelicals in their evangelism were downplaying doctrine and content for experience. In calling people to saving faith we must make clear that gospel

realities communicate “true truth,” confronting people with the “God who is really there” and that faith is not a blind leap, but rooted and grounded in truth. Experience is important, and Schaeffer strongly emphasized that fact, but, he stressed, it must not be divorced from truth. On the other hand, in the area of academic theology, he was concerned that evangelicals were adopting too much of the theology of neo-orthodoxy. He believed that it was a mistake of gigantic proportions to argue a position, such as Karl Barth’s, that allowed for the possibility of mistakes in Scripture that did not negatively affect our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He viewed Barth’s theology as another example of the tendency of contemporary thought to dichotomize reality and to divorce “faith” and theology from rational grounding and verifiable history.

In these points, Schaeffer was exactly correct. Evangelicalism, especially today, must not lose the issue of truth, content, and doctrine. Experience is important, but experience must always be grounded in the truth of God’s Word. Given the tendency of our generation to appeal to experience, we must be careful that we are not conformed to our age. It matters greatly what we believe and ultimately, whom you believe in. Not all “faith” or “faiths” are equal. This leads me to a second practical implication that Schaeffer warned us about.

THE CHALLENGE OF RELIGIOUS PLURALISM

With the loss of truth, there will be an increasing emphasis on religious pluralism and a downplaying of the exclusivity of the gospel. When Schaeffer spoke of religious pluralism, he was not referring to the empirical observation that there are many religions in the world and that even in the west there is an increasing growth of religions where Christianity once was predominant. Rather, he was referring to the mindset that did not allow that any one religion was true or better than another. He saw this as a practical consequence of a denial of truth.

For those of us living now in the 21st century, we are confronted by this attitude everywhere. What is interesting

about Schaeffer at this point was that he saw this coming way back in the 1960s. He saw that a major implication of the loss of truth is that a full-orbed pluralism will be put in its place. And part of our calling in our generation is to stand at this point, without compromise, proclaiming an exclusive Christ in an inclusive, pluralistic age.

THE DE-VALUATION OF HUMAN LIFE

With the loss of truth there is a third practical implication, namely the de-valuation of human life. As Schaeffer looked at the degradation of the West, he predicted that the post-Christian west would begin to devalue life. He predicted this based on his analysis of the shift of ideas that had taken place in the West away from a Christian understanding of the world to a modernist and eventual postmodernist understanding of reality. Unfortunately, he was exactly right in his assessment. For years Schaeffer warned the church that the worldview of the West was moving in the direction of interpreting reality solely in terms of an impersonal, closed system and that it would implode on itself. Of course the entailment of this was not only that chemistry and physics were interpreted within a “closed system” but so also were the humanities—psychology, sociology, literature, and even theology. In this, there was a massive turn to the impersonal, which, Schaeffer predicted, would lead to a de-valuation of the human being as evidenced by the acceptance of abortion, infanticide, and euthanasia—practices which are among us now more than ever before. He also predicted that human life would be devalued in terms of political tyranny as people gave up more of their rights for an increased expansion of government and its rule of the ordinary citizen. Of course, Schaeffer’s prediction was exactly right. Ethical issues and debates today that are common—abortion, infanticide, euthanasia, cloning, redefinition of marriage, increased governmental tyranny—are all evidences of the fact that the value of human life is up for grabs. That is why Schaeffer took the stand he did on the social front. It was not a stand divorced from his theology; rather it was precisely because he saw that “ideas have consequences” and that truth demands action.

As I have stated, Schaeffer's constant emphasis that "ideas have consequences" is one of his great legacies that we neglect to our peril. To remain faithful to the Lord today; to proclaim the gospel in such a way that effectively communicates to people; to prepare Christians to understand their world and live in it in such a way that they are not molded by it; we need to learn from Schaeffer at this point. As he taught us, these issues are not merely academic; they are a matter of life and death.

II. THE IMPORTANCE OF WORLDVIEW THINKING

Francis Schaeffer not only taught us that "ideas have consequences," he also reminded us that the crucial "ideas" at issue are ultimately worldview debates. No doubt, this is not a new observation, but it is one that has often been neglected, at least until recently. Given the tremendous shifts that have taken place in society, it is important to realize that we are engaged in a battle not over merely this or that point of Christian truth, but over entire competing worldview structures.

Schaeffer spoke of these worldview differences in terms of presuppositional differences. He argued that in the West at the beginning of the 20th century, everyone—Christian and non-Christian alike—were working from basically the same presuppositions, influenced strongly by a Christian view of reality. Even though it could be argued that the non-Christian had no right to act on the presuppositions he acted on given his rejection of the Christian worldview, still it could be said that there was a commonality in thinking. But eventually as people began to act upon their presuppositions in a more consistent fashion, which led them further away from a Christian view of the world, many Christians did not notice what had happened. And so, as Schaeffer comments, "The flood-waters of secular thought and liberal theology overwhelmed the Church because the leaders did not understand the importance of combating a false set of presuppositions. They largely fought the battle on the wrong ground and so, instead of

being ahead in both defense and communication, they lagged woefully behind. This was a real weakness which it is hard, even today, to rectify among evangelicals."¹³

Furthermore, this lack of worldview thinking, Schaeffer argued, is also due to the kind of education we received, whether it is Christian or secular. He astutely observed that in our education we often tend towards specialization without seeing the interrelationships between disciplines and thus the "big picture," i.e., worldview. As such, we are in danger of not seeing how various ideas relate to one another and thus the consequences of those ideas. He states,

Today we have a weakness in our educational process in failing to understand the natural associations between the disciplines.

We tend to study all our disciplines in unrelated parallel lines. This tends to be true in both Christian and secular education. This is one of the reasons why evangelical Christians have been taken by surprise at the tremendous shift that has come in our generation. We have studied our exegesis as exegesis, our theology as theology, our philosophy as philosophy; we study something about art as art; we study music as music, without understanding that these are things of man, and the things of man are never unrelated parallel lines.¹⁴

WE ARE TO COMMUNICATE THE GOSPEL TO OUR GENERATION IN TERMS THEY CAN UNDERSTAND.

This is an important lesson to learn, especially in our day. In many ways, we are back with Paul in Acts 17 at Athens preaching to an audience and context that is pluralistic, pagan, and foreign to Christianity in terms of worldview structures. That is why Francis Schaeffer repeatedly argued, appealing to texts such as Acts 17, that we must do "pre-evangelism" which he closely associated with apologetics. He argued that there were two purposes of apologetics. First, the goal of apologetics is to defend the Christian worldview from attacks against it, and to give people reasons why we believe Christianity to be true. But there is

also a second purpose of apologetics that is closely associated with evangelism and it is this: we are to communicate the gospel to our generation in terms they can understand. Thus, part of our task in evangelism and apologetics is to present the gospel for what it really is, within the worldview structure that it comes, so that people will hear correctly the claims and demands of the gospel upon them.

How this practically worked itself out in the life of Schaeffer was that in his evangelism and presentation of Christianity he would not begin with “accept Christ as Savior;” instead he would begin where Scripture begins, starting with the doctrine of God, establishing the worldview structures of Christianity grounded in the doctrine of creation, revelation, and the historic fall, and then and only then move to redemption, pointing people to the Lord Jesus Christ, who alone is their only hope.¹⁵ Why? Because, like Paul in Acts 17, he knew that unless he first developed a biblical frame of reference, i.e., worldview, the proclamation of the gospel would not make sense and his hearers would not then hear the gospel for what it truly is, in its own categories and on its own terms. Schaeffer, like Paul, was very concerned that the gospel is not wrongly dismissed or reinterpreted into another alien worldview framework, for that only leads to a distortion of the gospel message. And especially in our pluralistic, postmodern, inclusive age, in order to present Jesus Christ as not just another god or savior, but the exclusive Lord, Savior, and Judge, Schaeffer saw that it was imperative to build a biblical-theological framework, rooted in the story line of Scripture. That is, he saw that it was crucial to think in a worldview manner, rooted and grounded in the God who is there. In truth, what Schaeffer called us to and role modeled in his own life, was the doing of theology. In the broadest sense, the task of theology is to apply all of Scripture to the issues of life. It is to work from within the categories, structures, and teaching of Scripture, following the story line of Scripture, and apply it to the world. It is to live from within the worldview of Scripture and to set that biblical-theological framework over against all other worldviews. In short, it is to learn afresh how “to think God’s thoughts after him” and “to bring every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.” This was Schaeffer’s strength and this

is another crucial lesson that we need to learn from him.

In fact, I am convinced that it was because he constantly thought at the worldview level that helps explain why he was so adamant that evangelicals must not compromise certain points of doctrine. It was because he realized that Christianity was a worldview and that its parts “hung together” as a whole, that he was very concerned when evangelical scholars would chip away at some of these seemingly “insignificant” points. Thus, for example, he was very concerned that Adam was viewed as a historic figure, that the Fall was a space-time event, and that the early chapters of Genesis were not de-historicized. Why? Because he rightly saw that unless we took the Bible on its own terms; unless we maintained these crucial starting points that were the building blocks for the rest of the story, then the worldview of historic Christianity would not only collapse, but, in the end, Christianity would become nothing more than another “upper story” thing divorced from rational grounding, truth, and the God who is really there.¹⁶ At stake, in other words, was not just one point of doctrine, but the entire worldview claim; indeed, the gospel.

If we are to learn from Schaeffer at this point, our thinking, teaching, preaching, and living must be much more worldview-ish. Our battle today is over entire worldview structures. Thus, in our teaching and preaching we must work harder at showing people how the pieces of Scripture “hang together” as a coherent whole, and how those pieces lead to worldview formation. But even more: in our evangelism, in speaking to a culture that increasingly operates with alien worldviews and knows little of Christianity, we must learn afresh to communicate the gospel within its own worldview structure, beginning with the God who is there.

III. THE CENTRALITY OF THE DOCTRINE OF GOD

Francis Schaeffer was truly a God-centered man. This was not only true in his personal devotion and life; it was also true in terms of his thought.¹⁷ It is instructive that the very titles of his books—e.g., *The God Who is There*; *He Is There* and *He Is Not Silent*—illustrate the

fact that for Schaeffer, all the answers of life, meaning, morality, significance, and values are rooted and grounded in the personal-infinite, Triune God of Scripture.

Interestingly, there is a logical progression in these lessons; they are not random or haphazard. What has happened to western culture? For Schaeffer, modern man has turned away from the God of Scripture. In so doing, certain consequences have resulted from these alien worldviews that we see around us, living in the postmodern culture that we live in. What, then, is the solution to our problem? Where shall we turn to overcome the dichotomies in our intellectual life, the alienation in our personal

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lives, and the impersonalism of our society? The Triune God of Scripture. For it is only in him, the personal-infinite God who is the creator, sustainer, and providential Lord, the God who speaks, that we can find the answers to the questions of life. In him alone are intellectual answers because he is the source and standard of truth; but also in him alone is forgiveness, healing, justification, and redemption. For Schaeffer, God is not merely the transcendental necessity for meaning, truth, and values; even though he was that. He is also our portion. He is the God who is there—who can be known, loved, and adored. It is at this point, that we must learn from Schaeffer. First, we must learn anew how central the doctrine of God is

to the Christian worldview. We must especially learn this living in a day of religious pluralism in which the word “god” has basically become meaningless and contentless. We must have courage to stand and proclaim only one God and no other. We must have courage even in the evangelical world in which current debate over the doctrine of God is raging, to say that not all conceptions of God are equal. It is only the God of Scripture, represented by historic Christianity, who is there. But secondly we must learn anew that our doctrine of God must not be merely theoretical to us. This God must also be our portion. He must be the one who captures our thinking and our lives. In our teaching, preaching, and living, the God of Scripture must be our passion and delight.

IV. THE NECESSITY OF BIBLICAL AUTHORITY AND INERRANCY

Probably few evangelicals have spoken so passionately about inerrancy, biblical authority, and the doctrine of inspiration than Francis Schaeffer. Not only was he instrumental in forming the International Council on Biblical Inerrancy, he also taught, preached, and wrote about how much biblical authority was a “watershed” issue. He had no time for evangelicals who only gave lip service to biblical authority while at the same time redefined what inerrancy had historically meant for the church, obfuscating it in hermeneutical issues, or undercutting the very claims of Scripture regarding itself. Now the interesting question to ask is: Why was Schaeffer so concerned about biblical authority?

The answer should not surprise us. He was so concerned because the doctrine of Scripture was so basic to the Christian worldview and the God of Scripture. For Schaeffer, it is the God of the Bible—the personal-infinite, Triune God—who is the transcendental necessity for meaning, significance, values, and truth. We come to know this God not only because he is there, but because he has spoken to us—he is not silent. And because God is as Scripture presents him to be—the creator, sustainer, and Lord of his universe—there is no intellectual problem affirming that God is perfectly able to reveal himself to us and to guarantee that what the human authors of

Scripture freely write is precisely what he intended to have written. Furthermore, this seems to be the claim of Scripture regarding itself. So exegetically, theologically, and philosophically, biblical authority makes sense. It is intellectually credible, part and parcel of the entire world-view structure. And it is theologically necessary if we are to have truth and to justify theological doctrines. Without a high view of Scripture, we deny what Scripture says about itself and undercut the foundation by which we may do theology and answer the basic questions of life.¹⁸

That is why Schaeffer grew increasingly alarmed at evangelicals who were departing from or undercutting a high view of Scripture, and as we look back in hindsight, what he was deeply concerned about sadly has come true. In fact, in Schaeffer's last book, literally written on his death bed, he sought to warn the evangelical church against compromising on biblical authority for some of the reasons just stated, something we have not taken seriously enough. Schaeffer wrote,

Evangelicals today are facing a watershed concerning the nature of biblical inspiration and authority.... Within evangelicalism there is a growing number who are modifying their views on the inerrancy of the Bible so that the full authority of Scripture is completely undercut. But it is happening in very subtle ways. Like the snow lying side-by-side on the ridge, the new views on biblical authority often seem at first glance not to be so very far from what evangelicals, until just recently, have always believed. But also, like the snow lying side-by-side on the ridge, the new views when followed consistently end up a thousand miles apart.

What may seem like a minor difference at first, in the end makes all the difference in the world. It makes all the difference, as we might expect, in things pertaining to theology, doctrine and spiritual matters, but it also makes all the difference in things pertaining to the

daily Christian life and how we as Christians are to relate to the world around us. In other words, compromising the full authority of Scripture eventually affects what it means to be a Christian theologically and how we live in the full spectrum of human life.¹⁹

It should not surprise us that various evangelicals have not accepted this either-or presentation of Schaeffer. For example, Scott Burson and Jerry Walls, and many others think that he has overstated his case. They ask whether inerrancy really is the watershed issue for evangelicals and they respond with a negative answer.²⁰ They argue that God was less concerned with the exact wording of Scripture and more concerned with the "essential reliability of his overall message."²¹ They have problems with two premises of Schaeffer's argument: (1) That the Bible contains exactly what God desires, down to the very words; (2) That God can precisely control what human authors write without taking away their freedom, because these premises seem to imply an implicit determinism associated with a compatibilistic view of human freedom.²² Lurking behind this criticism, of course, is an implicit adoption of a libertarian view of human freedom which entails a more limited understanding of God's sovereign control over the world.

What is important about this observation is that Burson and Walls rightly note that Schaeffer's high view of Scripture and his defense of inerrancy requires a certain conception of the sovereignty of God and his relation to his creatures, particularly the authors of Scripture. Schaeffer, as one who affirmed a strong view of divine sovereignty and the rule and reign of God in this world, would not be surprised. Arguing from a Reformation theology, he would have acknowledged that the doctrine of inerrancy is intimately tied to our view of God. As we have noted above in commenting on the God-centeredness of Schaeffer's thought, the doctrine of God was the pivotal starting point in his understanding and defense of Christianity. For him, it was not just any "god" who would do. It was only the personal-infinite, (i.e., sovereign) Triune God of Scripture who alone is the foundation for truth and knowledge, and who alone, if he so chooses, can reveal himself

in such a way that is wholly reliable, true, and trustworthy.²³ However, what would have disturbed Schaeffer is the weakening of the infinite, or sovereign, nature of God that is now occurring in some quarters of evangelicalism. He would have been disturbed by this trend because he would have whole-heartedly agreed with the astute observation of J. I. Packer that: “The customary apologetic for biblical authority operates on too narrow a front. As we have seen, faith in the God of the Reformation theology is the necessary presupposition of faith in Scripture as “God Word written,” and without this faith sola Scriptura as the God-taught principle of authority more or less loses its meaning.... we must never lose sight of the fact that our doctrine of God is decisive for our concept of Scripture, and that in our controversy with a great deal of modern theology it is here, rather than in relation to the phenomena of Scripture, that the decisive battle must be joined.”²⁴

No doubt, much more could be said and must be said about Schaeffer’s exposition and defense of the doctrine of inerrancy. But suffice it to say, that for him biblical authority was a watershed issue of gigantic proportions. It was an issue intimately linked to his overall defense of the Christian worldview and without it, he believed that the Christian worldview would begin to unravel, beginning with the doctrine of God.²⁵ In this, I am convinced, he is right. We must learn afresh today that the doctrine of inerrancy is no mere option for evangelicals. It is part and parcel of what Christianity is and to tone it down, in essence, is to undercut the whole.

ENDNOTES

1 This article is a revised and edited version of “Francis A. Schaeffer (1912-1984): Lessons from His Thought and Life,” *SBJT* 6:2 (2002): 4-32. It is republished here with permission. Unless otherwise noted, all references to the writings of Francis Schaeffer will be taken from *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer*, 5 vols., 2d ed. (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1985). Michael S. Hamilton, “The Dissatisfaction of Francis Schaeffer” *Christianity Today*, March 3, 1997, 22.

2 These three areas of Schaeffer’s impact are taken from Harold O. J. Brown, “Standing Against the World,” in *Francis Schaeffer: Portraits of the Man and His Work*, ed. Lane T. Dennis (Westchester: Crossway Books, 1986), 19-25.

3 Brown, “Standing Against the World,” 23.

4 Lane T. Dennis, “Schaeffer and His Critics,” in Francis A. Schaeffer: *Portraits*, ed. Lane T. Dennis (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 1986), 102.

5 Dennis, “Schaeffer and His Critics,” 227, n. 5.

6 See Hamilton, “The Dissatisfaction of Francis Schaeffer,” 30.

7 Cited in Schaeffer, *The God Who Is There*, 1:11.

8 *Ibid.*, 5-6 (emphasis his).

9 Schaeffer, *Escape from Reason*, 1:225-36.

10 Carson, *The Gagging of God*, 19.

11 Schaeffer, *Escape From Reason*, 1:205-70.

12 See Schaeffer, *The God Who is There*, 1:13-90.

13 Schaeffer, *The God Who is There* 1:7.

14 Schaeffer, *Escape From Reason* 1:211.

15 E.g., Schaeffer, *The God Who is There*, 1:93-160; *idem*, *Two Contents and Two Realities*, 3:407-22.

16 Cf. Schaeffer, *Genesis in Space and Time*, 2:1-114; *idem*, *The Great Evangelical Disaster*, 4:301-411.

17 Schaeffer, *True Spirituality*, 3:193-378; *idem*, *Two Contents, Two Realities*, 3:407-22; *idem*, *The Great Evangelical Disaster*, 4:301-411.

18 See Schaeffer, *The Great Evangelical Disaster*, 4:329-30.

19 *Ibid.*, 328-29 (emphasis his).

20 See Scott R. Burson and Jerry L. Walls, *C. S. Lewis and Francis Schaeffer* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1998), 114.

21 *Ibid.*, 135-36.

22 *Ibid.*, 135.

23 See Schaeffer, *He Is There and He Is Not Silent*, 1:347.

24 J. I. Packer, “‘Sola Scriptura’ in History and Today,” in *God’s Inerrant Word*, ed. John W. Montgomery (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1974), 60.

25 Schaeffer, *The Great Evangelical Disaster*, 4:329-44.

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SPEAKING THE TRUTH IN LOVE

*LESSONS FROM THE LIFE OF
FRANCIS SCHAEFFER*

by
**Stephen
Wellum**



At the end of his life, Schaeffer wrote the following words:

What really matters? What is it that matters so much in my life and in your life that it sets priorities for everything we do? Our Lord Jesus was asked essentially this same question and his reply was: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.” (Matthew 22:37-40). Here is what really matters—to love the Lord our God, to love his Son, and to know him personally as our Savior. And if we love him, to do the things that please him; simultaneously to show forth his character of love and holiness in our lives; to be faithful to his truth; to walk day by day with the living Christ; to live a life of prayer.

And the other half of what really matters is to love our neighbor as ourselves. The two go together; they cannot be separated... And if we love our neighbor as Christ would have us love our neighbor, we will certainly want to share the gospel with our neighbor; and beyond this we will want to show forth the law of God in all our relationships with our neighbor.

But it does not stop here. Evangelism is primary, but it is not the end of our work and indeed cannot be separated from the rest of the Christian life. We must acknowledge and then act upon the fact that if Christ is our Savior, he is also our Lord in all of life. He is our Lord not just in religious things and not just in cultural things such as the arts and music, but in our intellectual lives, and in business, and in our relation to society, and

in the attitude toward the moral breakdown of our culture.... Making Christ Lord in our lives means taking a stand in very direct and practical ways against the world spirit of our age as it rolls along claiming to be autonomous, crushing all that we cherish in its path.¹

In this quote we glimpse something of the life of Schaeffer and lessons we may learn from that life. No doubt it is true that Schaeffer’s was not a perfect individual; no one is. Yet, in his life we see a person of integrity; a man who attempted to live and act upon what he believed and taught. In particular, he sought to love the Lord and his neighbor, and in so doing to bring his life constantly, in both thought and action, under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Let us look at each of these areas in turn.

I. LOVING THE LORD YOUR GOD

Schaeffer was a God-centered man. This was not only true in terms of his thought, but also his life. Whether you read his works or listen to his tapes, a deep devotion for the Lord is clearly evident. Here is an individual who does not merely talk about God, but one who knows him deeply. Even the beginning of L’Abri was born in a spiritual crisis to know God in a deeper way. Schaeffer recounts in *True Spirituality* how he himself faced a spiritual crisis in 1951-52, and out of that crisis the birth of L’Abri took place. He discovered during this time what it meant to rely upon the finished work of Christ in our present lives and in moment-to-moment dependence upon the Spirit of God in prayer. And this was not mere rhetoric for him. L’Abri itself was rooted and grounded in prayer; a visible testimony to the existence, power, and grace of God.

We also see in Schaeffer a man who sought to exhibit simultaneously the holiness of God and the love of God, albeit in an imperfect way. He was a man of courage and compassion, both in terms of his thought and life. He spoke much about the need for “loving confrontation” and he demonstrated it in his life. For

example, Harold O. J. Brown recounts at least three areas in which Schaeffer took a stand, when it was not fashionable to do so, largely due to his desire to honor the Lord with all his heart, soul, mind, and strength.

First, there was his stand against the theology of Karl Barth. Schaeffer was converted and received his theological training in the 1930s. At that time evangelical theology was

almost nonexistent for a variety of reasons largely stemming from the fundamentalist-modernist controversies of that era. However, after World War II, evangelicalism enjoyed a rebirth under such scholars as F. F. Bruce and Carl F. H. Henry, as well as under the evangelistic ministry of Billy Graham. Brown recounts that Schaeffer could have been a part of this movement and attained celebrity status; however he detected flaws and compromise that were serious enough to

undermine evangelicalism as a movement. What did he see? He saw the growing influence of neo-orthodoxy on evangelical theology. What was appealing about Barth was that he too, like evangelicals, was criticizing many liberal assumptions held in the academic community. As such, some evangelicals were drawn to the orthodox elements in Barth's theology, while they were slow to observe the negative points. However, what Schaeffer noticed was not only that Barth's influence in Europe was beginning to decrease, but also that Barth's theology, if adopted, would undermine evangelical theology.

Where did Barth go wrong? Schaeffer argued that Barth had an improper view of biblical authority. He allowed for the theoretical possibility of mistakes in Scripture, thus undermining the foundations for evangelical theology. Barth's critique against liberalism was helpful, but his foundations for the faith were shaky, and this precisely is what Schaeffer pointed out. What Schaeffer saw, probably more clearly than anyone else, was that Barth's theology

was not the one to adopt. Brown summarizes it this way:

There is no doubt that Barth was antiliberal, and that he affirmed the central doctrines of the Christian faith. However, his failure to assert Biblical infallibility and the historicity of the Gospel accounts meant that his affirmations rested on his own charismatic

authority rather than on that of Scripture. Because of his failure to shore up the foundations of Biblical authority which had been sapped by a generation of destructive criticism, Barth was not able to establish a second generation of Protestant theologians in the faith that he himself honored; his greatest influence remains among evangelicals and other

conservatives who already know why they believe. There is no doubt that Barth's affirmations are encouraging, but his foundations are inadequate, and it would be dangerous to take him as a theological guide. It is remarkable that Schaeffer recognized this three decades ago while some evangelical leaders today are "discovering" Barth as the answer to modern disbelief.²

Second, and probably even more disturbing to some evangelicals than his stand against Barth, was Schaeffer's failure to embrace wholeheartedly the evangelistic methods of Billy Graham. It was not that Schaeffer was against evangelism, nor was it due to Graham's lack of commitment to biblical authority, rather it was a twofold concern. First, Schaeffer was alarmed that Graham too quickly worked with and did not sufficiently distinguish between those who held to historic Christianity versus liberalism or Roman Catholic theology.³ Second, he was

BARTH'S CRITIQUE AGAINST LIBERALISM WAS HELPFUL, BUT HIS FOUNDATIONS FOR THE FAITH WERE SHAKY, AND THIS PRECISELY IS WHAT SCHAEFFER POINTED OUT.

concerned that Graham's evangelism did not touch the whole person and as such, it tended to appeal solely to an emotional decision—an “upper story” experience—that will, in the end, only produce pseudo-converts.⁴ As Brown notes, Schaeffer's criticism of Graham's approach was not offered to a wide public, but it soon became known. Schaeffer was criticized by some leaders in the evangelical movement, such as Carl Henry and Harold Lindsell, and written off by others as being too separatistic.⁵ Yet, Schaeffer realized something that too many failed to see. What good is “success” in evangelism if it does not produce true converts? Evangelism, especially in this era, given the massive shifts that have taken place in society, must call for “solid foundations as well as good feelings.” As Brown astutely observes, evangelicalism as a movement only gained a sense of strength and stability in those early years because “many of Graham's converts later went through the school of Schaeffer's disciplined thinking.”⁶

Third, there was his courageous stand for the rights of the unborn. It is important to realize that Schaeffer's social activism was not independent of his defense of truth and the gospel. For Schaeffer the *Roe v. Wade* decision of the US Supreme Court in 1973 was a powder keg. It was alarming evidence that the ideas of the Enlightenment were beginning to have practical consequences in how human beings viewed each other. Schaeffer had been predicting for quite some time that with the loss of a Christian view of reality in the west, one of the massive implications would be the loss of respect for human life. And that is precisely what *Roe v. Wade* symbolized for Schaeffer. And so when he, along with precious few others, took this issue to the streets, he did so out of a profound sense of love for God and his Word, as well as love for his neighbor. Truth demanded action. But initially not all evangelicals, especially those in leadership positions, appreciated Schaeffer's stand. As Brown notes, with the publication of *A Christian Manifesto*, he for the first time was branded a political conservative which brought attacks from a growing number of politically liberal evangelicals.⁷ Brown states: “Schaeffer's increasingly outspoken commitment to specific conservative causes in the last two years of his

life troubled some evangelicals who disagreed with him, because they recognized his influence among the general Christian public. In addition, it embarrassed others, who generally agreed with him, because they wished to avoid controversy and not to endanger their own acceptance among the general public. Consequently Schaeffer found himself once again, at the end of his life, in the position he had occupied in the 1960s, before his name became a household word—a voice crying in the wilderness.”⁸

Schaeffer states, “What is the use of evangelicalism seeming to get larger and larger if sufficient numbers of those under the name evangelical no longer hold to that which makes evangelicalism evangelical? If this continues, we are not faithful to what the Bible claims for itself, and we are not faithful to what Jesus Christ claims for the Scriptures. But also—let us not ever forget—if this continues, we and our children will not be ready for difficult days ahead” (The Great Evangelical Disaster, 4:343).

Here again, we may learn from Schaeffer. Even though it was costly to him, he stood, when necessary, for the cause of truth and life. His practical, social action was not divorced from his beliefs and his love for the Lord; instead, it flowed from them. However, it was not a “social action” which was devoid of a larger theology which sought to uphold the dignity of human beings, a limited government, and a proper church-state separation in society. He rejected any move to socialism due to its devaluation of human beings and not treating humans as responsible agents, image-bearers created to know God and to live and work for God's glory. In a day when it is so easy to compromise in the midst of pressure; to bend when the going gets tough, to even jump on the bandwagon of current fads such as many who advocate “social justice” are doing without a proper theological foundation underneath it, Schaeffer is a contemporary role model, like those ancients in the past, who was willing to love God with his whole self, to exhibit his character in the toughness of life, and to be faithful to his truth.

II. LOVING YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF

As Schaeffer stated in the quote above, the love of God and the love of neighbor are intimately intertwined and “if we love our neighbor as Christ would have us love our neighbor, we will certainly want to share the gospel with our neighbor; and beyond this we will want to show forth the law of God in all our relationships with our neighbor.”⁹ Of course, no person living this side of the consummation will ever achieve this ideal,

Schaeffer emphasized strongly that evangelism must deal with the whole person—the mind, will, emotions, heart, and soul. When asked on one occasion how he viewed himself, whether as a theologian, philosopher, apologist, he responded that he was an evangelist. But he did not view his evangelism as divorced from the great intellectual and cultural issues of life because human beings are whole beings. He states: “People often say, ‘What are you?’ and I sometimes have said, ‘Well basically I am an evangelist.’ But sometimes I do not think that people have understood that does not mean that I think of an evangelist in contrast to dealing with philosophic, intellectual, or cultural questions with care. I am not a professional, academic philosopher—that is not my calling, and I am glad that I have the calling that I have, and I am equally glad some other people have the other calling. But when I say that I am an evangelist, it is not that I am thinking that my philosophy, etc. is not valid—I think it is.... But what I am saying is that all the cultural, intellectual or philosophic material is not to be separated from leading people to Christ. I think my talking about metaphysics, morals, and epistemology to certain individuals is a part of my evangelism just as much as when I get to the moment to show them that they are morally guilty and to tell them that Christ died for them on the cross. I do not see or feel a dichotomy: this is my philosophy and that is my evangelism. The whole thing is evangelism to the people who are caught in the second lostness we spoke of—the second lostness being that they do not have answers to the questions of meaning, purpose, and so on.... To me there is a unity of all reality, and we can either say that every field of study is a part of evangelism... or we can say that there is no true evangelism that does not touch all of reality and all of life” (The God Who Is There, 1:185-87).

however in Francis (and Edith) Schaeffer we see a person who at least sought to role model for us something of how it should be done, especially in three areas. First, Schaeffer demonstrates his love for his neighbor in attempting to give honest answer to honest questions. In his booklet, *Two Contents, Two Realities*, Schaeffer contends that there are four things that are absolutely necessary if Christians are going to meet the challenges of our day: (1) Sound doctrine; (2) Honest answers to honest questions; (3) True spirituality; (4) The beauty of human relationships. In his discussion of (1) and (2) he stresses the need to make no compromises over sound doctrine, while simultaneously spending time with people and attempting to answer their questions. He deplores the attitude of some in the church who give the impression that we are not to ask any questions, just believe. This, he says, was always wrong. It is wrong because it does not view human beings as whole people who need both intellectual and spiritual answers. It is also wrong, especially in an age that does not believe in truth, to say that we have the truth and then not take the time to answer real and difficult questions. But, of course, this not only takes a lot of time and effort, it also takes compassion to meet a person where they are at. Answering questions is hard work. Schaeffer states it this way:

Christianity demands that we have enough compassion to learn the questions of our generation. The trouble with too many of us is that we want to be able to answer these questions instantly, as though we could take a funnel, put it in one ear and pour in the facts, and then go out and regurgitate them and win all the discussions. It cannot be. Answering questions is hard work. Can you answer all the questions? No, but you must try. Begin to listen with compassion. Ask what this man's questions really are and try to answer. And if you don't know the answer, try to go someplace or read and study to find the answer. Not everybody is called to answer the questions of the intellectual, but when you

go down to the shipyard worker you have a similar task... I tell you they have the same questions as the university man. They just do not articulate them the same way.

Answers are not salvation... And there must be the work of the Holy Spirit. Nonetheless, what I am talking about is our responsibility to have enough compassion to pray and do the hard work which is necessary to answer the honest questions.¹⁰

These were not just empty words to Schaeffer; they reflected his life.¹¹ For countless numbers of people who came to L'Abri, Schaeffer sought to put into practice what he taught. Constantly one of the charges I hear from students at seminary is that professors, and even pastors, have no time for them. They have honest questions that require time and attention, but often we are too busy to help. But, as Schaeffer reminded us, we are called to love our neighbor. For Christian leaders, pastors, and teachers, certainly one way that this must show itself is in time spent, care shown, and honest answers given to real people who, in a postmodern age, deserve nothing less.

A second way that the Schaeffers demonstrated their love for others was through hospitality. At L'Abri they opened up their home to individuals, which was certainly not an easy thing to do. As Schaeffer later reflected on this he stated that "in about the first three years of L'Abri all our wedding presents were wiped out. Our sheets were torn. Holes were burned in our rugs. Indeed, once a whole curtain almost burned up from somebody smoking in our living room.... Drugs came to our place. People vomited in our rooms."¹² Now this is not to say that everyone must do what the Schaeffers did. However, in their life we see two individuals who took seriously the command to love both God and neighbor. Story after story at L'Abri is centered in how this visible love was so instrumental in bringing people to Christ.¹³ Evangelism must not be divorced from how we treat the whole person, in our words and in our actions.

Third, Schaeffer's life sought to exhibit a wonderful balance

between truth and love. He stood fast for the gospel, but in so doing he sought to love and understand in person-to-person relationships the people he was ministering to. Brown, in comparing Schaeffer to Athanasius—another role model from the past who knew what it was to stand for the truth—relates how Schaeffer sought to achieve the balance between truth and love. He states:

Like Athanasius, Schaeffer took stands—especially in his last years—which some would call intemperate and inflexible. We do not really know how Athanasius dealt with people on a personal level; it is possible that he was as severe with individuals as he was with their theology. But in Schaeffer's case, we know that the rigor of his convictions was always tempered with love and understanding in person-to-person relationships as well as in public debate. He invariably treated those with whom he deeply disagreed with consideration and love. Francis Schaeffer not only held the line for Biblical orthodoxy in his generation as Athanasius had done. What is perhaps even more important, Schaeffer showed the next generation not merely that they will need to take stands, but where to take them and how to do so, in Paul's words, "speaking the truth in love" (Ephesians 4:15). He has shown us that standing "contra mundum" is an essential part of being "pro Christo."¹⁴

Here is another lesson that we must learn, especially for those of us who serve as leaders in the church. Every generation must stand for the truth, but we must do so in love. Today, we hear much about love at the expense of taking hard and uncompromising stands for truth. In a day that desperately needs to hear the truth, we cannot waver at this point. However, we must not go to the other extreme either; both truth and love are necessary. And Schaeffer is a helpful role model at this point. A man of conviction, rooted and grounded in God's Word; a man who knew firsthand what "loving confrontation"

was all about; a man who sought, albeit imperfectly, to love the Lord his God and his neighbor himself, and to exhibit, in thought and action, the Lordship of Jesus Christ in all of life. May we learn this lesson likewise.

In the end, Francis Schaeffer was a fallen, imperfect man, saved by the grace of God. He made many mistakes, like us all. But he was a unique individual, gifted by God for his generation. He often said that God did not have to use someone with extraordinary gifts, instead God can use a dead stick of wood if he wants as he did in the hand of Moses. In a very memorable sermon he stated it this way:

Though we are limited and weak in talent, physical energy, and psychological strength, we are not less than a stick of wood. But as the rod of Moses had to become the rod of God, so that which is me must become the me of God. Then I can become useful in God's hands. The Scripture emphasizes that much can come from little if the little is truly consecrated to God. There are no little people and no big people in the true spiritual sense, but only consecrated and unconsecrated people. The problem for each of us is applying the truth to ourselves.... Those who think of themselves as little people in little places, if committed to Christ and living under His Lordship in the whole of life, may, by God's grace, change the flow of our generation. And as we get on a bit in our lives, knowing how weak we are, if we look back and see we have been somewhat used of God, then we should be the rod "surprised by joy."¹⁵

From the thought and life of Francis Schaeffer there is much to ponder and learn. It does not honor him simply to parrot back everything he has said; he would not have wanted this. Instead, what we are to learn from him is how to minister more effectively in our time as he did in his—with mind and heart firmly rooted and grounded in Scripture; passionate for the gospel; willing to tackle the issues of our day in faithfulness to our great God.

After all, no higher tribute could be given to a man who sought in his thought and life, above all, to live under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, for the glory of God alone.

ENDNOTES

- 1 This article is a revised and edited version of "Francis A. Schaeffer (1912-1984): Lessons from His Thought and Life," *SBJT* 6:2 (2002): 4-32. It is republished here with permission. Unless otherwise noted, all references to the writings of Francis Schaeffer will be taken from *The Complete Works of Francis A. Schaeffer*, 5 vols., 2d ed. (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1985).
- 2 Schaeffer, *The Great Evangelical Disaster*, 4:321-22.
- 3 Harold O. J. Brown, "Standing Against the World," in *Francis Schaeffer: Portraits of the Man and His Work*, ed. Lane T. Dennis (Westchester: Crossway Books, 1986), 20-21.
- 4 See Iain H. Murray, *Evangelicalism Divided* (Carlisle: Banner of Truth Trust, 2000), 50 n. 5; 76-77. Also see where Schaeffer comments on the fear he sees within evangelicalism of cooperating in the area of evangelism with those who are not evangelical in their theology in *The Church at the End of the Twentieth Century*, 4:30-49; *The Great Evangelical Disaster*, 4:343; *Letters of Francis Schaeffer*, 72.
- 5 See Brown, "Standing Against the World," 21-22.
- 6 Ibid., 21-22.
- 7 Ibid., 24.
- 8 Ibid., 25.
- 9 Schaeffer, *The Great Evangelical Disaster*, 4:322.
- 10 Schaeffer, *Two Contents, Two Realities*, 3:414.
- 11 See Schaeffer, *Letters of Francis A. Schaeffer and Part 2 of Francis A. Schaeffer: Portraits*, 131-205.
- 12 Cited in Michael S. Hamilton, "The Dissatisfaction of Francis Schaeffer" *Christianity Today*, March 3, 1997, 25.
- 13 See Part 2 of *Francis Schaeffer: Portraits*, 131-205.
- 14 Brown, "Standing Against the World," 26.
- 15 Schaeffer, "No Little People, No Little Places," in *No Little People*, 3:8, 14.

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BOOK REVIEWS



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Roots of the Reformation: Tradition, Emergence and Rupture

By Gillian R. Evans. Second Edition. Evans. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2012.

In 1971, Harvard University Reformation historian, Steven Ozment edited a volume of essays suggestively entitled *The Reformation in Medieval Perspective*. It was intended to show that contrary to our predisposition to think otherwise, the ties that bound the Reformation age to what had preceded it were substantial. Luther, for instance was shown to have owed a debt (of sorts) to German mystics who went before him. Ozment's aim was not to undermine the Reformation's significance, but only to show that the Protestant Reformers were men of their times with links to the past.

This is the theme on which the distinguished Cambridge University historian of medieval Europe, Gillian R. Evans has focused in her *Roots of the Reformation*, now available in its second edition. Known for her earlier works, *Law and Theology in the Middle Ages* (Routledge, 2011) and *John Wycliffe: Myth and Reality* (IVP, 2006), Evans is surely as well qualified as any medievalist of broadly Protestant sympathies to take up this task. It is a very ambitious undertaking!

Her aim is to show that in addition to the eventual Reformation of Luther's time standing in substantial continuity with the doctrinal consensus of early Christianity, expressed in early ecumenical creeds and councils, there was also another aspect of the story. In the rough and tumble of Christian history over the fourteen centuries intervening between the death of the last apostle and the dawn of the Reform, there were many disputes and

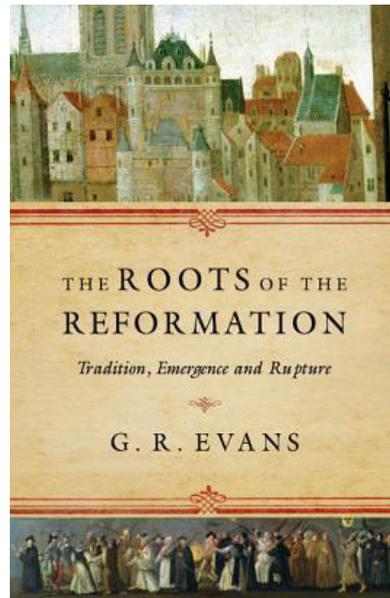
protest movements which – because never patiently adjudicated—contributed to a pent-up demand for changes in Christianity in Western Europe. When it came, the Reformation, like the proverbial torrent over the dam, represented the confluence of numerous pre-existing streams. Three examples will prove helpful.

First, sharp disagreement about the relationship between the elements of bread and wine and the all-important words of institution, given by Jesus in his establishing the Lord's Supper, had gone on for centuries. Christians were reproved for denying the alleged transformation of the two elements into the realities they symbolized as early as the ninth century. The important Fourth Lat-

eran Council of 1215 made the denial of this transformation something punishable by death, provoking still further protests against it in the fourteenth century (chap. 7). The eventual Reformation protests over the abuses of the Mass were to a large extent 'replays' of controversies earlier played out.

Second, the Reformers were not the first to protest against the exaggerated claim of the bishop of Rome to be Christ's supreme representative on earth, and Peter's intended successor (chap. 8). An argument in support of a diffused leadership shared by the Mediterranean churches of Alexandria, Jerusalem, Antioch, and Constantinople (as well as Rome) had been forcefully made since before the sixth century. Rome's impatience at the refusal of these major churches to submit to its supreme authority had fueled mutual decrees of excommunication in 1054. Even in Western Europe, later frustration over the existence of rival popes and papal abuses gave rise to an important 'conciliar movement' in the fifteenth century; this sought to define and limit papal power.

Third, the wider circulation of the Bible in the languages of the European people had been eagerly desired long before the invention of the printing press in the age of



Gutenberg (which immediately preceded the Reformation). The work of the church father, Jerome (347-420) in standardizing and improving older Latin versions of the Bible into a common Latin Vulgate – read in all the churches of the Latin-speaking West and available to be purchased by ordinary believers in hand-copied portions – had been the norm in centuries following. But the decline of Latin as a popular, spoken language in those same regions produced a population which could no longer read the Bible in its own language. This dearth of the vernacular Word was subsequently targeted by medieval believers such as Waldensians and Wycliffite Lollards (chap. 14), who produced common language Bibles to roll back the plague of biblical illiteracy. The Reformation, when it came, only saw to completion this centuries-old Christian aspiration that the Word would be restored into the hands of the people.

Yet *Roots of the Reformation* is by no means simply designed to make Rome look ‘bad’ and the Reformation look ‘good.’ Evans shows a spectrum of concerns regarding contested questions raised before, during and after the Reformation; she demonstrates that extremists could be located in each camp. Having said this, it is only right to acknowledge the author’s willingness to allow that Rome provoked a Reformation because of its deaf ear towards earlier protest movements over a succession of centuries.

The book has weaknesses. At 500 pages, it will tax many readers. Both in its multi-chapter format, and extended conclusion, there is repetition. The author is on much firmer ground in her portrayal of Christianity between the fall of Rome (circa 476) and the dawn of the Reformation (1517) than in her treatment of themes and doctrines earlier and later. Geographically, the focus of the book is most of all on English, Italian and Germanic lands (reflecting her own researches) with little said of other European regions. English Reformers are regularly praised, while those of other Reformation lands are very often depicted as extreme. Sources quoted are occasionally obtained from websites of no reputation, rather than from the solid sources one would expect to be drawn on

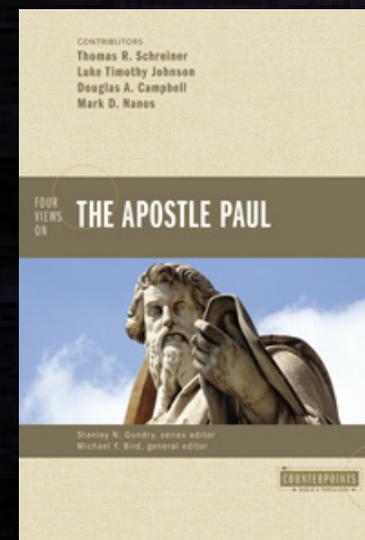
by a Cambridge don. But with all that said, I will also say that I know of no other book which so effectively demonstrates that the crisis of the Reformation was a crisis addressing accumulated grievances and protests which Rome had done its best to stifle. Evans’ *The Roots of the Reformation* deserves the widest reading.

Kenneth J. Stewart

Professor of Theological Studies, Covenant College

New Interview with Thomas Schreiner “Paul: A Reformed Reading”

The Counterpoint series by Zondervan continues to be a helpful one-stop-shop for sorting out various theological positions. Our own Dr. Thomas Schreiner has recently contributed to the volume *Four Views on the Apostle Paul*. While Schreiner argues for a Reformed view, Luke Timothy Johnson argues for the Catholic view, Douglas Campbell for a post-New Perspective view, and Mark Nanos for the Jewish view. Michael Bird introduces the volume and the issues at stake. Schreiner gave us the privilege and opportunity to ask him a few questions about his perspective on Paul.



[Click here to read this interview!](#)

Finding Faithful Elders and Deacons

By Thabiti M. Anyabwile. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012.

Usually when the average church is looking for an elder or deacon, the most common qualifications sought after include whether they are well liked in the church and perhaps respected in the business world. Now of course most church committees want to be biblical in their selection of elders and deacons, so they might read through Scripture and quickly assess the character qualities of their chosen man. The problem is that most churches and even leaders of those churches struggle to know how to assess potential elders and deacons. In an effort to help churches and their leaders, Thabiti Anyabwile in his book *Finding Faithful Elders and Deacons* provides his expertise as an experienced elder in identifying and reproducing leaders within the church.

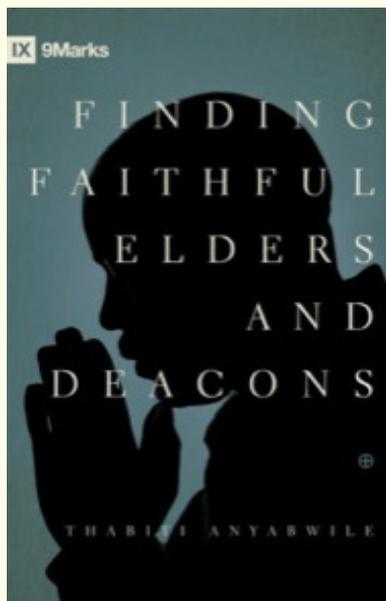
The way that Anyabwile sets up his book is a significant advantage to the reader. The chapters are short and to the point. Anyabwile adds illustrations and personal experiences, but yet he stays on task with the meaning of the scriptures. Despite having 29 chapters which at first might look daunting, the brevity of each chapter makes this book an easy and accessible read. But the strongest advantage of this book is the practical side of each chapter. After detailing what the Scriptures say about a certain quality that should be displayed in an elder or deacon, each chapter has an equal or longer section of questions and observations, traits to watch for, or both. This is displayed in an expanded list which helps the reader truly decipher how to evaluate a potential candidate for the desired office.

In his first section, Anyabwile begins with the definition

of a deacon. After detailing what a deacon is, Anyabwile explains the first qualification of one from Acts 6:3. He says deacons should be known as men full of the Spirit (24). The reason for this is because deacons should be people who know how to live by God's precepts, and apply them to life's situations (24). Anyabwile then moves through the rest of the qualifications for deacons by examining 1 Timothy 3:8-10. In each of these chapters the main quality expressed is not ability but character. Deacons should be people who are not double-tongued (28), sober and self controlled (31), a model of truth (39), and people who stand the test of time (42).

In a very similar manner in the second section, Anyabwile examines the character qualities of elders. He begins with an overview chapter to introduce the office of elder. When communicating the fundamental quality of an elder, Anyabwile points to Jesus Christ by saying, "all good shepherding finds its root and model in the life and love of God revealed in Jesus Christ. Ultimately, the shepherd we need is Jesus himself" (49). As under-shepherds, elders are to care for the flock that Christ has purchased with his blood. He is the chief shepherd whom elders are to trust in and look to. The role of elder is much different than the role of deacon. While they are two enduring offices, deacons serve the practical needs while elders serve the spiritual needs (49). With this as the background, Anyabwile follows with 11 chapters that walk through 1 Timothy 3:1-7.

Perhaps the most valuable section of Anyabwile's book is the last. Here he explores Titus 1:9 and 1 Timothy 4:7-16 as he details the role of a good pastor. As important as it is to know how to evaluate future and potential elders and deacons, it is even more vital for an elder to "watch his life and doctrine" (1 Tim. 4:16), as he leads the flock entrusted to him from God. An elder should be sure to set his hope in God (123) setting before his flock an example of exemplary conduct (138), teach-



ing (144), while growing himself (145), as he serves the church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

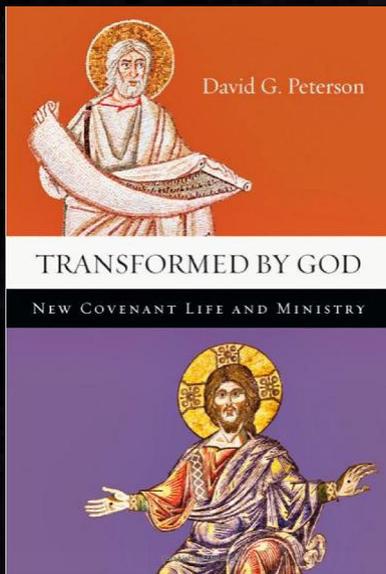
Finding Faithful Elders and Deacons is a valuable resource among many put out by 9Marks that should be on every pastor's shelf. It is biblical, clear and concise, providing an easy read and even easier reference points. The call to every elder is to carry on the faith through entrusting the truths of Scripture to faithful men (2 Tim. 2:2). This book aids in taking this call seriously.

Michael Nelson

Pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Osceola, AR.

Transformed by God

An Interview with David G. Peterson



After the longest quotation of any Old Testament passage within the New Testament, the author of Hebrews concludes with this definitive statement on the significance of the New Covenant: “where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin” (Heb. 10:18). Apart from a full and deep awareness of the biblical history standing behind those words, it might be easy to glide past them with a nod

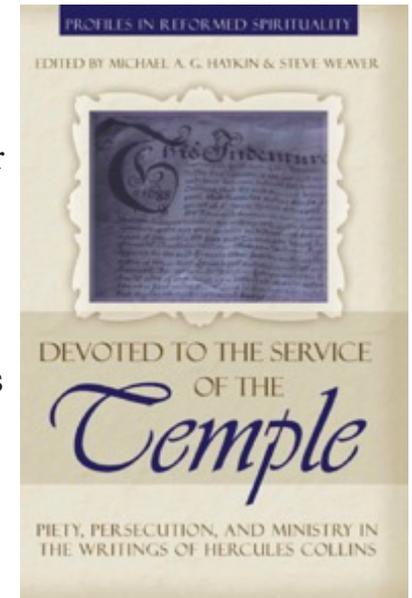
and a yawn. But David Peterson's new book aims to keep us from doing anything so foolish again. In *Transformed By God: New Covenant Life and Ministry*, David Peterson treats us to a robust biblical theology uncovering the origin of New Covenant language in Jeremiah's vision and every possible allusion, quotation, and inkling of it found in the New Testament.

[Read this interview today!](#)

Devoted to the Service of the Temple: Piety, Persecution, and Ministry in the Writings of Hercules Collins

Edited by Michael A.G. Haykin & Steve Weaver. Grand Rapids: Reformation Heritage Books, 2007.

Devoted to the Service of the Temple is a small collection of writings from the lesser-known London Baptist pastor Hercules Collins (1646/7-1702). It forms a volume in the series “Profiles in Reformed Spirituality,” a series designed to introduce readers to the writings of great Reformed devotional authors in an easy-to-understand, non-technical format. The book includes a thirty-page biographical sketch of Collins, followed by thirty-five brief excerpts from his works. The volume concludes with a section from the sermon preached at Collins' funeral.



On the whole, I found *Devoted to the Service of the Temple* to be one of the most spiritually encouraging books I have ever read. Its language, theology, ethos, and size are all very similar to the volumes in the Puritan Paperback series published by Banner of Truth. In two-to-four page excerpts topics such as true repentance, God's sovereignty, the use of singing in corporate worship, finding encouragement from the Word while in affliction, training elders, pastoring and preaching, how to interpret the Bible, and longing for Jesus are covered. Throughout, Collins' writing emanates an evident love for His Savior. The volume makes plain that many of Collins' thoughts were recorded during his times in prison for preaching the gospel. That this man would prefer communion with Christ in a disgusting dungeon over freedom was convicting and instructive. It moved me to examine my own commitment to Christ.

My only small criticism of the volume regards its length. I wish the book were longer and contained more of Collins' writings. Presumably this is the intent of this series, namely to whet the reader's appetite and to move the reader to seek out more substantial pieces by the author in other books. However, in the case of Collins, the reader is left in a lurch, since, as far as I can tell, there are no works by Collins currently in print anywhere. [Though evidentially, co-editor Steve Weaver is working on a revision of some of Collins' works, hopefully to be published at some future date.]

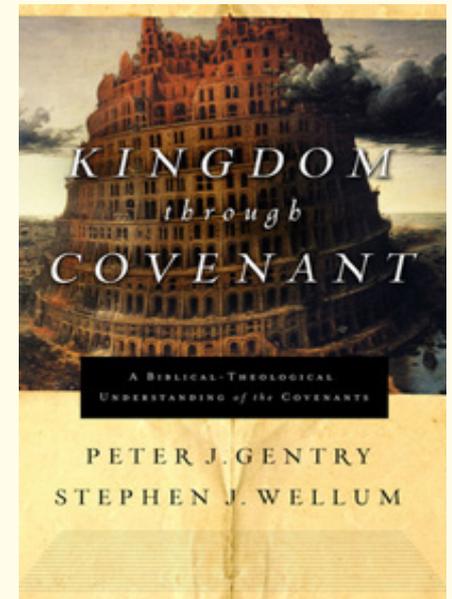
For those seeking the devotional zeal and warmth of the Puritans yet with a Baptist ecclesiology, I could not recommend *Devoted to the Service of the Temple* highly enough.

Timothy Raymond
Pastor, Trinity Baptist Church, Muncie, IN.

Kingdom Through Covenant: A Biblical-Theological Understanding of the Covenants

By Peter J. Gentry and Stephen J. Wellum. Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2012.

There are two dominant theological formulations in evangelicalism known as "covenant theology" and "dispensationalism." Covenant theologians *primarily* emphasize continuity between the biblical covenants, a continuity that is undergirded by their formulation of a single "covenant of grace." On the other hand, dispensational theologians *primarily* emphasize discontinuity between the covenants, which is demonstrated in their emphasis of the "newness" of the new covenant. Intrinsic to these systems is an emphasis on the continuing validity of the promises of the Abrahamic covenant, although they ironically emphasize different promises. For covenant theologians, the promise of "seed" indicates a genealogical principle never renounced in the Bible (hence children of believers are members of the covenant and should be baptized); for dispensational theologians, the promise of "land" indicates that God will fulfill the land promise to Israel in the future millennial reign of Christ (hence an emphasis on the Palestinian boundaries of the geopolitical nation-state of Israel). In other words, both systems emphasize the "literal" promise and fulfillment of "seed" and "land," respectively.



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With regard to this debate, *Kingdom Through Covenant* (KTC) makes its greatest contribution. It attempts to formulate a *via media*, a "middle way" between these

systems of theology. In other words, Gentry and Wellum agree with some aspects of covenant theology and some aspects of dispensationalism. But they also disagree with both systems at various points. Hence, KTC, referred to as a species of “new covenant theology” or “progressive covenantalism” (24), is an attempt to take the best from both systems and formulate a mediating position. The task is large, but KTC largely succeeds.

The thesis of KTC is that the biblical covenants form the backbone of the metanarrative of the Bible, and that a correct understanding of how these covenants relate to one another is crucial in formulating one’s theology—including the doctrine of God, Christology, ecclesiology, and eschatology (21). The underlying assumption to the work as a whole is that, for one’s theological system to cohere in a biblical fashion, one must do biblical and systematic theology. Hence, KTC is written by a biblical exegete (Peter Gentry) and a systematic theologian (Stephen Wellum). The structure of KTC is as follows: Parts 1 and 3 are written by Wellum, and Part 2 by Gentry.

In Part 1 (chaps. 1-3), Wellum introduces and defines the terms “biblical” and “systematic theology” in order to show how they relate to one another as theological disciplines. He also surveys covenant theology and dispensationalism, showing how and where the two systems overlap as well as vary. This section is particularly helpful for anyone wanting to understand the basic tenets of these systems, and it allows the reader to comprehend the variations within each system. Finally, in order to describe the hermeneutical method used in KTC, Wellum provides a list of the authors’ hermeneutical assumptions, e.g., inerrancy, progress of revelation, Scripture interprets Scripture, etc.

In Part 2 (chaps. 4-15), Gentry unpacks with rigorous exegesis each of the biblical covenants (creation/Noah, Abraham, Sinai, David, and the new covenant). He gives one introductory chapter to the concept of covenant in the Ancient Near East, focusing on the nature of a covenant and how it is to be distinguished from a contract. Next, Gentry describes the Noahic

covenant and shows through linguistic analysis that the phrase “cut a covenant” (*kārat bērit*) always refers to the act of covenant initiation, whereas “establish a covenant” (*hēqīm bērit*) refers to “a covenant partner fulfilling an obligation or upholding a promise in a covenant initiated previously so that the other partner experiences in historical reality the fulfilling of this promise, i.e., one makes good on one’s commitment, obligation, or promise” (155). Since the phrase “establish a covenant” occurs in the Noahic covenant but not “cut a covenant,” Gentry argues that there must be a covenant with creation in Genesis 1-2. Hence, after the chapter on the Noahic covenant, Gentry provides an analysis of the covenant at creation, showing that the image of God is fundamentally ontological, resulting in human dominion over the earth (chap. 6). Here he also argues that Adam was a king-priest who was to extend God’s rule over the earth.

Next, Gentry analyzes the Abrahamic covenant in two chapters (chaps. 7-8), arguing that Genesis 15 and 17 refer to one covenant, not two. The covenant with Abraham shows that God planned for Abraham’s family to take on the Adamic mandate and restore the world. Two chapters are also given to the Mosaic covenant, where Gentry expounds the “Ten Words” (commandments) in Exodus 20 (chap. 9) and demonstrates how the structure of Deuteronomy is covenantal but the content is legal (chap. 10). He shows here that Israel was meant, as the family of Abraham, to be king-priests in the world who would bring God’s blessing to all the families of the earth (cf. Exod. 19:5-6). He also shows that Deuteronomy, as a codicil to the covenant at Sinai (cf. Deut. 29:1 EV), is structured by the repetition of the covenant formula (“I will be your God, and you will be my people”), hence its significance for the central book of the Old Testament.

Next, Gentry analyzes the Davidic covenant (chap. 11). Just as Israel was to be the mediator of God’s covenant blessings to the world, so now it would be through David and his sons in particular who would, as the representatives of the people, take on the Adamic role. The Davidic covenant establishes the Davidic king

as the son of God who would by his faithfulness to the covenant bring God's Torah to the nations (cf. 2 Sam. 7:19). Gentry rightly analyzes "the sure mercies of David" in Isaiah 55:3 as a subjective genitive; that is, the future David is the one who by his sure and steadfast covenant loyalty will bring about the blessings of forgiveness recounted in Isaiah 53 (408-23; cf. Acts 13:34).

Finally, Gentry analyzes the new covenant in the prophets (chaps. 12-14). First, he shows in Isaiah and Ezekiel (chap. 12) that the phrases "covenant of peace" or "everlasting covenant," or the promises of a new heart and the coming Spirit, refer to the same new covenant reality promised in Jeremiah. Then, in Jeremiah (chap. 13), he shows that the famous new covenant text (31:31-34) must be set in its immediate context, which describes how no longer will the sins of the fathers be held against the sons, but each person will be responsible for his own sin (31:27-30). This demonstrates that "days are coming" when the tribal structure of the old covenant will be no more, for there will be another covenant, which will be substantially different from the old in nature and structure. In short (515), the new covenant is better than the old in that it has a better mediator (without sin), sacrifice (Heb. 9:6-10:18; Isa. 42:6; 52:13-53:12), provision (the Spirit of God; Ezek. 36:24-28), and promise (impartation of a new heart; Ezek. 36:24-28). It fulfills all the other biblical covenants. In Chapter 14, Gentry analyzes Daniel's 70 weeks (Dan. 9:24-27) and contends that the "strong covenant" in 9:27 refers to the new covenant and that the "anointed one" and "prince" of 9:25-26 refer to the same messianic individual. Gentry finishes Part 2 with a chapter on "speaking the truth in love" in Ephesians (cf. Eph. 4:15, 25), where he shows this phrase is a summary of the new covenant's stipulations.

In Part 3, Wellum synthesizes the work of Gentry by summarizing the biblical-theological storyline of the Bible via the covenants (chap. 16; cf. especially the helpful charts on 621-22). He then applies Gentry's exegesis to the doctrines of God, Christology,

ecclesiology, and eschatology (chap. 17). This final chapter is especially significant, for it is here that Wellum spells out precisely how KTC functions as a *via media* between covenant theology and dispensationalism. In terms of ecclesiology, for instance, because the nature and structure of the new covenant is different than the old, in the new covenant community everyone "knows the Lord." No longer is the covenant people of God "mixed" but everyone is regenerate. This means that the sign of the new covenant (baptism) should only be applied to those who are regenerate, not to infants. This also indicates that baptism does not correspond to circumcision, for they are different signs of different covenants, with circumcision of the flesh pointing forward typologically to circumcision of the heart (cf. Rom. 2:25-29). In short, then, covenant theologians do not recognize the typology of Abraham's "seed" developed within the covenants. On the other hand, dispensationalists fail to recognize the typology of the theme of "land" in the Old and New Testaments. Even within the Old Testament, there is an emphasis on worldwide dominion for the people of God, not just a plot of land in Canaan. This emphasis is expressed in various ways in the Abrahamic, Mosaic, and Davidic covenants, all of which point back toward restoring the "land" of Eden. Hence, the New Testament authors view the land as a type of the new creation, which is fulfilled in Christ.

There are many strengths to KTC, but space permits only a few. First, the test of whether KTC is successful depends on whether it best accounts for the biblical data. On this point, Gentry's work in Part 2 is invaluable, for he analyzes each covenant within its own immediate, epochal, and canonical context. As he points out time and again, to interpret rightly each covenant requires that one deal with the literary structures at hand, the cultural-historical-linguistic setting of the text, and how the text fits into the metanarrative of the Bible. A good example of the significance of this approach is found in his exegesis of the "Ten Words" of Exodus 20 (329-47). Concerning the first commandment, he shows that having no gods before Yahweh does not mean having

Yahweh as the highest priority in one's life. Rather, the preposition "before" (*l pny*), when used with a personal object, is always spatial. In other words, the command is to recognize no other gods in the presence of Yahweh. This command only makes sense if one understands that the ancient Near East viewed their gods working in divine assemblies, making decisions together in a pantheon. But Israel was not to see Yahweh as such, for he works alone and needs no help from other gods. Interpreters routinely have misinterpreted this first commandment because of a failure to do solid lexical study or to recognize the cultural background of the command.

Second, Gentry and Wellum also rightly note that the bifurcation between covenants as "unconditional" or "conditional," "unilateral" or "bilateral," is not helpful (120, 316). In a sense every covenant contains elements expected of both parties in the covenant relationship. Even the so-called "unconditional" covenants (e.g., Abrahamic, Davidic, new covenant) have conditional elements within them. Abraham is expected to obey as a faithful covenant partner, as is David and his sons. Certainly these covenants emphasize the unconditional elements more so than the conditional, but the conditional still remains. This is significant for believers because it recognizes the significance of Jesus fulfilling the conditions of the covenants as the "last Adam," the "seed of Abraham," the "true Israel," and the "son of David." He succeeds where Adam, Abraham, Israel, David, and others failed. Hence, all who are united to Christ by faith share in the covenants' promises (cf. 2 Cor. 1:20-22).

Third, KTC rightly sees the Mosaic covenant as a whole law-covenant in its own right, as opposed to the common tripartite division (ceremonial, civil, moral). The commands found in both the old and new covenants do not come to believers today as commands of the Mosaic law-covenant, for believers are no longer under that temporary covenant. The similarity of some of the commandments in these covenants are owing to the permanence and immutability of God's righteousness, as opposed to the continuing authority of the old covenant

(357).

Fourth, KTC successfully places the biblical covenants into their proper biblical framework. The authors show a sensitivity to the immediate, epochal, and canonical contexts of each covenant. They do not rush too quickly from the Old to the New, nor do they bridge the gap between the Old and the New without first thinking Christologically, that is, how precisely all the covenants find their *telos* in Christ. Indeed, they do justice to each covenant on its own terms and show canonically how Jesus fulfills all of them (92).

As for weaknesses, KTC has only a few. First, it would have been nice if the authors had been able to interact with Scott Hahn's book *Kinship Through Covenant* (2009), which is a major contribution to the debate concerning the covenants. Second, although no one book can do everything, more New Testament material would have been welcome. Certainly there were many references to New Testament texts in the book, but a few more chapters dedicated to the significance of the new covenant to the apostles would have strengthened the authors' case even more (but see 137-38). Third, there was some measure of redundancy in KTC, which probably owes to the fact that most of Gentry's chapters have been previously published as whole articles in their own right. Hence, there were several instances where the editors could have shortened the book by omitting the redundant paragraphs and sentences (e.g., compare 186ff. with 584-85).

Nevertheless, KTC is an outstanding contribution to the discussion concerning how to put the Bible together. In my opinion, the authors succeed in presenting a *via media* between covenant theology and dispensationalism, and they remind us, as we keep returning to the text, to glory in our covenant-keeping God.

Joshua Greever

Ph.D. candidate, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary

Walking with Giants: The Extraordinary Life of an Ordinary Man. A memoir

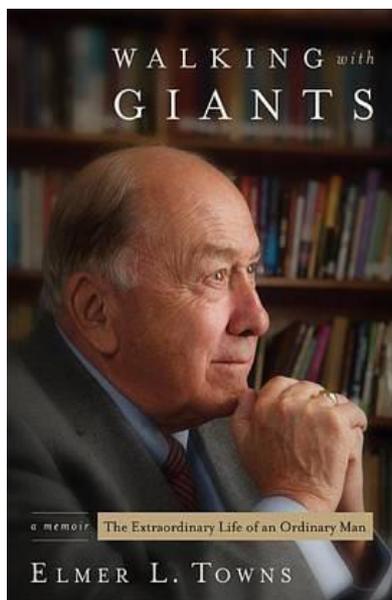
By Elmer L. Towns. Ventura, CA: Regal, 2012.

Christian autobiography is a difficult subject to write: how to find the right tone to speak about oneself and one's achievements is very difficult for a fallen creature. On the other hand, for church historians, autobiographical accounts are essential for their discipline—one thinks of Augustine's *Confessions* (albeit not an autobiography strictly speaking, even by the standards of antiquity), John Bunyan's *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners*, John Newton's *Authentic Narrative*, or Charles Colson's *Born Again* and how helpful such narratives are for understanding their subjects. Elmer Towns' *Walking with Giants* does not fall into the same class as these classic narratives, but nonetheless it sheds an interesting light on that important slice of American Evangelicalism associated with Jerry Falwell (1933–2007) and Liberty University.

Raised in an evangelical Presbyterian home, Towns became a Baptist early in his life and went on to study at such schools as Dallas Theological Seminary and Southern Methodist University. He credits his time at Southern Methodist University with transforming his understanding of research (p.112–113). I was interested to learn that one of his first academic appointments was as the President of Winnipeg Bible College in Manitoba, Canada, from 1961 to 1965. He admits that he was never able to get the school's enrollment beyond a hundred despite various month-long fund-raising trips in the summers (p.134–135), though he does state that the school—later renamed Providence College and Theological Seminary—eventually became the “largest evangelical college and seminary in Canada” by 1990 (p.135; also p.137). I found that remark surprising as I would have thought that Tyn-

dale University College and Seminary was larger.

It was while Towns was at Winnipeg Bible College that he decided to hire Revd. Les Tarr, whom I knew quite well in his later years, to teach journalism. Les was an accomplished writer but caused some controversy when he penned an article for the Canadian national magazine *Macleans* entitled “Let's Give Our Churches Hell.” One of the college's board members accused Tarr of profanity, but Towns defended him on the basis of the fact that Tarr was not using the “h” word as an expletive but as part of an argument for preachers not to omit the biblical doctrine of eternal punishment from their sermonic corpus (p.136–137). Of course, it goes without saying that the publishers of the magazine must have known the word's double-entendre.



Towns shares some of the frustrations he had with the Canadian theological scene when he states that his fund-raising efforts were stymied by the fact that Canadian evangelicals were more concerned to give to their local churches, and “sensational ministries” like that of Billy Graham (p.144). Having been an administrator in a small Canadian Baptist seminary and largely responsible for fund-raising, I can readily empathize with Towns, though these remarks do raise the question, “Should one not give first of all to one's local church?” He did

notice that there were what he calls two “huge Canadian Bible Institutes,” namely Prairie Bible Institute and Briercrest Bible Institute, then led by L.E. Maxwell and Henry Hildebrand respectively, that dominated Western Canadian Evangelicalism (p.144). The success of these two schools convinced Towns that “great men attracted students and money,” for both colleges were built in the middle of the nowhere of the Canadian Prairies (p.144–145). There is no doubt that this conviction is linked to Towns' later involvement at Liberty University and his relationship with Jerry Falwell.

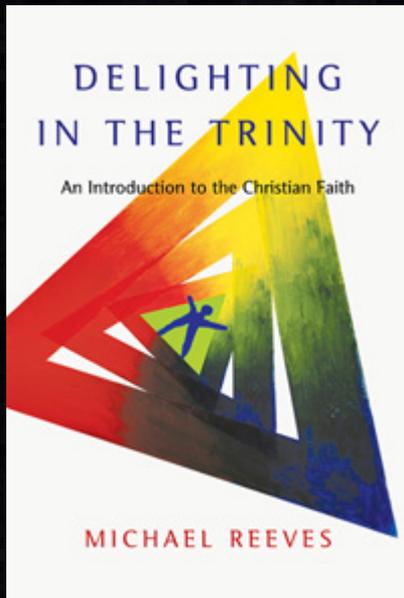
I heard Towns give a graduation address at Heritage Theological Seminary in the 1990s, but knew nothing at

the time of his previous involvement on the Canadian scene. He spoke on the ten largest churches in America, seeking to encourage the graduates to do great things for God. Reading this book helped me understand better his fascination with size and influence. In reading his memoir, I was also amazed at the number of people he mentions whom I know: the afore-mentioned Les Tarr; Dr. Richard Longenecker, my New Testament professor at Wycliffe College and an enormous influence on my life as a young Christian (p.148); Pastor Doug Porter (p.221); and members of the families of L.E. Maxwell, Henry Hidlebrand, and Doug Hindmarsh (p.137). The latter is a reminder of how small Canadian Evangelicalism is!

Michael A.G. Haykin
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Delighting in the Trinity

An Interview with Michael Reeves



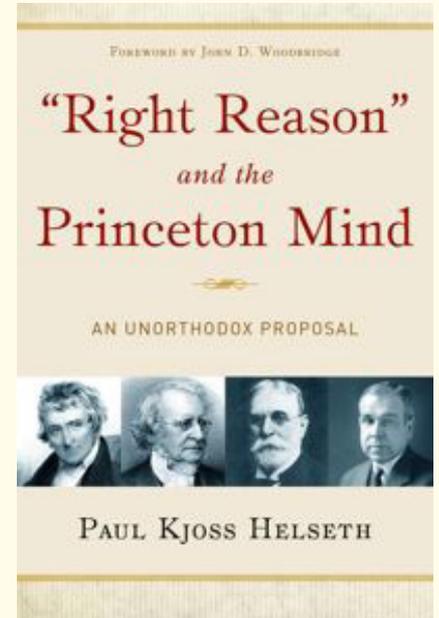
Recently we interviewed Michael Reeves, theological adviser for Universities and Colleges Christian Fellowship (UCCF), a charity supporting evangelism in higher education throughout the United Kingdom. Michael has written a new book entitled, *Delighting in the Trinity: An Introduction to the Christian Faith* (InterVarsity Press).

[Read this interview today!](#)

“Right Reason” and the Princeton Mind: An Unorthodox Proposal

By Paul Kjoss Helseth. Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R, 2010.

It is always difficult to trace the ideological roots of a particular idea. In many cases, ideas are like butter. It takes an individual to blend together the milk of many cows in a single churn to produce the savory spread. The question historians like to pose is one that is most difficult to answer—where did a writer get his or her particular views? Sometimes a thinker will give a clear indication of her sources. At other times, her hearers are left to draw their own conclusions.



In the case of the Princetonians, from Archibald Alexander to J. Gresham Machen, numerous modern writers have argued, following Sydney Ahlstrom’s 1955 thesis, that Scottish Common Sense Realism (SCSR) is the principle intellectual antecedent for the 19th century Princetonian view of reason and that when the Princetonians embraced SCSR, they had departed from classic Reformed epistemology in favor of a “rather bald” rationalism. Surveying the writings of “old Princeton” from Alexander, Charles Hodge, B. B. Warfield and concluding with Machen, Paul Helseth offers a significant counter proposal—an *unorthodox* one—that these Princetonians, to a greater or lesser degree, used epistemological categories that are more rooted in classic Reformation intellectual notions—“right reason” being not merely cognitive but affective. “They were more or less consistently Reformed scholars who responded to the modern era’s relocation of the divine-human nexus not only by

insisting that the Christian religion entails the rational appropriation of objective truth, but also by maintaining that the ability to see this truth for what it objectively is presupposes the work of the Holy Spirit on the ‘whole soul’ of a moral agent” (49). As such, only the regenerate “have the moral ability either to attend to the substance of what God has revealed in a ‘truly scientific’ fashion or to embrace the substance of this revelation in saving faith” (137).

This fine book is divided into an important introduction and two main sections. First, Helseth offers a lengthy apologetic to justify his *unorthodox* proposal, namely that the Ahlstrom thesis has become so dominant in broad evangelical scholarship so as to make it the *orthodox* view. But the prevailing view badly misrepresents Old Princeton. These men, however, were thoroughly reformed, even in their view of “right reason,” defined as “reason that acknowledged the authority of God and which functioned for moral, not speculative ends” (6fn7). To show this, Helseth first examines the claim that these Princeton giants drew their epistemology from SCSR. He demonstrates that their views not only are not contradictory with the Reformation but actually are derived from Reformation thought intentionally. Citing the writings of the prominent Princeton thinkers beginning with Alexander, Helseth shows why the Old Princetonians need not be considered mere rationalists—they viewed “right reason” as a moral category rather than simply a rational one. For instance, speaking of the unregenerate, Hodge insisted that “saving faith is beyond their grasp not because of ‘any deficiency in the evidence for truth,’ but because the depraved mind does not have the moral capacity ‘to appreciate’ the true significance of the truth that it can rationally perceive” (45). In the final section of the book, Helseth engages the misuse of the erroneous view of the Princeton epistemology among post-conservative evangelical writers. These post-conservatives (Roger Olson, Robert Webber, Stanley Grenz) not only have embraced the historiography of Ahlstrom, et al, but they have used this distorted view to press for a “revisioning’ of the theological task along the lines of ‘the postliberal research program.’ Evangelicals

will become something more than ‘fundamentalism with good manners, they contend, only when evangelicals recognize that doctrines are not ‘timeless’ and ‘culture-free’” (143-44). Thus post-conservative evangelicals use the alleged Princetonian rationalism to justify their departure from a Scripture-driven, propositional theology. By drinking the “Kool-Aid of cultural accommodation,” they are demonstrating their own “irrelevance” (219).

Helseth marshals an impressive amount of Princetonian data to make his point. While he concedes the influence of SCSR on the epistemologies of Alexander and Hodge, he argues cogently that its appropriation was “qualified and conditioned by their Reformed commitments” (21). These men made a “conscientious attempt to retain consistently Reformed religious epistemology in an age increasingly characterized by religious subjectivism” (25). Helseth’s work is well-written and carefully argued. He returns again and again to the writings of the Princeton men to rebut various aspects of their alleged dependence on SCSR. The footnotes are long and engaging and not to be passed over. Much important collateral discussion may be found in the many long content-laden discussions. Moreover, Helseth has demonstrated a vast breadth of reading and interaction on the broad evangelical conversation. While his thesis is *unorthodox*, he apparently is not alone in holding it, as evidenced by the impressive array of endorsements, including Princeton historians David C. Calhoun and Andrew Hofferker as well as John Woodbridge, who writes a generous forward. This may not be the last word in this conversation, but it is to be hoped that Helseth’s *unorthodoxy* will be investigated far and wide. If this happens, perhaps Woodbridge’s own desire (xiv) for a “new ‘orthodox’ proposal” will be granted! The book is iconoclasm at its finest! He knows that he is facing an ideological giant with only a sling shot and five smooth stones. But he proceeds boldly into the valley ready to engage his adversaries.

Jeff Straub

Professor of Historical and Systematic Theology at Central Baptist Theological Seminary

The Great Evangelical Disaster

by Matthew Barrett

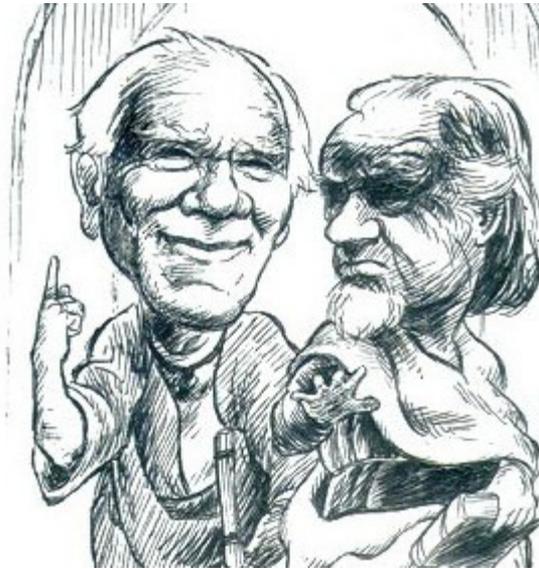
One of Francis Schaeffer's greatest strengths was his resolve to battle for truth and morality as an evangelical Christian in the midst of our secular culture. But Schaeffer also was not hesitant to confront fellow evangelicals who failed to do so. Schaeffer refused to rest content but instead called evangelicals out of their cultural ghettos in order to engage others with the Christian worldview. He felt unsettled as he observed that evangelicals had not been on the front lines, contending for the faith and confronting the moral breakdown of the twentieth century.

Schaeffer was confident that the battle for truth had to result in confrontation. "If the truth of the Christian faith," said Schaeffer in *The Great Evangelical Disaster*, "is in fact truth, then it stands in antithesis to the ideas and the immorality of our age, and it must be *practiced* both in teaching and practical action. Truth demands confrontation. It must be loving confrontation, but there must be confrontation nonetheless."

Schaeffer argued that the "great evangelical disaster" was "the failure of the evangelical world to stand for truth as truth." Schaeffer's words were more on target than we could have imagined: "There is only one word for this—namely accommodation: the evangelical church has *accommodated* to the world spirit of the age."

But how exactly? First, evangelicals have accommodated on Scripture. They call themselves evangelicals and yet hold to a "weakened view of the Bible and no longer

affirm the truth of all the Bible teaches—truth not only in religious matters but in the areas of science and history and morality." Second, there has been accommodation on issues, moral issues, concerning life and death. And by removing the authority of the Scriptures, we have no credibility to speak with authority on the moral issues of our day. With tears Schaeffer concluded that "the evangelical church is worldly and not faithful to the living Christ."

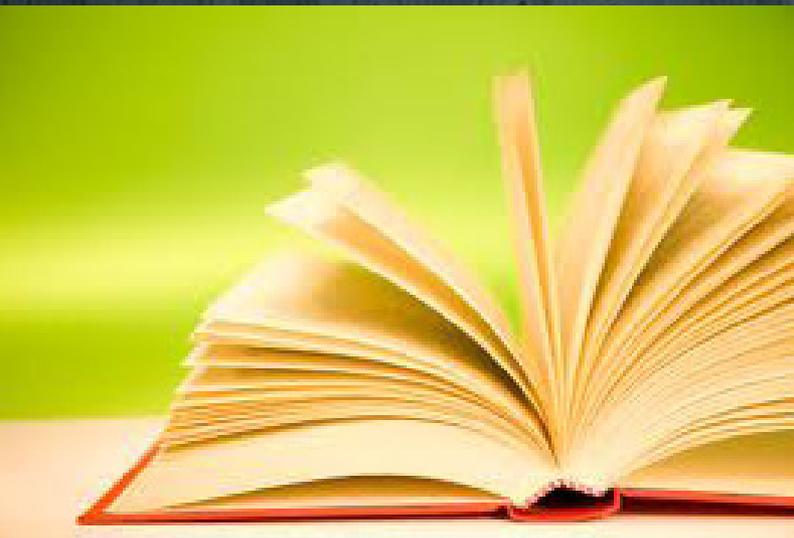


Most will dismiss Schaeffer as overstating his case. However, if we are honest with the current state of evangelicalism, I dare say Schaeffer's words ring true. First, too many evangelicals today are more concerned about offending others than standing for the truth. They do not confront others with the truth, but rather compromise out of fear of man. Second, evangelicals today are playing with fire. Rather than affirming the truthfulness and

trustworthiness of Scripture, they have adopted a weak view of the Bible. Consequently, and third, they cannot confront the issues of our day with "Thus says the Lord."

Christianity stands in antithesis to the spirit of our age. But rather than confronting others with the truth of the Christian faith, we have capitulated. If evangelicalism today is to recover from this great disaster, as Schaeffer called it, there must be a renewed effort to stand for truth, confront others with the truth, and resist the all-too-tempting urge to compromise under the pressure of this world.

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